

BACKGROUND

There are approximately 16,000 Special Constables in England and Wales, and a further 7,000 Police Support Volunteers. Typically, Special Constables complete between 4 and 16 hours per week (Gaston and Alexander, 2001), with the main activities being community patrol,

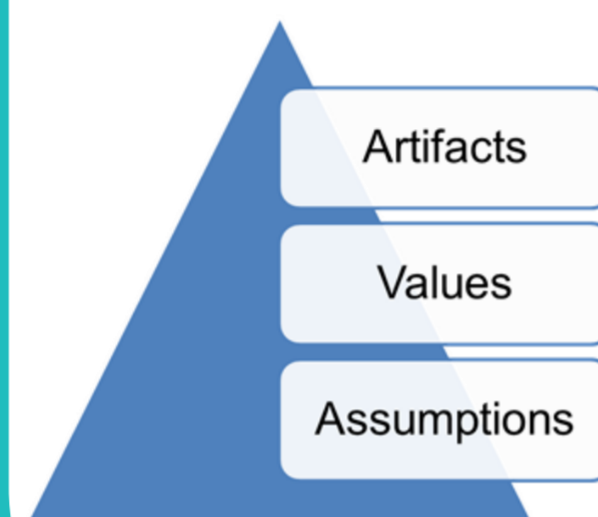


traffic and policing special events. More recently, some forces have begun to explore specialist Specials, working in cyber crime, safeguarding etc. Special Constable role is seen by some as a 'training ground' for becoming a regular full-time officer (Pepper, 2014), having implications for the nature of training programmes, and the necessity of moving beyond the 'hobby bobby' stereotype. Bullock and Leeney (2014) note, the Special Constabulary has been a part of the extended policing family for some time, but more recently has been given new impetus.



ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Organisational culture is a system of shared assumptions, values and beliefs which influence how people within an organisation behave (Schein, 2010). Artifacts are characteristics that are seen, heard and felt. Values relate to thought processes and attitudes. Assumptions are more elusive relating to deeply embedded beliefs on an unconscious level.



METHOD

The research investigated strategic cultures and leadership of the Special Constabulary. The aim of the research was to identify key factors affecting development and implementation of policy in relation to the citizens in policing agenda within two participating police Force areas, both of which were implementing new strategies to increase the number of Special Constables.

25 semi-structured interviews were completed with both Police Force staff and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner staff. Interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes and were transcribed verbatim.



Data were thematically analysed involving the following six steps: 'familiarisation' through reading and re-reading transcripts, 'code generation', 'theme identification', 'review' of themes and codes, 'labelling themes', and 'report writing' (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Tradition in a time of change

Tradition and history of the Special Constabulary within the force is understood as a **recognised barrier** to organisational change. There remain **damaging behaviours, practices and views** which need to be addressed and challenged.

...we were always quite shocked when we spoke to [name of senior officer]... who often refers to Special Constables as cannon fodder.

Importance of value, recognition and reward

Importance of recognition, reward, and training was perceived but **relatively small developments** had taken place. Those given responsibility for Specials have a duty of care which **cannot wait** until 'the next time I see them'.

...where there's debriefs, [Specials] wouldn't be part of the debrief... As a Special Constable, you've gone back to your day job, etc. and it can easily get forgotten about...

FINDINGS



HEADLINE: Traditional views of what it means to be a volunteer within the police are restricting the development of more progressive strategic developments..



Authenticity

Tensions were identified with the **symbols of 'the uniform' and 'warrant card'**, which position Specials as **lacking authenticity** as a holder of The Office of Constable.

'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.

Volunteering vs. volunteering in the police

The importance of the role and identity of the police officer was interpreted as being **significantly different** to that of a volunteer. A key aspect within the analysis was the extent to which to force could **exhort power and control** over volunteers.

...as representatives and as warranted officers, which they are, we're able to deploy them where we most need to at times that most suit us.

DISCUSSION: This is an important moment in time for the agenda of volunteering in policing. This is especially the case given the upcoming Policing and Crime Bill 2016, which will enable chief officer's flexibility to confer a wider range of powers on police staff and volunteers. The findings show how many forces are considering how to better capitalise upon the skills and qualities that Special Constables possess, but traditional organisational thinking and structures are limiting the scope of volunteering in policing and indeed restricting the nature of contributions volunteers can make by obfuscating their wider skills and abilities. Whilst there is much enthusiasm within forces and PCCs, as well as the National Survey for Specials and volunteers showing an appetite for volunteers to be more central to the core business of policing, it is critical to establish mechanisms to capture this value and these activities.

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