This work has been submitted to NECTAR, the Northampton Electronic Collection of Theses and Research.

Conference or Workshop Item

Title: Evidence-based models for Citizens in Policing

Creators: Callender, M. and Britton, I.


Version: Presented version

http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/8593/
Evidence-based models for Citizens in Policing

Dr Matthew Callender and Dr Iain Britton
Structure

• Introduction to our new Centre for Citizens in Policing
• Strategic Cultures research
• National Survey
• National Benchmarking Exercise
• Conclusion – Reflections on the future
Why is our focus on police volunteering?

- It exists on a large-scale, in England & Wales and internationally
- Critical, and with huge potential
- There is a coming together of factors, creating (arguably) a key moment of greater policy and professional interest

- Limited research-base and research activity
- Limited data, basic gaps in knowledge
- Lots of ‘gut instinct’ and ‘legacy practice’
A new Centre for Citizens in Policing

- Deliver a world-leading research programme across citizen involvement in policing, developing the ‘what works’ evidence base both for police volunteering and for wider citizen involvement in policing and public safety;

- Translate evidence into real-life improvement in how citizens are involved in policing (with an initial focus on improving the experience of being a police volunteer and on improving the outcomes achieved through police volunteering);

- Lead in building and coordinating the academic and policy field across citizens in policing;

- Stimulate debate, ideas and innovation across the policy and practice of citizen involvement in policing.
The first few months of our programme...

Specials/PSV insights - (interviews/focus groups), across the ‘life cycle’

Strategic cultures and leadership (interviews) – with senior officers, OPCC, etc.

Regulars culture (survey, interviews, focus groups) – with Regulars

Activity analysis (activity recording exercise) – with Specials

Skills surveying (survey) – with Specials

National Survey – with Specials & PSVs

1st Phase of National Benchmarking Exercise – Specials, PSVs and Cadets

Data analysis (e.g. of volunteer cohorts, activity, etc.)

‘Solutions workshops’
Some of our vision for ‘what next...’

Building on the current strands...

Diversity, cohesion, reach, confidence etc.
International
Leadership
Big data...
Who volunteers and why?
‘Value’

Piloting new models, introducing new powers, moving into new specialisms

‘Observatory’
Strategic cultures
Organisational cultures

- Organisational culture is a system of shared assumptions, values and beliefs which influence how people within an organisation behave.

**Artifacts**: Characteristics that are seen, heard and felt – structures, uniforms, processes etc.

**Values**: Thought processes and attitudes – standards, rules, beliefs etc.

**Assumptions**: Deeply embedded beliefs – self-evident, unconscious and taken for granted.
Approach and Status

• Completed primary research in two sites and ongoing in another 2 sites
• Interviews with both Police Force staff and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner staff (completed and analysed 25 interviews)
• Interviews last between 45-60 minutes covering the following topics:
  • Formal strategy and vision;
  • Organisational change;
  • Operational implementation and effectiveness;
  • Meanings associated with volunteers and Specials;
  • Leadership;
  • Future.
Organisational Change

• An organisational fixation on a **discourse of numbers**
  • The vision and ambition of strategies regarding Specials was often related to 1. the number of Specials and/or 2. the number of hours completed by Specials.
• Communication about the rationale for the number was defined within a **policing dialogue of frontline demand**, rather than a more **visionary dialogue of organisational and service transformation**.

*I think with Specials, the strategy seems to be focused primarily on numerical recruitment. Police - Site 1*

*We should aspire to have a vibrant, integrated Special Constabulary adding value and hours and that should be on an upward trajectory. In doing that I think is a far more intelligent, you know target than x, cause where does that number come from? Police – Site 2*
Meanings of Volunteer/Special

- There are conflicting views of what it means to be a Special and indeed a volunteer within the organisation. The importance of the role and identity of the police officer was interpreted as being significantly different to that of a typical volunteer.
- A key aspect within the extent to which the force could exhort power and control over volunteers, i.e. volunteers doing what they want, when they want etc.

Yeah, but it’s really difficult, ‘cause we’ve had it where, you know, is a volunteer a volunteer or a nuisance if they don’t turn up? Because how do you hold them to account when you’re not paying them anything? You’re not... what do you do? Threaten to sack ‘em? Police – Site 1

You can't rely on them. And this is the issue, you must never rely on the Special because we don't rely on volunteers. They’re a nice to have, you know, that’s the language that gets used. Police - Site 2
Symbolism and Authenticity

• There are recognised tensions associated to the symbols of ‘the uniform’ and the ‘warrant card’, which position Specials for some as lacking authenticity in their position as a holder of The Office of Constable.

• These conceptualisations have real impact on levels of trust, confidence and the degree to which they are relied upon by the Regular Constabulary.

So we’ve now got Special Constables that are full-time with traffic... they’re even wearing white hats... the fact we’re allowing them to wear white hats and be given skills that a traffic officer has, that’s symbolic around how far we’ve moved. Police – Site 2

You can't rely on them. And this is the issue, you must never rely on the Special because we don't rely on volunteers. They’re a nice to have, you know, that’s the language that gets used. Police - Site 2
Concluding thoughts

• Communication about the organisational subculture of the Special Constabulary has been largely defined in relation to traditional policing culture.

• A discourse of numbers has been overly privileged and further legitimised in the thinking of key leaders within the organisation. Communication within the organisation would benefit by transcending discussion of numbers to a more imaginative dialogue based on a vision for citizens in policing.

• There is an organisational desire to re-conceptualise the meaning of being a volunteer and Special, reconsidering the roles and functions appropriate to non-paid members of the organisation. Critically, issues of trust, dependency and identity are pervasive in realising the vision and achieving a closer sense of integrated working.

• The increased attention on citizens in policing has been interpreted as being politically driven rather than needs driven, having implication for investment as well as the behaviours, practices and policies associated with integration.
National work
National survey – initial key findings

Largest ever survey of police volunteers in England and Wales
Reflections on the process...

Positives
Room for improvement...

Why do they do it?
What are their future plans?
Citizens in Policing

The National Survey of Special Constables and PSVs

3,084 responses recorded in the survey data set overall, with around two-thirds of the responses being from Special Constables

HEADLINES:

• Overall, a sizeable majority of police volunteers are positive about their experience as a volunteer. Seven out of ten volunteers felt their experience has either ‘fully’ (35%) or ‘mostly’ (36%) fulfilled what they had hoped for when they joined as a volunteer;
• Over three quarters (77%) of volunteers ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that their morale is good;
• Over two thirds of volunteers (69%) agreed that they would like appropriate additional powers to support their volunteer roles.
• Just over half (52%) of volunteers feel that Regular officers “need to have a better understanding of volunteers and the work they do”.
• A majority of volunteers (58%) see themselves in this “for the long-term” and “expect to still be volunteering in three years time”.

National Benchmarking Exercise

Largest ever data exercise across all England and Wales forces and OPCCs
A ‘census’

Key gaps in knowledge it will begin to fill...

Key gaps it will expose...

So what?
What next?
Conclusion
Reflections on the future

• A discourse of expansionism?
• ‘Key moments’ and police volunteering – really?
• Research as an influence for good – experience, effectiveness, paradigm
• Who are we talking to? Who is listening?
• The perils and potentials of creating a ‘what works’ approach to police volunteering
Thank you

Dr Iain Britton
Head of the Centre for Citizens in Policing
iain.britton@ipscj.org

Dr Matthew Callender
Senior Researcher, IPSCJ
matthew.callender@northampton.ac.uk

ipscj.org