

# **National Evaluation of the Police Cadets**

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## **Authors**

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# Executive Summary

## Overall Headline Findings

- Cadet programmes across England and Wales are currently being rejuvenated and there has been a +10% rise in cadets across the country (excluding the Met which has conversely seen a 9% fall);
- The Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) offers positive impact and value to young people and their future;
- Young people were proud to be a cadet and were positive about their experiences in the cadets, especially in relation to gaining confidence, reducing social anxiety and meeting new people;
- Cadets valued making a difference and impact in their community, have a strengthened sense of social responsibility, and have a desire for more community involvement in the VPC, more events and opportunities to volunteer;
- Cadet leaders were less positive compared with cadets, with key issues influencing these results being having enough time to do the role well and having enough cadet leaders;
- Strategic leads for the VPC in forces indicate that the VPC is a positive and important programme within local contexts, though there is support for more standardisation on regional and national levels; and
- Issues around recruitment of cadet leaders is a key threat to sustainability, which is also consequential to planned growth. More and better training for cadet leaders is a key need of the VPC alongside achieving a sustainable financial model.

## Introduction

This report provides the findings and results from a national evaluation of the Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) in England and Wales. The VPC is a nationally recognised police uniformed youth group throughout the UK for 13 to 18-year olds, first developed in South Norwood (Lambeth) in March 1988 as a community initiative to engage with young people. The VPC aims to be different to other uniformed youth groups, offering young people an opportunity to better understand policing whilst acquiring new skills and abilities to better position them within

their intended future pathways.

Since its conception, it has grown to involve some 12,329 young people spread across nearly all forces in England and Wales. Forces indicate further planned growth in cadet numbers, with a forecast rise in numbers up to 15,398 in the coming year to 2020, signifying a quite rapid period of planned growth of 24.9%. There are significant numbers of people who deliver the VPC, with initial figures suggesting that there are 62 full-time officers and 63 full-time police staff, approximately 1,400 other officers engaged either part-time or voluntarily, approximately

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380 other police staff engaged either part-time or voluntarily, and approximately 640 PSVs and 200 Special Constables.

There are significant differences in scale and design across sites. This report takes a significant step at establishing an evidence base for the VPC, with there being a dearth of evidence on the VPC and outcomes in relation to social impact and value. There has also to date been a relatively limited development of the evidence-base for 'what works' across the development and delivery of the VPC programme.

## Approach

A mixed method approach was taken to explore the VPC in England and Wales. To capture the views of cadets and cadet leaders, a national online survey was administered by the VPC and focus groups were completed in 4 sites across England and Wales. To explore the perspectives of strategic leads, semi-structured interviews were completed. Data from the national cadet census exercise were considered to provide a national picture of the VPC.

## Social Impact and Value Headlines

- The figure for social action hours requires further analysis, but as a broad initial indicative figure there appears to be at least 540,000 hours of social action undertaken across cadets;
- The VPC offers important opportunities to develop life skills, such as first aid, team work and independence as well as specific awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh;
- Cadets feel more aware of the consequences of their choices and behaviours, which relates to a more mature sense of self;
- Cadets are empowered to deliver a range

of positive impacts to others through volunteering and raise money for charitable causes;

- For young people who present challenging behaviours or attitudes, the rules and ethos of the VPC environment has a positive effect, offering a positive alternative for these young people to construct a pro-social identity; and
- New strategies, guidance and reflection are needed to give young people who exhibit negative behaviours or attitudes the best possible prospect of positive change, keeping them engaged in the programme and avoiding them dropping out.

## Transitions Headlines

- The VPC positively impacts the career aspirations of young people, especially those who were interested in a future career in policing;
- More focus is needed within sessions for cadets on how to navigate pathways into employment alongside policing content;
- Important differences are evident in the interest to join policing along gendered and ethnic lines, which warrant further consideration;
- Being a cadet provides beneficial evidence to enhance young people's CV's and employment prospects, helping to distinguish cadets from other young people; and
- There is good practice of the VPC facilitating links with the application processes for the Special Constabulary and Police Support Volunteers, however it was suggested that such connections need to be strengthened.



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This report provides the findings from a national evaluation of the Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC). It documents perspectives on the programme, outlines how being a cadet achieves social impact and value as well as exploring young people's transitions following being a cadet. Additionally, the report outlines strategic perspectives on the programme and makes recommendations to further build and develop the impact of the VPC in the future.

The VPC is a nationally recognised police uniformed youth group throughout the UK for 13 to 18-year olds. The first volunteer police cadet unit started in South Norwood (Lambeth) in March 1988 and was developed as a community initiative to engage with young people. Whilst being a recognised youth programme nationally across forces, there are significant differences in scale and design across sites. There has also to date been a relatively limited development of the evidence-base for 'what works' across the development and delivery of the VPC programme. A little over two decades since its conception, this report is timely as it will enable forces to reflect on how to improve and grow local VPC programmes.

This report takes a significant step at establishing an evidence base for the VPC, with there being a dearth of evidence on the VPC and outcomes in relation to social impact and value. The VPC programme offers a valuable opportunity for young people to engage in positive and constructive activities as well as achieve a social impact in communities. The VPC aims to be different to other uniformed youth groups, offering young people an opportunity to better understand policing whilst acquiring new skills and abilities to better position them within their intended future pathways.

The evidence points to an impact which

would not have been possible without the support and dedication of police staff who deliver the VPC. Nevertheless, there remains a significant opportunity to build further from the current VPC model, increase its footprint within localities and enhance the value and impact for young people. It is argued that the VPC is advantageously strategically positioned to support national objectives and priorities, such as the National Strategy for the Policing of Children and Young People: Child Centred Policing.

This report draws on evidence from a secondary analysis of a national census of cadets completed by forces in January 2019, primary analysis of national surveys of cadets and cadet leaders, a series of focus groups conducted with cadets across four forces and semi-structured interviews with cadet leads in forces.

**Chapter 2** sets out a context for the VPC and provides an overview of evidence that has documented the value of uniformed youth groups.

**Chapter 3** provides a national picture of the VPC, providing figures on the numbers of young people and units in different areas.

**Chapter 4** outlines general perspectives on the VPC based on evidence from cadets and cadet leaders.

**Chapter 5** details the identified social impacts and value of the VPC for young people, society and policing.

**Chapter 6** explores the impacts of the VPC on the future pathways and life course trajectories for young people.

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**Chapter 7** details key themes that emerged from strategic interviews with VPC leads in different forces.

**Chapter 8** draws together the key findings and makes recommendations to improve the development of the VPC and enable a significant step at realising its potential.

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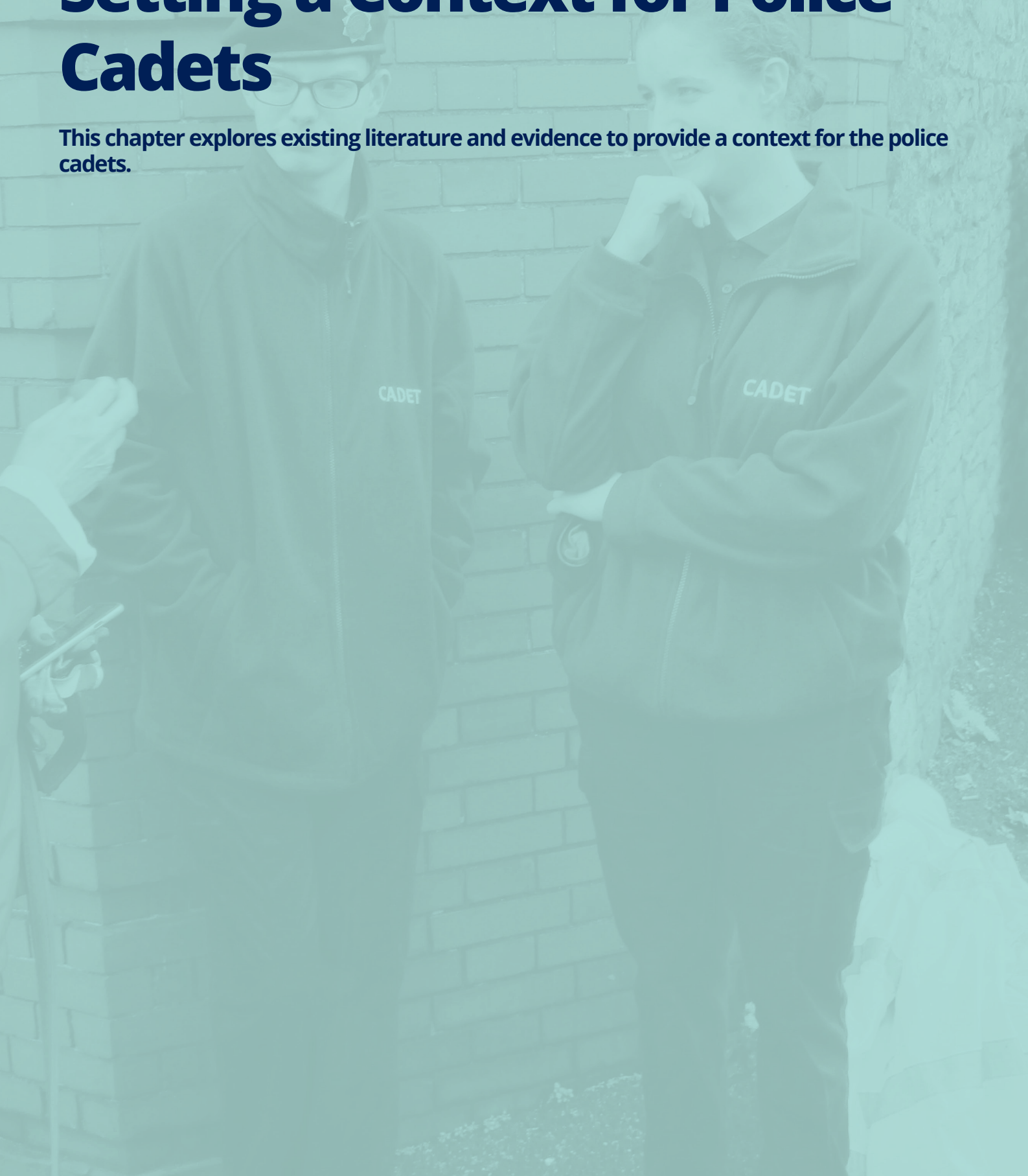
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# Setting a Context for Police Cadets

This chapter explores existing literature and evidence to provide a context for the police cadets.





# Setting a Context for Police Cadets

**“The purpose of the VPC is not to recruit police officers of the future, but to encourage the spirit of adventure and good citizenship amongst its members. We believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive regardless of his or her background. We encourage young people from all backgrounds to join the VPC, including those who may be vulnerable to the influences of crime and social exclusion.” (www.vpc.police.uk/about-us)**

## Locating the Cadets within National Policy

The Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) is the nationally recognised police uniformed youth group throughout the UK for 13 to 18-year olds. The first volunteer police cadet unit started in South Norwood (Lambeth) in March 1988 and was started as a community initiative to engage with young people.

The nationally agreed aims of the VPC are to:

- promote a practical understanding of policing amongst all young people;
- encourage the spirit of adventure and good citizenship;
- support local policing priorities through volunteering and give young people a chance to be heard; and
- inspire young people to participate positively in their communities.

Units normally meet once a week and are led by police officers, police staff and volunteers. In addition, cadets undertake social action projects in their communities with an expectation that they will volunteer 3 hours a month.

The aims of the police cadets programme resonate with government strategy that seeks to work with young people to reduce their risk of becoming offenders or victims; build positive

relations between the police and young people; and nurture their feelings of social responsibility so that they become active citizens. For example, the *Modern Crime Prevention Strategy* aims to prevent crime by building positive character traits and increasing young people’s abilities to make good decisions and achieve positive life outcomes (Home Office, 2016). To achieve this, positive interactions between the police and young people, such as police cadets, will foster positive characteristics and resilience in children and young people. The *Serious Violence Strategy* also promotes the importance of providing programmes that help young people build their self confidence, character and ability to engage positively with society (Home Office, 2018).

The *National Strategy for the Policing of Children and Young People: Child Centred Policing* acknowledged the evidence that:

**“shows the lack of confidence many young people have in the ability of the Police service to protect them – and so they rarely ask for help. Policing policies, processes and interactions with C&YP can have a significant impact on their lives, both in the short and long term” (National Police Chief’s Council, 2016:4)**

Early intervention is a crucial component of strategies (Home Office, 2016; National Police Chief’s Council, 2016), aiming to improve communication and engagement with children and young people. *The Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for Everyone* sets out a commitment to empower young people to shape the future of the country by helping them to develop the skills and habits of social responsibility during their childhood and youth (Cabinet Office, 2018). The importance of schools is critical, with *“citizenship teaching in schools, both as a discrete curriculum subject and as part of a whole-school approach, has been shown to*

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*enhance and reinforce participation individually and at school level” (Cabinet Office, 2018:44).*

In this context, the VPC is strategically well placed to provide young people with access to positive and integrated activities, representing a potentially critical programme to deliver the ambitions of national policy. The cadet programmes across England and Wales are currently being rejuvenated and there has been a +10% rise in cadets across the country (excluding the Met which has conversely seen a 9% fall).

In March 2016, the National Volunteer Police Cadet programme received a 2-year, £1.8 million Home Office, Police Innovation Fund grant to support the development of the Volunteer Police Cadets in England and Wales. This grant was awarded to achieve four key outcomes:

- Develop a digital platform to make the VPC programme more effective;
- Support Police Forces in increasing VPC membership to 20,000 young people by establishing 400 new cadet units;
- Develop new training courses and guidance based upon best practice and principles and train a cadre of adult volunteers to deliver the programme; and
- Develop a body of research into the value of the programme.

The funding for cadets is primarily provided by forces locally, however, some additional revenue has been obtained nationally to support the development of the VPC. All forces contribute via NPCC arrangement to funding the central VPC hub and in addition a grant from Youth United was secured 2018/19. The funding of the VPC remains a strategic priority and is considered within this report.

## Relationship between the Police and Young People

Research has shown that young people are more likely to have contact with the police and that this contact can often be adversarial and problematic. Young people are disproportionately subject to practices such as stop and search, curfews, dispersal orders and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). These contacts can often be experienced negatively with young people reporting that they do not feel that they are treated with respect, that procedures are not explained to them, that the Police have negative stereotypes of them and they are labelled as a ‘problem’ (Crawford, 2009; Norman, 2009; Cleghorn *et al.*, 2011). Contact has been consistently demonstrated to be a significant determinant of attitudes towards the police, with those having contact often being more negative (Bradford *et al.*, 2009).

At the same time as difficult and negative contact that children and young people have with the police, children and young people are exposed to significant risks in their lives that the police are positioned to provide protection. The rise of attention towards County Lines organised crime, reliant on the exploitation of children and young people, is a prominent societal and policing concern. Although the extent is not known, the Children’s Crime Commissioner estimates that there are at least 46,000 children in England involved in gang activity, with around 4,000 teenagers in London alone being exploited through child criminal exploitation, or ‘county lines’ (Children’s Commissioners for England, 2017). Furthermore, the rise of online safety risks presents a threat to the healthy development of children and young people. In 2017/18, more than 3,000 Childline counselling sessions were about bullying online and online safety (Bentley *et al.*, 2018) and a Barnardo’s survey

(Fox and Kalkan, 2016) of children that had been supported by one of five participating sexual exploitation services in the UK, found that 42% of them had been groomed online.

The problematic relationship between young people and the police has been a highly politicised subject over the last 10 years, with the Howard League's 'U R BOSS' campaign to promote young people's interests in the CJS, with policing consistently at the heart of young people's concerns (Fleming *et al.*, 2014). The 2014 "It's all About Trust" report found that interactions were often negative leading to some young people not trusting or even fearing the Police (All Parliamentary Group, 2014). While there were some examples of positive initiatives, these were patchy and hindered by funding issues. One of the recommendations of the report was the extension of the VPC programme. The Children's Rights Alliance for England (2015) documented how children when discussing policing and youth justice described negative stereotypes such as the police being "rude" and "heavy handed", feeling hassled and feeling that comments by the police were intended to humiliate and intimidate them.

Research suggests a key tenant of public and police relations is the perception of procedural justice. It is argued that public trust in policing is needed partly because this may result in public cooperation with justice, but more importantly because public trust in justice builds institutional legitimacy and thus public compliance with the law (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Bradford *et al.*, 2009; 2014; Gau and Brunson, 2010). Although research has largely focused on adults, recent research suggests that procedural justice is more important to young people (Hinds, 2007; Murphy, 2015). Therefore, the evidence suggests that improving relations and understanding between children and young people and the

police is critical to increasing children and young people's likelihood of asking for help, compliance with the law and cooperation with the police.

Overall, the VPC has the potential to have a positive impact in relation to police and young people's relations and trust, procedural justice, public cooperation and public compliance with the law.

## Police Interventions with Young People

This section explores what existing research says about the ways in which police-youth schemes could improve relations between young people and the police, as well as impacting on the willingness of young people to help the community, improve behaviour, increase skills and confidence and enhance wellbeing of children and young people. The section also draws upon research of other youth organisations, mostly uniformed, that have a similar ethos or purpose such as military cadets and organisations such as the scouts.

## Improving Skills

Research evidence is available to demonstrate how young people develop new skills and improve existing skills through participation in uniformed youth organisations.

- The Impact of Scouting report (PACEC, 2011) documents how 88% of scouts stated their experiences had helped them develop key skills including social, team working and leadership skills, with 92% indicating that being a scout had helped with relationship building.
- The NVCO (McGarvey *et al.*, 2019) survey of thousands of current and recent volunteers found that volunteering had created opportunities for new types of

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experiences and the acquisition of new skills. It was reported that 71% of those that had volunteered in the last 12 months agreed that they had gained new experience through volunteering and this increased to 85% among 18-24 year olds.

- Moon *et al.* (2010) highlighted how Ministry of Defence (MoD) cadets view membership in terms of future benefits such as CV enhancement as well as for personal development and skills acquisition.
- DeMarco *et al.* (2018) argue that young people most 'at risk' due to family composition, school exclusion, or other lifestyle risk factors were the most vocal about the importance of these advantages within the police cadet unit as individuals who would not routinely have access to such support and experiences.

The perceived future benefits of skills gained or developed through uniformed youth organisation involvement are important to young people who participate, as well as for future employers. Critically, the facilitation of new experiences and meeting new and, at times, different people enables members to develop their 'soft' skills (such as communication) to complement opportunities to acquire qualifications (such as Duke of Edinburgh) which are perceived as valuable to their development and positively representing their sense of self-identity/character to future employers.

## Increasing Community Involvement and Future Willingness to Volunteer

Studies of young people's engagement in uniformed youth groups illustrates potential to increase community involvement and future willingness to volunteer.

- The study of the impact of Scouting on the

UK's young people, adults and communities report in an (PACEC, 2011) reported that 36% of former scouts volunteered regularly (at least two hours per week), compared to 26% of the general population as reported by 2008-09 Citizenship survey. Of the former scouts who did volunteer, 66% indicated that scouting positively influenced their decision to get involved.

- Kirkman *et al.* (2016) in a randomised control trial of youth social action initiatives found that young people who participated were more likely to express interest in specific volunteering activities available to them in the future than their counterparts.
- Tyler-Rubinstein (2016) in an evaluation of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund (UYSAF) identified that three quarters of those surveyed (c.1,000) reported that they considered the social action they experienced to be very worthwhile (75%), that they had a more positive impression of what young people contribute to their local communities as a result (77%) and that they felt prouder of their local area as a result (80%).
- Moon *et al.* (2010) in their social impact study of MoD-sponsored cadets found that 66% of cadets would intervene if they saw a child being rude to an adult and 73% would do something or tell someone if they saw some children spray painting graffiti on a local building (compared to 56% and 68% of young people surveyed in the BCS 2006/07 respectively).

Engagement with uniformed youth groups, therefore, research suggests can improve how young people behave within and perceive their community. Moreover, initiatives have potential to improve young people's sense of moral order and sense of responsibility for delinquency and transgressions in their local environment. Importantly, as outlined in the preceding section,

improvements in terms of trust with the police and perceived legitimacy renders children and young people more likely to report such contraventions to the relevant authorities, as opposed to a silenced acceptance of disorder.

## Relationship Building

There are a range of studies that demonstrate positive benefits of police-based children and youth engagement in terms of rapport between young people and officers.

- Anderson *et al.* (2006) found that young people reported feeling significantly more respected by police officers and more comfortable in their presence following their engagement in a programme in Connecticut designed to promote positive youth development through meaningful and enjoyable community activities.
- Clayman and Skinns (2010) in a qualitative study exploring why 'young people do not 'snitch' concluded that in the interests of encouraging young people to actively cooperate with the police, more could be done to further develop trust in them through the relationships they have with PCSOs and school liaison officers.
- Pepper and Silvestri (2016) drawing on research with Volunteer Police Cadets argue that being a police cadet provides young people with a number of important opportunities to experience positive 'personal encounters' with the police, resulting in a greater feeling of belonging and an increased stake in conformity.

The benefits of police-based young people engagement are evidenced to be positive both for children and young people as well as police officers.

- Goodrich *et al.* (2014) evaluated a prevention programme designed to create positive interactions between Police and young people in a non-law enforcement environment, finding that participation improved police officers' and young people's attitudes toward each other. Participants reported enjoying the programme and appreciating the opportunity to interact in an informal setting.
- Hyanghee *et al.* (2017) using a pre-post-design identified improved police officers' and young people's attitudes toward each other. For young people, the rate of change in attitudes was greatest for minority young people and for young people who had prior negative experience with the police. The study concluded that community-based programmes that involve police with young people can improve participants' attitude toward each other, which might impact future interactions.
- Walmsley (2015) in an evaluation of a police engagement programme with young people found that there were statistically significant improvements in (1) attitudes towards the police at the end of the project compared to the start and (2) an increased willingness for young people to go to a PCSO for help after the project compared to the start.

Overall, there are a range of studies that show police engagement initiatives with children and young people have potential to significantly improve the relationship between young people and the police, especially for those young people who have had previous negative experiences with the police. Such benefits may translate to improved trust and cooperation, perceptions of legitimacy and likelihood of reporting crime.



# Setting a Context for Police Cadets

## Self-Confidence, Mental Wellbeing and Physical Health

Volunteering is linked with improved mental wellbeing and confidence, and there is evidence that participation in uniformed youth groups has similar benefits.

- Denny *et al.* (2018) found in a study of MoD cadets that, despite young people who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM) having lower self-efficacy levels compared with the general population, no significant difference in self-efficacy levels between eFSM cadets and non-eFSM cadets were found. Although it is not possible to definitely say that this is only due to participation in cadets, it is very possible that cadets who were eFSM have improved self-efficacy because of the activities they undertake as members of the MoD Cadet Forces.
- Moon *et al.* (2010) identified that members of MoD cadet forces demonstrated a high level of self-esteem with over 90% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with a series of statements designed to evaluate how individuals feel about themselves. The statements cover themes such as confidence, pride, satisfaction, personal power and achievement.
- Dibben *et al.* (2017) found that participation in guides and scouts was associated with better mental health and narrower mental health inequalities, at age 50. The study suggests that youth programmes that support resilience and social mobility through developing the potential for continued progressive self-education, soft non-cognitive skills, self-reliance, collaboration and activities in natural environments may be protective of mental health.
- Wang *et al.* (2015) in a two and half year study with scouts measured that self-ratings

increased significantly for cheerfulness, helpfulness, kindness, obedience, trustworthiness and hopeful future expectations but did not increase significantly for a non-scout control group.

Overall, the improvements to mental health are extremely valuable, in a wider societal context of increased levels of poor mental wellbeing, especially among specific groups of children and young people. Participation in uniformed youth groups has the potential to improve children and young people's self-identity as well as increasing their resilience.

## Behavioural Improvements

Alongside improved attitudes and civic engagement, uniformed youth engagement programmes are evidenced to improve the behaviour and attitudes of children and young people who participate.

- Denny *et al.* (2018) reported that 85% of the Ministry of Defence cadets who participated in a survey felt that their behaviour and attitude at school had improved due to their membership of the Cadet Forces. In addition, a majority of the Cadet Force Adult volunteers surveyed reported that being in the Cadet Forces helped some young people settle down at school. Quantitative analysis on cadets and a matched comparison group of students from the same school shows that being in the cadets had a positive impact on school attendance. School staff also reported that the Cadet Forces had a positive impact on inclusions for students with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

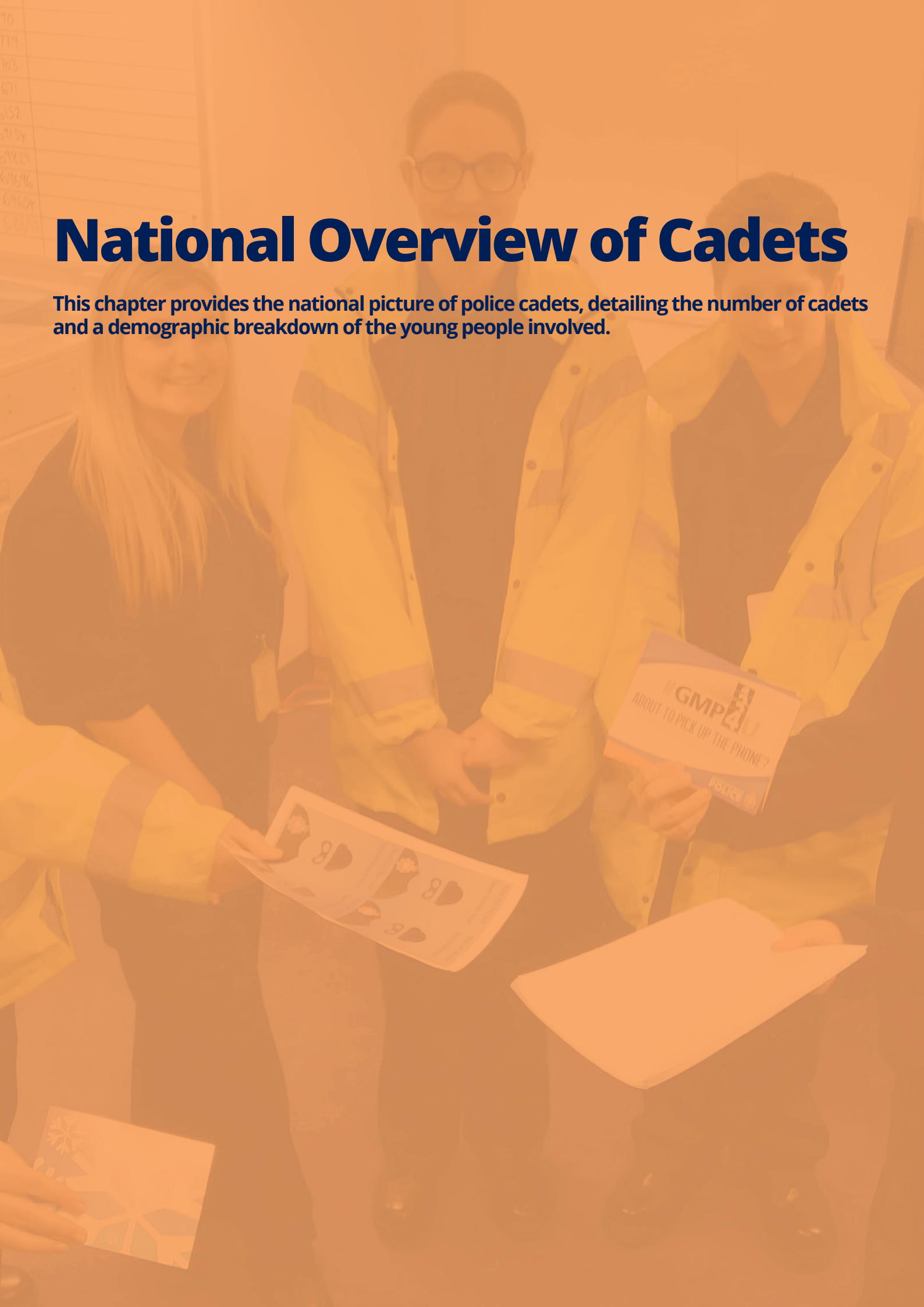
Other research highlights the importance of mentors on improving behaviour.

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- Grossman and Gary (1997) in an evaluation of a federal Juvenile Mentoring Program suggested that the provision of positive adult mentors had increased school attendance, reduced alcohol and drug use and participation in anti-social behaviour. In addition, the quality of young people's relationships with their parents and peers was better for mentored young people.
  - Gregory and Ripski (2008) argue that young people who found their teachers to be trustworthy and authoritative were more likely to be co-operative in activities, engage in lesson plans and curriculum, and less likely to engage in defiant behaviour. This model provides an insight into the utility of establishing trusting relationships between youth and the figures in authority.

Participation in uniformed youth engagement programmes are therefore illustrated to have potential to influence young people's behaviours in school as well as their attitudes towards attainment. This is important as increased attainment at school will support young people in their future careers as well as reducing their likelihood of entry into the Criminal Justice System.

# National Overview of Cadets

This chapter provides the national picture of police cadets, detailing the number of cadets and a demographic breakdown of the young people involved.



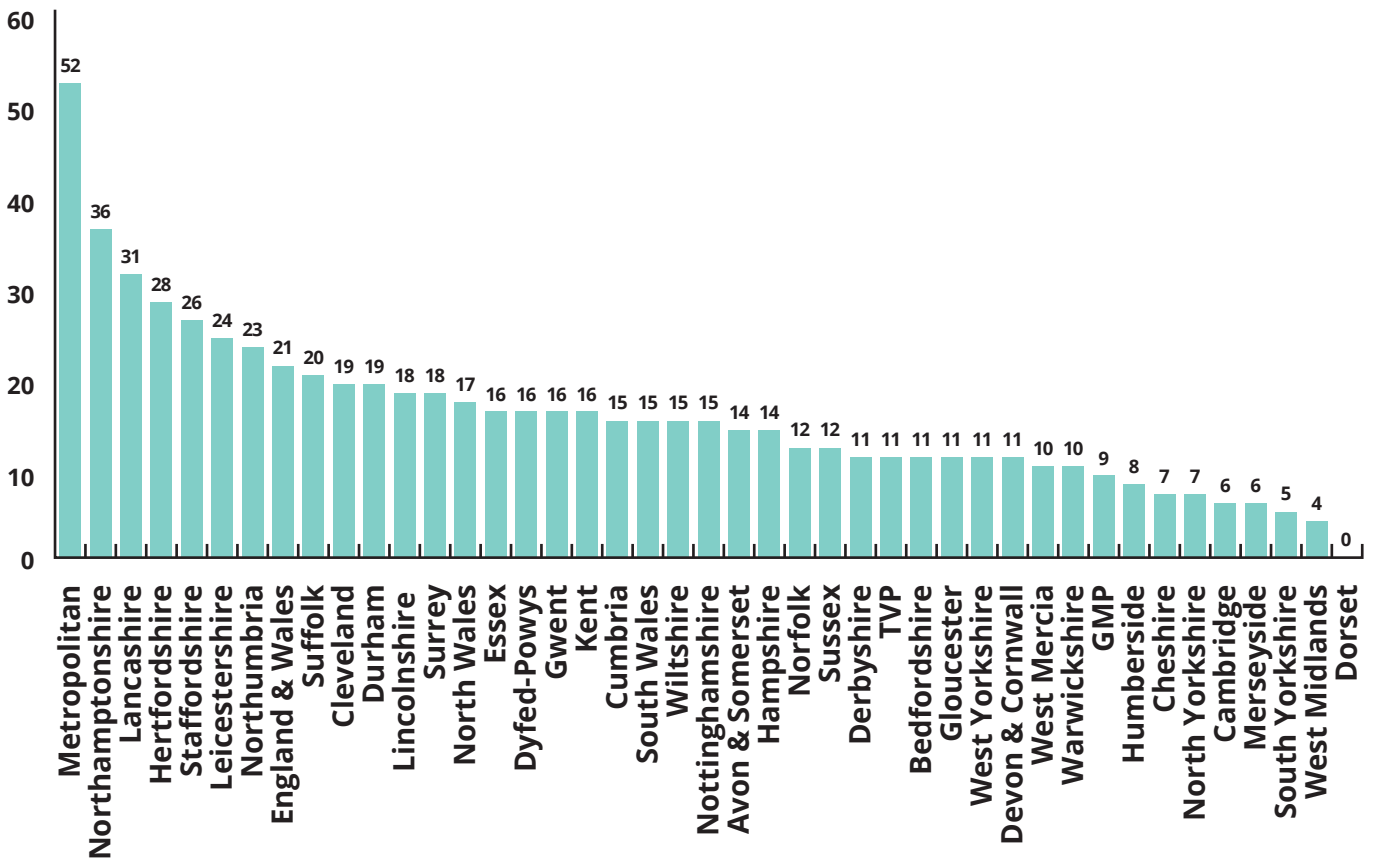


# Cadets Overall

Figure 4.2 shows the number of VPC in each police force area, per 100k population. The forces at the left-hand side of the graph (led by the Met) have proportionally the largest number

of cadets. Whilst Dorset is building a VPC programme at the point of the 2019 census it still had no cadets, hence its position at the right-hand side of the graph.

**Figure 4.2 Number of Cadets per 100k Population**

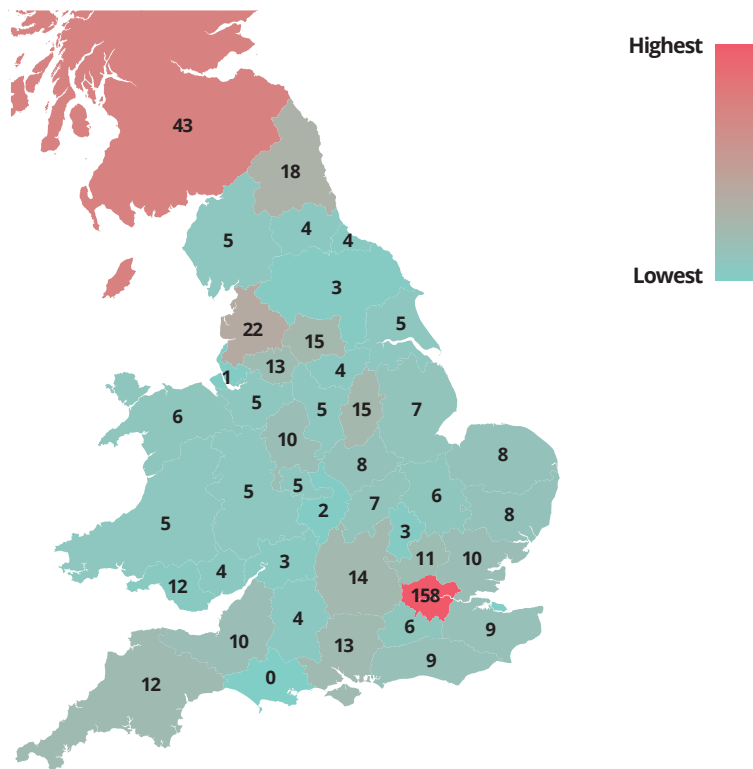




There are 520 Cadet Units, a rise from 499 in 2018, with figure 4.3 illustrating the national

picture in relation to the number of cadet units in each site.

**Figure 4.3 Overview of Cadet Units**



The gender ratio has for the first time reflected more female (at 50.4%) than male cadets. This proportion is up (slightly) from 49.2% in 2018.

The headline estimated figure for the proportion of BAME cadets is down slightly, at 27.2% in January 2019 from 30.9% the previous year. The fall is likely simply reflective of the reduction in Met cadets, as the Met has particularly high levels of BAME cadets (49% for senior cadets, 54% for junior cadets). The figure is also an estimate as (consistent with previous years) several forces (7 this year) were unable to provide data.

Forces indicate further planned growth in cadet

numbers, with a forecast rise in numbers up to 15,398 in the coming year to 2020, signifying a quite rapid period of planned growth of 24.9%. In respect of this forecast growth, relatively little relates to junior cadets, with only 6 new units and 155 additional junior cadets planned, and those primarily in the small number of forces which already have a junior provision

Initial figures suggest 62 full-time officers and 63 full-time police staff, approximately 1,400 other officers engaged either part-time or voluntarily, approximately 380 other police staff engaged either part-time or voluntarily, and approximately 640 PSVs and 200 Special Constables. Overall, a figure roughly in the

# Cadets Overall

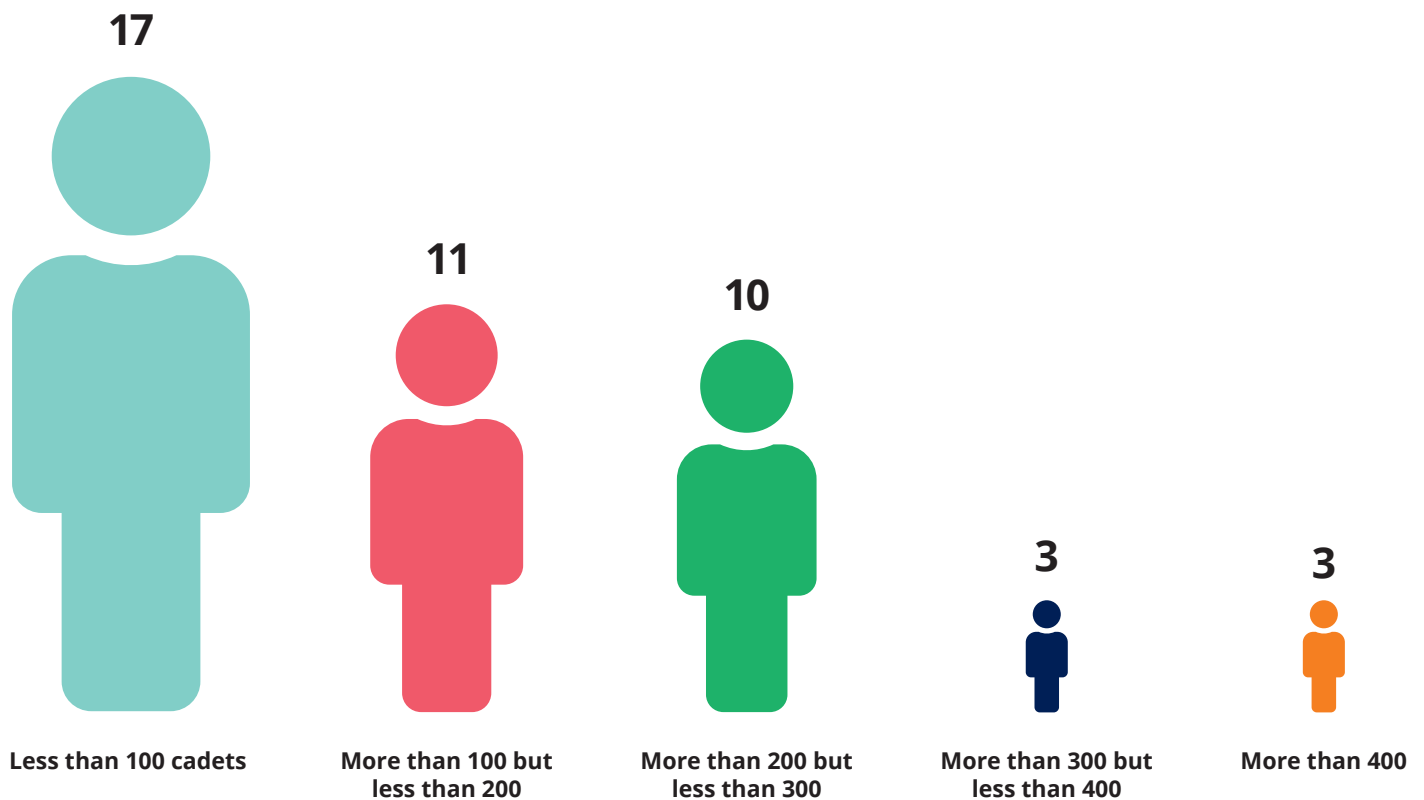
region of 2,300-2,500 individuals involved in delivering Cadets would seem a reasonable estimate based upon the data in the information provided by forces in the cadet census.

The figure for social action hours requires further analysis, but as a broad initial indicative figure there appears to be at *least* **540,000** hours of social action undertaken across cadets. This will be further explored in a subsequent chapter on Social Impact and Value.

## Senior Police Cadets

There are 10,517 senior cadets in 2019, though there was significant variance between forces. Figure 4.4 below shows that 17 forces (39%) have less than 100 cadets and a further 11 (25%) have more than 100 but less than 200 cadets. Only 3 forces have over 400, which are Lancashire (465), Police Scotland (844) and the Met (2,846). The Met cadets constitute over a quarter (27%) of all senior cadets.

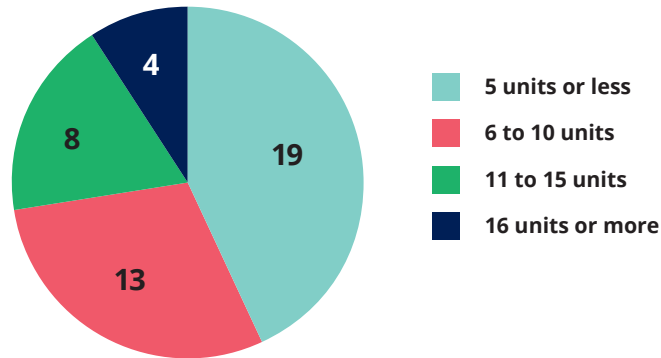
**Figure 4.4 Senior Cadet Population per Force**



There are 432 senior cadet units in 2019. Figure 4.5 shows that 19 forces (43%) have 5 or less units and a further 13 (30%) have 6-10 units. Only 4 forces have over 15 units which

are Northumbria (18), Lancashire (22), police Scotland (42) and the Met (77). The Met cadet units constitute nearly a fifth (18%) of all units.

**Figure 4.5 Number of Senior Cadet Units per Force**



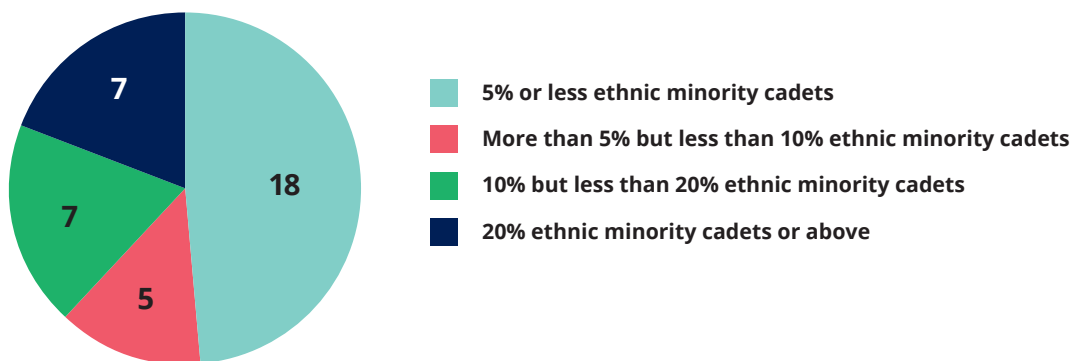
### Gender

In 2019, females constituted 50.6% of the senior cadet population. The proportion of females across forces ranged between 39% and 63% (with one outlier of 83%). Nearly half of force areas have a proportion of females that is 50% or over (21, 48%), 15 (34%) have 45% to less than 50% and 8 (18%) have less than 45%. This indicates that the VPC is attractive to both males and females.

### Ethnicity

BAME cadets constituted 22.6% of the senior cadet population, with the average proportion of BAME cadets in forces being 12.7%. Almost half of forces (48.6%) had 5% or less BAME cadets, which may be reflective of the BAME population in the force area. Overall, BAME participation in the VPC is broadly positive though in need of attention in some force areas.

**Figure 4.6 Proportion of Ethnic Minority Cadets per Force**



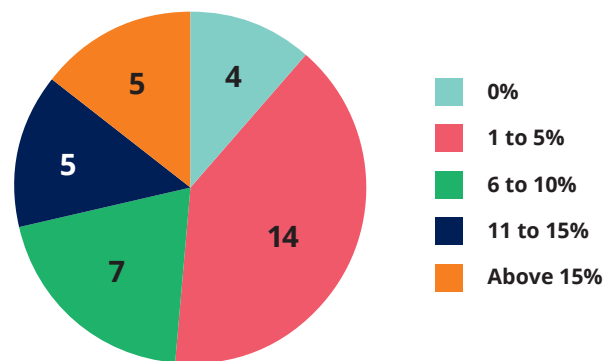
# Cadets Overall

## Disability

A little under 1-in-10 (8%) of cadets were recorded as having a disability (this is an estimate as data were not available for 9 of the forces). Figure 4.7 shows that 4 (11%) forces had no cadets recorded as having a disability, 14 (40%) had 1-5% of cadets recorded as having a

disability and 17 (49%) had 6% or over recorded as having a disability. These findings are very positive in that the VPC attracts and recruits young people with disabilities, enabling equal opportunities to participate within a uniformed youth group. More research is needed to explore specific facilitators and barriers for such young people, as well as evidence of good practice.

**Figure 4.7 Proportion of Young People with Disabilities within VPC Population per Force**

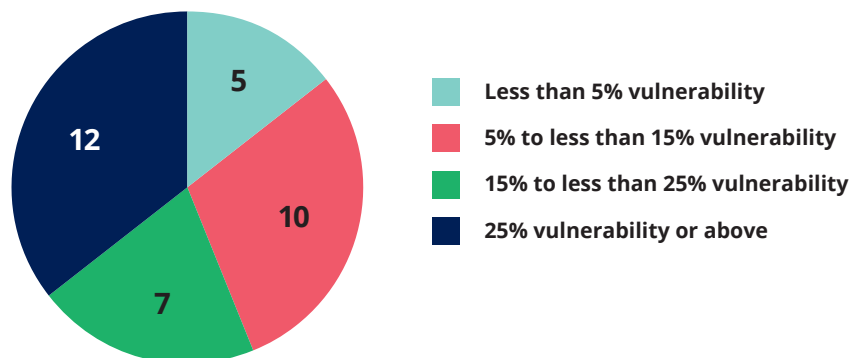


## Vulnerability

Around a quarter (24%) of the cadet population were recorded as vulnerable (this is an estimate as data were not available for 10 of the forces). The proportion of cadets classified as vulnerable was as high as 54% in some forces, though

others did not record vulnerabilities. The average vulnerability level across the 34 forces for which vulnerability was recorded was 19%. About a third of sites (35%, 12) had recorded a vulnerability level of 25% or above (see figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.8 Proportion of Vulnerable Young People per Force**



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## Junior Cadets

There are 1,812 junior cadets predominantly in the Met but also in Derbyshire, Durham and Nottinghamshire. This figure is for January 2019, so may well not capture some more recent funded growth in some forces.

The Met have 81 junior units with 1,681 cadets, Nottinghamshire have 3 units with 54 cadets, Derbyshire have 2 units with 46 cadets and Durham has 1 unit with 30 cadets.

49% (891) of junior cadets are female, 50% are from a minority ethnic background and 25% are from a vulnerable background.

The development of separate data at a national level on junior police cadets is relatively new. As such, no further observations are drawn. The prospect for junior police cadets is, however, extremely promising and has the potential to fill a void between the mini-police and senior police cadets. As such, there is ample scope for significant growth of the cadet population overall, as well as developing smooth transitional connections between each children and youth programme, forming a more comprehensive and coherent body of police-led youth engagement initiatives.

## Summary

**The documented number of police cadets has increased by 2.2% since 2018, though the distribution of cadets in the UK has changed. In total, there were 12,329 (10,517 senior and 1,812 junior) cadets in the UK, which represents a very sizable body of young people engaged in the VPC. The VPC programme can be found in nearly all areas of the UK, though there remains significant variance in the size of the programmes locally. Importantly, the gender profile of senior cadets is relatively even between males and females, with BAME young people comprising 27.2% of the senior cadet population. About 1-in-10 senior cadets had a disability and around a quarter were classified as vulnerable. The figure for social action requires further analysis but is estimated to be at least 540,000 hours of social action. These figures reflect a significant potential for the future growth and impact of the VPC.**



# Perspectives on the VPC

The background of the page is a photograph of two young men in military-style uniforms. They are wearing light-colored, long-sleeved shirts with dark horizontal stripes across the chest and dark trousers. The man on the right is wearing a dark beret. They are standing in front of a brick wall and are looking at a document held by the man on the right. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

This chapter provides findings relating to perspectives on the VPC, based on qualitative and quantitative data from cadets and cadet leaders. It first provides an overview of the approach and samples of datasets and then summarises the findings relating to perspectives of being a cadet on the cadet programme.

# Approach and Sampling

A mixed-methods approach was taken in the evaluation.

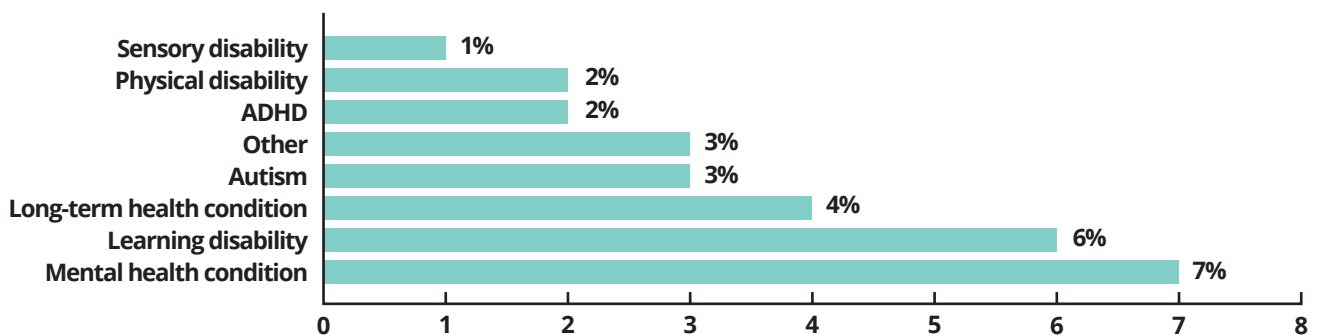
To capture the views of police cadets themselves:

**1. A national online survey about experiences of being a police cadet, their views of the scheme and their perceptions of the police.** 1,166 cadets responded to the survey from 40 police forces. Participants were aged 13 to 18 years with the mean age being 15 years old. 87% of the population classified themselves as white, 6% classified themselves as Asian, 3% as of mixed ethnic background, 2% as black and 2% as an 'other' ethnic background. Therefore, ethnic minority participants are under-represented

in the sample as they constitute an estimated 27.2% of the cadet population. 53% of the sample were female, 46% were male and 1% indicated that they identify in some other way. Therefore, there were slightly more females in the sample than in the actual cadet population, in which they represent 50.4%.

Figure 5.1 shows the proportion of cadets who classify themselves as having a particular condition or disability. The most common was a mental health issue, with 7% of cadets self-reporting that they have a mental health issue. A fifth of participants to the survey self-reported that they had one or more of the conditions or disabilities.

**Figure 5.1 Self-Reported Conditions or Disabilities among Survey Participants**



**2. Focus groups with cadets were completed to explore their motivations for joining, their experiences as a cadet and their intentions after leaving the cadets were conducted.** 7 focus groups were conducted with cadets from 4 police force case study sites. There was a maximum of 8 cadets per group and 45 cadets took part in total. The focus groups were voluntary and cadet leaders were instructed to select a variety of participants on the basis of difference and

diversity and motivation and experience.

To explore the views of strategic force leads and those that are involved in running the scheme, the following were completed:

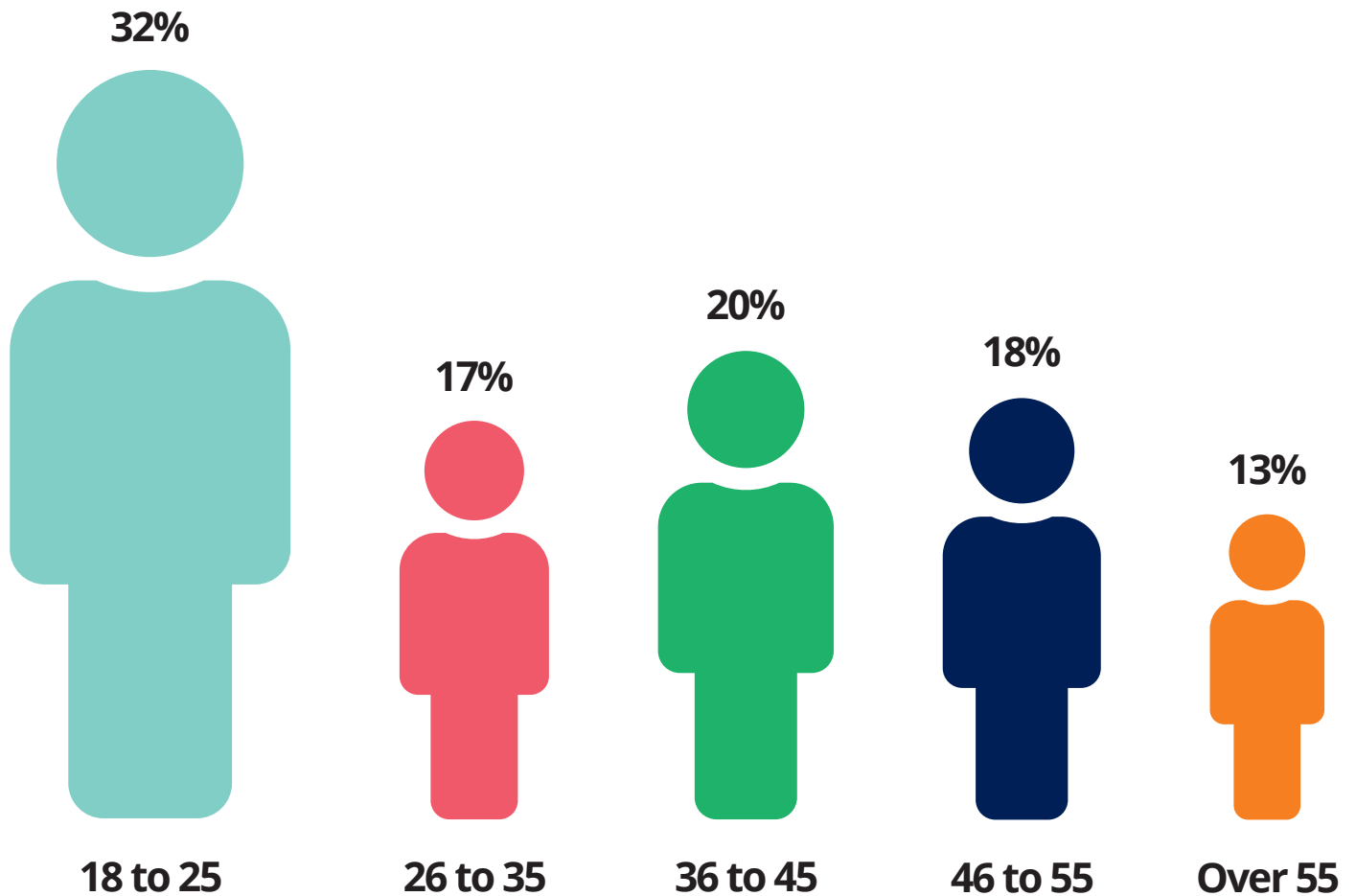
**3. Semi-structured interviews with VPC force leads were completed to provide an overview of schemes in different areas, including strategy and policy, how they work operationally, their impact on**

# General Perspectives on the VPC – Survey Findings

young people and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strategic leads from all forces with police cadet schemes were invited to take part in a telephone interview. 11 interviews were completed.

4. A national cadet leader online survey was completed, to which 413 cadet leaders responded from 40 police forces. 47% of participants were female and 95% were white. 8% of cadet leaders considered themselves to have a disability. About a third of cadet leaders (32%) were aged 18-25 (see figure 5.2)

Figure 5.2 Age of Police Cadet Leader Survey Participants



Overall, whilst noting some limitations in the samples achieved across the methods, this evaluation represents the most comprehensive

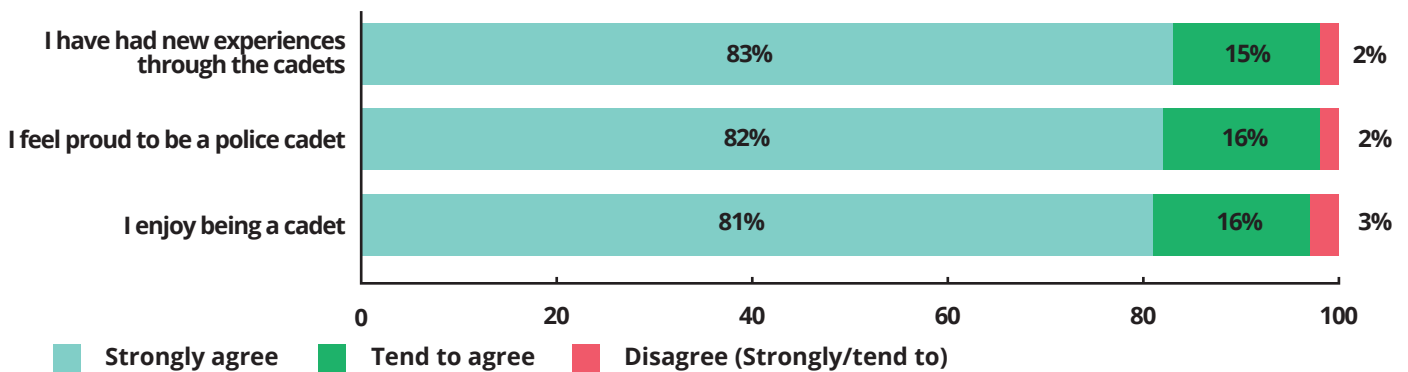
study at a national level across England and Wales on police cadets to date.

## Cadets enjoyment and pride in the scheme

The survey results demonstrate that most cadets enjoy and are proud of being a cadet and that they are also very likely to recommend the experience to friends. Nearly all (98%) cadets

agreed that they feel proud to be a cadet and 97% agreed that they enjoy being a cadet and that they have had new experiences through being a cadet. Most cadets (81-82%) strongly agreed with these statements.

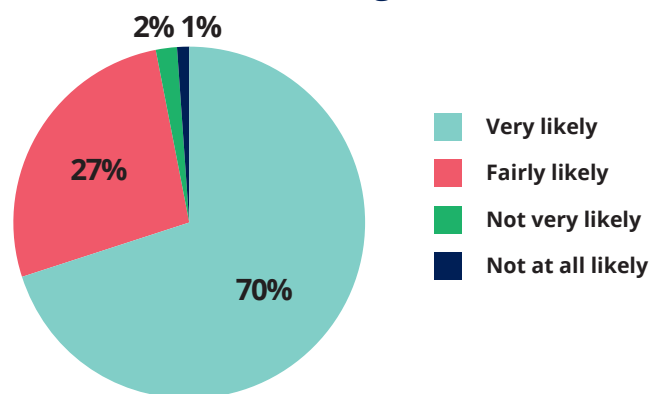
**Figure 5.3 Cadets' Perceptions of New Experiences, Pride and Enjoyment in the Cadets.**



Most cadets (70%) would also be very likely to recommend the police cadets to other young people, 27% would be fairly likely, 2% would be not very likely and 1% would be not at all likely.

be not be very likely and 1% would be not at all likely.

**Figure 5.4 Cadets Likelihood of Recommending the Cadets to Other Young People**



The evidence that demonstrates how the VPC is experienced positively by young people is very strong. Young people clearly value and are proud

of being a cadet and are very likely to share these positive views and experiences with other young people.

# General Perspectives on the VPC – Survey Findings

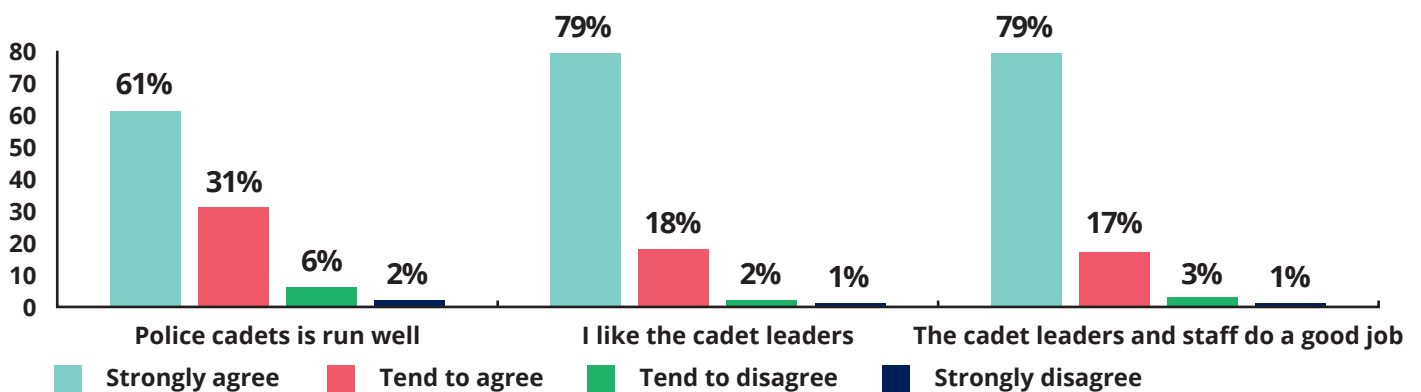
## Cadet perceptions of the running of the VPC and how it can be improved

There was a high level of agreement amongst cadets that the scheme is run well and that the leaders are doing a good job. This did not mean that cadets did not also have ideas for suggested improvements, with three quarters making

suggestions for the future.

About nine-in-ten (92%) cadets agreed that the cadets is run well (with 61% strongly agreeing), 97% agreed that they like the cadets leaders (with 79% strongly agreeing) and 96% agreed that the cadet leaders and staff do a good job (with 79% strongly agreeing).

**Figure 5.5 Cadets’ Perceptions of Whether Police Cadets is Run Well and of Cadet Leaders**



Cadets were asked how the police cadets could be improved and about three quarters of cadets (77%) offered a suggested improvement. The top five themes of responses, which constituted over 10% of all comments each were:

1. To get involved in the community more including events and having more opportunities to volunteer (13%)

“Have more events where you are interacting with the community such as going to local schools in uniform and speaking to young people.”

“Do more activities outside by helping the community and showing people that we are there to help.”

“Go out in to the community and local area more often. More opportunities for police volunteering hours.”

2. To do more activities or learning that is police-related, for example to increase knowledge of policing or specialisms (13%)

“Cadets could take part in more operational duties with the police such as ride-alongs with Neighbourhood Policing or Safer Roads and volunteer on more operations to help improve relations with the Police.”

“By doing more nights on what it would be like in the role of a police officer through scenarios.”



**“Do activities that are police linked like police fitness tests and other activities that can support and help people wanting to enter the police force.”**

3. **Get “out and about” more often, get out of the classroom and do more visits (13%)**

**“We could do more outside activities like patrols, visits to places etc.”**

**“We could do more activities outside of our cadet HQ.”**

4. **More practical, hands on and interactive learning opportunities and activities including scenarios, role plays and problem-solving opportunities (12%)**

**“Sometimes the sessions can get boring when we sit and learn, maybe making it more active than sitting down could improve the learning environment for everyone.”**

**“More scenarios around different roles in the police.”**

**“Less really long talks and more hands-on activities.”**

5. **Better organisation and structure to sessions so that cadets know what is going to happen from week to week and to ensure that time is used efficiently. In addition, ensure that plans, or changes in plans, are effectively communicated to cadets (11%)**

**“A little bit more guaranteed structure every week so that we know what we are required to do before we get there.”**

**“Better back up plans when, for example, a guest visitor cancels short notice and what we do feels like a waste of time where we could be doing other things such as studying/ homework... etc.”**

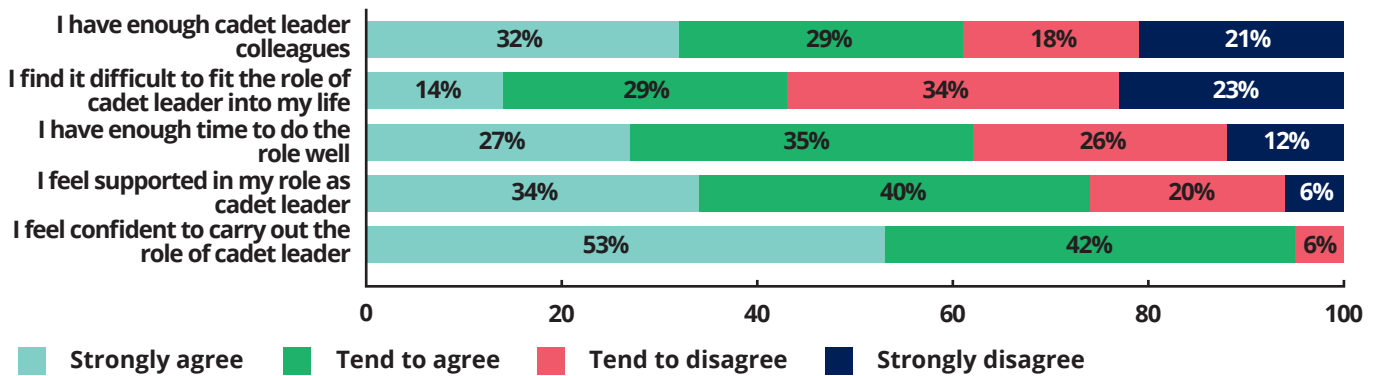
**“Have more of a plan and let the cadets know in advance exactly what’s going to happen through the year.”**

### **Cadet leaders’ perceptions of the running of the scheme and support provided to them**

Cadet leaders indicated that there could be improvements in the organisation and running of the VPC. The results from cadet leaders’ analysis are less positive compared with that of cadets. Although 95% of cadet leaders felt confident in their role; 26% disagreed that they felt supported, 38% disagreed that they had enough time to do their role well and 39% disagreed that they had enough cadet leader colleagues. Around 4-in-10 (43%) cadet leaders agreed that they found it difficult to fit the role of cadet leader into their life.

# General Perspectives on the VPC – Survey Findings

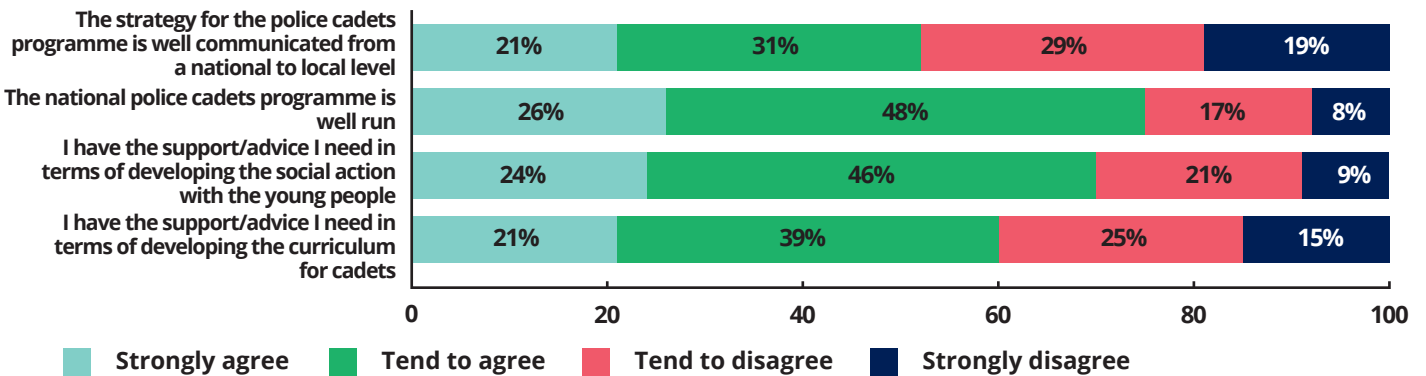
Figure 5.6 Cadet Leaders' Perceptions of their Role



Nearly half (48%) of cadet leaders disagreed that the strategy for the police cadets programme is well communicated from a national to local level. A quarter (25%) disagreed that the cadets programme is well run. There was 4 in 10 (40%)

who disagreed that they have the support/advice they need in terms of developing the curriculum for cadets and 3 in 10 (30%) disagreed that they have support/advice they need in terms of developing social action with the young people.

Figure 5.7 Cadet Leaders' Perceptions of the Running of the VPC, Communication of Strategy and Support



When asked how they could be better supported in their role as a cadet leader, the key themes of comments were:

- Provision of or help with lessons plans and resources (15%).

**“If there is more resources on lesson plans it would help. However, the lesson plans have to be interesting for the cadets as they do lose interest quick.”**

**“Have access to a knowledge library and lesson plans to use and expand on.”**

- To be given time to plan lessons, attend

events and do administration (13%).

**“Be allowed more time to perform the Cadet Leader role at work (as a Police Officer). I do not get any ‘work/duty time’ to perform my role as a Cadet Leader.”**

**“Given the time to attend cadet meetings / important events when I am on shift.”**

- **More support from management and the organisation (11%).**

**“More support from senior team and other Sgts at local levels. Colleagues to embrace cadets and be keen to encourage them.”**

- **More communication either with central team/ co-ordinators or with other cadet leaders to know what is going on and share best practice (11%).**

**“More communication from our cadet coordinator, and having them be more available to us (they often do not return calls, emails and texts) ...”**

**“Regular leader meets to discuss ideas and activities with other areas. Another way to find out what works and what doesn’t.”**

- **More leaders and volunteers (10%).**

**“Enough leaders to do our role. Stop recruiting cadets until you have more leaders.”**

**“More Cadet Leaders and incentives for people to be leaders as it requires a lot of dedication and hard work. Because the role is voluntary it’s difficult to find people willing to do it.”**

- **Better induction and training (9%).**

**“Have a better induction on arrival (I was just thrown into it after one observation evening).”**

**“More opportunities for development, within the role and development for qualifications to assist us further within the role.”**

- **More structure and guidance around the curriculum (8%).**

**“More structure around the curriculum and a plan for the year.”**

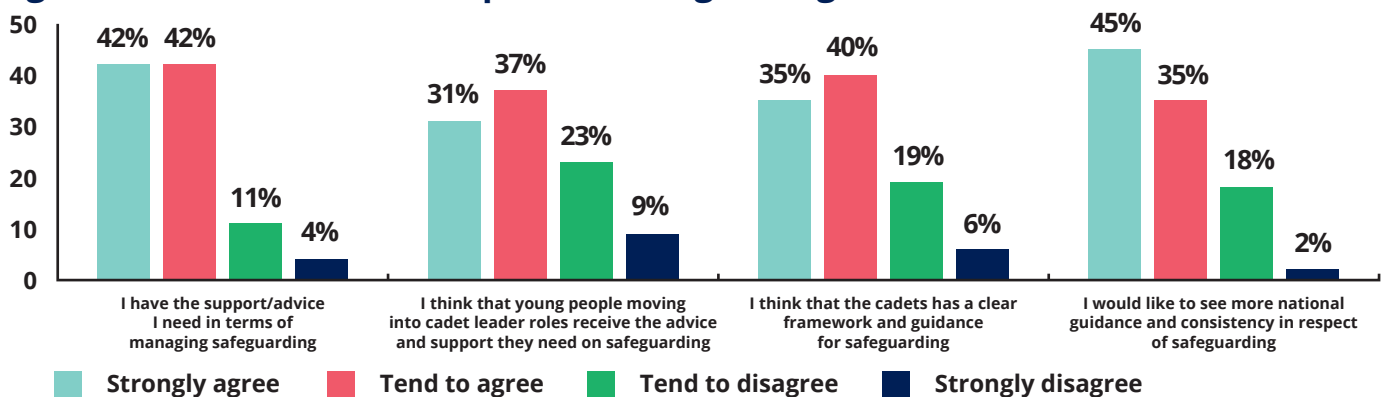
**“a national program with subjects and awards and a common framework of operational things that are appropriate.”**

## **Cadet leaders’ perceptions of safeguarding**

Most cadet leaders (80%) would like to see more national guidance and consistency in respect of safeguarding. Figure 5.8 shows that 15% of cadet leaders disagreed that they have the support or advice they need in terms of managing safeguarding and 32% of cadet leaders disagreed that young people moving into cadet leader roles receive the advice and support they need. A quarter (25%) of cadet leaders disagreed that the cadets have a clear framework and guidance for safeguarding.

# General Perspectives on the VPC – Survey Findings

Figure 5.8 Cadet Leaders' Perceptions of Safeguarding in the Cadets



When asked what support cadet leaders wanted in relation to safeguarding, comments included:

**“Actual training, ongoing training support, clear structure about how to look after our kids and flag concerns.”**

**“Any would be good. We all simply rely on our skills and knowledge as police officers. We have only recently received the guidance sent from national VPC following the conference. We need proper training and a structured nationally agreed approach to dealing with safeguarding issues which may arise with cadets.”**

**“There doesn’t appear to be a safeguarding policy or training in relation to how leaders should interact with children/young people. For instance, leaders do not get training in what abuse is, what the signs & indicators are, who to report concerns to and how they should behave to stay safe (no 1:1 interactions in a closed room etc).”**

“A policy in place which states the steps we need to go through in order to safeguard those that need it. We have previously had to rely on experience from other cadet leaders about what to do. I am in a non-operational role so have never had anything to do with safeguarding children.”

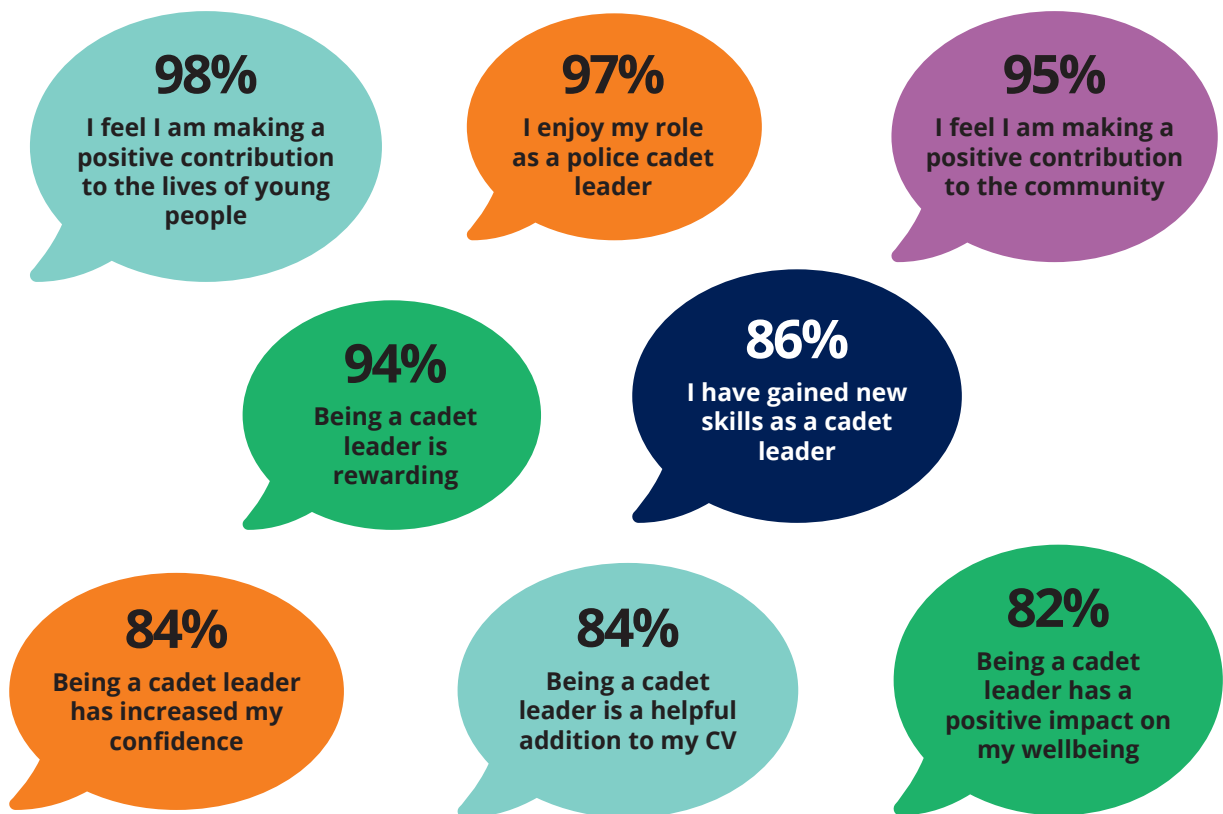
## Benefits to cadet leaders of their role

Figure 5.9 shows the level of agreement of cadet leaders with a series of statements about what they have gained from being a cadet leader. There was a very high level of agreement that they enjoy their role, that it is rewarding, and that they feel that they are making a contribution to the community and young people. Additionally, over 80% agreed that they have gained new skills, it has increased their confidence, that it has been a helpful addition to their CV and that it has impacted positively on their well-being. For these measures there were some significant differences between those aged 18-25 and those that are older:

- 94% of 18-25 year olds agreed that they had gained new skills as a cadet leader, compared to 83% of those above;
- 95% of 18-25 year olds agreed that they had gained in confidence as a result of being

- 
- a cadet leader, compared to 79% of those above;
  - 96% of 18-25 year olds agreed that being a cadet leader is a useful addition to their CV, compared to 78% of those above; and
  - 90% of 18-25 year olds agreed that being a cadet leader has a positive impact on their wellbeing compared to 78% of those above.

**Figure 5.9 Perceptions of Cadet Leaders of What They Gain from their Role**



# General Perspectives of the VPC - Case Study Findings

This section provides an overview of key findings from a series of focus groups held with police cadets in England and Wales. It is important to note that cadets were, overall, very positive about their experiences in cadets, with young people identifying lots of social value and impact (explored in Chapter 5), as well as importance to their future trajectories (Chapter 6). Young people took their role as a cadet seriously and valued the opportunity to be a cadet.

The section is organised into the following sub-sections: Motivations; Positive Experiences; Negative Experiences and Improvements.

## Motivations

There were three dominant motivations identified in young people's accounts: meeting new people, family connections to policing and a future interest in employment within policing.

The most dominant motivation within young people's motivations to be a cadet was a desire to meet new people. The VPC programme created opportunities for young people to participate in interesting and fun activities with other young people outside the home, enabling an expansion of their social networks, alongside the opportunity to develop new skills and abilities. Some young people, prior to the cadets, described themselves as being relatively socially isolated and lacking fun activities in which to participate.

**"After moving to Wales, I didn't hang out much outside. So, when I was given the opportunity - I went to the services fair at the college and spoke to a couple of Cadets there when they told me about it... just thought, 'Why not try and socialise and hang out with some more people', so I joined." (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P5)**

**"I wanted to join the Police Cadets because I thought it would be fun and I would make new friends." (West Yorkshire FG1, P8)**  
**"I wanted to be able to learn a lot of skills and new things and then meeting new people to do stuff in the future." (West Yorkshire FG2, P3)**

There was a sizable proportion of cadets within the focus groups who have pre-existing family members who either were employed in policing or who had previously engaged with the VPC programme. These connections were instrumental at raising young people's awareness of the cadets as well as highlighting the benefits of participating in it. It is unclear whether such young people would have otherwise engaged with the VPC.

**"From my dad. My dad's a Policeman, so he told me about it and when he told me, I thought, 'Yes, I definitely want to join'". (Essex FG1, P3)**

**"Basically I got introduced to the Cadets from my sister. She did it. She told me how good it was and that everything the police had to offer was amazing so I really wanted to do it." (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P4).**

Lots of young people also had an interest at becoming a police officer in the future and perceived the VPC as a method to better understand the policing world as well as position themselves favourably within their intended future trajectories.

**"I joined the Police Cadets to have an insight of what the police do, a better understanding." (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P2)**

**"I joined the Cadets to get a better insight to get a better insight into what Policing is and what the Police do." (West Yorkshire FG1, P1)**



**“I’ve been a Cadet for 4 months. I wanted to be a Policeman when I’m older so I joined to see what it was like, to see if I would enjoy it.” West Yorkshire FG2, P2)**

Whilst this was the primary motivation for some young people, it is important to note that young people’s intentions and motivations may shift, which does not necessarily result in a detachment and distancing from VPC, as the account below explains how their motivation changed to be primarily an engagement with fun and interesting activities.

**“Well initially I did want to be in the police so I joined because I wanted that. Now I’ve changed my mind and just do it for a bit of fun, something to do.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P3)**

There were a few cadets who considered other uniformed youth groups prior to joining the cadets, such as Army Cadets or Navy Cadets, etc. These young people depicted the police cadets as offering a more friendly, diverse and impactful experience, reflective of their perception of policing more generally.

**“I’ve always thought about going into Army Cadets because there was a local group where I lived. But then I found out about this and I just thought it would be more friendly.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P5)**

Overall, the evidence shows that young people have different motivations to engage with police cadets and it is important that the VPC programme offers a positive experience that embraces these differences. Critically, young people’s motivations over time may alter, which highlights the importance of cadet leaders maintaining a strong relationship with cohorts, enabling dialogue of what young people are interested in, to keep young people engaged in the programme.

## Positive Experiences

There were many positive experiences about being a cadet that young people highlighted within the focus groups. Related to the dominant aim outlined in the previous section, a key positive experience for young people was making new friends in cadets. These peer groups were diverse, with young people forging connections with young people who were perceived as unlike themselves. The friendship groups created within cadets were positively mixed by gender, age, ethnicity, background and length of time being a cadet, demonstrating a key strength of the VPC programme at bring different young people together within a safe and fun space.

**“I would say making new friends and learning about things I didn’t know about.” (West Yorkshire FG1, P4)**

**“I’ve got to socialise with people from different backgrounds and got to know people to see what a lot of the people are actually like.” (Lancashire FG2, P7)**

**“When I first started I thought, “I’d rather have my own friends”, but now they are all my friends. Our age gap as well. Now it’s 13 to 17, but we are all friends still, even with a 4 year age gap. I think it’s good in that way because I never thought before joining that I could be mates with a 13 or 14 year old. But, here it’s good.” (Essex FG1, P2)**

Several young people commented on the positive environment created when taking part in the cadets. The strength of connections between young people was strong, with a core value shaping young people’s behaviour being inclusivity. Older cadets were suggested to be supportive of younger cadets, sharing valuable experience and knowledge to aid their

# General Perspectives of the VPC - Case Study Findings

development.

**"It's been a really good atmosphere to come here and still learn about the Police but have this sort of chilled environment." (West Yorkshire FG1, P5)**

**"We learned a lot off the older people, to be honest. We'll be doing something and they'll just give us a tip on what to do. So there's always someone to help us along." (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P3)**

**"Some people came without friends. There were a few people who were by themselves and now they can come and sit with the rest of the group and feel welcome." (West Yorkshire FG2, P3)**

**"Loud people, shy people. Lots of different people. It's a big variety, really. We make lots of new friends as well and everyone is really friendly and welcoming. No-one is excluded in the Cadets; it's like one big family." (Lancashire FG1, P1)**

A key activity that young people enjoyed was meeting up with other VPC units, as well as other uniformed youth groups. During such events, cadets were able to engage in competitions and participate in larger-scale activities. The events usually involved overnight stays and were valued by the young people.

**"My year went up to RAF Cosford and met quite a few Cadet groups from all over the place, Police Cadets, combined Cadets and we just did a competition over a few days, that was quite enjoyable. Met a load of people, made friends, got a bit of confidence." (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P2)**

**"We do Cadet competition as well. It was here a couple of years ago. Everybody was just camping in the field, but it was fun because you had Manchester and they were quite nice, but they thought they owned the place because they used to always win the competition." Lancashire FG2, P3)**

A central tenet of the VPC is making a difference within communities and positive social action. The young people who participated in the focus groups indicated that they both enjoyed such opportunities and that they had been positively impacted by them. These types of experiences will be expanded upon in the following chapter on social impact and value.

**"We do a lot more stuff with the public than I thought. I thought we would do a lot more stuff in the classroom, but we go out quite a lot and engage with the public, which I enjoy doing." (Essex FG1, P3)**

**"My communication has got a lot better, I would say. We are doing a lot of volunteering in the public, so we are interacting a lot with people, like doing bag packing and stuff like that. It's just made me better at talking to people I don't know and given me more confidence." (Lancashire FG1, P1)**

Whilst evident to varying degrees across case study sites, the importance of a child-centred approach and youth ownership within units was highlighted. Many young people were able to express preferences and areas of interest, that cadet leaders facilitated where possible. The cadet leaders were pivotal to such dynamics, but when achieved it enhanced young people's sense of achievement and enjoyment.

**“Recently what we’ve been introduced to, which is really good, that [Cadet Leader] told us that we’re allowed to decide what we want to do in future sessions. So we have the opportunity to do what we want. So if we wanted Armed Response Police Officers to come in to meet us, we could meet them.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P4)**

**“He [Cadet Leader] sorts everything out; activities, fitness, guest speakers. He talks to everybody and asks what they think of what they have done that night and asks for opinions. He includes everybody’s view point and then makes decisions from that for what we are going to do next.” (Lancashire FG1, P4)**

The final prominent type of experience highlighted by young people in the case studies were those that connected with policing and involved activities with specialised inputs from officers across different departments. Inputs from all officers, where they shared professional experiences were valued by young people, especially where they are facilitated to ask questions and learn. Units were noted as being more or less favourably positioned to engage with police officers, with some units being located within police stations or property which allowed ease of access to officers, which was seen as favourable.

**“We’ve been out to Fire Arms before. When we went to the fetes, there have been Dog Handler Units there and we have gone over and spoken to the person and had a picture. We have gone out to places and seen people but also, they have come in and spoken to us about their experiences.” (Essex FG1, P3)**

**“We had a recent one which was a day in the life of a Police Officer and I thought that was really good. There wasn’t really anything interactive but it was just really interesting, because it was telling you about the job and what that particular Police Officer had to deal with when he was working. It was really good. It was just really interesting.” (Lancashire FG1, P4)**

**“The new group I’ve just started is more of a family towards me, because we are based in the Police Station, so we are more sensible and listen more. At the other one I was at, we were based in the college, so you don’t really feel like you are part of the Cadets because it’s not in the Police Station, so you don’t feel the same, really.” (Lancashire FG2, P3)**

Overall, there were many positive experiences that young people highlighted within the focus groups, reflecting the positive, inclusive and exciting spaces that cadets are located. Importantly, cadets can feel a strong sense of belonging within an inclusive yet diverse group of young people, giving them confidence and opportunities to meet other young people from different areas who share similar experiences and values. Finally, cadets valued making a difference and engaging in activities that involved positive social action.

## **Negative Experiences**

Young people were largely very positive about their experiences about being a cadet, though there were a few issues and themes that emerged within the analysis across the sites that were more negative about their experiences. A recurrent negative experience within cadets’ accounts that was highlighted in all sites was participating in drill. The timing for some cadets was that their initial experiences of being a cadet

# General Perspectives of the VPC - Case Study Findings

involved repetitive drill sessions, which some young people felt 'went too far' and becomes tiresome. In such instances, a key risk is that some young people may mis-perceive what the Cadet Programme, representing a threat to the continued engagement of young people. It was, however, recognise that the volume of drills decreased over time enabling other types of activities to be facilitated.

**"Personally, I dislike drill a lot [laughter] Because I think it's taken too serious instead of a bit of fun. I honestly think it's taken too far, and I think when we first learnt drill it was for Remembrance Sunday and then we continued to do it but then it gets boring as well because it's repetitive. And I really believe it's taken too serious instead of a little bit of fun."** (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P4)

**"Drill isn't that enjoyable, marching and that, mainly because you don't get to talk to your friends. Group work is the best because you can have a laugh with your friends and also learn about different aspects of the Police. With drill, it's "Be quiet. Walk this way", and just do that for about an hour, which is really boring."** (Lancashire FG1, P4)

**"It's because, when we first started, every week we were doing drill, obviously to the build-up that we were doing our attestation thing. But now, we don't really do it as much..."** (West Yorkshire FG2, P4)

Changes in cadet organisers within forces were indicated to directly shape the opportunities within the cadets for young people. Young people appeared to hold attachments to cadet leaders within forces and valued having connections with key points of contacts. Movement within police forces is relatively frequent and with such movements impacting

young people's experiences, it is important that robust succession planning is in place to minimise such effects.

**"We did have a really good person that organised events round here but she's gone from that area of work and someone else has gone in and I don't really think they're really good at planning events."** (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P2)

**"Well, they have changed the person who is in charge from a Police Officer to Police Staff. The Police Officer who used to run it doesn't come down any more and we don't know who the new person is. It's outside of this that has happened but it has obviously affected us in that way."** (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)

The final negative issues highlighted across sites were that the activities that were facilitated within units were too one-dimensional, typically defined as presentations to young people by session leads with limited opportunity for interaction or activities that put learning into practice. Moreover, some cadets indicated that more opportunities to engage in activities that achieve impact within communities and positive social change could be more prominent within programmes.

**"It got to the point where you just came for 2 hours after to basically be taught a lesson."** (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)

**"It's just the guest speakers. They need to make it so we are more involved, instead of just standing at the front with a Power Point."** (Lancashire FG1, P2)

**“We learn a lot of skills but we don’t really enforce those skills. So, there will be guest speakers that come in and explain some stuff to us and we will ask questions. But, then the following week it will be the same thing but with a different person, so we don’t really stick to that same skill that we have been taught and actually do stuff.”**  
(West Yorkshire FG2, P6)

Overall, the negative experiences shared by the young people are important to reflect upon within local cadet units and there is a need for a sustained and facilitated dialogue with young people to ensure programmes remain interesting and engaging. Whilst it is important that young people prepare well for key events, such as parades etc, where they will be required to practice their skills, it is crucial that these preparations maintain a positive balance with other activities so that young people do not disengage with the programme. Managing change within police forces is an important strategic and operational point to be considered as programmes develop. Finally, the structure of sessions should consider a balance between presentations, individual and group discussions, and activities that put learning into practice.

## **Improvements**

Cadets were able to suggest ways to improve their experiences and to improve the experiences of future cadets. Their suggestions included:

- **Make cadet sessions more dynamic and interactive, involving more than presentations. Different session formats should be considered to keep the programme creative and different;**

**“Every week we come in and obviously training in that room down there. But, you just sit there until guest speakers come in and then you might go to the front and do a bit of an activity.”** (West Yorkshire FG2, P3)

- **Facilitate more opportunities to participate in, and make an impact to, community events. Consider longer-term projects where cadets are able to identify an issue to be focused on and then over an extended period make a positive difference.**

**“I think we need a lot more community events and to meet new people.”**  
(Dyfed-Powys FG1, P1)

**“...have a project. Start in the community, work in that community and see a change.”** (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)

- **Have equitable and similar uniforms across units, allowing for a more collective identity between units.**

**“The uniforms for the Police Cadets are all different. Whereas for St John’s and Fire Cadets and Army Cadet’s and all of them, they’ve got all the same uniforms so they all look smart and the same.”**  
(Dyfed-Powys FG1, P4)



# General Perspectives of the VPC - Case Study Findings

“Some of us would say it is the uniform. You look at other Forces’ cadets and... I think they fit into the Police family more because they are wearing the same uniform as Officers and we feel a bit like, “Why do we have a bad uniform and they’ve got a nice uniform?”... All of Lancashire have the same uniform. But, if you look at other Counties like Staffordshire or Merseyside, and they have dead nice uniforms.” (Lancashire FG2, P6)

- Have a diverse range of inputs to showcase the width and breadth of roles in policing, including Special Constables and Police Support Volunteers.

“I think Cadets would be much better if we had a lot more chances to work with different departments in the Police. So we could work with different people and then really see their jobs and how they work. And then that gives us the chance to see, ‘I’d really like to do that; I’d really enjoy doing something like that.’” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P4)

- Create connections with other police cadet units as well as other uniformed youth groups to enable shared events and new insights into other roles and services.

“I’m like - love what the Fire Cadets do, St John’s Ambulance Cadets do, we should have an insight so if one of the Cadets enjoyed what they were doing they could go and have a look at that.” (Dyfed-Powys, FG1, P2)

- Invest in and sustain transportation for cadets to enable equal opportunities to participate in events.

“I think our problem is travelling. We’ve not got a mini bus for Cadets, we have to ask another unit if we can borrow a leader to pick us up. So, we feel like if we had our own transport, even if it was a Cadet mini bus, we would get there a lot easier than parents running around for us.” (Lancashire FG2, P3)

- Ensure that cadets are regularly communicated with and are provided updates relating to both policing and the planned activities in cadets.

“One thing is, last year we received a lot more emails and I felt a lot more up to date, whereas this year it’s been a bit quiet and I don’t feel as up to date.” (West Yorkshire FG1, P3)

“They need to lay out what they are doing before, so they know what they are doing each week and that it won’t always be the same. They know they are going to have something for everybody to do and not just be sat there, because we don’t like that.” (Lancashire FG1, P2)

- Reflect on how programmes and Cadet Leaders facilitate and support cadets in their planned life course trajectories, both in an out of policing.

“Make sure there is a follow-on path. I know we have already mentioned it, but there needs to be something there. If you have committed 2 years, you want something after it, don’t you?” (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)

“We never get told what we are going to do in advance, so it is always in the moment; it just happens.” (Lancashire FG, P3)



- 
- **Better advertise the Cadet's programme to young people to increase engagement and awareness.**

**"I would say advertising. I only knew about it because someone mentioned me in a comment of a Facebook post on the Police. If I hadn't got that comment, I wouldn't have known about it." (West Yorkshire FG1, P7)**

**"I had no idea that Police Cadets existed, but one day in school there was a notice that said, "Police Cadets", promoting, so I thought, "That looks fun", so I applied to join it in Blackburn and did my interview." (Lancashire FG1, P3)**

**"I did self-research to find it myself because it's not promoted anyway." (Lancashire FG1, P5)**

- **Reduce free or wasted time within sessions to maximise the value of sessions.**

**"As relaxing as it is when you come, I think they could be a bit more structured with it. A bit more of a guideline, as in, you come in and straight away you do this, this and this. It's a bit more relaxed than what you would expect the Police to be enforcing." (West Yorkshire FG2, P6)**

- **"Last year we had too much free time. There weren't enough activities." (Essex FG2, P3).**

# General Perspectives of the VPC - Case Study Findings

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## Summary

The vast majority of cadets enjoy their experience, are proud to be cadets and would recommend it to their friends. In terms of improvements cadets suggested:

- more involvement in the community, events and opportunities for volunteering;
- to do more activities or learning that is police related;
- to get out and about more;
- more practical, hands on and interactive learning opportunities and activities; and
- better organisation and structure to sessions so that cadets know what is going to happen from week to week

A high proportion of cadets feel that the scheme is run well. However, cadet leaders particularly highlighted that there is some cause for concern, with a quarter disagreeing that the national VPC programme is run well and that they feel supported in their role. Key issues for cadet leaders included having enough time to do the role well and that they have enough cadet leader colleagues, with nearly 4 in 10 disagreeing for both. Being given time within work to plan lessons, attend events and do administration as well as having more cadet leaders were in the top five suggestions for how they could be better supported in their role. Cadet leaders' top suggestion for how they can be supported was to have access to high quality lesson plans and resources, 4 in 10 disagreeing that they have the support or advice they need in terms of developing the curriculum for cadets. In addition, 8 in 10 cadet leaders agree that they would like to see more guidance and consistency in respect of safeguarding and a quarter disagreed that they currently have a clear framework and guidance for safeguarding.

# Social Impact and Value

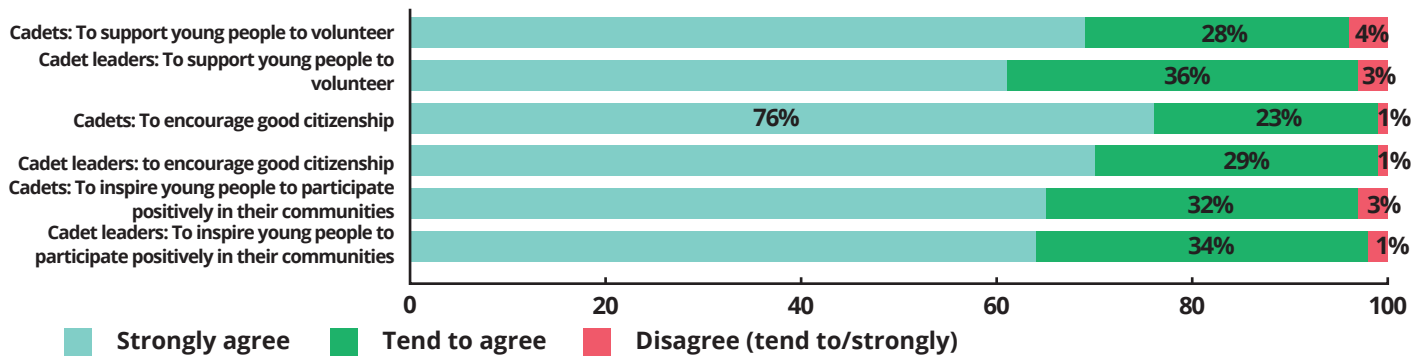
This chapter provides an overview of findings relating to social impact and value of the VPC programme. It first explores the results of the national surveys and then provides an overview of the findings from the case study focus groups.

# Social Impact and Value – Survey Results

## Citizenship and Volunteering

Key social impacts of being a cadet were positive effects to young people’s sense of citizenship and social responsibility. Cadets had a strong level of agreement that the VPC encourages good citizenship (99% agreeing, with 76% strongly agreeing). Nearly all cadets

(97%) agreed that being a cadet inspired young people to participate in their communities and it supports young people to volunteer, with 64% and 69% strongly agreeing respectively. Overall agreement was also high for cadet leaders, although they tended to be less likely to strongly agree particularly that the cadets supports young people to volunteer, illustrated in figure 6.1.



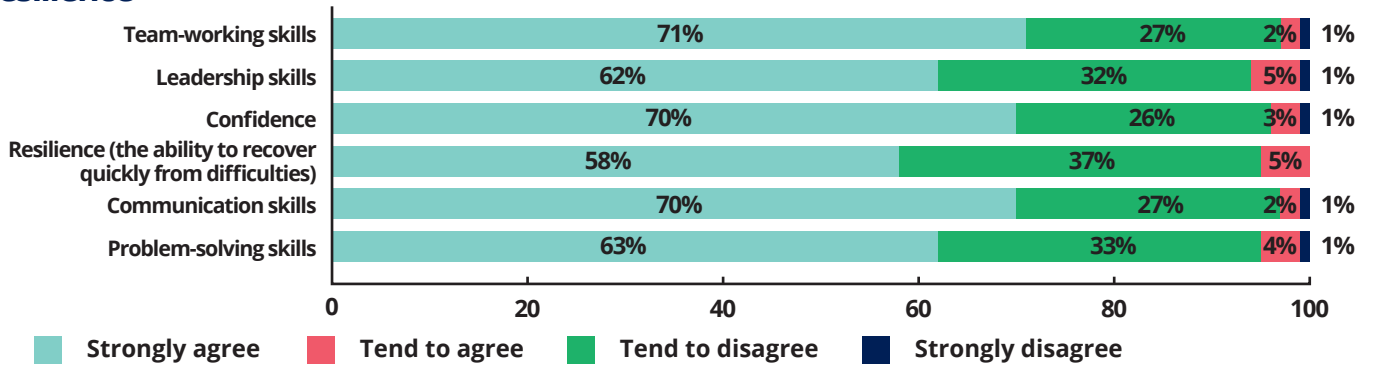
Around two-thirds (69%) of cadets strongly agreed that the VPC had a positive impact on their feelings of social responsibility, with 28% tending to agree, 2% tending to disagree and 1% strongly disagreeing. A similar proportion (57%) of cadet leaders strongly agreed that cadets had a positive impact on cadet’s feelings of social responsibility, with 38% tending to agree, 2% tending to disagree and 2% strongly disagreeing. Nevertheless, it is worth considering that the most commonly suggested improvement of young people for improving the VPC outlined in the previous chapter was to increase opportunities to help the community, volunteer and get involved in events. Overall, the evidence suggests that being a cadet promotes positive citizenship and social responsibility. The social value of being a good citizen is difficult to quantify, though is likely to be significant. The desire of cadets to have more

of an impact in communities is encouraging, and the VPC should develop strategies and initiatives that empower cadets to engage in projects and social action that is important to them.

## Skills

Being a cadet was seen an enabling young people to develop new skills and abilities. At least 95% of cadets agreed that being a cadet had a positive impact on their team working, communication, problem-solving skills and confidence (see figure 6.2), with 94% agreement that being a cadet had a positive impact on resilience and leadership skills. Agreement was particularly strong for the positive impact on team-working skills, confidence and communication, with 7 in 10 cadets strongly agreeing.

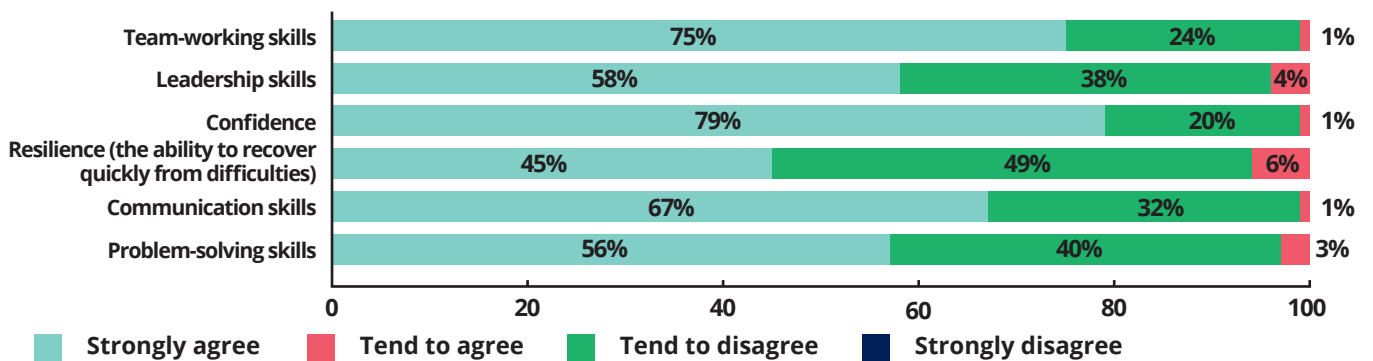
**Figure 6.2 Cadet's Perceptions of the Positive Impact of the VPC on Skills, Confidence and Resilience**



Results were similarly positive from cadet leaders about the positive impact on cadet skills, illustrated in figure 6.3. Cadet leaders were less

likely than cadets to strongly agree that the scheme positively impacted cadet resilience (45% compared to 58% of cadets).

**Figure 6.3 Cadet Leaders' Perceptions of the Positive Impact of the VPC on Skills, Confidence and Resilience**



Overall, whilst not providing a measured difference, the evidence suggests that the VPC positively impacts a range of skills and abilities. More research is needed to measure such impacts and identify the specific components of the VPC programme that facilitate such gains.

### Views of the police

The results show that the VPC has a positive effect on young people's knowledge and perceptions of policing. Around three-quarters

(77%) of cadets strongly agreed that their cadet unit is achieving the aim of promoting an understanding of policing, 21% tended to agree and 2% tended to disagree. By engaging with police officers through the VPC, cadets were able to better understand the role of policing as well as the diversity of roles and functions within policing.

**"Cadets has allowed me to see what the police are doing to help people and the community"**



# Social Impact and Value – Survey Results

**“Because it has presented to me, the police isn’t just about making arrests and all the action, it’s about the community and helping it”**

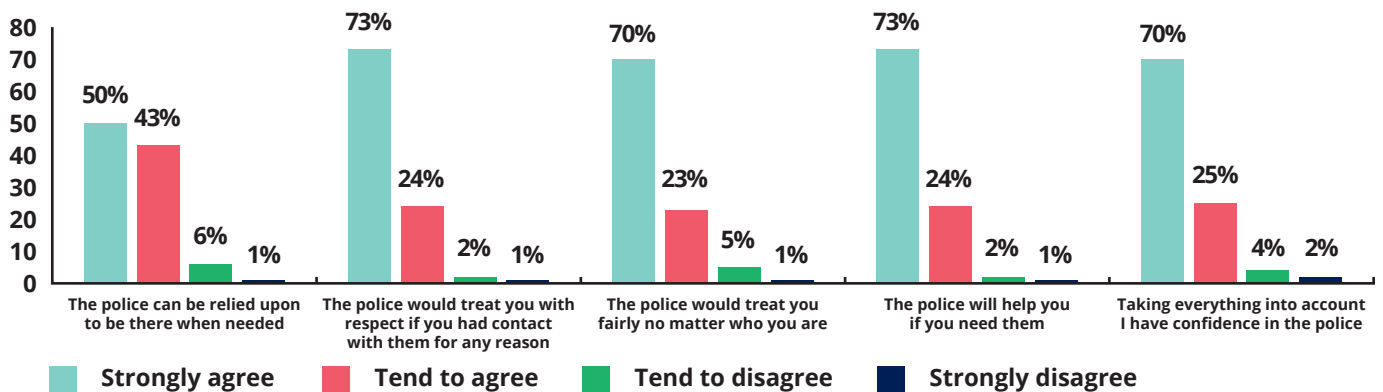
**“It has shown me that not just the problems that are shown through media are the only things that police have to deal with. There are many, many more complications and tasks that are dealt with everyday.”**

A little over half of cadets (57%) strongly agreed that they have a good understanding of what the police do, which was a relatively lower level of agreement compared to other measures. A commonly suggested improvement of cadets was to have more police-related content and interaction with different departments and

specialists within the police, both to gain knowledge and to provide assistance to the police. However, nearly three-quarters (72%) felt confident to report a crime or other information to the police with a further 24% tended to agree (leaving 4% disagreeing).

The cadets held very positive views of the police, with 95% agreeing that they have confidence in the police. Figure 6.4 illustrates that agreement that the police can be relied upon to be there when needed, the police would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason, the police would treat you fairly no matter who you are and the police will help you if you need them ranged between 93% and 97%.

**Figure 6.4 Agreement with Positive Statements about the Police by Cadets**



Importantly, 45% of cadets indicated that being a police cadet has changed their perception of the police a lot, with 41% indicated that it had changed their perception a little and only 14% said that it had not changed it at all. This impact to the perception of policing was positive, with young people commenting how being a cadet had fostered and strengthened the respect they had for the police.

**“Most of my family don’t like police and even my nana jokes and calls me a pig whenever she sees me, but because I grew up with that perspective of not liking police I didn’t like them, however joining police cadets has changed my mind completely and I fully respect the police and wish to become a police officer in the future.”**



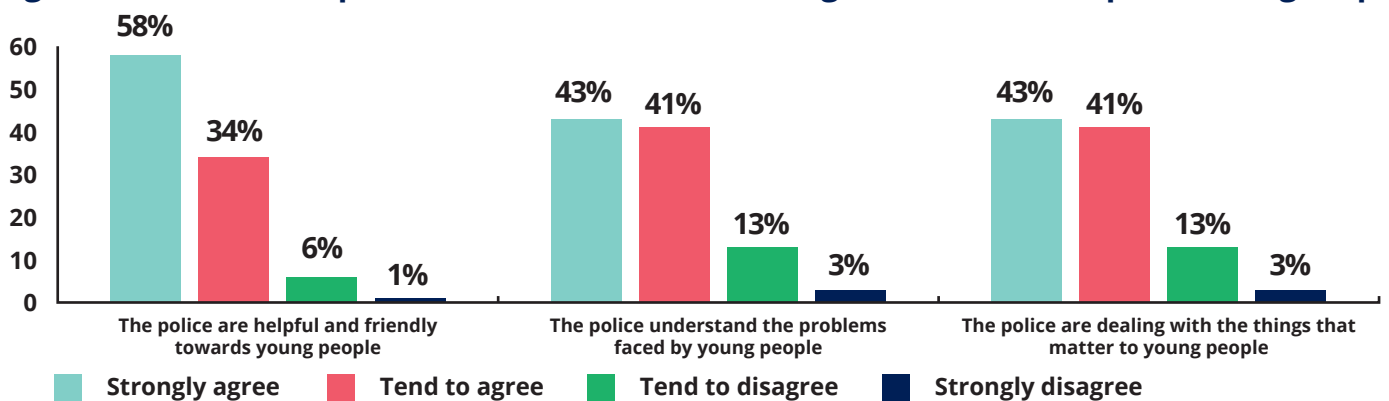
**“I didn’t realise how much work they do for our community and appreciate them more now I know. Look up to police and my cadet leaders. I feel that when others make negative comment about the police force I defend the police force all the time.”**

**“Police officers often have a bad reputation in some aspects of work but through the police cadets I have learnt that the majority are trying their best to benefit the community and the negative rumours that you commonly are just that - rumours, although I already respected the profession, I now have a greater understanding of it.”**

**“Being a police cadet gets you inside information and instead of hearing bad rumours about the police you hear what they are doing for everyone, so I have change my views about the police from negative to positive since I didn’t know anything about the police except bad stories people tell.”**

The changed perceptions of policing that cadets had are connected with concepts such as procedural justice, with participation in the VPC reconstituting the relationships between young people and the police. Figure 6.5 illustrates how cadets held positive views towards the police, as 93% of cadets agreed the police are helpful and friendly towards young people; 84% agreed that the police understand the problems faced by young people; and 84% agreed that the police deal with things that matter to young people. It is worth noting, however, that 16% of young people disagreed that the police understand the problems facing young people and that they are dealing with things that matter to young people.

**Figure 6.5 Cadet’s Perceptions of the Police Understanding of and Relationship with Young People**



There were many comments that suggest how participation in the cadets had made young people aware of police efforts to engage with

young people and their strategies to help young people in need.

# Social Impact and Value – Survey Results

**“Yes, because before that I didn’t really like police forces because I used to be in a gang in which had lot of police involved and they arrested my friends but as I joined police cadets my life changed instantly and my view of police and now I understand that the police force are just trying to help young people like us to not make bad mistakes.”**

**“I realise they take kids seriously.”  
“It has shown me how much police officers care about young people and try to do their best for us.”**

**“I haven’t been there for long but I can see that the police want to help young people even if it means giving up some of their time.”**

Overall, the evidence demonstrates how young people had positive views of the police, which participation in the VPC strengthened. For those young people who previously had negative views of the police, the VPC was instrumental to changing such attitudes, whilst increasing young people’s knowledge of the range of roles and functions police undertake. Being a cadet also helped to enhance young people’s perceptions of procedural justice, with better perceptions of the relationship between the police and young

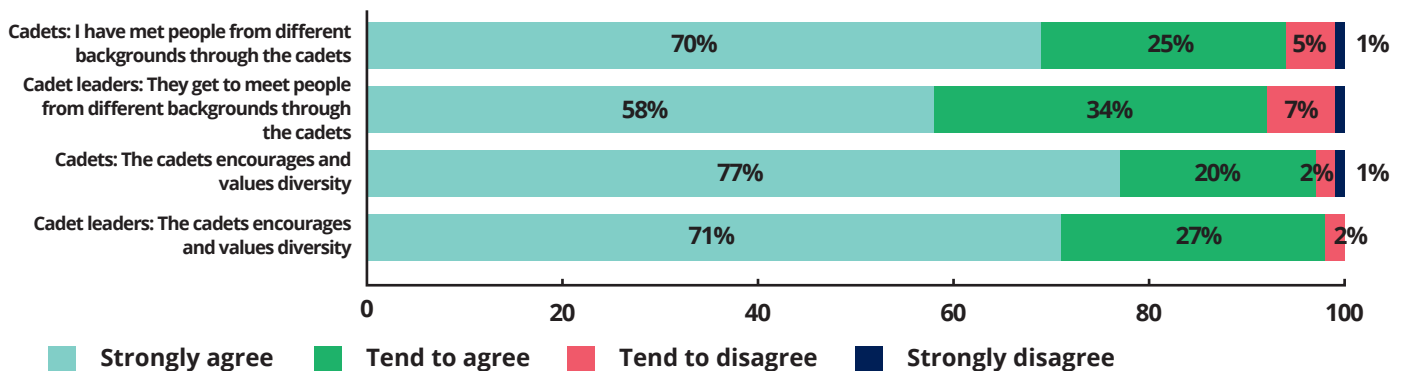
people.

## Social inclusion, diversity and friendship

Being a cadet for many young people promoted a sense of belonging within a diverse group of young people. Nearly all young people (97%) indicated that they agreed that they had made new friends through the cadets, with 81% strongly agreeing, with a little over two-thirds (70%) strongly agreeing that cadets had a positive impact on their sense of belonging. A similar proportion of cadet leaders strongly agreed that cadets had a positive impact on young people’s sense of belonging (71%), with 28% tending to agree and 1% tending to disagree.

A promising feature within the VPC was the diversity within units, with nearly all (95%) cadets agreeing that they had met people from different backgrounds (with 70% strongly agreeing) and 97% agreed that the cadets encourages diversity (with 77% strongly agreeing). Figure 6.6 illustrates cadet and cadet leaders’ perceptions of diversity in the VPC, showing that cadet leaders had lower agreement that cadets get to meet people from different backgrounds to cadets. Further, cadet leaders less agreed that the VPC promotes diversity.

**Figure 6.6 Cadet and Cadet Leaders’ Perceptions of Diversity in the VPC**



Young people valued meeting different people and a suggested improvement was to have more interaction with each other and other cadet units.

“Perhaps doing more activities with other cadet units.”

“More opportunities to do fun activities with other units.”

“More opportunities to meet cadets from different forces.”

“Maybe there could be more events which interconnect different cadet groups that are local to one another.”

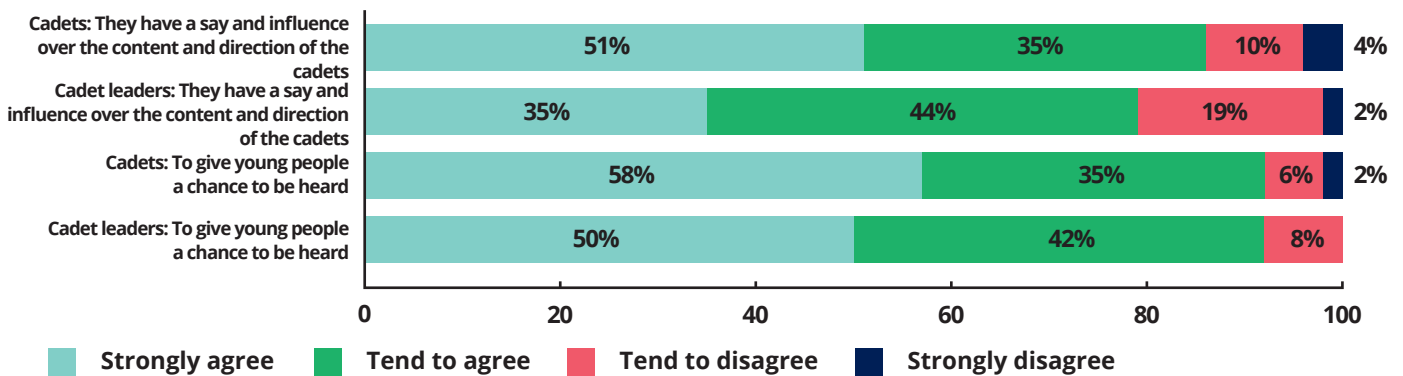
Overall, cadets mostly agreed that being a cadet enabled interaction and a sense of belonging in a diverse group of young people, with cadet leaders having less agreement. Being a part of a group of a different group of young people is

important, enabling young people to feel safe at expressing who they are. The results are very positive, though young people desired more opportunities to encounter other young people in different units.

### Giving young people a voice

A key aim of the VPC is to support young people to be heard and around 9-in-10 agreed that the VPC was achieving this aim, with 58% strong agreement and 35% agreement. The results for cadet leaders were similar although they were more likely to tend to agree rather than strongly agree (see figure 6.7). There were 51% of cadets who strongly agreed that they have a say and influence over the content and direction of the police cadets, with 35% tended to agree, 10% tending to disagree and 4% strongly disagreeing. Cadet leaders were notably less likely than cadets to agree with this, with about a fifth disagreeing (21%) and only about a third strongly agreeing (35%) compared to half of cadets (51%).

**Figure 6.7 Cadet and Cadet Leaders’ Perceptions of the VPC giving Young People a Chance to be Heard**



A suggested improvement to the VPC by cadets was to allow cadets to have a say in the content of the programme.

“Cadets should have a say in what activities we should participate in.”

“Give the cadets more of a say on what content is covered over the course.”

# Social Impact and Value – Survey Results

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**“More input from the cadets and the ability for more cadets to be able to lead in activities.”**

**“Listen to cadets opinions and ask for feedback.”**

Overall, whilst the results for supporting young people to have a voice, the results are relatively less positive to other themes and issues, suggesting that a developmental need of the programme.

# Social Value and Impact – Case Study Findings

This section provides an overview of the key points that emerged from the focus groups with cadets that relate to impact and social value. The section is organised into three subsections. First impacts to young people are outlined and second impacts young people make whilst being a cadet are overviewed. Third, points relating to children who present behavioural challenges or negative attitudes are summarised.

## Impacts to cadets

Being a cadet had several positive impacts to young people, which are linked with a positive effect in terms of social value. The main value and impact to young people engaged in the cadets were improved confidence, reduced social anxiety and strengthened resilience. Young people described how their experiences in the cadets had given young people the confidence to speak to others and meet new people. In this sense, being in cadets had enabled young people to express who they are.

**“It gives you the confidence to be able to speak to new people and get to know new people.” (West Yorkshire, FG2, P3)**

**“Cadets has helped boost my confidence massively. When I didn’t do Cadets I was really shy but now I’m just out there and don’t really care what people think.” (Lancashire FG2, P1)**

**“Before I joined - I still do have social anxiety but before I joined, going out in public was one of the things I couldn’t do. Speaking to people, I couldn’t do it. But now, after being with people and going out and doing stuff as a group I’m building up confidence to speak out and go out into public and that.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P5)**

These impacts had directly impacted young people’s ability to help others and people in the community.

**“You understand if people have any problems, how to deal with it. I had massive anxiety when I first started, now I don’t have it any more. If anyone had that, I would know how to help them, which would be such a good achievement for me and them too.” (Essex FG1, P2)**

There were a host of skills and abilities that were positively impacted through participation in the cadets. Young people described the Cadet’s programme as offering ‘life skills’ such as first aid, team work, independence alongside specific awards such as Duke of Edinburgh. It was indicated that these would be beneficial in their future pathways, as well as to transitions into employment discussed further in a later chapter on transitions.

**“We get to learn a lot of life skills through the Cadets and it’s really good for us... Because if you see normal people who don’t do Cadets, if something happened they would know nothing about first aid or anything. And we at least know basic first aid training and we can help.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P4)**

**“Independence as well, teamwork. Both combined, rather than one or the other. It gave me a balance of how to work in a team and be independent.” (Lancashire FG2, P2)**

**“I think we have done an awful lot but this year, so far, we’ve got Bronze D of E for some, Silver D of E for some of us, Belgium and Summer Camp. So, that’s 4 things all in the space of this year and a few events coming up. So, it’s finding the time.” (Essex FG1, P5)**

For some young people depending on the

# Social Value and Impact – Case Study Findings

activities in local cadet programmes, being a cadet had directly impacted their sense of safety within public spaces through education and group activities in personal protective behaviour. By knowing how to be safe and how to protect themselves related to young people's improved sense of confidence.

**“We’ve had personal protective behaviour training. A PCSO came in and taught us things like pressure points, holds and like.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P2)**

A common theme for young people was an improved sense of achievement, gained through their development during the cadets and participation in key events. Cadet leaders here were seen as instrumental to enabling young people's development through the provision of key activities and opportunities offered to cadets.

**“Honestly, from the first 10 weeks when we were all quiet and new, after you attested everyone seemed to speak to each other. So, it was almost like you had that sense of, “I’ve achieved something now. I’m not faking it any more, I’m proper”.” (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)**

**“I think we’ve got a great set of leaders and I wouldn’t be where I am today without them.” (Essex FG1, P5)**

The final theme that emerged in the analysis related to a maturing effect within the programme. The VPC cohorts varied in terms of age, which enabled young people to share experiences and have a positive effect on others in their own development. Importantly, cadets felt more aware of the consequences of their choices and behaviour, which related to a more mature sense of self.

**“The maturity does vary and it would allow you – the group I was in before was 16 – 18 – to bounce off each other. So now, the people who were 13 get more mature because they are hanging around with older people.” (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)**

**“We help out more, we are more aware of what we do and the consequences.” (Essex FG1, P1)**

Overall, the cadet programme made a positive difference to young people, enabling them to feel more confident in themselves, less social anxious and mature. Young people shared a host of skills they had acquired in the cadets which were beneficial to their planned future pathways. Through these impacts, young people were better positioned to make a positive social difference in their communities, through volunteerism and awareness of social and public safety issues.

## Impacts from being a Cadet

Cadets were also able to create and deliver a number of positive impacts to others. There were two main themes relating to external impacts. First, cadets engaged in community work where they were able to mix with others and the public more generally. Some young people had committed many hours to volunteering to aid good causes in the community, which was underpinned by the improved sense of confidence young people had gained through being a cadet. Whilst engaging in community projects and volunteering was a component within all programmes, young people reported wanting to increase the proportion of activities that achieve these aims to make even more of a local difference.



**"I have done over 200 hours of volunteering and all of that has got me used to different environments, so I can cope with a lot of different situations as well... My communication has got a lot better, I would say. We are doing a lot of volunteering in the public, so we are interacting a lot with people, like doing bag packing and stuff like that. It's just made me better at talking to people I don't know and given me more confidence."** (Lancashire FG1, P1)

**"Yes, we've done a lot of community work as well which is really good because it helps us mix with other people in the community and it taught us to be more confident around others."** (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P4)

**"Going out into the community and kind of pushing yourself to be out there. Not literally, but talking to people and building your confidence that way."** (West Yorkshire FG1, P7)

Second, cadets engaged in a range of charity and fund-raising events. Some cadets described raising sizable amounts of money which was then donated to local charitable causes. Alongside the fundraising, cadets were also able to raise awareness of local public safety and crime issues, further supporting the objectives of policing in the community.

**"We've done Race For Life - we helped out there. We usually give out leaflets to people. We did the Santa Dash."** (West Yorkshire FG1, P5)

**"[We've] also raised money (£4,000) for charity as a unit, which is good."** (Essex FG1, P3)

community was noteworthy and commendable, but in need of development to increase the opportunities for young people to engage in social action. Opportunities to engage in shared fundraising objectives regionally or nationally would improve the footprint of the cadets within local areas alongside raising the profile of the cadet programme to other young people as well as to local/national partners. Young people engaged in the cadets are motivated to make a positive difference, which the cadet programmes facilitates, though more coordination between units would further improve the current picture.

## **Impacts to Young People with Challenging Behaviour or Attitudes**

This section details some of the impacts identified in the focus groups with cadets on young people who present challenging behaviours and attitudes. Being a cadet supported young people to regulate their behaviour and exercise a higher degree of self-control. Cadets described how they had become calmer and more respectful of others because they were a cadet. It was suggested that the rules and ethos created within the cadet environment was translated by young people into their everyday lives, having a positive effect within school, home and community domains.

**"I was over confident when I came so I feel like I've calmed down a lot and it's brought me down a peg so I'm less loud and less 'in your face'."** (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P3)

**"I've gained a lot more respect for people, since joining. Not that I was horrible before but my behaviour has improved."** (West Yorkshire FG2, P3)

Overall, the impact of cadets within the

# Social Value and Impact – Case Study Findings

**“We have certain rules in the Police Cadets that we have to follow. That can get integrated into everyday life.” (West Yorkshire FG2, P8)**

Being a cadet helped some young people to keep out of trouble, giving them a positive alternative to that which was offered within their local community. As well as providing a positive space for young people, the cadet programme offered important knowledge related to community issues such as drug use and county lines which enabled young people to make more informed and responsible choices in their everyday lives.

**“I think Cadets has kept us away from the people who are troublemakers around the area. So other people our age are smoking and stuff like that. But through Cadets it’s kept us away from that and really seeing the dangers of smoking and taking drugs and all this, it’s really helped us realise what the consequences are if you are taking drugs or possession of drugs or selling drugs or so on.” (Dyfed Powys FG1, P4)**

One young person described how being a cadet had impacted their behaviour significantly and had altered their perceived life course trajectory, from one that would lead to negative involvement in the criminal justice system to a positive and productive life. It is not known how many other young people in the case studies, or within the cadet population, shared a similar life changing experience.

**“I used to get in quite a lot of trouble with the Police before I joined. I used to be part of this group where I used to live and they were just – I got arrested at one point. There was drugs and it was just a horrible scene. I decided in my last year at school that I would knuckle down and get my GCSE’s. I saw the Police Cadets advertised on Facebook, so I signed up for it and got in.” (West Yorkshire FG2, P7)**

The previous section outlined how cadets perceived the VPC as enabling them to meet different people. The findings of the case studies identified one social marker of difference was between those who were perceived as behaved or not. Cadets suggested that the VPC environment enables a peer influence to impact negative behaviours, often supported by formalised rules and commitments cadets make at the outset of each year.

**“Within the group there is a proper mixture between well behaved and not well behaved people. But, when you are mixed in groups and they say something that is inappropriate or is not supposed to be said, then the more well behaved people have their input and it stops them from acting that way.” (West Yorkshire FG2, P3)**

However, it is important to reflect on the environment in terms of supporting positive change in those young people who are identified as in need. It is argued that the VPC environment creates a challenging environment for young people with behavioural issues. The motivations why young people engaged with cadets are important here, with some young people who leave cadets being articulated as too immature or unwilling to try new things, which may be unfair. A key challenge for cadet leaders is to facilitate sessions with those who are highly

motivated alongside other young people who exhibit difficult or challenging behaviours.

**“I think people that are quite immature, like we had a few of them and they all left. And people that are not willing to try new things because then they are just not getting anything out of it.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P3)**

**“I think the majority of the people in our Cadets don’t mind school; they don’t mind doing work and stuff like that. But then, the people have dropped out – I’ve known one in my school and she wasn’t too bothered about school or any education.” (Lancashire FG1, P4)**

**“People do get forced to go to Cadets. I think they don’t enjoy it as much. They either drop out or mess around and get kicked out.” (Lancashire FG1, P5)**

**“If they are bad at school, they will be bad at Cadets and will often leave.” (Lancashire FG1, P1)**

It was noted that it takes a long time for a young person with behavioural difficulties to settle in the VPC, which highlights the importance of effective behaviour management plans for young people and training in techniques and good practice for cadet leaders. It was added that too much emphasis on drill at the outset of programmes did not help at keeping young people with behavioural issues engaged. Inconsistent attendance presents additional challenges and fragments progress.

**“And personally I believe that people are getting pushed too hard in drill... I think they get pushed and I think some people are put out of their comfort zone too quick and they’re getting pushed too hard and that’s why they’re disliking it.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P4)**

**“And a lot of time people that come in and are quite loud and their behaviour is quite difficult, after about a year they’ve calmed down. They realised that the way they were behaving wasn’t too good but now that they’ve calmed down they’re behaving better.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P1)**

**“They’ll come back and say, ‘Why haven’t I done all this?’. It’s like, ‘You haven’t come so you haven’t been given the uniform yet, so..’.” (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)**

Overall, the findings suggest that the VPC programme has some success at changing the behaviour of young people who exhibit negative behaviours, though inconsistently. The environment of the programmes, behaviour management policies and planned activities should be reviewed to give those young people with challenging behaviour the best chance for success in the programme. Bringing different young people, with differing motivations is very challenging and relies of the skills of cadet leaders to effectively and appropriately manage negative behaviour. Guidance and good practice on effective behaviour management and change techniques would support cadet leaders to positively engage with these groups of young people.

# Social Value and Impact – Case Study Findings

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## Summary

Being in the cadet was found to have a range of social impacts and value to young people. Being in the cadets promoted positive citizenship and a strengthened sense of social responsibility, instilling the value of volunteering and making a difference within their community. The new skills and abilities that young people gained in the cadets were important to an identified improvement in confidence, a reduction in social anxiety and strengthened resilience. Importantly, young people in the cadets fostered a sense of belonging within an environment where they could express a positive identity. However, new strategies, guidance and reflection are needed to give young people who exhibit negative behaviours or attitudes the best possible prospect of positive change, keeping them engaged in the programme and avoiding them dropping out.



# Transitions

**This chapter provides an overview of findings relating to the perceived value and impacts of the VPC on the future transitions of young people beyond their time in the cadets. It first explores the results of the national surveys and then provides an overview of the findings from the case study focus groups.**



# Transitions – Survey Results

The evidence suggests that being a police cadet positively impacts the career aspirations of young people, especially those who would like a career in policing. Around two-thirds (67%) of cadet leaders strongly agreed that the scheme enabled cadets to be more aware of future opportunities in the police, 27% tended to agree and 6% tended to disagree. Many cadets commented about how being a cadet allowed them to better understand what policing involved, giving them an insight into the internal workings of the police.

**“I have a greater understanding of the way the police do their job and this is very interesting and I feel I would like to pursue a career in the police force.”**

**“It has given me an insight on how many different police staff jobs there are and given me opportunities for future careers”**

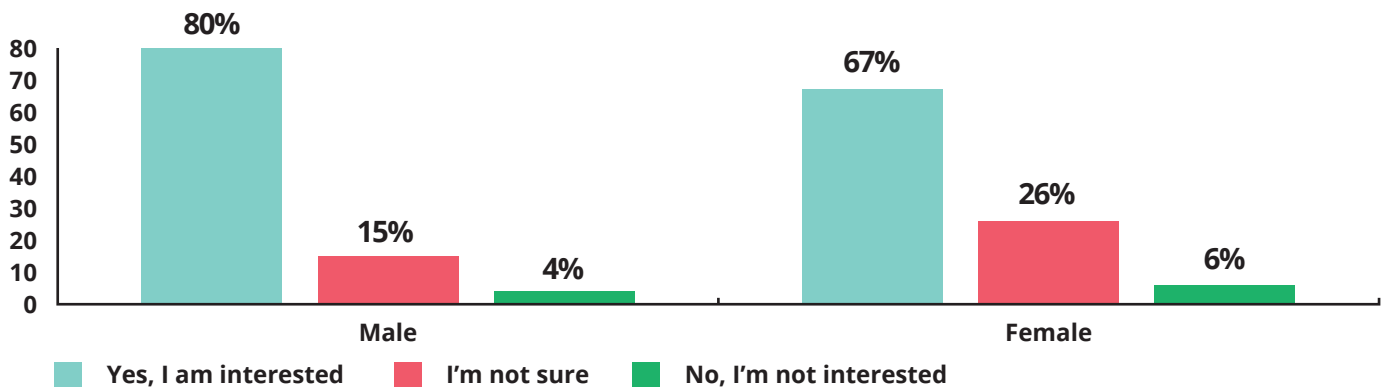
**“It has given me an internal view of the police force and allows you to see the world from a police officer’s perspective. It highlights the unforeseen pros and cons of a career in the police which we otherwise wouldn’t be getting from schools or the media etc.”**

**“I have a greater understanding of the way the police do their job and this is very interesting and I feel I would like to pursue a career in the police force.”**

**“I have a greater understanding of the way the police do their job and this is very interesting and I feel I would like to pursue a career in the police force.”**

Around three-quarters (73%) of those who completed the survey were interested in a future job or career in policing after leaving the cadets. There were, however, 1-in-4 cadets that were either unsure (21%) or were not interested in joining the police in the future (5%). There was a significant difference between males and females in their likelihood of being interested in a career in policing with females being less likely to say that they are interested and being more likely to say that they are not sure, illustrated in figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1 Interest in having a Career in Policing, by Gender**

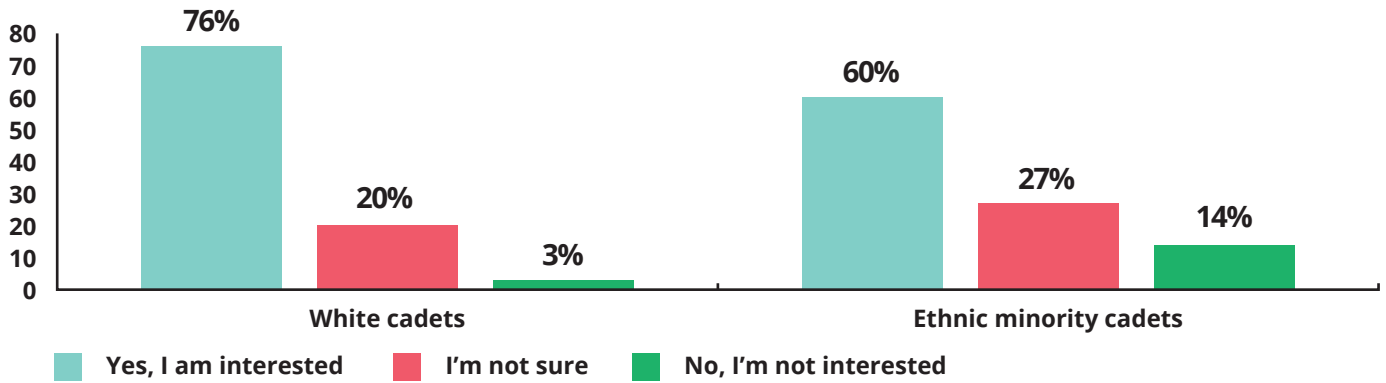




Similarly, figure 7.2 illustrates how white cadets were significantly more likely than those from a minority ethnic background to say that they

are interested in a career in the police, with 14% of minority ethnic cadets who had ruled it out completely compared to 3% of white cadets.

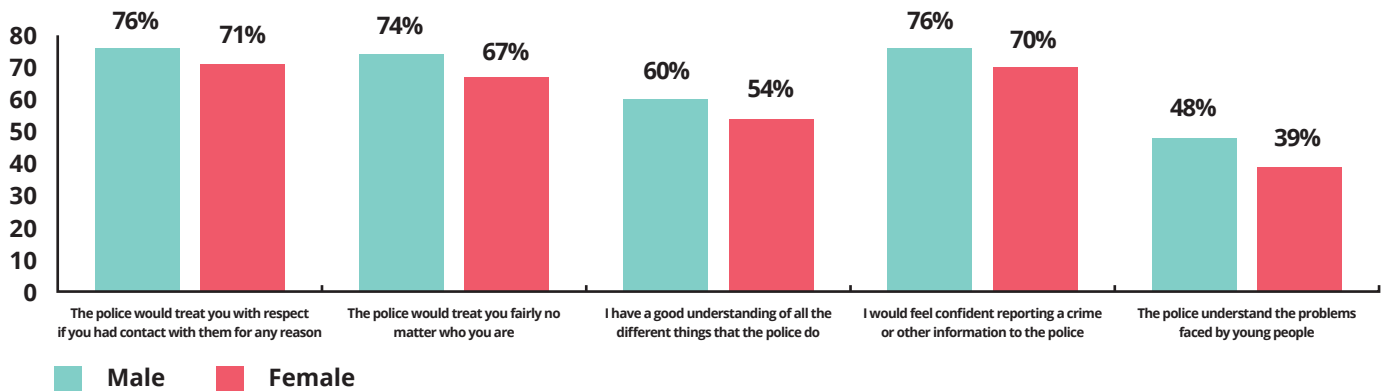
**Figure 7.2 Interest in having a Career in Policing, by Ethnicity**



The reasons why participants did not want to join the police were not shared in the survey and, therefore, it is difficult to draw conclusions on these disparities. However, analysis shows that female cadets were significantly less likely to strongly agree with certain positive statements about the police as were those from a minority ethnic group (See figures 7.3 and 7.4). This may not mean that cadets had less of a positive

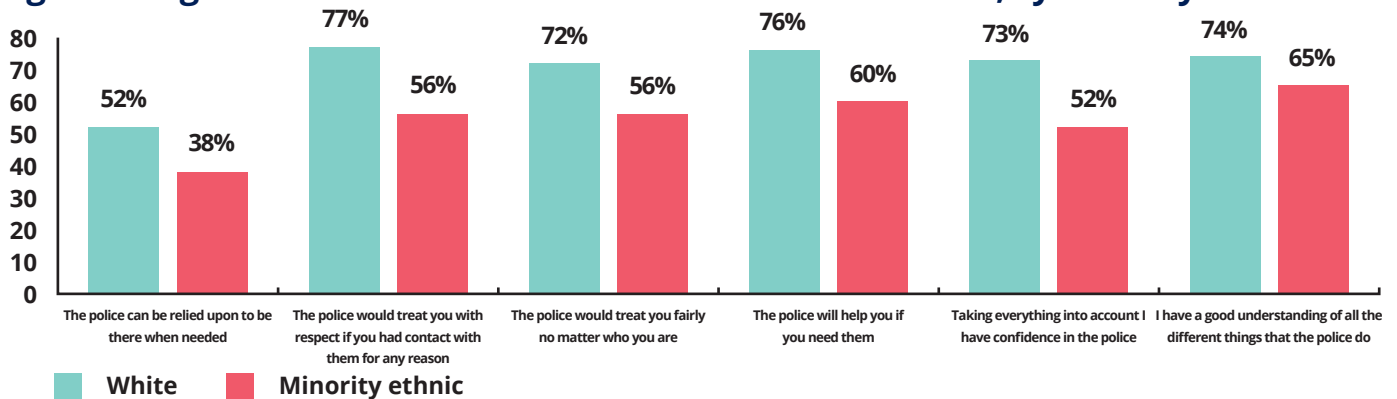
impact on certain groups as there is no baseline measure to determine how far each group may have changed. Therefore, further research would be beneficial into both the reasons why certain groups may be less interested in joining the police and the establishment of baseline data of new recruit's perceptions of the police and interest in joining the police would be beneficial.

**Figure 7.3 Agreement with Positive Statements about the Police, by Gender**



# Transitions – Survey Results

Figure 7.4 Agreement with Positive Statements about the Police, by Ethnicity



It should also be noted that despite there being a difference between males and females and white cadets and minority ethnic cadets, interest in a career in policing is very high amongst all groups. In a survey of 16-21 year olds in the general population in the year 2015/16 (ONS, 2018), only 4% indicated that they aspired to be in the protective services (e.g. a police officer or firefighter). Unfortunately, this data is not available broken down by ethnicity or gender. Overall, the survey findings indicate that most cadets are interested in a future career in policing, though not all.

# Transitions – Case Study Findings

The impacts of being a cadet was a topic of discussion within the case study focus groups, and several themes emerged within the analysis. The central point from the analysis was that the cadets offered valuable and new experiences which were perceived as providing beneficial evidence to enhance their CV's and prospects of employment. Furthermore, one cadet outlined how being a cadet was recognised within their current workplace and provided important evidence that secured an internal promotion.

**“Cadets also gives us the Duke of Edinburgh which is amazing to put on our CV for jobs when we are older which gives us a huge benefit and advantage to other people.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P5)**

**“I thought that if I joined and I had Police Cadets on my CV, it would give me more a chance of getting in than someone who didn't have it, so I thought even if I finish Police Cadets and I think,**

**“The Police isn't for me”, I've still got it on my CV and it's still something that I've done.” (West Yorkshire FG2, P5)**

**“Sometimes people do it for experience on your CV, to show you have done something.” (Essex FG2, P1)**

**“It got me a promotion at work... I put it on my application when I applied for a job and they looked at my application form again and they gave me a promotion at work for having that on my application form.” (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)**

The meaning of being a cadet was perceived as strengthening their image within the employment market, representing responsibility, maturity, and social and civic engagement. Being a cadet was understood as distinguishing them

from other young people, which advantageously positioned them to navigate their future trajectories, whether in the police or in other sectors.

**“I'd feel like as an employer it might stand out as, 'I've done this', I'd probably have a little bit of discipline, have respect for people in a workspace. It's - I have respect for people around me more.” (Dyfed-Powys FG1, P3)**

**“I think it's quite unique and no-one else does it. It's something to put on your CV as well. Something to say that you've done.” (West Yorkshire FG2, P2)**

There were many comments by young people about how the VPC enabled good links with the application processes for the Special Constabulary or as a Police Support Volunteer, which is good considering that most cadets had an interest at joining the police in the future. There were good examples within the case study sites of the cadet leaders facilitating specific inputs from different departments of interest for young people, though it was recognised that such engagements should be of interest to the wider unit. This supported the cadets by giving them more knowledge on the skills and abilities needed to thrive in different roles, which helped them both to make decisions about where they saw their future career being as well as obtaining demonstrable evidence for the application process.

**“We've had people come in and give us an example of an application form for the Special Constables and a practice exam for them. And we're quite lucky to have [name of cadet leader], which is part of the Special Constable recruitment line-up, and he's happy to help us through the process of application.” (West Yorkshire FG1, P5)**

# Transitions – Case Study Findings

**“They (cadet leaders) always ask us if there is a certain unit that we want to come in and talk to us. If you say which one they will do their best to get them in to talk to us.” (Lancashire FG1, P2)**

**“Well, I am going to get my ‘A’ Levels after my GCSE’s and carry on in the Cadets and then be a Special. I’ve told [cadet leader] that I want to be a Special, so he is going to help me through that process.” (Lancashire FG1, P4)**

**“They have taught us that you need to have confidence in yourself, discipline and all that to be able to join the Police, so you have got to take that on board and that you need to grow in confidence, so you try that within the Cadets and outside. You try to develop that.” (Essex FG2, P3)**

However, for some young people, there was not enough emphasis on how to negotiate the pathways into policing, with the content being more aligned to education and knowledge on topic areas. There were some negative impacts of policy shifts within forces that ‘changed the goalposts’ for cadets in terms of being successful in their transition into policing. For instance, in Lancashire, cadets described how they were now required, which they previously did not know, to ‘log’ hours volunteered in the cadet environment for it to be recognised within their application, which they attributed to them being unsuccessful with their application.

**“We learn about a lot of stuff behind it but we don’t really talk about how you get into it and paths we can take.” (Essex Fg2, P4)**

**“One of our old cadets has just become a leader and has applied to become a Special. He didn’t log any of his hours because we didn’t know about it and he didn’t get in.” (Lancashire FG2, P3)**

**“Maybe a better route into Policing for Cadets. Lancashire do a Cadet to Special Scheme. So, if you have been a Cadet for 3 years and you have been doing your hours and volunteering and going to events, you can skip a lot of the recruitments phases to be a Special. But now Specials are saying that they only want Career Specials.” (Lancashire FG2, P6)**

What is important to acknowledge is that many young people are very strategic when they join the cadets, in terms of the VPC being a pathway into policing. Young people positioned themselves to create seamless pathways from being a cadet, to cadet leader, to Special, to their final goal of being a police officer.

**“I joined when I was 16 anyway, so I could become a PSV. Now I’m 18, so I can apply for the Regulars.” (West Yorkshire FG1, P2)**

Some cadets expressed concerns that their experiences in cadets might not be recognised within the application process to become a regular police officer or to join the Special Constabulary. It was felt that the commitments made within the VPC should be recognised within the recruitment processes favourably.

**“Maybe setting up a better way, like if you’ve been a Cadet Police for a significant period of time, it should be recognised more. It’s still hard to get in to the Police, but if you’ve been a Cadet and have been putting yourself out there, you should be recognised more.” (Lancashire FG2, P6)**

## Summary

Overall, being a cadet was perceived by young people as beneficial to the life course, distinguishing them from other young people by providing important demonstrable skills and qualities. It was indicated that being a cadet was beneficial to recruitment processes, both within and outside of policing, though more focus was suggested on how to navigate pathways into employment alongside session content. Whilst there were some positive examples of strong links to the Special Constabulary and Police Support Volunteers, such connections were often dependent on the individual cadet leader and there are likely differences across units within force areas. The evidence relating to transitions, and that presented previously, illustrate how being a cadet had benefits to young people within the current phase of their life as well as to future phases within their life course. Importantly, young people actively think about what they want to do and strategically position themselves to increase their chances of success, with the VPC being seen as a platform to realise future employment within policing.

# Strategic Perspectives

**This chapter presents strategic perspectives which emerged from interviews with VPC force leads from across England and Wales. It first provides key themes that emerged during the analysis and then provides a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis based upon the strategic lead data.**





# Strategic Perspectives on the VPC

This section presents key issues and perspectives that emerged from the analysis and is structured into the following sections: general attitudes towards the VPC; views towards young people; value of VPC and transitions.

## General attitudes towards VPC

Perceptions of the VPC were generally positive among strategic leads across force areas. The VPC programme was seen as a positive activity for young people to take part in that helped to develop skills and achieve qualifications while engaging with marginalised and vulnerable groups. Moreover, a key benefit of the programme was the ability of the VPC to empower young people and give them a voice in their community.

**“Bringing people from different backgrounds together and create that sense of a team.”**

**“We are actively working to improve young people from what can be chaotic backgrounds through providing role-models and leaders for them to look up to... it’s about them socially interacting with others and becoming better people.”**

**“It not only helps the cadets on a personal level by giving them skills and abilities. It helps the interpretation of young people, it makes them visible within their communities, and people see that those young people aren’t out there causing ASB and other problems.”**

Cadet strategic leads suggested that their VPC programmes had tailored the national framework to be effective in their local environments. Locally designed sessions were seen as adding value and being more impactful due to the local knowledge that can be worked into the content. There was a suggestion that the materials provided at a national level requires

some development.

**“I don’t think each scheme needs to be the same nationally, because you’ve got the uniqueness of the area where you live and each force wanting to put their own stamp on it.”**

**“We have our own structure [locally] and our own goals, but we now work very closely with the central hub, who have given us a lot of direction.”**

**“We basically took the framework and reworked and reworded a lot of what was there.”**

There was support for more standardisation on a regional and national level, including suggestions of more structured guidance around a curriculum for cadet leaders to work from and more support for leaders in terms of training provision.

**“A national curriculum. That’s what we need. So that we’re all doing the same thing that everybody else is doing, rather than just making things up as we go.”**

**“We need to drive some consistency across the regions.”**

There was not a fixed model of cadet leadership and there was substantial variation across police force areas, with some programmes being led by paid police officers or staff, some led by volunteers, and many working with a combination of paid and unpaid leaders. There were concerns raised by some leaders about staffing the programme with volunteers, though such views fit within a broader concern about the sustainability of the programme if leaders decide not to continue.

# Strategic Perspectives on the VPC

**“We’ve got 7 PCSOs that are full time paid members of staff. They’re cadet coordinators so their role is to run the scheme, organise the time table, they’re the line-managers for any volunteers...  
...We’ve probably got about 15 adult volunteers, and then we’ve got about 25 young people who have been cadets and then stayed on to become cadet leaders.”**

**“We’ve 2 PCSOs, 1 PC and 1 sergeant who each run a unit, then they might have another couple of PCSO who help them, and then they’ve got 2 or 3 volunteers. But you can’t always rely on those volunteers. And if the PCSO isn’t on shift, they don’t necessarily want to come and run cadets.”**

Issues were identified around the recruitment of leaders which created risk around sustainability. In some areas, recruiting cadet leaders was a higher priority than recruiting cadets to ensure that cadet units could operate sustainably. However, some areas struggled to recruit leaders with the required experience and there were issues around compensating cadet leaders for their time. The sustainability of VPC units vis-à-vis depth of cadet leaders represents a key strategic challenge facing the VPC programme especially within planned strategic growth.

**“We struggle with experience. There aren’t enough experienced volunteers coming through. With the best will in the world, we have a lot of young, 18-year-old, ex-cadets, but we can’t give them a unit to look after.”**

**“It is one of the issues that we are facing. We are not getting those adults wanting to help with cadets.”**

**“I think that for the police officers, it’s quite difficult for them to get the time on the units, and essentially, we haven’t got enough support in place to support the volunteers out in the districts.”**

Additional issues were raised in relation to limits around the training available for cadet leaders in some areas. Although strategic leads overall felt that the fundamental elements such as safeguarding seemed to be covered, a lack of funding was preventing leaders from developing skills to create and deliver better quality content for cadet units.

**“The main training they get is safeguarding and risk assessments, the absolute must-haves before they can work with us. Over and above that, they get hardly any training on how to actually entertain and teach young people. We hope that when they come to us they’ve already got that experience. We’re not really in a position to give them that training purely because of the constraints: time, money.”**

**“Our officers or volunteers who are cadet leaders, have quite often had no training on how to prepare a lesson plan... that’s the kind of thing I would like to see them have in the future, that specialised training to support them.”**

**“There should be more investment in the training of the leaders... particularly for our PCSOs something around managing volunteers, something around young people.”**

There were several comments around the Marshall Platform, highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the system. Some strategic leads found the content useful but others suggested that it could be developed further to be more intuitive and provide more useful resources.

**“We use it, but there are quite a few IT issues with it, both getting onto it and then using it.”**

**“We have the portal... ..it’s a good system... ..but we could do with an app on a phone. It’s the only way it’s ever going to succeed in the future. Cadets and parents don’t do emails, and it’s an email-based system.”**

Overall, the general attitude towards the VPC was positive and that it added positive social value. Moreover, the VPC was seen as achieving significant impacts to young people in terms of skills and competencies that will increase the likelihood of employment alongside positive participation in their community. However, there were suggestions that the national content provided to forces via the Marshall Platform was in need of development and a strategy to improve the sustainability of the VPC programme by recruiting more cadet leaders were key strategic priorities.

## **Views towards young people**

Strategic leads across different forces were committed to finding balance and achieving a rich diversity of backgrounds within cadet units in their areas. There was evidence of good practice around different vulnerabilities, including children with poor mental health and those who have experienced social isolation. It was felt that more training was required to appropriately respond to and support young people who have specific needs, especially in relation to mental health.

**“It works really well because you can have somebody who’s not going to get a GCSE in their life, no matter how hard they try, and someone who’ll be a grade A student, working together and creating friendships where they would’ve probably never been friends if they hadn’t joined the cadet scheme.”**

**“Overall, our cadets are very reflective of [the county], and we do look to recruit in the areas where we have more hard to reach communities, so we have regular recruitment campaigns.”**

**“Socio-economically it’s quite a broad mix. We have youngsters who are very well looked-after and wealthy and well-to-do, and we have youngsters who come from very difficult wards, some of them who don’t like people in their area knowing that they’ve joined the police cadets because they’ll get a hard time.”**

Some VPC programmes reported working alongside other agencies, including Youth Offending, to recruit cadets who it was perceived will benefit from being a cadet. Recruitment procedures were also in place to process applications and visit the families of applicants to ensure the correct balance and diversity was achieved within units. Several leads commented that they received referrals from a host of agencies that were considered within the application processes.

**“We get referrals from Barnardos quite a lot. And then we also have the multi-agency teams, so we do get quite a few referrals through children’s social care or children and family wellbeing services as well as our local policing teams.”**

**“We have been approached by lots of referral agencies that want to get their troublesome kids into this scheme.”**

# Strategic Perspectives on the VPC

**“When it comes to shortlisting, the referrals will be the first ones we consider, because it is those children that are maybe vulnerable, there are issues going on at home that are causing them to run away or come to the attention of the police.”**

An important strength of the VPC is engagement from young people from BAME communities, with higher BAME representation compared with most other police programmes. There were, however, a few force areas that had found it challenging to engage with young people from BAME communities, an issue that relevant strategic leads were aware of. Whilst there was a desire to change the balance in programme that lacked representation from BAME communities, strategic leads found it challenging to outreach to BAME communities.

**“In terms of ethnicity, the community isn’t fully represented. We do try in areas where we need more representation, particularly in the Asian community. In [one of the wards] we do OK, but the other units don’t do so well in terms of that.”**

**“We have a number who are BAME, not as many as I would like. We have pockets of our community that are very diverse and other parts that are very white-British.... ...We still struggle with our BAME communities not wanting to come on board with the schemes.”**

VPC programmes in several areas were operating at full capacity with reported demand that could justify the introduction of more cadet units. However, having only a small number of units in some areas limited the capacity of the programme and, by extension, limited the reach and impact more broadly.

**“...we have waiting lists in most areas, which means there is a market and appetite for more people to join the police cadets here. So the opportunities are there to impact more and more young people.”**

**“At the moment I think we have 90 young people on the waiting list. So when we do recruit we will contact them and let them know.”**

**“If we get a lot of young people from a certain area applying we will always look at [starting up] a unit in that area if we can get the staff and the volunteers to run that unit, obviously. That’s how [some of the other units] started.”**

The financial climate that cadet units are operating in is quite challenging with some of the programmes only just sustainable, and this raises implications for some of the young people involved. Some programmes have considered charging subs and some already do. Some strategic leads highlighted that provision is in place for support with finance for those who can’t afford it, however, such practices may still present a barrier for those who don’t feel comfortable asking for help.

**“We don’t have any funding. We were given some money by our PCC when our latest units were opened, and we were given some money by the fire service, but that isn’t sustainable. They were one-off payments.”**

**“We live in an area that does have a high level of deprivation so we don’t want to put any expense on the cadets. I know in some areas they charge for lessons and have subs, but we don’t have anything like that, we keep everything free.”**

**“They pay subs every week, and whatever we spend on them comes out of that budget. So we don’t get funding from anywhere... ..we do have a separate fund where if there are children who cannot afford their £2 subs, they don’t have to pay.”**

Overall, the local VPC programmes were attentive to the issues and needs of engaging with young people with a range of social issues, though were often hampered by limited local provision.

## **Value of the VPC**

Evidence on the value of the VPC programmes seems to be powerful, but anecdotal. Whilst there is a survey available on the Marshall Platform to measure social impacts on young people, the engagement with and knowledge of the results was limited. This highlights the importance of raising awareness, dissemination and use of the results of the evidence that demonstrate change. A value-framework and evidence-generating practices so that longer-term benefits can be measured alongside success stories would enable the generation of a national evidence base for the VPC.

**“It’s really difficult to quantify a number of the successes of the scheme. How do you quantify a child that might possibly go down one route and end up costing the constabulary and other stakeholders hundreds of thousands of pounds, who comes into the cadet schemes and goes down a completely different path and might even become a police officer? You can’t quantify that.”**

**“We’ve not necessarily recorded that information before of what backgrounds the cadets have come from. It hasn’t been recorded and I don’t know why, because it is on the application form. But we are recording it now because we are meeting our aims and objectives of getting into those areas that need it.”**

Strategic leads pointed to several examples of young people whose lives have been turned around through their involvement with the VPC. Some had previously been involved with low-level criminal activity, but again without appropriate procedures to capture such impacts, there is no way to accurately assess how many young people experience such impacts.

**“We’ve had a couple of cadets in recent years who came to cadets because they were on that slippery slope, and one of them, I think it was last year that he left, and he’s now a PCSO.”**

**“We’ve got a young lad at [location redacted] who was engaged in low-level criminal behaviour. He was known to the youth offending team and to the neighbourhood policing team. He joined the cadets and has now changed his life around. He now volunteers for everything. He’s no longer in trouble, and his younger brother has just joined as well.”**

**“We had one young lad who started with us when we first started the cadets. He was very isolated. He didn’t really speak. He was very lonely, living with his grandparents and didn’t have a relationship with his parents at all. And from working with us he gained confidence and ended up moving back in with his father. It made him realise he could do things. We ended up taking him to a national conference where he stood up and spoke in front of 200 people.”**



# Strategic Perspectives on the VPC

Some of the strategic leads mentioned the value to the police, both operationally and strategically, of the VPC programme, with some areas noticing the improvement in community relations through the visibility of the cadets and others referring to the cadets as a resource in finding out what is going on in certain communities. It was understood that the VPC had improved over recent years in its placing within the community, which was seen as a positive development for the programme.

**“Cadets are [the police’s] ears to a certain extent in the youth community. They are helpful when it comes to the police wanting to know how best to engage with young people.”**

**“Community engagement has grown... our visibility within the communities [the county] is definitely growing... people in [the county] now know what the police cadets scheme is, whereas perhaps 2 or 3 years ago they wouldn’t have done.”**

**“The communities, when they meet [the cadets], they love it. I think they like them more than the regular officers, because they see young people doing something, standing up and making a difference... and I think they do really appreciate it.”**

There was a challenge identified in interviews with strategic leads at balancing those young people who join the cadets with ambitions of joining the police in a professional capacity and those who are referred or signposted in by other agencies with challenging behaviours. This points to a need for significant thought around programme content as well as session delivery to ensure these groups all get what they want and need from the cadets.

**“All the stuff that we deliver needs to be delivered in an entertaining way, so that the youngsters are entertained. They come to us because they want to have fun, and if they’re not having fun then they don’t come. So there’s a lot of learning involved, but it’s got to be fun.”**

**“We always tell them ‘we’re not working with you to be an officer. We’re working to make you a good person in terms of the skills and abilities that you will have.’ Because half way through they might find they don’t want to be an officer.”**

**“There’s obviously a reason why they’ve chosen to go to the Police Cadets instead of the Scouts, so when we’re doing our lessons, we don’t want to lose the police aspect of it. So even if we’re looking at the development of them as young people, there still needs to be that police input, whether it’s a visit from fire arms or the dogs unit.”**

Cadets are able to gain valuable skills and even qualifications in some areas. There is a need, however, to provide more centralised guidance on how qualifications can be accessed so that opportunities are available across all VPC programmes.

**“We also have opportunities for our cadets to do the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver awards, which the force fully funds.”**

**“We’re also keen as a region to get the cadets involved in the Senior Cadet Leadership course that we hope to be able to do later in the year.”**



**“When we work with other agencies they provide different training. So for example, one of the groups has been trained in mental health first aid... ..and another group have done ‘Heart Start’ with the fire service.”**

Overall, the strategic leads were positive about the value and impact the VPC achieved, but it was recognised that better mechanisms to capture and assess such positive benefits were needed. The VPC was seen as improving over time in relation to its positioning within communities. A challenge locally was achieving a balance within programmes to make them both accessible and positive for a diverse group of young people.

## Transitions

There were seen to be several benefits from engagement in the VPC programme for young people from the perspective of the strategic leads. The most important benefit was that the VPC had a stabilising effect on young peoples’ life-course trajectories, providing them with a greater depth of resilience when taking their next steps.

**“Changing youngsters’ life-cycles. Maybe putting an early intervention in place to help them on a path that in years and years to come change people’s behaviour. I do think that’s the ultimate goal of our cadet scheme, changing people’s attitudes, outlooks and approaches towards life.”**

**“I think it’s confidence above all other things, because I’ve seen cadets come in at 13 and cry at their interviews, they’re so nervous. And when they leave us at 18, anybody would employ them, they are just fantastic young people.”**

Some strategic leads provided examples of cadet leaders providing more holistic support to young

people through the VPC programme. Leaders were described as providing a form of mentoring in helping cadets into further education, higher education and employment opportunities that it was perceived would not have been achieved without the young person’s involvement in the cadets.

**“...we’re also seeing a number of cadets who have had learning disabilities or psychological problems or behavioural issues that are going onto universities or further education or picking up normal employment, all supported by the cadet scheme and the cadet leaders that do a phenomenal job.”**

**“We had a cadet who left last September, but he had an interview in November, so we still met with him in the October to give him some interview prep, to help him with his forms, just so he can get into employment.”**

**“We just want to get them ready, so that when they finish school, they’re in a good place to take the next step, whatever that next step is. And we will help them with that. There will be an element of careers advice.”**

Several VPC programmes also supported cadets into volunteering in the Special Constabulary when they reach the end of the VPC programme. Although it wasn’t implemented in all force areas, some of the forces had fast-track processes in place to ensure that cadets did not have to follow all the same processes as those applying to volunteer with the police for the first time.

# Strategic Perspectives on the VPC

**“We have a fast-track route through to our specials where if they’ve been with us as a volunteer police cadet for three years and they’re up to the required standard and they’ve proved themselves in the cadets, they don’t have to go through a normal application process to be a special.”**

**“Because we manage the specials as well, that is something we start talking to them about when they’re hitting that sort of age... ..and we send out information to them about the PQF for those that are interested so that they get it first hand from us. So we do definitely try to support them.”**

**“If a young person has been with us for 3 or more years, and they’ve attended regularly and consistently volunteered, then they can apply to join the specials and get straight through to fitness test and medical and vetting. So they don’t need to go through the assessment centre procedure. They don’t need to go through any interview.”**

Some sites had a staged programme for cadets reaching the upper age-limit whereby they transition into a junior cadet leadership role. This provides an opportunity to gain valuable experience and skills to carry forward into future employment.

**“...anybody else who wanted to remain supporting the cadets, we’ll put them on a bit of a leadership programme, and then they become assistant junior cadet leaders and they support the delivery of the cadet scheme.”**

**“We’ve got quite a few cadets coming through who leaders have recommended and supported their applications to become police support volunteers, so they are now young adult leaders, and that’s working really well for us here.”**

**“We have a system whereby cadets who reach 18 can come back as junior leaders. We get a lot who want to do that.”**

**“At 18, we hope they will come back and be cadet leaders with us.”**

Overall, the VPC was articulated as providing significant value to young people’s transitions following being a cadet. Whilst this benefit was for all cadets, the VPC was seen as having a stabilising effect on young people’s life course trajectories who presented challenging behaviour or had specific vulnerabilities. It was felt that such changes would not have been fostered without engagement in the VPC.

# SWOT Analysis

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## Strengths

**Provides an environment for young people to meet different people that they wouldn't otherwise socialise or interact with.**

- Strategic leads highlighted the value of bringing together young people from different backgrounds, many of whom would be otherwise isolated due to social issues or disabilities;
- VPC programmes reported a focus on creating a rich diversity within cadet units that was perceived as being beneficial to all young people.

**Young people gain new and important life skills and qualifications.**

- Joining the cadets provides young people with important life skills through interactions with other cadets, cadets leaders, and members of the public when volunteering in the local community;
- Several cadet programmes facilitate the completion of awards and qualifications, including the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, first aid, and mental health first aid, although this is not consistent across force areas.

**Develops positive and meaningful relationships with other young people and adults.**

- For many vulnerable young people who experience chaotic and often dysfunctional relationships with their families, the VPC provides stable and consistent adult role models to look up to and develop relationships with;
- The relationships that young people build with each other through the cadets are based on positive personal and group development,

involving having fun and making a contribution to the local community.

**Provides a safe environment for young people to stay out of trouble.**

- Many of the strategic leads recognised the need to provide a stable environment for some vulnerable young people in contrast to their chaotic home environments;
- There were several examples of young people, previously known to police, whose lives had been 'turned-around' due to joining the cadets were provided.

**Provides positive and varied experiences. Joining the cadets gives young people opportunities that they might not otherwise get;**

- Examples include supporting the police presence at large sporting events, regional cadets events, as-well-as learning about specialist police teams such as firearms and the police dogs unit.
- Develops a positive narrative around volunteering from a young age.
- Although providing future special constables is not the primary objective of the VPC, involvement in the cadets promotes the idea of volunteering in the community and making a difference;
- Embedding this message from a young age will hopefully result in a community-spirit in cadets' adult lives, whether they volunteer with police forces or other organisations.

## Weaknesses

**Inconsistent opportunities for young people due to local design and differences in funding.**

- Some VPC programmes were able to provide

# SWOT Analysis

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fully funded opportunities for cadets to achieve awards and qualifications, as well as having access to transport, enabling a broader range of activities on offer;

- Differences in funding across force areas means that some VPC programmes cannot offer these opportunities to their cadets, resulting in some profound inequalities in the experience young people are receiving.

## **Gap in guidance around effective leadership models.**

- Approaches to leadership within cadet units widely varied across VPC programmes with some led by volunteers and others having paid police officers or staff leading units;
- This presents further inconsistencies for the young people attending cadets across different programmes nationally as well as potential risks to sustainability, either through the withdrawal of funding to cover paid positions, or the lack of volunteer leaders.

## **Has a small footprint in large geographical areas.**

- The number of spaces for young people in some large geographic areas limited opportunities for engagement significantly, with some areas having waiting lists and demand that would justify expansion;
- Large geographical areas, especially areas that are predominantly rural, are difficult to provide resources for, resulting in young people potentially having to travel long distances to attend cadet sessions;
- This could be limiting the reach and impact of the cadets to vulnerable young people in areas where there is not a local VPC unit.

## **Opportunities**

### **Further training for cadet leaders to help more challenged/vulnerable young people.**

- Strategic leads were keen to provide cadet leaders with more training to be better prepared to deal with different vulnerabilities and challenges that young people attending cadets might experience. This included mental health training, in addition to behavioural issues, physical and learning disabilities;
- There was also an identified gap in knowledge and skills around session design and delivery, which was considered to be a priority in ensuring a high-quality experience for young people attending cadets.

### **Develop consistency in the opportunities available to young people through the VPC.**

- It was felt that the national VPC organisation could provide guidance to police forces regarding what opportunities should be made available to cadets, especially in relation to strategic partnerships with national organisations;
- This should include training and qualifications in specific skills as well as awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh.

### **Develop a national VPC curriculum with local flexibility.**

- Strategic leads were aware that there could be 44 very different versions of cadets being delivered across England and Wales;
- While flexibility to provide locally-designed content was valued, it was felt that cadets would benefit from consistency provided by the shaping and framework delivered from a national curriculum.

### **Developing junior cadets to fill space between mini-police and cadets.**

- In areas where mini-police existed in primary schools, some strategic leads had identified that the police lose an opportunity to continue engagement with young people between the ages of 11 and 13 years;
- This highlighted an opportunity to develop a junior cadets programme to keep young people involved following being a mini-police officer;
- The main challenge of this, apart from funding, was to make it different enough from the senior cadet programme, as the cadets would be younger and so there is a different more advanced senior programme to transition on to.

### **Regional and national events to bring cadets together.**

- Some strategic leads said that their cadets had hugely enjoyed the few occasions when they got to interact with VPC programmes from other areas, but that opportunities to do so were limited;
- The VPC could host more regional and national events that bring VPC programmes together, this would enhance a sense of belonging to something much larger whilst also providing an opportunity for programmes to learn from each other and present what they have achieved.

### **Developing the portal to provide useful resources, information and management tools.**

- There was limited use of the Marshall Platform, however, some strategic leads expressed hope that it could become a useful tool in providing resources and

information for delivering more impactful and standardised learning;

- The desire for a mobile app was raised, with potential for use as a management tool, for cadet leaders to communicate quickly with volunteers from their unit.

### **Threats**

#### **Safeguarding.**

- Although all strategic leads confirmed that safeguarding training was mandatory for any adult involved with cadets, safeguarding of children always presents a risk to an organisation that focuses on young people;
- The national VPC organisation must ensure that safeguarding training of leaders and volunteers across all of the VPC programmes meets the required standards.

#### **Data measuring systems.**

- Measuring of impact has been largely anecdotal to date, this makes it difficult to accurately report outcomes for individuals or any return on investment;
- This presents a threat as obtaining future or additional funding may be negatively affected if impact cannot be evidenced.

#### **Funding.**

- Some VPC programmes were fully self-funded with no help from the local force or PCC, whereas other programmes had a number of paid staff operating either strategically or in the delivery;
- Funding presents a threat in both models, as a lack of funding limits the opportunities available to cadets, but the withdrawal or reduction of funding from a previously well-funded programme threatens sustainability altogether.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides key conclusions and recommendations based upon the evidence presented throughout this report.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates how the VPC offers positive impact and value to young people and their future. Young people were proud to be a cadet and were positive about their experiences in the cadets, especially in relation to gaining confidence, reducing social anxiety and meeting new people. The opportunities to develop new skills and qualifications in the VPC were advantageous to young people's employment prospects. Cadets valued making a difference and impact in their community, and desired to have more community involvement in the VPC, more events and opportunities to volunteer. Cadet leaders were less positive compared with cadets, with key issues influencing these results being having enough time to do the role well and having enough cadet leaders.

Being a cadet was found to achieve a range of positive social impacts and value, promoting citizenship and a strengthened sense of social responsibility. The VPC offered important opportunities to develop life skills, such as first aid, team work and independence as well as specific awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh. Importantly, cadets felt more aware of the consequences of their choices and behaviours, which relates to a more mature sense of self. Alongside these impacts to cadets, cadets were empowered to deliver a range of positive impacts to others through volunteering and raising money for charitable causes. For young people who present challenging behaviours or attitudes, the rules and ethos of the VPC environment had a positive effect. The VPC in this respect offered a positive alternative for these young people to construct a pro-social identity. However, such impacts are inconsistent, being reliant on the abilities of cadet leaders. More guidance and awareness of good practice of effective behaviour management techniques would better support cadet leaders to be more

supportive of positive behaviour change.

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that the VPC positively impacts the career aspirations of young people, especially those who were interested in a future career in policing. Important differences were identified in the interest to join policing along gendered and ethnic lines, which warrant further consideration. Nevertheless, being a cadet provided beneficial evidence to enhance young people's CV's and employment prospects, helping to distinguish cadets from other young people. There are many examples of good practice of the VPC facilitating good links with the application processes for the Special Constabulary and Police Support Volunteers, however it was suggested that such connections need to be strengthened.

Strategic leads for the VPC in forces indicated that the VPC was a positive and important programme within local contexts, though there was support for more standardisation on regional and national levels. There were powerful but anecdotal examples of positive change and social impact, highlighting the necessity of creating a value framework and robust evidence-generating practices. Issues around recruitment of cadet leaders was identified as a key threat to sustainability, which was also consequential to planned growth. More and better training for cadet leaders was suggested to be a key need of the VPC alongside achieving a sustainable financial model.

Recommendations (R) are organised into 2 categories: strategy and practice.

## Strategy

**R. To reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the strategic position of the VPC within the Citizens in Policing portfolio, creating better**

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## **connections with other strategic areas, such as Children and Young People.**

There are benefits to the VPC being located within the Citizens in Policing portfolio, most notably at creating strong connections with the Special Constabulary and Police Support Volunteers. However, the VPC is relatively poorly positioned within other strategic areas, such as the Children and Young People portfolio, and often seems to not be sufficiently considered in plans to address societal concerns such as knife crime, online safety and other risks that young people face. The VPC would be stronger if it was aligned to multiple portfolios, facilitating important social action and awareness opportunities for cadets to make a difference.

## **R. To create a sustainable financial and resourcing model to underpin planned growth of the VPC.**

Whilst the VPC has grown over recent years in terms of its national footprint, it remains a relatively small programme within some large geographic areas, with limited spaces in the VPC for young people who are interested. Planned growth is limited by two entwined factors: 1. the financing and resourcing of the VPC and 2. the recruitment and training of cadet leaders. Strategies should be developed to address these issues, with local programmes being supported to flourish.

## **R. To develop a national evidence-base for the VPC that focuses foremost on the social value and impact of participation for young people.**

There is a need to embed processes to capture the activities and outcomes for young people in the VPC. Evidence at present is largely anecdotal, with limited evidence relating to behaviour change or social value. Also, there

is a need to identify good practice and share this across sites to avoid duplication and save resource. It is important that such evidence generating practices are coordinated across programmes to ensure that the value of the VPC can be evidenced. This would better position the VPC programme within national funding opportunities to expand and embed the provision locally.

## **R. To mature police-led uniformed youth engagement programmes, designing pathways between mini-police, junior cadet and cadet initiatives.**

In many sites, there is a gap of provision between the mini-police and senior cadets. A larger strategic vision for all uniformed children and young people engagement (from mini-police age 8 through to cadet age 18) would create continued opportunities for children and young people to get involved and stay involved. Junior police cadet initiatives have begun in some sites, having great strategic promise at bridging the gap between mini-police and senior cadet programmes.

## **R. To strengthen support for young people in their transitions following being a cadet.**

Most young people currently involved in the cadets are interested at joining and building a successful career in policing. It is recognised that adult volunteer programmes have experienced local and national policy shifts, and it is important that the VPC is positioned to facilitate successful trajectories whereby the contributions young people make as a cadet are recognised and valued. However, it is equally important to provide support to young people who see their futures outside of policing.

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## Practice

### **R. To consider all developmental points made throughout this report by young people and cadet leaders.**

There were many developmental points raised in this report made by cadets and cadet leaders to improve the VPC. It is important to consider such views on a local level, engaging with cadets in a constructive dialogue to improve the experience and impact of units.

### **R. To increase opportunities for cadets to engage in positive social action projects.**

Young people valued opportunities to engage in social action projects and make a difference within their local communities. Cadets wanted to engage more in initiatives in communities to address local issues or raise awareness, facilitating them to make the most of time given to being a cadet and increasing the impact they can make. Opportunities exist to engage in shared social action campaigns between units, either on a regional or national level, which would both serve to increase the contribution of cadets to the specific cause but also strengthen feelings of belonging to a regional/national cadet family for young people.

### **R. To reflect on session timings and structures, to maximise the time young people give to cadets and ensure a range of activities.**

There was a need to ensure that the time young people give to police cadets was used effectively within a set of activities using different formats (e.g. presentation, group discussions, activities etc.). Whilst young people were very positive about what they get from being a cadet, sessions at times had too much free time and required

more purpose. It is important that inputs from officers and departments are coordinated around topics or issues across multiple sessions, to achieve a coherence to programmes.

### **R. To develop training and guidance concerning behaviour management and good practice in terms of support for young people with problematic behaviours or attitudes.**

Whilst there were several examples provided of positive impact for young people with problematic behaviours or attitudes, these impacts were inconsistent across and within programmes. More training and knowledge is needed for cadet leaders in how to best support young people with specific needs and good practice concerning how to keep them engaged in the cadets.

### **R. To improve the provision of materials for cadet leaders available through the Marshall Platform.**

The content and materials on the Marshall Platform were useful to cadet leaders and strategic leads, though it was suggested that the system could be improved to be more intuitive and provide more useful resources. In particular, content and materials that were provided were useful starting points for sessions, though were developed locally before they were suitable for delivery.

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