



Institute for  
**Public Safety  
Crime and Justice**

# **Police Support Volunteers National Benchmarking 2021**

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# About the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice

Established in 2014, the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (IPSCJ) at the University of Northampton delivers high quality research and evaluation, insight, and innovation in the fields of public safety, crime and justice. The IPSCJ is situated at the interface between practice, policy, and academia, adopting an evidence-based approach to enhance public service delivery models, organisational strategy, and outcomes for service users. The IPSCJ collaborates with partner organisations at local, regional, national, and international scales to address key global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The core mission of the IPSCJ is to support positive evidence-based policy and practice change for the benefit of society.

The IPSCJ has five research and evaluation portfolios:

**Health and Justice:** We explore intersections between health and justice, working with a wide range of partners and agencies in community and prison settings. Example projects include:

- Evaluating Community Sentence Treatment Requirements in England, funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement and local CSTR Programme Boards
- Assessing the Effectiveness of Mental Health Street Triage in the East Midlands, funded by Northamptonshire Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

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- National evaluations of the Mini Police and Volunteer Police Cadets, funded by the Home Office Police Transformation Fund
- Fast-tracking vulnerable young people into the police cadets in Nottinghamshire, funded by the Volunteer Police Cadets
- Evaluating early intervention pilots in Northamptonshire with young people at risk of exclusion, funded by Northamptonshire Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

**Citizens in Policing:** We investigate the roles, functions, and contributions of volunteers within public safety and policing. Example projects include:

- Exploring synergies within volunteering in law enforcement and public safety in the UK and Japan, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council
- National programme of research in partnership with the NPCC portfolio for Citizens in Policing, funded by the Home Office Police Transformation Fund

**Organisational Development:** We support organisations to understand practices, structures, and cultures to improve efficiency and lead change. Example projects include:

- Organisational development programme with the East Midlands Specialist Operations Unit (EMSOU), funded by EMSOU
- Place-based leadership development in Kenya and Uganda, funded by the Danish Institute Against Torture
- Workforce engagement in Leicestershire Police and Northamptonshire Police, funded by Leicestershire Police and Northamptonshire Police

**Equality, Vulnerability and Inclusion:** We empower individuals and communities whose voices are not often heard to take part in research and evaluation. Example projects include:

- Understanding serious violence in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire, funded by Nottinghamshire Office of Police and Crime Commissioner
- Evaluation of Women's Health Services for Perinatal Female Offenders in HMP Peterborough, funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement – East of England

## Executive Summary

This report presents analysis from the national Police Support Volunteer (PSV) data benchmarking exercise. All police forces in England and Wales completed a survey in summer 2021, covering data and operational elements of their PSV programmes. This report follows on from similar national benchmarking undertaken across all forces in 2016 and 2018.

Key findings from the PSV national benchmarking exercise are summarised below:

### **The impact of Covid-19**

- Covid-19 has had a significant impact on PSV programmes. Most police forces (34) had suspended their PSV programmes at some point during the pandemic period, and a similar proportion had experienced disruption in recruitment. Most forces have changed roles for PSVs and how they manage and communicate across their PSV programmes. Estimates in this benchmarking exercise for PSV hours nationally, at 190,000, are well below previous benchmarking estimates of 450,000 hours in 2018 and c.600,000 hours in 2016, with Covid-19 likely a predominant factor in that pattern.

### **Numbers of PSVs**

- There were **7632** PSVs counted by forces in this benchmarking exercise. This is broadly consistent with the circa 8,000 PSVs headcount of recent police national workforce statistics. The figure is a little lower than the most recent national statistics and previous benchmarking surveys.
- Key challenges remain with the quality of data in relation to PSVs. The figures that some individual police forces report for their PSV numbers fluctuate significantly, there are major gaps in some areas of data (e.g. ethnic diversity, disability), and there remain grey areas in terms of definitions and counting.
- Cadet Leaders represent a sizeable proportion of PSVs (12.2% in this benchmarking exercise). However, not all forces consider and count Cadet Leaders as being PSVs (10 do not count them), and aligning figures with the recent national VPC Census, across forces there are hundreds of volunteer Cadet Leaders not counted as PSVs.
- Differences in practice remain in terms of volunteer Chaplains (counted by 33 forces as PSVs) and Community Speedwatch (CSW) volunteers (counted by 13). Whilst over four hundred volunteers with CSW are managed and counted by their forces as PSVs, there are an estimated several thousand other CSW volunteers not counted as such.
- PSV programmes in individual forces vary a great deal in scale. About a dozen forces have relatively small PSV programmes, in the tens rather than hundreds of volunteers. At the other end of the spectrum, a handful of police forces have several hundred PSVs.
- In terms of comparative scale, the variation is also substantial. Comparing headcount of PSVs by force population, regular officer numbers, or police staff numbers, the scale of variation is that some force PSV programmes are eight to ten times as large as others.

### **Who volunteers as a PSV?**

- As was the case in previous benchmarking surveys in 2016 and 2018, this benchmarking survey shows roughly a 50:50 split in terms of male and female PSVs.
- The age profile is also very similar to that identified in the 2018 benchmarking exercise, with perhaps a *slight* growth in younger PSVs and commensurately *small* reduction in older PSVs. There remains an age range between thirty and fifty where there are relatively smaller numbers of PSVs. The main headline in terms of age profile is the large proportion of PSVs who are over fifty, and within that over sixty. This contrasts with other elements of the police family.

### ***Length of service and reasons for leaving***

- In terms of length of service, the pattern is also very similar to the 2018 benchmarking survey; four in ten PSVs are within their first two years of service, with only a quarter having served more than five years. Whilst the profile of PSVs may be similar to the 2018 benchmarking survey, the actual population of PSVs has changed a lot: over half of the PSVs currently in cohort were not PSVs back in 2018, having joined since that benchmarking exercise took place.
- Personal reasons and career change are predominant factors identified for PSVs at their point of leaving.

### ***Delivering the PSV programme nationally and locally***

- The level of knowledge and engagement with elements of the national PSV programme by individual forces varies. Fourteen forces reported they were fully aware of the work of the PSV working group, twenty-two said they were somewhat aware, and eight said they were unaware. Whilst a majority of forces have engaged with the Valuing Volunteers Framework, the PSV handbook, and have access to the knowledge hub, a sizeable (and consistent) body of forces are less engaging in those elements.
- In terms of future approach to recruiting PSVs, all forces have an intention to recruit, and commonly forces identify the need for recruitment to be driven by 'business' needs, raising internal buy-in and promotion of PSVs as being important. The degree to which there is a broader strategy for recruiting PSVs seems to vary, with seventeen forces reporting that they have a strategic recruitment plan.
- Barriers identified by forces to future recruitment reflect some key common themes. These include processes that are often long, drawn-out, and time consuming, there are sometimes limitations experienced in terms of engagement by the 'business', and internal 'blockages', and there are challenges in achieving reach, diversity, and recruitment of minority groups across PSVs, as well as some aspects of age of volunteers.
- Broadly half of forces (22) said that they would welcome additional assistance and resources to help them in their recruitment.
- Only thirteen forces reported that they had training specifically for those who manage or are responsible for PSVs.

### ***Developing the roles of PSVs***

- Despite having now been available for several years, there still remains virtually no take-up of the opportunity to designate powers to non-warranted volunteers. Only one police force, Kent, is currently developing this approach. Four other forces have indicated an intent to consider this in the future.
- Half of forces (22) reported that they have volunteer roles in partnership with other agencies. The extent of partnership volunteer roles varied, with a handful of forces having substantively developed in this aspect across a larger number of roles.
- Across forces, it is recognised that there is limited opportunity for ongoing PSV training and often few developmental opportunities. Challenges to delivering training for PSVs were identified and including the limited extent of development pathways, limited resources to deliver training (and competing demands on learning and development staff), and the challenges of PSV availability for training. Thirty-one forces said they would like to see more support for forces around training and developing PSVs.

### ***Employer Supported Volunteering***

- Eighteen forces reported that they ESP for their PSVs who are police staff, whilst 24 said that they have not. These arrangements have developed at a local level and show a wide range of variation between those forces.

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# 1. Introduction

This report presents findings from a national data benchmarking survey of Police Support Volunteer programmes across police forces in England and Wales. Police Support Volunteers are non-warranted volunteers who operate within every police service across England and Wales, they perform a wide range of roles, including 'back office' support and 'front-line' delivery. Every police force across England and Wales, and the British Transport Police, responded in the early summer of 2021 to a survey which covered a wide range of aspects of their local PSV programmes.

The online survey covered the following aspects:

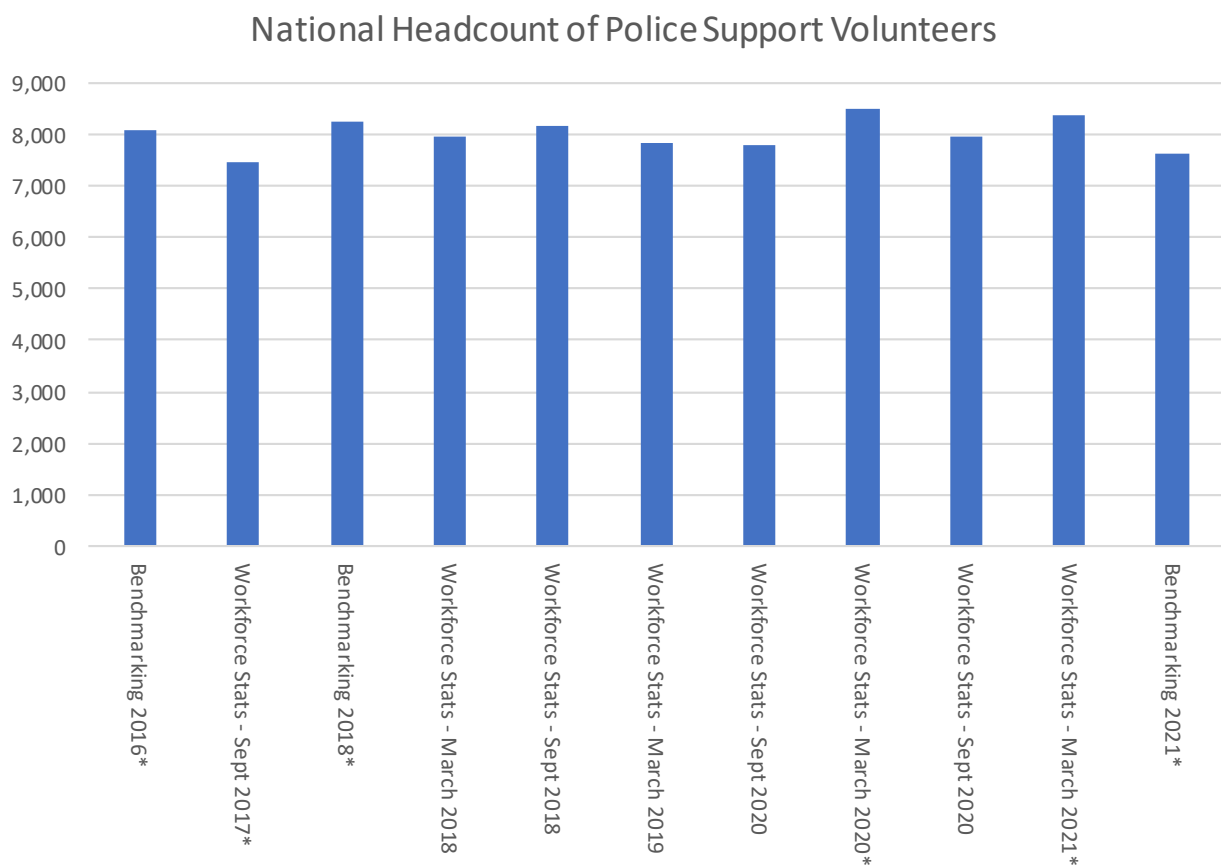
- Numbers, length of service, and hours served.
- The nature of who volunteers as a PSV, including demography, ethnicity, gender, and disability.
- How PSV programmes operate and are resourced and delivered locally in forces.
- The impact of Covid-19 on PSV programmes in forces.
- Awareness of and engagement with national aspects of the PSV programme by local forces.
- Data on those PSVs who have left their volunteer roles, and their reasons for departure.

This findings report provides high-level data across the survey questions and identifies key issues and trends.

## 2. Headcount of PSVs

The National Benchmarking Surveys show that, as was the case in previous benchmarking exercises in 2016 and 2018, every police force in England and Wales has an active PSV programme, albeit these programmes vary greatly in their scale and content.

Looking across the data from forces at a national level, the overall number of PSVs identified was **7,632**. As shown in the graph below, this figure is broadly in the same range (slightly lower) to the national CiP benchmarking exercises in 2016 (8,106) and 2018 (8,265) and to figures provided for PSVs through the biannual national police workforce statistics. The most recent figure for March 2021 from the national workforce statistics recorded 8,281 PSVs across police forces (8387 adjusted for missing force data). As the graph below reflects, at a national level, counts of PSVs over the past five years have provided a relatively consistent and stable national figure, in the region of 8,000 (+/- 500).



However, the data picture for numbers of PSVs at individual police force level is far less stable. There are, for example, significant differences in the counts of PSVs shared by forces into this National Benchmarking Survey and into the most recent (March 2021) police national workforce statistics, despite both data requests essentially reflecting the same time period.

Looking back across the datasets in recent national police workforce statistics, the figures for PSVs in individual forces remain volatile, with several police forces' numbers jumping up and down over six-monthly periods markedly, and in a manner which appears to reflect data quality issues rather than the reality of sharply fluctuating changes of numbers on the ground.

There remain several key challenges in counting the number of PSVs:

- As reflected above, there remains major volatility in the data at individual force level, which raises questions over data quality, and in consistency of applying the definition of 'PSVs' within individual forces.
- Differences in local practice results in categories of volunteers being managed and counted as PSVs in some police forces and not managed as part of the PSV programme in others. To identify only a few of the more significant elements of this, there remains inconsistency as to whether Cadet Leaders, CSW volunteers, Neighbourhood Watch, chaplaincy volunteers, and victim support volunteers are managed as PSVs (according to the national definition) and thus counted within individual police forces as part of the PSV cohort. This in effect means that comparing numbers of PSVs between different police forces runs the risk of not comparing like-with-like.
- There are some questions over the level of engagement and activity of PSVs within police forces. As there is not a widely recognised national minimum hours of service expectation for PSVs (unlike for Special Constables, where the sixteen hours per month expectation is broadly consistent across most police forces), there remain uncertainties about the degree of activity and engagement of those being counted as PSVs. Whilst the picture will no doubt vary widely between forces, analysis work in individual forces has suggested that 30-45% of PSVs may not have actively volunteered in the recent past, and that as many as 10-15% of individuals recorded in PSV cohorts may never have served any volunteer hours at all.

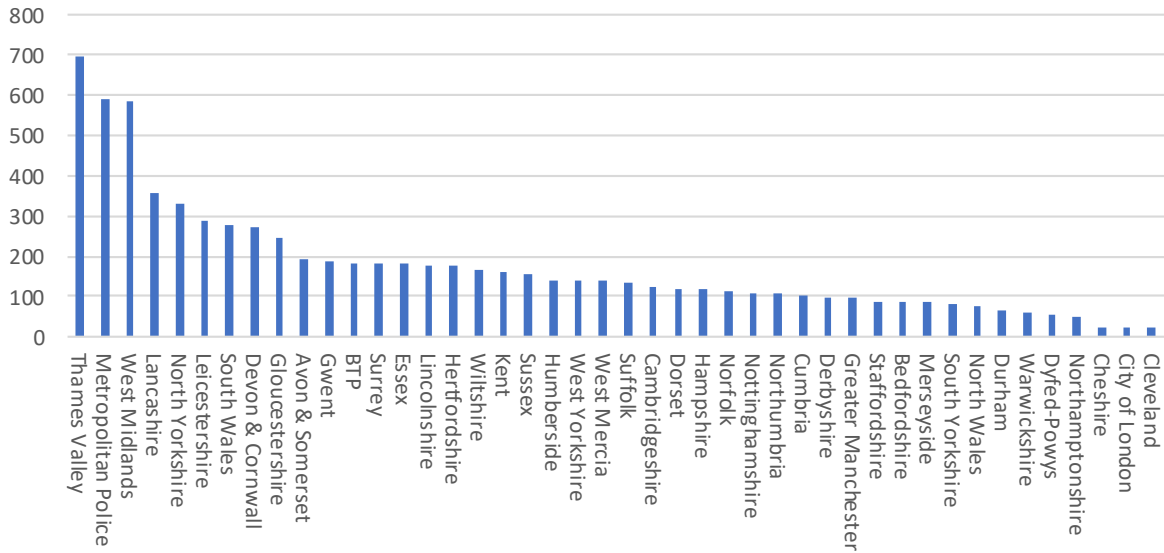
The Covid-19 period has added complexity to some of the above challenges.

More positively, the development of DutySheet utilisation across police forces for PSVs is recognised as providing an improved data management practice across PSV cohorts.

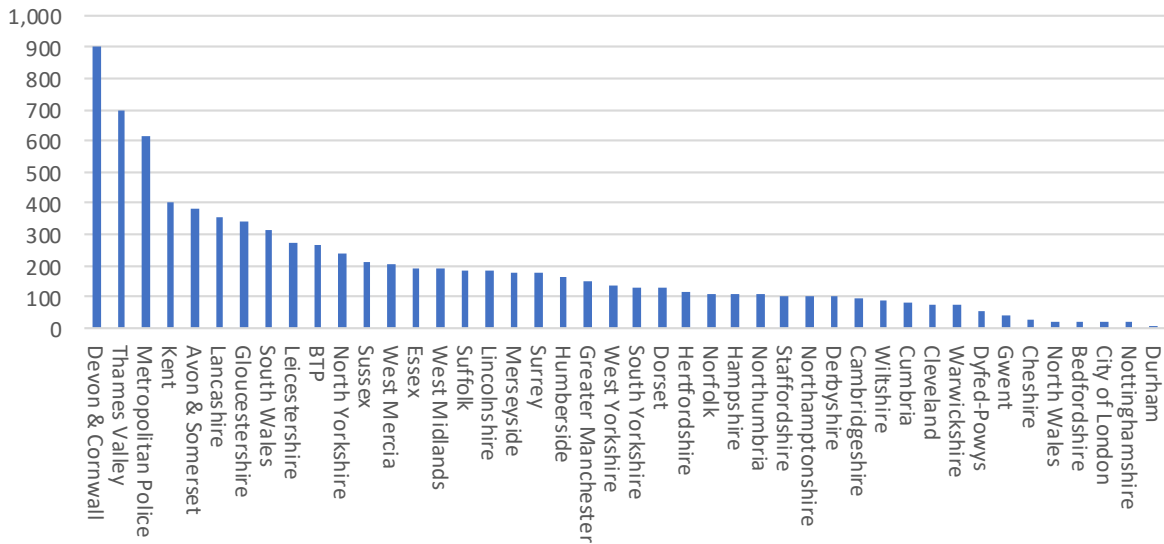
Notwithstanding these data challenges of looking at numbers of PSVs at individual police force level, the following two graphs show the raw numbers of PSVs in each police force. The first graph shows this for the National Benchmarking Surveys (with, as explained in the introduction, some adjustment and addition of missing data for a handful of police forces), and the second graph shows the latest figures in the national police workforce statistics (for this data set, the data was missing for Northumbria, so the graph uses the figure for the Benchmarking Survey).



Number of PSVs by force, National Benchmarking Survey, 2021



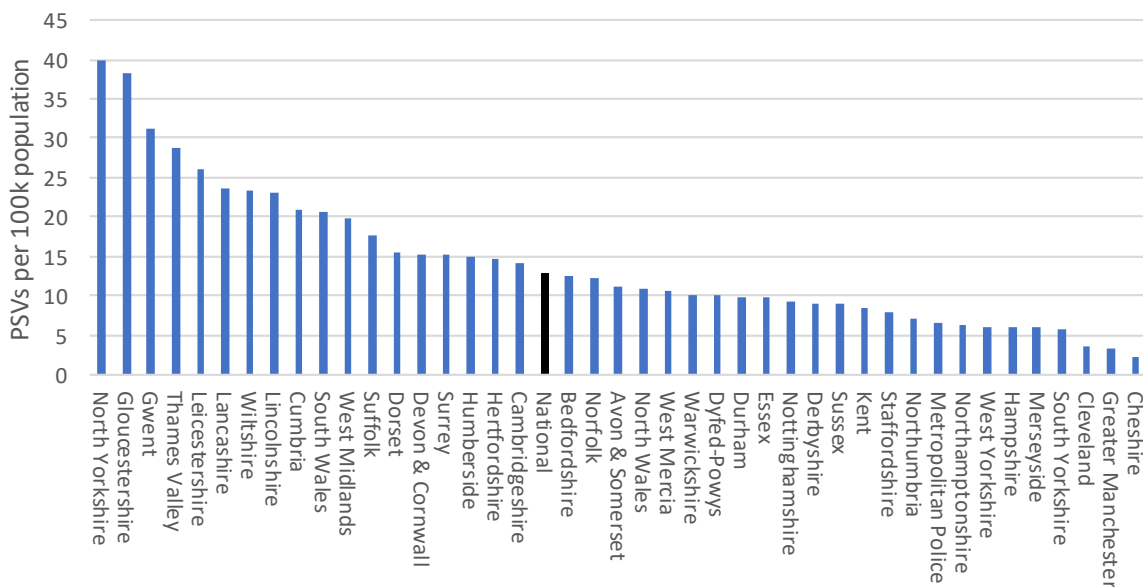
Number of PSVs by force, National Police Workforce Statistics, March 2021



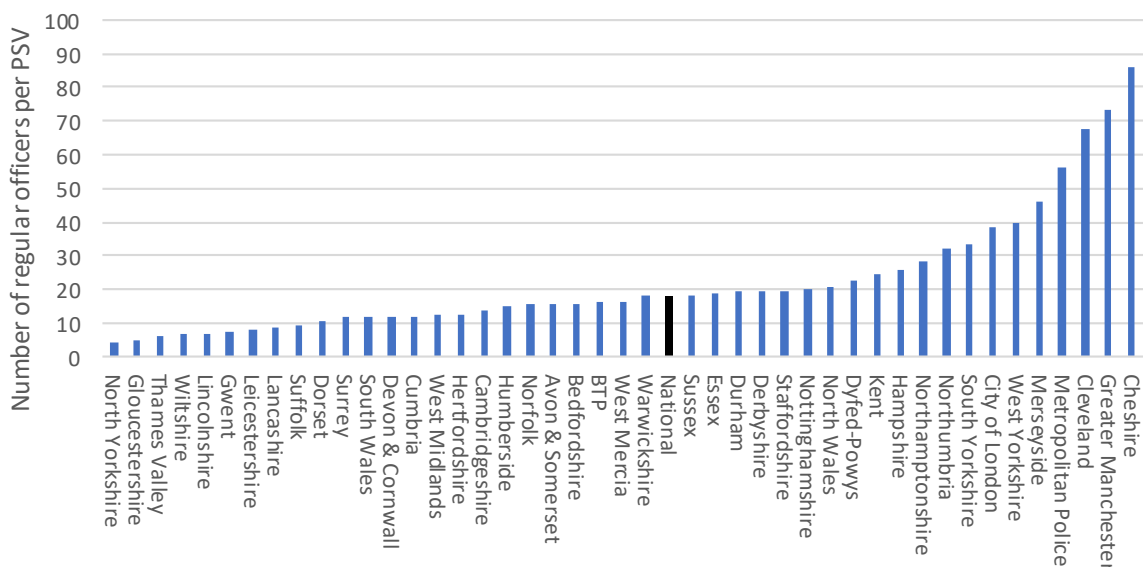
Both graphs reflect the marked variation in scale of programmes across police forces. Whilst almost half of police forces have PSV cohorts of (approximately) 100 or less volunteers, there are a number of forces which have several hundred PSVs. As reflected above, this may in part reflect different patterns of managing and counting PSVs in different police force areas, but also will reflect differences on the ground in terms of the degree to which PSV programmes have been scaled, and the range of roles that volunteers are engaged within different police forces.

The above graphs show raw numbers, which makes a sense of comparing size between programmes difficult because clearly police forces vary significantly in their size and in the size of the communities that they serve. The following three graphs – again, cognisant of the caveats above relating to the challenges of comparing PSV figures across police forces – provide a picture of the relative scale of PSV numbers in different police forces. The first graph looks at PSV numbers by population (omitting City of London, and BTP, the two forces for which population comparators are less appropriate), and the second and third graphs use regular officer numbers and police staff numbers respectively as a proxy of the overall scale of the policing organisation as a comparator. In all three graphs, the forces with the relatively larger PSV counts are towards the right-hand side of each graph.

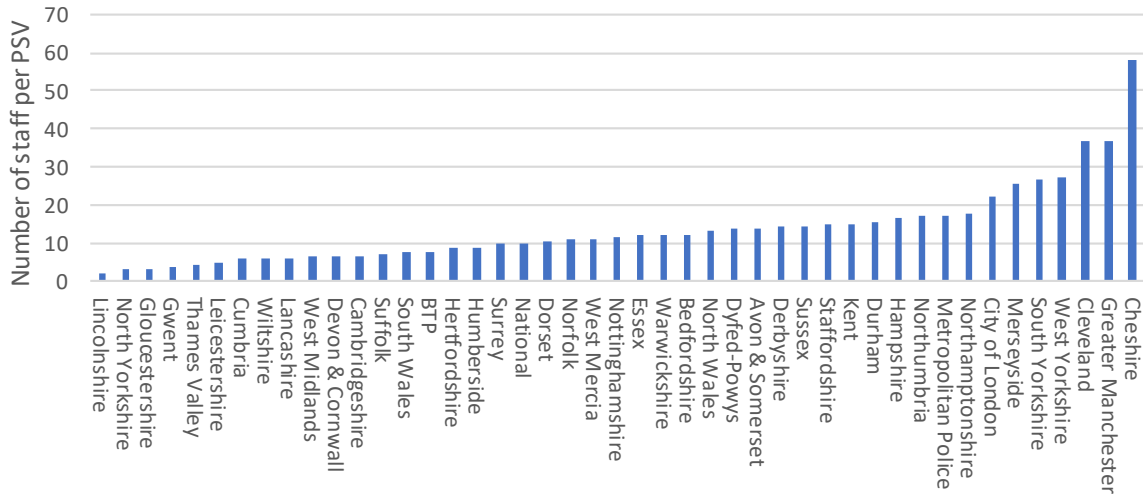
PSVs per 100,000 population, National Benchmarking Survey, 2021



Ratio of regular police officers and PSVs, National Benchmarking Survey, 2021

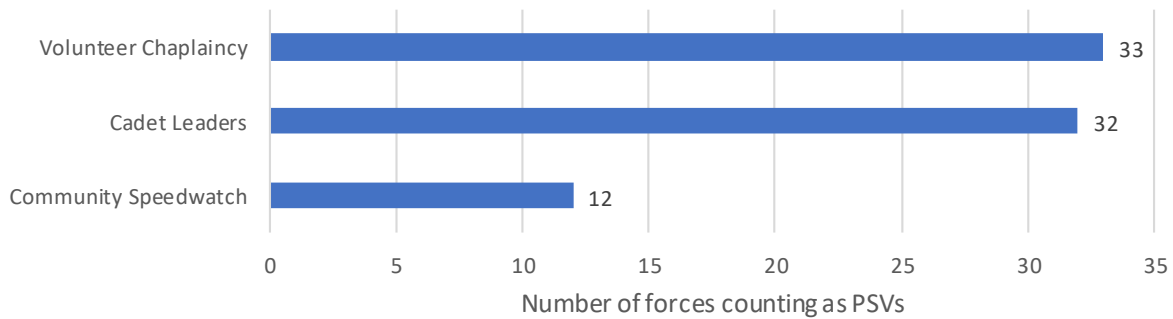


## Ratio of police staff and PSVs, National Benchmarking Survey, 2021

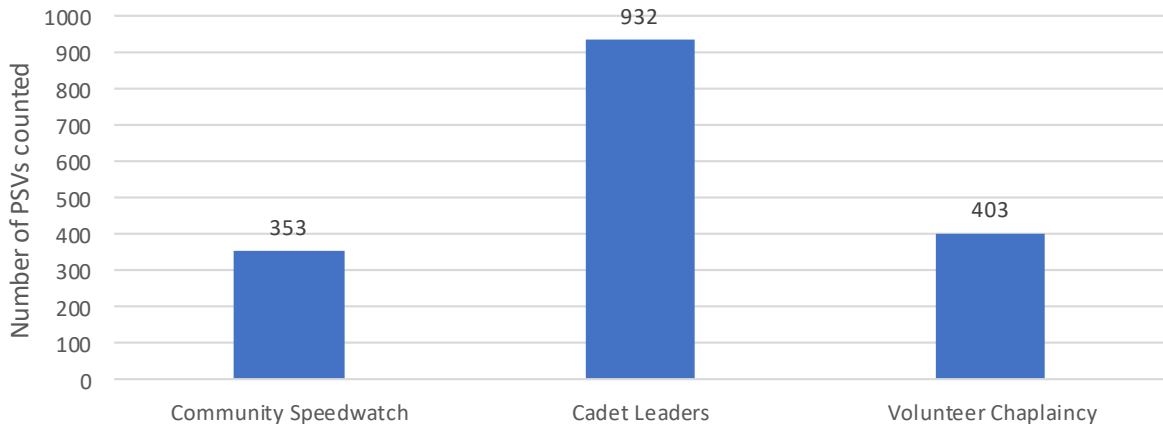


As reflected earlier, several key volunteer roles are counted within the numbers for PSVs in some police forces, and not in others.

## Number of forces counting specific categories of volunteer as PSVs



## Number of volunteers counted in specific categories of PSVs



Twelve forces counted CSW members within their PSV totals, with a number of other forces counting a small number of specific CSW related leadership or coordinator roles. In total, 353 CSW volunteers are included in the benchmarking survey national figure for PSVs of 7,632 (4.6% of the total). There is variation over time within individual police forces, with some forces inconsistently including CSW volunteer numbers in some counts of their volunteers and not in others. This local variation within particular forces likely accounts for much of the difference between the police workforce statistics national figure of 8,387 and the benchmarking survey headcount of 7,632.

A larger number of police forces (32) include Cadet Leaders within their PSV cohorts. This still leaves twelve forces that do not. The benchmarking surveys have identified 932 PSVs who are Cadet Leaders (a sizeable 12.2% of all PSVs). However, the recent VPC Census suggested that there were many more volunteers than this in leadership roles. That work suggested that volunteer leaders within the Cadets includes 1,180 PSVs, 104 other non-designated volunteers, plus additionally 530 regular officers and 120 PCSOs volunteering their time, and 161 other police staff volunteering. There remains a complex and inconsistent picture nationally as of which of these circa 2,100 volunteers are included within the PSV counts of forces. Notwithstanding these data issues, it is clear a sizeable proportion of PSVs are leaders within VPC, and VPC leaders probably represent the single largest category of PSVs.

Also, quite large in number are volunteer chaplains. 33 forces count chaplains within their PSV figures (with 11 not doing so, albeit not all those remaining forces might have voluntary chaplaincy roles). The benchmarking surveys show 403 chaplains counted within force PSV figures (5.3% of the total headcount of PSVs).

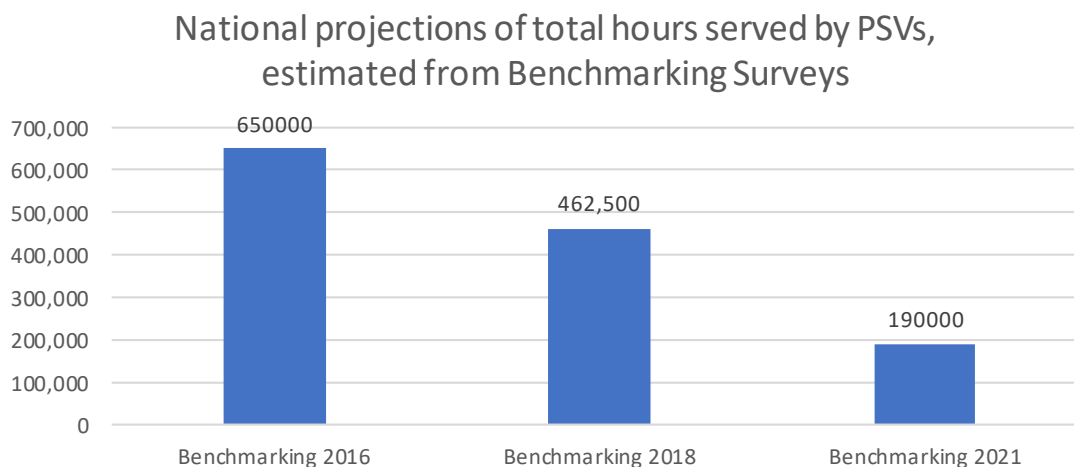
The Covid-19 period has clearly disrupted PSV programmes (discussed in more detail later in this report). Police forces were asked for figures on their joiners and leavers for the period since the first lockdown in March 2020. Data was missing from six forces, but overall, the figures showed 944 joiners and 1,058 leavers during the period. It may well be that there is a 'hidden' cohort of individuals who, whilst not having formally left their roles as PSVs, may be set not to return following their periods of Covid related dormancy. Therefore, the figures in the benchmarking surveys likely undercount (to some extent) the scale of departure for PSVs caused by the Covid context.

In terms of future trajectories for numbers, all police forces plan to recruit, albeit the scale and ambition of these recruitment plans differ from force to force. A majority of forces do not have a strategic recruitment plan for their PSVs.

### 3. Hours Served by PSVs

Only 25 forces (out of 44 surveyed) provided data on hours served by PSVs, reflecting data for only approximately half of PSVs nationally. Therefore, the data shared here only provides a partial picture of the whole.

The figures present a low number of hours served, averaging at only 25 hours per PSV over a year, extrapolating nationally (if it is assumed there to be similar activity levels for the forces not providing data) at an estimate of **190,000** hours across all forces. This estimation is significantly smaller than the 650,000 hours estimated in the 2016 national benchmarking exercise, and the 450-475,000 estimated in 2018.



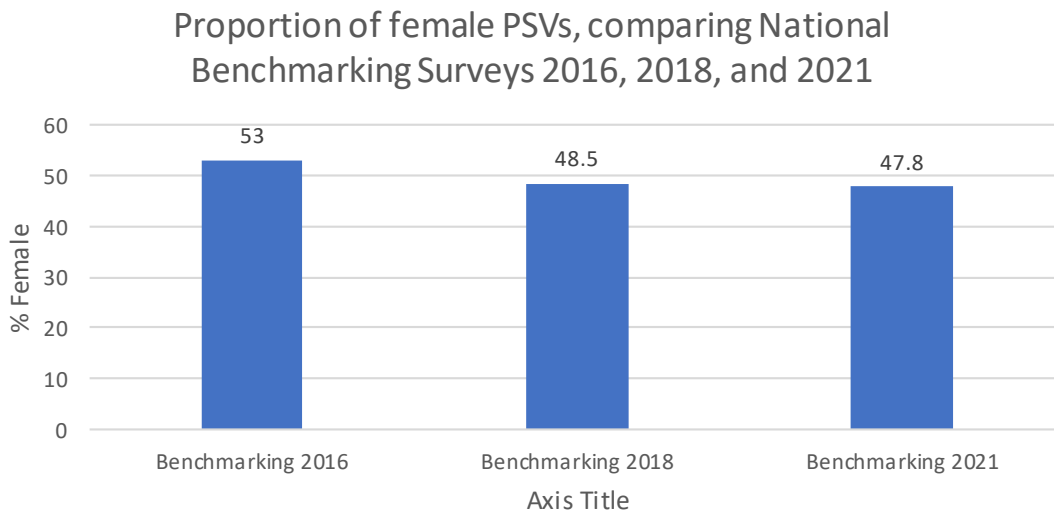
There seem three likely explanations behind these figures being quite low:

- The data has been gathered over the Covid-19 period, when the vast majority of forces have seen a marked reduction in PSV activity due to lockdowns, shielding, and other health and practical concerns. Specifically, many PSV roles link directly to Cadets leadership, and again the VPC has not been functioning as normal for much of the period in question.
- Data collection and quality issues, in that some hours for some PSVs may not be being fully recorded. This has in the past been an issue experienced by forces whilst migrating onto DutySheet, as it can take a period for all volunteers to engage and fully utilise the system. It has also historically been identified as an issue for forces not utilising (or fully utilising) DutySheet, in that other systems or approaches used to record hours are incomplete.
- The unknown quantity of how many PSVs are, in effect, 'dormant'. Local research in forces suggests this figure may be as high as 30-45%. This tends towards having the effect of reducing the average hours served by each individual PSV.

## 4. Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Disability

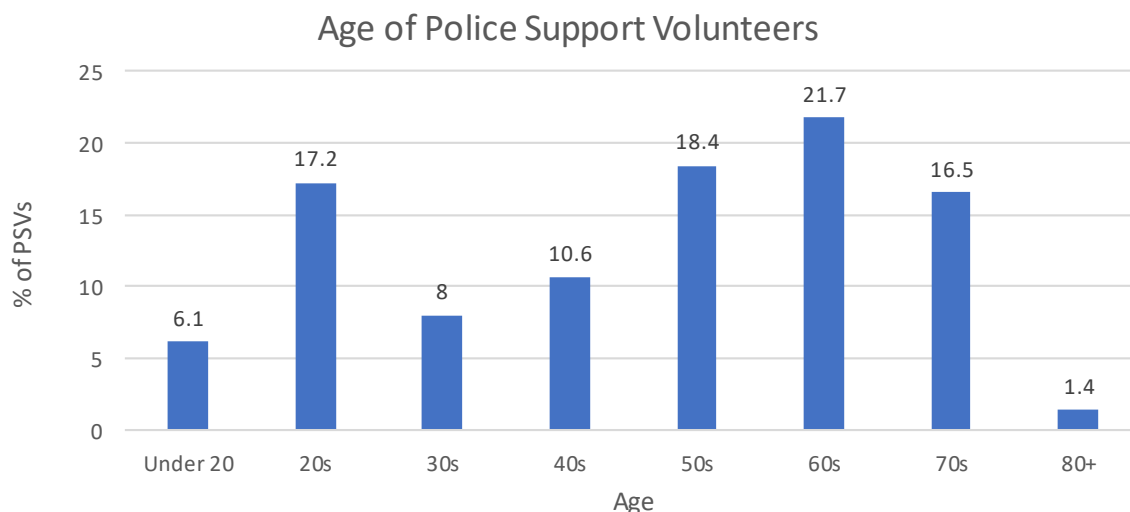
### Gender

Data on gender was shared by 36 of the 44 police forces. For those PSVs recorded as male or female, 47.8% female of PSVs were female and 52.2% were male. This is broadly consistent with the previous two benchmarking surveys, which have similarly seen a roughly 50:50 split between male and female for PSVs.



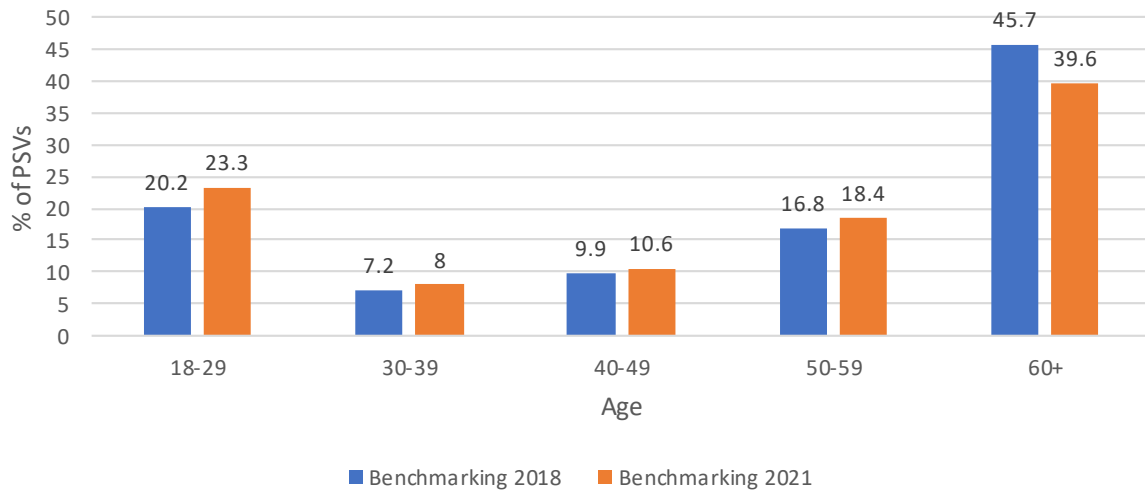
### Age

Twenty-eight forces provided data on the age of their PSVs, comprising age data collectively for 3,777 PSVs (roughly half of all PSVs). As shown in the graph below, the age distribution was skewed towards older age groups, with one in four (39.6%) aged 60 or over, and 58% aged over fifty. However, there was also almost a quarter (23.3%) of PSVs under thirty, with almost a fifth of PSVs (18.2%) aged under twenty-five. As had been identified in previous data for PSVs, the 'hole' in the data, in the sense of the less represented age groups, is volunteers aged in their thirties and forties.



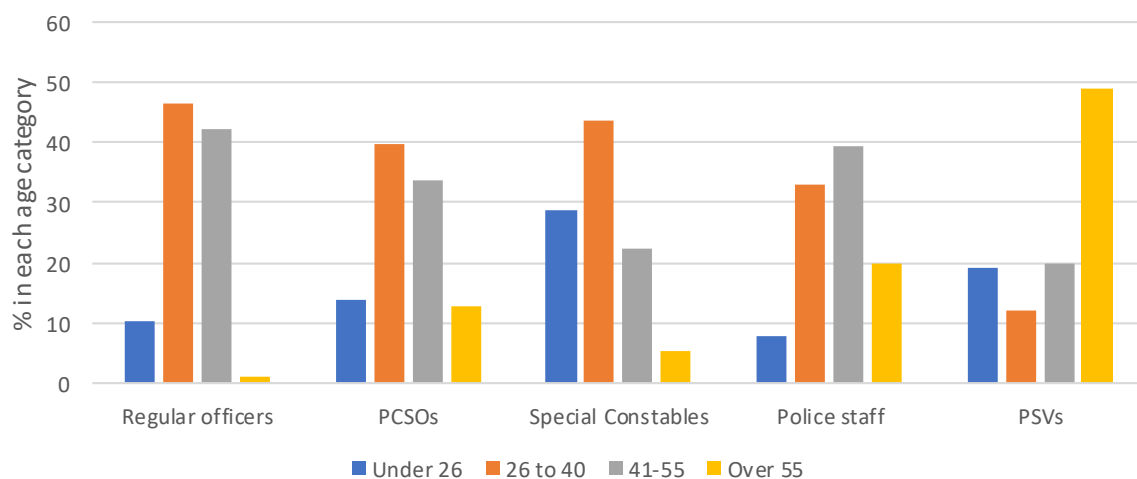
The age profile for the PSVs in this 2021 national benchmarking match very closely with the same data from the benchmarking exercise in 2018. Comparing the two, there is perhaps a slight growth in younger volunteers and a slight reduction in the proportion over sixty, but those variations between the two periods are small.

Comparing age profile of PSVs, National Benchmarking Surveys  
2018 and 2021



Looking across the police family (and with some estimation involved in dividing up age categories, because the age bands used in the benchmarking surveys do not fit exactly with age bands utilised in the national police workforce statistics), the age profile of PSVs can be seen as quite different to that of any other group. Regular police officers and Special Constables in particular have very small proportions aged over 55, whilst that is the predominant age band for PSVs. And whilst those aged 26-40 form the largest age band for regular police officers, Special Constables and for PCSOs, it is the smallest age band for PSVs. PSVs have the highest proportion of under 26s apart from the Special Constabulary.

Age profiles across the police family



## **Ethnicity**

Consistently to previous Benchmarking Surveys of forces in 2016 and 2018, the data on ethnicity across forces is missing in a large proportion of cases, and there are also data challenges (including sizeable proportions of missing data) in many other forces. Given these challenges, and the uneven picture of ethnicity nationally across the country, it is not possible to summarise PSV data in respect of ethnicity from this benchmarking exercise. This is an important gap in data which should be addressed.

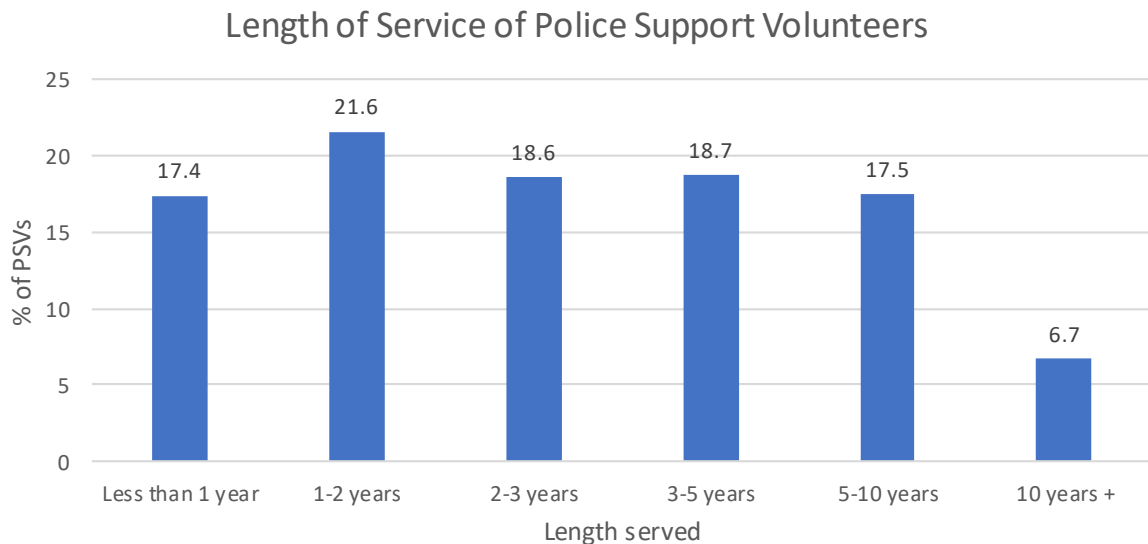
## **Disability**

Similar problems exist in relation to data on disability. In the surveys of individual PSVs, a sizeable minority of PSVs responding to the survey identify that they have a disability, and again the absence of this data at national level through this benchmarking exercise of forces identifies another important gap in the data which should be addressed.

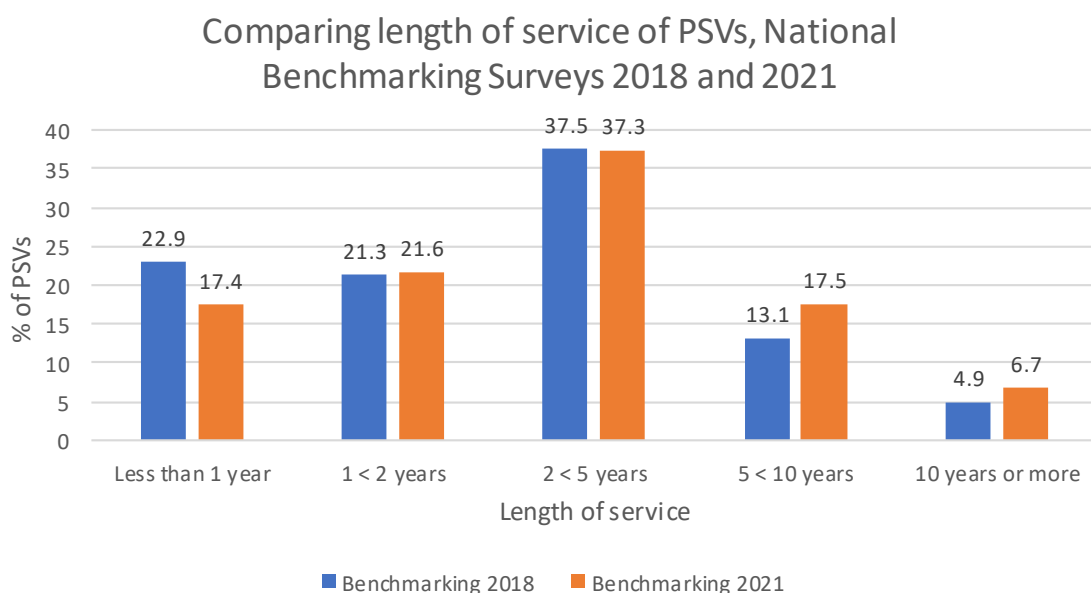


## 5. Length of Service

Thirty-six police forces provided length of service data for their PSVs, meaning the following data is based on 4,573 PSVs (60%). The data reflects that there is a sizeable proportion of more stably engaged, longer-serving volunteers, with over four in ten PSVs (42.9%) having served over three years, and a quarter (24.2%) having served over five years. However, there is also a sizeable proportion of the PSV cohort which is young in service, with almost four in ten PSVs (39%) being in their first two years of service as a volunteer.

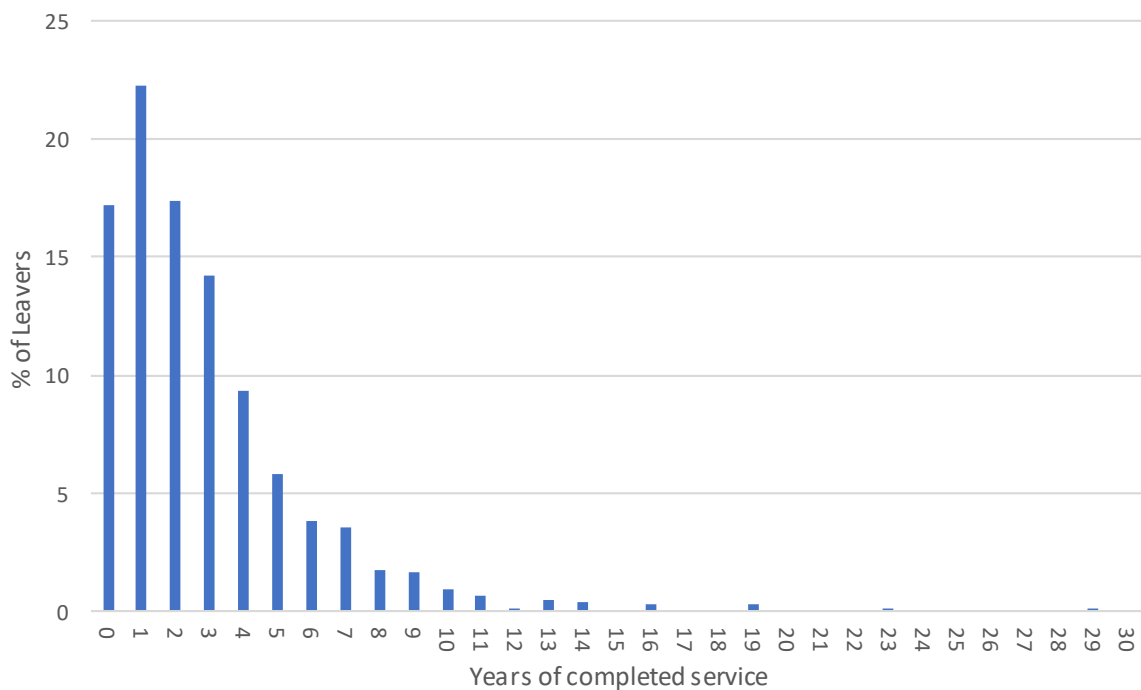


The length of service profile for the PSVs in this 2021 national benchmarking exercise was very similar to the same data collected in the 2018 national benchmarking, shown in the graph below.

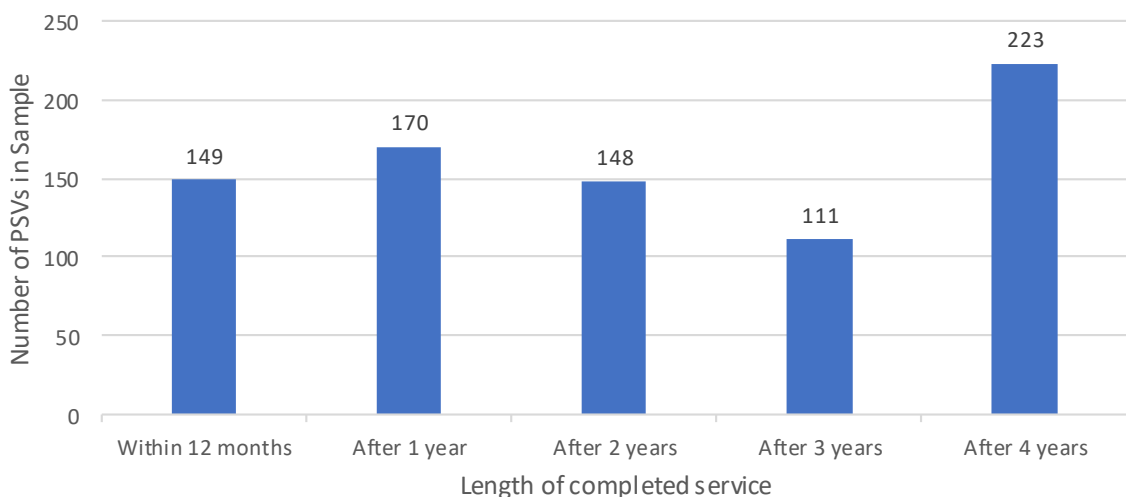


Looking across the data for those terminating their volunteering as a PSV, police forces shared length of service data for 796 PSVs. Consistent with the preceding graphs of length of service of the current cohort of PSVs, the majority of PSVs who leave do so relatively early in their volunteering careers. Over half (56.8%) leave before completing three full years of service, and 80% had completed less than five years of service at their point of departure. Of those early-leaving PSVs, 17.2% left before completing a year as a PSV, and 22.2% completed between 1 and 2 years of service. At the other end of the scale, there were only 26 PSVs (approximately 3%) who had completed ten or more years of service at their point of departure.

Length of service as a PSV at point of leaving

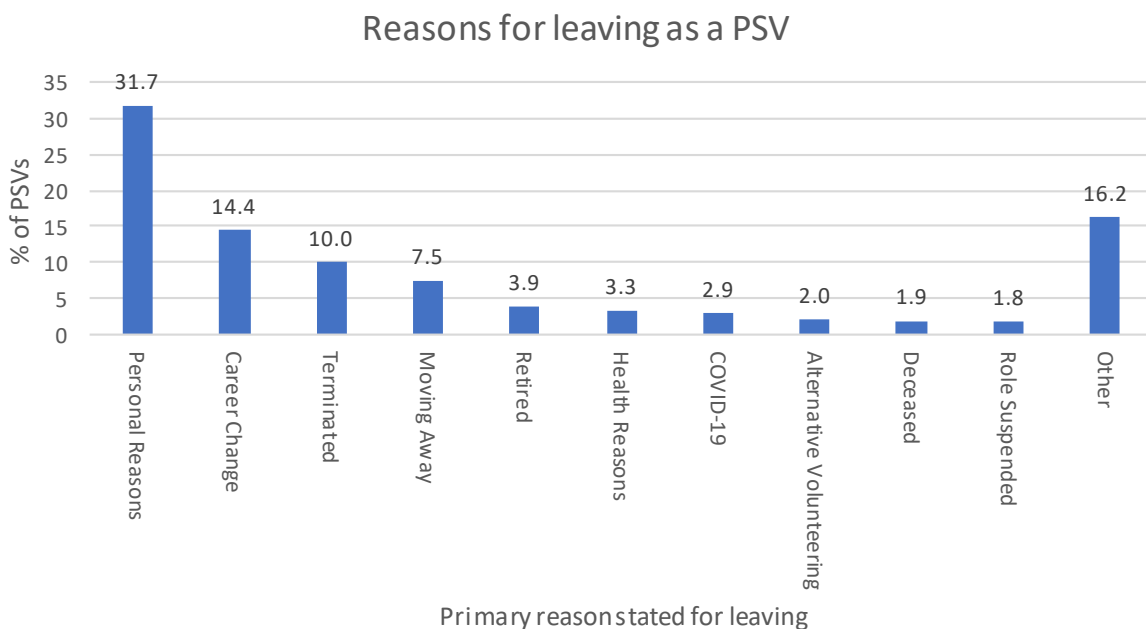


Length of Service at point of departure as a PSV



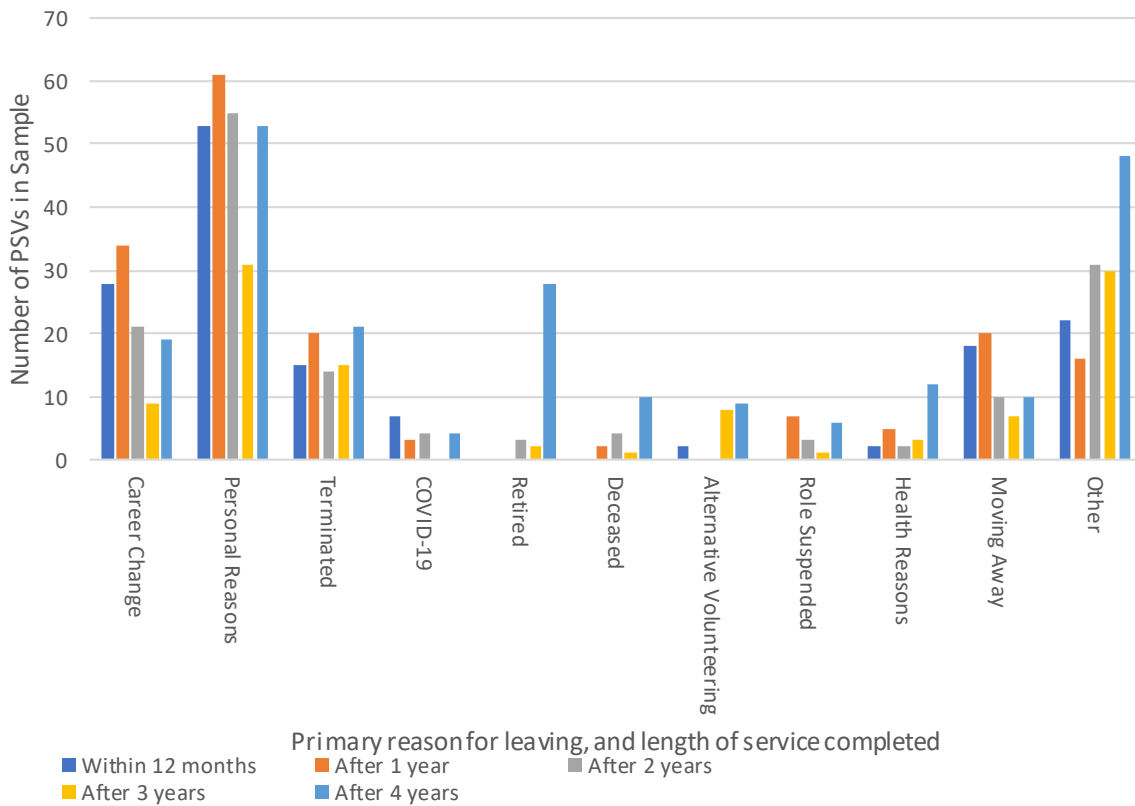
The reasons why PSVs leave their role are wide and varied, and whilst the data gathered for the benchmarking exercise focused on primary reasons for leaving, it is recognised in reality (as is the case for motivations to commence, and to continue, volunteering) that for many individuals there will be multiple reasons behind their decisions. The approaches in individual forces to engage and support their departing PSVs also vary widely, and in many cases probably tend towards an under-identification of factors specifically relating to the volunteering experience itself.

The largest category of reasons for leaving were clustered into ‘personal reasons’, including change in personal circumstances, work-life balance and competing commitments on their time, which made it difficult to commit and carry on as a PSV. Within the ‘career change’ category of reasons for leaving, joining into other police roles - as regulars, or as a member of police staff, or joining the Special Constabulary - were prominent. The ‘termination’ category reflects where the force was pro-active in ending the PSV’s period of volunteering, in a bulk of cases relating to lack of engagement, attendance, and commitment. In a sizeable proportion of cases (approximately one in six leavers), the primary reason for leaving was generically unidentified as “other”. It might reasonably be hypothesised that a proportion of those “other” cases may again reflect a general pattern of disengagement and ceasing to commit and attend to the role.



The pattern for reasons for leaving varied a little by length of service. Those leaving after longer-service were proportionally more likely to leave for health, retirement, or being deceased, and for “other” reasons. Those with shorter service more commonly cited personal reasons, career change, and moving away, as reasons for leaving.

## Reasons for leaving as a PSV, by length of service



76 individuals stated they had stopped being a PSV to join as a paid member of the 'police family'. The individuals who joined as a paid police member, had on average 26 months of service as a PSV. Similarly, the 22 individuals who joined the Special Constabulary had 21 months of PSV service on average. Therefore, although they stopped volunteering, 98 individuals continued to contribute to the police family, with approximately two-years' worth of PSV experience behind them.

## 6. Delivery and Resourcing of PSV Programmes

### Staffing

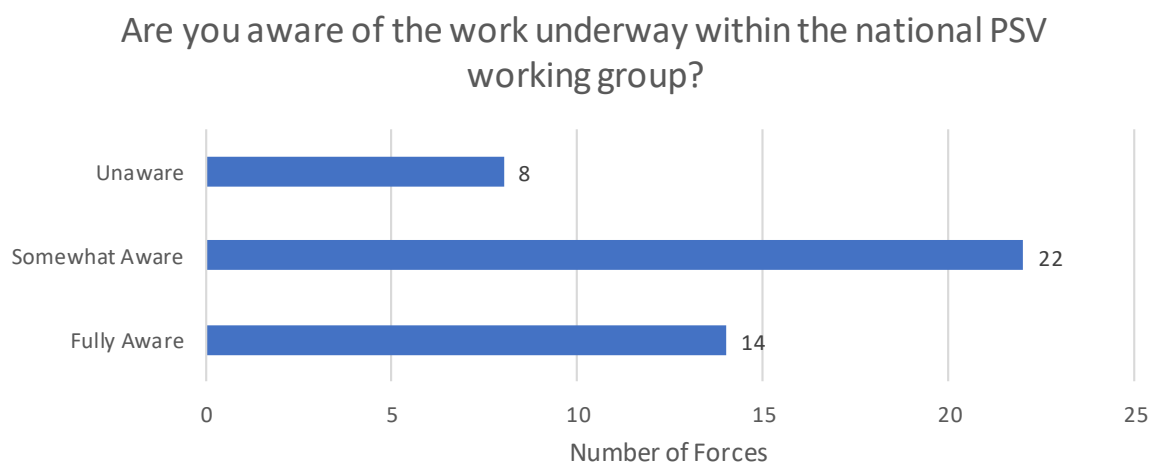
All forces identified in their benchmarking surveys that they had some level of dedicated roles of staffing working with volunteers and in CiP. The figures suggest a quite wide degree of variation between force teams, with some forces having very small staffing resource, and some proportionally much larger teams.

The staffing figures are difficult to analyse across forces because the data is expressed in different ways by police forces in their survey returns. In broad terms, there appear to be approximately fifty police staff roles (full time equivalent, so reflecting a larger number of individuals, as some are part-time) dedicated to PSVs. In addition, there appears to be somewhere in the region of one hundred other posts with some level of involvement in PSV programme management and support, combining with wider responsibilities (typically across other elements of CiP). This is quite a sizeable level of resource across the PSV programme nationally.

Essentially, virtually all this PSV-focused resource is at individual force level, supporting local PSV programmes within forces. There is effectively no *dedicated* full-time PSV-focused resource at regional or national levels, with a small number of regional and national roles (e.g. regional CiP coordinators) providing some support to the PSV programme, alongside contributing across other elements of CiP.

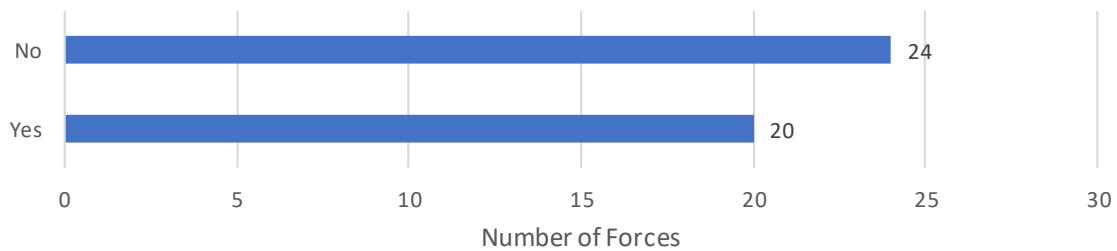
### Engagement with the national PSV programme

In terms of engagement and awareness of national PSV work, half of forces (22) described themselves as “somewhat aware” of the work underway within the national PSV working group, eight said they were “unaware” and fourteen 14 were “fully aware”.



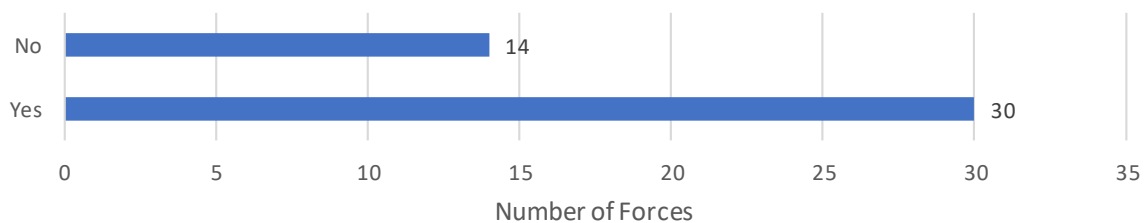
Looking at specific aspects of national work, 20 forces said they had utilised the findings from the previous PSV survey in 2018, whilst 24 said they had not. Given that this is now somewhat historical, and there is a degree of ‘churn’ in PSV leads and staffing within forces, it may be that some of those 24 forces had utilised in the past, but not to the knowledge of the current staff. Where the findings from the survey have been utilised, it has primarily been in helping form a PSV action plan, developing CiP strategy, making comparisons with other forces and forming recruitment approaches.

### Have you utilised the National Survey of PSV 2018 Report?



A majority of forces said that they were using the Valuing Volunteers Framework (30), and it may be that some of the other forces (14 remaining) have also engaged to some degree but not responded in that way in this survey. The picture seems to be that the VVF is used quite widely but is not yet universal across all forces.

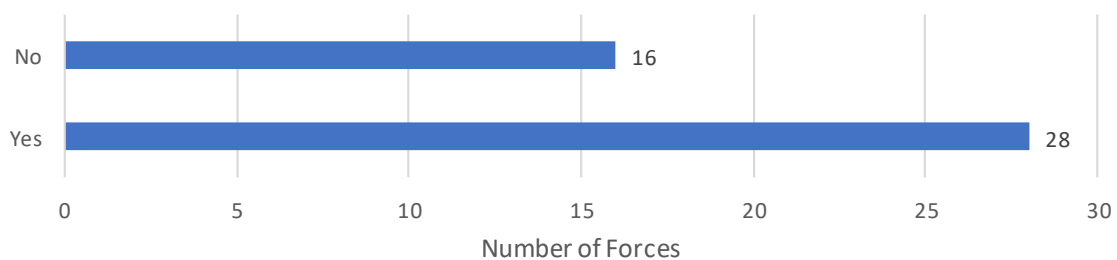
### Are you using the Valuing Volunteers Framework Assessment Tool?



Where forces have utilised the VVF they have found it useful, particularly in identifying gaps in their programmes and support for PSVs, creating an action plan for PSVs, and in reviewing their progress as a force in developing their PSV programme.

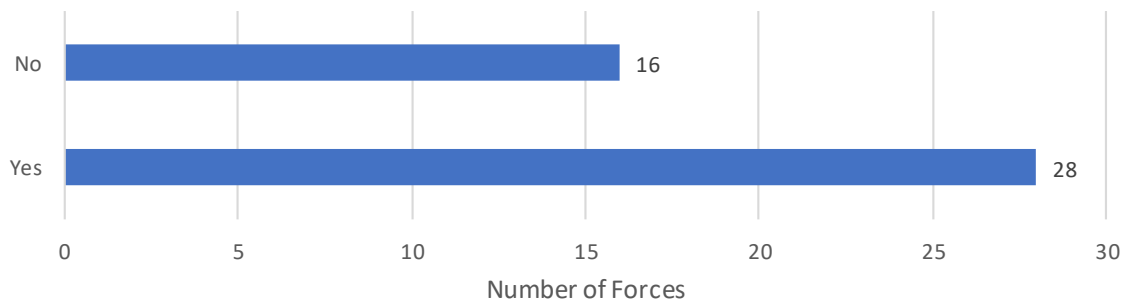
28 forces said that they were aware of the PSV Practitioners Manual. Main uses of the Manual were in informing policy and developing guidance.

### Are you aware of the National PSV Practitioners Manual?



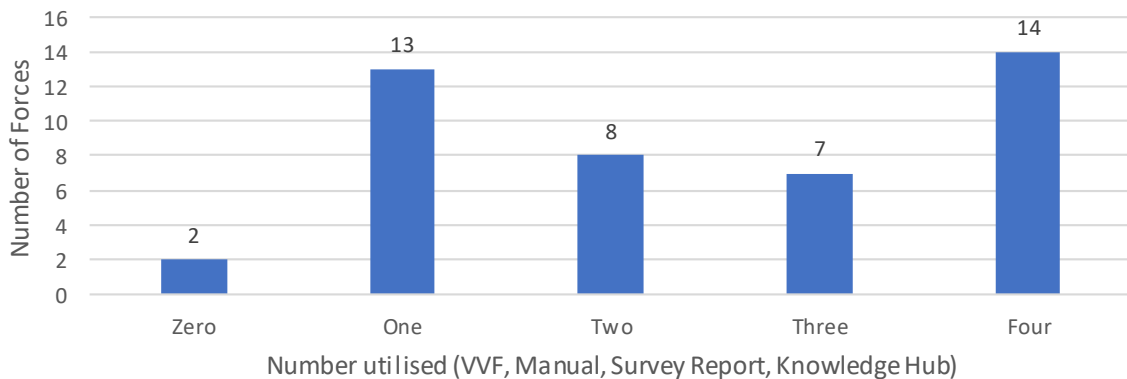
Twenty-eight forces also said that they could access the Knowledge Hub, albeit some also reflected that they had limited time, or limited working knowledge of the Hub, to utilise it to its full potential. Sharing practice, regional groups, learning from others, and liaising with colleagues in other forces were the principal advantages identified for the Knowledge Hub.

### Do you access the knowledge hub?



Looking overall at the four elements of national tools and activity identified above (National PSV Survey, Valuing Volunteers Framework, Practitioners Manual, and Knowledge Hub), there are different patterns of involvement across different forces. Fourteen forces indicated engagement across all four, whilst at the other end of the spectrum fifteen forces answered positively in respect of none or only one of the four, suggesting a minimal engagement with the national tools and activity.

### Overall level of engagement by forces in wider national 'infrastructure' of PSV programme



### **Recruitment**

In terms of future approaches to recruiting PSVs, all forces have an intention to recruit, and commonly, forces identify the need for recruitment to be driven by 'business' needs, raising internal buy-in and promotion of PSVs as being important. The degree to which there is a broader strategy for recruiting PSVs seems to vary, with seventeen forces reporting that they have a strategic recruitment plan.

Barriers identified by forces to future recruitment reflect some key common themes:

- Processes are often long, drawn-out, and time consuming. Not only for PSVs in terms of the actual appointment process as a volunteer, but also the broader processes in terms of identifying new roles and developing and expanding the PSV programme.
- There are sometimes limitations experienced in terms of engagement by the 'business', and internal 'blockages'.
- There are challenges in achieving reach, diversity, and recruitment of minority groups across PSVs, as well as some aspects of age of volunteers.

Broadly half of forces (22) said that they would welcome additional assistance and resources to help them in their recruitment. Such additional help included:

- A national-level visibility of campaign for PSVs, to help encourage engagement at the individual force-level and to wider the reach and awareness of PSV programmes across all local communities.
- Increased opportunities to share good practice.

In terms of processes of recruitment, there is quite a high degree of consistency of broad approaches across forces. A large majority of forces utilise an application form; about half a dozen do not, utilising a mix of CVs, structured discussions, or online portals (with the latter, in effect, often replicating much of the elements of an application form). Forty forces utilise interviews, and thirty-nine have local inductions for new PSVs. Fewer forces take up references (22) or have centralised, force-level PSV induction (29). In terms of training and on-boarding of PSVs, whilst fifteen forces said they did not undertake safeguarding training with PSVs, most forces identified they did undertake this with specific roles which were felt to be relevant for that input.

### **Training and Development of PSVs**

Across forces, it is recognised that there is limited opportunity for ongoing PSV training and often few developmental opportunities. Challenges to delivering training for PSVs were identified as including:

- The limited extent of development pathways.
- Limited resources to deliver training (and competing demands on learning and development staff).
- The challenges of PSV availability for training.

Thirty-one forces said they would like to see more support for forces around training and developing PSVs, including standardised materials and courses nationally, and sharing materials and best practice between forces.

### **PSV Wellbeing Support**

Thirty-eight forces said that they had processes in place to support the wellbeing of PSVs. Whilst six forces reported a gap in this, typically they were looking at ways to develop access to support.

### **Managing PSV leavers**

Twenty-nine forces said they have some process of exit form or interview, and 28 forces said they had a process to look at and analyse the reasons why PSVs were leaving.

### **Training for PSV managers**

Only thirteen forces reported that they had training specifically for those who manage or are responsible for PSVs. Training for PSV managers focused on DutySheet, leadership and mentoring, and valuing volunteers.

### **Designated Powers**

Despite having now been available for several years, there still remains virtually no take-up of the opportunity to designate powers to non-warranted volunteers. Only one police force, Kent, is currently developing this approach. Four other forces have indicated an intent to consider this in the future.



## **Partnership volunteer roles**

Half of forces (22) reported that they have volunteer roles in partnership with other agencies. This may undercount to some degree the reality on the ground, but still reflects that such roles are quite extensive. One force, Lancashire, has a well-developed 'pooled' volunteer role, working collaboratively with other local agencies. The most common partnering in respect of PSV roles is with other emergency services, in particular with joint roles with the fire service. A handful of forces have developed a sizeable portfolio of partnering roles, whereas most others who have roles have developed this to a less extensive stage to date.

## **ESP for PSVs**

Eighteen forces reported that they ESP for their PSVs who are police staff, whilst 24 said that they have not. These arrangements have developed at a local level and show a wide range of variation between those forces who do have internal ESP for PSVs, in respect of the extent of agreed hours. Some forces have hours agreements equivalent to those for Special Constables, but most forces have fewer hours in their ESP arrangements for PSVs.

## **Approving roles**

Every force reported that they have a process of approving roles. A prominent feature of these arrangements is an active involvement of Unison. Human resources teams, and CiP teams themselves, are also active participants.

## **Impact of Covid on delivery of PSV programme**

A majority of police forces (34) have suspended their PSV programmes for some period of time during the Covid-19 pandemic period. Some other forces which did not wholly suspend their programmes did something similar on a role-by-role basis. In many cases these suspensions of the programmes were for quite a prolonged period of several months. At the point of gathering data earlier in the summer of 2021, nine forces had suspended their programme for the 'whole period of Covid' (since March 2020) and still had not recommenced.

Twenty-six forces reported that they had altered the way that they utilised PSVs. This included options for remote working, and consideration of alternative roles. A minority of forces mentioned Covid related new roles. Just over half of forces said that they had changed the way they communicate with PSVs as a direct consequence of the pandemic. This has included a wider utilisation of Zoom, Microsoft Teams or similar, and a shift from face-to-face meetings and contacts to greater utilisation of phone calls and emails. Newsletters have been established in some forces, to help keep active communication during a period when this has otherwise been challenging.

More police forces (24) said that they did not think the Covid context had directly impacted on numbers leaving, with only fifteen forces saying they felt it had resulted in a direct impact. A higher proportion (34) felt that there was a direct Covid effect on recruitment, including suspension of recruitment, and an inability to operate recruitment processes as usual (e.g. face to face aspects), and reduced availability of roles. There were also positives, in particular a sense of greater interest and enthusiasm in volunteering connected to the wider Covid-19 context.

## 7. Conclusions

Much of the picture across this 2021 PSV benchmarking exercise reflects a continuity with previous exercises in 2016 and 2018. Given five years have elapsed between the 2016 and 2021 benchmarking surveys, there is limited evidence overall of growth in numbers, roles, or impact. In terms of overall numbers of PSVs counted through the benchmarking surveys, this has remained largely static (if anything, falling slightly) between 2016, 2018, and 2021.

There have been some key developments at the national level, such as the Valuing Volunteers Framework, national surveying, national strategy, national handbook, and more recently developing of shared spaces on the knowledge hub. On the whole over the past five years, there has been some strategic progression of the PSV model, but only to a quite limited extent, and the overarching national picture across 2016, 2018, and 2021 data is one of continuity.

The only major disruptor to that continuity has been Covid-19. The pandemic led to decisions to close down many PSV programmes, or aspects of them, across most forces, effectively pressing a pause button on the contribution of many PSVs nationally. This is reflected in an untypical year in terms of the data, in particular the very low figure in this benchmarking exercise for hours served. The pandemic has also seen some positive innovation both in roles and also in modes for communicating with and supporting PSVs.

There remain challenges in the quality, completeness, and consistency of data across police forces in respect of PSVs which still need to be addressed. This is again consistent with similar conclusions within the benchmarking reports in 2016 and 2018, and in this respect, there is very little sign of progress since 2016. One potential advantage now, which was not the case in 2016, is the widespread use of DutySheet for PSVs, which may assist technically in the resolution of some of these issues. Whilst there is a national definition for PSVs, it is clear that the operationalisation of that definition has been inconsistent within and between different forces' PSV programmes. This leads to a muddle at a national data level with regards to inclusion (or not) of particular categories of PSVs (e.g. volunteer chaplains, Cadet leaders, CSW volunteers, etc.). Two areas of data gaps which are particularly key, and are widespread across forces, relate to ethnicity and to disability.

There are some real positives within the benchmarking data in respect of engagement with aspects of the national programme, and many forces reflect an enthusiasm for ongoing greater support, cohesion, and collaboration across aspects of PSV programmes regionally and nationally, in particular in recruitment and training.

Consistent with previous benchmarking exercises in 2016 and 2018, the data reflects challenges of sustaining longer-term volunteer careers for PSVs, and the vast majority of PSVs volunteer for a small number of years rather than into the longer-term. Based on the data in this report, very few of the PSVs counted in 2016 will still be in role. This report does provide more detailed data than was available in 2016 and 2018 in respect of retention. The available data points to changes in the broader lives of volunteers, rather than aspects of the PSV experience, prompting decisions to leave. However, the manner in which this data is collected may mask some of those more 'internal' reasons for departure. A sub-set of those leaving do move into other roles in policing, either paid roles or as Special Constables, and for these people they take experience gained as a PSV into those future roles.

Nationally, across forces PSV programmes still struggle to effectively engaged those aged 30-50. There is some slight evidence of improved engagement of younger PSVs. The PSV programmes across forces remain strong at engaging older people.

Overall, the benchmarking data points to some key opportunities to strengthen and further build PSV programmes across forces in the future.



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