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Improvement Agency

NEIGHBOURHOOD
POLICING
PROGRAMME

Neighbourhood Policing Programme

national AGENCY POLICING

NPIA
PCSO Review

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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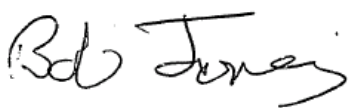
Foreword

Since their introduction in 2002, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) have made a significant and positive contribution to policing. With their focus on high visibility, reassurance policing, community engagement and problem solving, they have played a critical role in the successful delivery of Neighbourhood Policing.

The last two years have seen a large increase in the number of PCSOs. There are now more than 16,000 across England and Wales and this year we reached the milestone of providing a Neighbourhood Policing team in every area. Both of these achievements are a testament to the commitment of the police service to Neighbourhood Policing and to the importance of the PCSO role.

Despite these huge successes, however, we recognise that we must build on this to truly meet the needs of the community and deliver a high quality policing service to the public. That is why we felt the time was right to take a closer look at how the PCSO role has developed across all 43 forces, and, in consultation with forces and key stakeholders, consider what we can do to achieve greater clarity around the PCSO role and function, whilst continuing to allow police chief officers and authorities local flexibility to address neighbourhood problems.


We are grateful to the National Policing Improvement Agency for conducting this review on behalf of the tripartite partners. We hope that this report and its recommendations will help to illustrate how PCSOs are indispensable to Neighbourhood Policing Teams, and to firmly establish PCSOs as a unique and valuable addition to the policing family.



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1. Introduction

PCSOs were introduced under the Police Reform Act 2002. In particular, the Act enabled chief officers *'to appoint suitable support staff (community support officers) to roles providing a visible presence in the community, with powers sufficient to deal with minor issues. Such staff would be under the formal direction and control of the chief officer'*.

The Act suggested that the key function of PCSOs was to *'provide additional capacity to combat low level disorder'*, and thereby help reduce the public's fear of crime. The wording suggests that this would take place through visibility and the exercising of powers to deal with minor issues. The implied distinction is that police officer capacity would focus on more serious disorder and crime.

There are presently over 16,000 PCSOs in England and Wales who represent a significant resource base (approx 10%) of the service's operational presence (combined police officers and PCSOs).

PCSOs and Neighbourhood Policing are generally viewed as a success story but there has been significant negative press coverage generally highlighting the different approaches taken by forces in the role, powers, training, supervision and uniforms provided. There is a concern that these factors have contributed to confusion and misunderstanding by the public on the role of PCSOs.

The combined effects of adverse media attention and the variance in roles across forces has the potential to undermine the implementation of Neighbourhood Policing and lessen the positive local impact of PCSOs in terms of reassuring communities at a time when crime is falling and confidence in policing has been rising.

Therefore, the Association of Chief Police Officers, The Home Office and the Association of Police Authorities asked the NPIA (Neighbourhood Policing Programme Team) to conduct a review of the current ACPO guidance for PCSOs with a view to addressing the concerns raised.

2. Methodology

In December 2007 the NPIA was requested to undertake a review of PCSOs and to report back their findings by March 2008. The purpose of the Review was to consider a number of issues relating to the use of PCSOs, and seek to establish a tripartite agreement on the future use of these staff.

The review was led and managed by the Neighbourhood Policing Programme Team with direct assistance from colleagues within the NPIA, Home Office and APA.

The Review's terms of reference were agreed by the tripartite organisations in December 2007 and are at [Appendix A](#).

In summary the review focused on the following areas:

- Role
- Powers
- Selection, training and career development
- Supervision
- Uniform
- Protective equipment
- Age
- Volunteering Scheme

All Chief Officers, Police Authorities, the Police Federation, UNISON, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), Police Superintendents Association, the Local Government Association and the Welsh Local Government Association were invited to submit written comments on any aspect of the review. 25 Forces, 20 Police Authorities and all the named bodies consulted subsequently responded.

A small number of regional practitioner workshops, consisting of focus groups comprising of PCSOs, Neighbourhood Policing constables and Neighbourhood Policing sergeants, were held in London and Bradford where 12 forces were represented. In addition, the Neighbourhood Policing Programme Team Field Officers undertook focus groups in 4 forces with Senior Management Team members, non NP staff (response, investigative, specialist and intelligence staff etc), the public and 4 Local Authority Chief Executives who had supported forces in matched funding arrangements.

Desk top research was undertaken by the NPIA Research, Analysis and Information Unit and many forces supplied a number of key documents (risk assessments, deployment and patrol policies and job descriptions). The existing and substantial knowledge base within the Neighbourhood Policing Programme has also been drawn upon, which included tactical research conducted in 2007.

A number of specialist sources were also consulted – Home Office Police Leadership and Powers Unit, NPIA Learning and Leadership Directorate, Force Training Managers, NPIA Workforce Modernisation Programme and NPIA Workforce Strategy Unit. A number of `bespoke` or directed visits also took place to look at specific elements i.e. PCSO supervisory models and force selection and recruitment processes.

3. Review Findings

This report is intended to provide a concise summary of the review findings. Further detailed information on the consultation, analysis and recommendations is available from the NPIA Neighbourhood Policing Programme.

This section considers the specific issues addressed under the terms of reference.

1. Role

The current position on the role of PCSOs as set out in ACPO Guidance, 2005, is, *“to contribute to the policing of neighbourhoods, primarily through highly visible patrol with the purpose of reassuring the public, increasing orderliness in public places and being accessible to communities and partner agencies working at local level. The emphasis of this role, and the powers required to fulfil it, will vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and force to force.”*

This guidance identified areas where the use of PCSOs is not to be considered:

“It is ACPO’s view that only sworn police officers are appropriate for the following circumstances: -

- *Wherever there is a clear likelihood that a confrontation will arise*
- *Where there is scope for exercise of a high degree of discretion*
- *Where police action is likely to lead to a higher than normal risk of harm to anyone*
- *Where there is a clear likelihood that police action will include any infringement of a person’s human rights*
- *Where the incident is one which is likely to lead to significant further work.*

A review of role profiles and deployment policies submitted from forces showed that PCSOs are predominately undertaking the same core role as within the framework set out above. The ACPO Guidance enabled flexibility in defining the exact nature of the duties that PCSOs would carry out locally and over time this local flexibility has resulted in PCSOs performing certain roles which are not closely aligned to those set out in the guidance.

A number of variations were identified, in some cases with PCSOs conducting quite specialist functions:

- Safer Transport teams
- Schools and youth involvement
- Hate crime & vulnerable people liaison
- Gypsy and traveller liaison officer
- Mobile police station reception
- Family liaison/management and domestic violence
- Offender management

- Police station reception
- Joint partnership, action or cross border teams or special project teams
- Trainers and tutors
- Liquor and firearms licensing
- Roads policing/ANPR teams
- Detention office related duties

The consultation feedback demonstrated that there is wide support and agreement for the current ACPO Policy on the role of PCSOs. The majority of forces agreed that the fundamental role should be as currently defined by ACPO (public facing, supporting the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing, community engagement, high visibility patrolling and reassurance). However, forces, the Association of Police Authorities (APA) and Police Superintendents Association continue to call for sufficient local flexibility, especially in areas generally categorised as 'quality of life' issues - involvement in recording minor crime and attending low level incidents and recording basic victim statements. The APA highlighted that whilst the drive for national consistency was supported, some local discretion should remain regarding '*specific aspects of the role and function dependent on local circumstances and need*'. Both the Superintendents Association and Police Federation identified a need to clearly differentiate the role of PCSO from that of a sworn officer. UNISON supported the current definition and called for greater national consistency.

The National Reassurance Policing Programme evaluation in 2005 indicated that properly implemented neighbourhood policing can increase public confidence in policing, feelings of safety, and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Research conducted by the NPIA in 2008 has shown that whilst the implementation of neighbourhood policing is the most important factor in increasing public confidence, a perceived poor service to victims can have a significant disproportionate impact on overall confidence and satisfaction levels. Therefore, there is good evidence that addressing non-attendant crime policies, ensuring that victims receive a personal service/visit and generally improving contact and information to victims will have positive effects on overall confidence.

Despite the significant agreement from all stakeholders regarding the role of PCSOs, it is also clear that role drift has occurred, with forces justifying their use in varied tasks. The review considered that by re-defining a core role and principles, it should be possible to prevent further drift, as well as bringing consistency to the way in which PCSOs are deployed.

Proposed role and principles – PCSOs should be:

Integrated into a Neighbourhood Policing team (normally geographic but could be for a defined community of interest, for example. Safer Transport teams)

Or

Deployed to directly support Neighbourhood Policing team(s) in their neighbourhoods (in both the above the PCSOs should spend the majority of their time within neighbourhoods and not be office/police station based and/or undertaking administrative roles).

With **all** the below principles applying:

- *Undertake public facing non-confrontational duties in uniform*
- *Visible in the communities on foot or cycle patrol (vehicle if rural community)*
- *Deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB), low level crime and incidents, local problems/priorities and quality of life issues*
- *Support and improve service to victims and vulnerable people*
- *Conduct engagement and problem solving activity*

Attached at [Appendix B](#) is a list and description of roles matched against the above principles. Where forces existing use of PCSOs conflicts with the above principles, it is proposed that they be given an agreed period of time to reconcile.

The Review acknowledges that this could involve realignment of budgets and changes involving staff which will require time to resolve. It is proposed that forces may wish to seek the advice of the ACPO lead for PCSOs in contentious cases.

Recommendation 1:

Forces to adopt the role and principles for PCSOs

The research highlighted that PCSOs in reality engage in activities that contribute to two outcomes, that of effectiveness, (their contribution to improving reassurance, reducing ASB, confidence and satisfaction) and efficiency, (engaging in tasks that free up more expensive resources i.e. fully sworn officers) etc. The review concluded that some of the confusion and drift in roles and responsibilities nationally may in part be due to a lack of appreciation of the effects of mixing these two outcome activities together. Therefore, additional work is suggested in order to effectively measure and monitor holistically the benefits, tasks and performance of PCSOs in the future.

Recommendation 2:

The NPIA consider with the tripartite partners whether further evaluation of the use of PCSOs is required, specifically looking at:

- **Contribution of PCSOs to confidence and satisfaction**
- **Benefits in efficiency, costs and freeing up sworn officers (added value)**
- **Contribution to crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) reduction**
- **Improvements in the awareness and understanding of the role by the public.**

If these recommendations are approved the NPIA will ensure that any additional responsibilities requiring additional training are effectively mapped against the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and IPLDP requirements.

2. Powers

Section 38 of the Police Reform Act 2002 (PRA) allows a chief officer to designate powers to PCSOs. At present there are 53 powers that can be designated. In addition, there are a number of local authority by-laws which can also be designated (usually enforced by the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices). A standard list of 20 powers was introduced on 1 December 2007. All PCSOs are designated with these powers (once trained in their use). This has therefore created core standardisation across England and Wales whilst still allowing for local flexibility by individual forces and Police Authorities. The resultant variation between some forces has led to some confusion and misunderstanding and has been negatively portrayed in some sections of the national media.

The majority of forces stated that the standard list was sufficient to enable PCSOs to carry out their role whilst ensuring that their abstraction from front line duties is kept to a minimum. Where necessary this list could be added to by drawing on the

additional discretionary powers available for designation. Forces also reiterated the view that any increase in powers would have additional training/cost requirements, potential personal safety implications, and could lead to further confusion of the public and the blurring of roles between PCSOs and fully sworn officers.

The APA are supportive of ensuring that Chief Officers retain the flexibility to best match powers to role and defined local community need, whilst at the same time recognising the need not to extend these powers further due to the negative effects this can have. Both the Police Federation and UNISON called for the adoption of all 53 powers to ensure national standardisation. Local Authorities were keen to see transferable powers which could help address certain local issues that were closely related to the work of neighbourhood teams e.g. enforcement of environmental & parking offences, but stressed that any increases in powers generally should not undermine PCSOs current status, increase administrative burdens or remove them from the streets.

A number of forces presently designate PCSOs all powers available whilst others adopt a more selective and restrictive approach. Therefore some PCSOs have been designated powers which increase the potential for confrontation i.e. the power to require a person to remain (commonly referred to as the detention power) and the power to use force to enforce this requirement. What is clear from research carried out by the Neighbourhood Policing Programme is that the majority of powers issued are seldom used, particularly when large numbers of powers are designated. There is also variation between forces regarding those powers outside the Police Reform Act 2002 that are allocated to PCSOs. Many forces have designated PCSOs as Traffic Wardens and as such have a number of additional powers and a considerable amount of their enforcement activity utilises these powers.

The clarification of role, as outlined above, will provide the opportunity to map the powers against role. The Home Office powers audit also presents a timely opportunity to establish a national picture of what powers forces are designating and using. This mapping exercise may necessitate the request for additional offences being added to the standard list or the removal of those no longer required. It will also allow for certain anomalies highlighted by forces during the consultation to be addressed. There will be an ongoing need for dialogue between the partners involved in the tripartite over powers.

Significantly the review also identified the need to increase the awareness amongst staff of the role and powers of PCSOs.

Recommendation 3:

Forces should review currently designated powers to ensure they are all required and used by their PCSOs.

Recommendation 4:

Following the Home Office powers audit, the NPIA will work with forces and the Home Office to consider additional and/or alternative powers and seek to resolve any anomalies.

Recommendation 5:

The NPIA will work with forces to ensure that suitable training and awareness is available at all levels of the service in the role, deployment and powers of PCSOs.

3. Selection

In April 2006 the Home Office introduced a national selection process for PCSOs which comprised a national application form and assessment centres. The process was established to ensure consistency in recruiting standards, however, the take-up of this system, especially the assessment centre element, has been variable with only 17 forces adopting the whole process.

Force responses to the consultation process indicated that the decision not to adopt is based primarily on the cost-effectiveness of operating such an expensive process for comparatively small numbers. In addition, where regional assessment centres have been established there is a view that this may deter candidates who in some cases would have to travel excessive distance. The APA view is that local variation of standards and practice in recruitment and selection is preferred. A common theme from the public and practitioner level consultation was the importance of communication skills to the PCSO role and the view that the inclusion of interactive exercises and other methods to test this skill during selection was essential.

It is clear from the consultation that there is strong agreement for nationally consistent standards in recruitment but the cost involved in the assessment element appears prohibitive for many forces. To ensure consistency in approach is achieved it appears sensible to use the national application form (long or short version) and the Integrated Competency Framework (ICF) behaviours agreed as core for PCSOs, with particular emphasis on communication skills. Forces should be able to choose whether they continue to use the regional assessment centres process.

Recommendation 6:

Forces should recruit to defined National Standards using the national application form (long or short version) and the Integrated Competency Framework (ICF) behaviours agreed as core to the PCSO role.

4. Training

The NPIA has developed a national training product for PCSOs contained within the Wider Police Learning and Development Programme (WPLDP). This was released to forces in September 2007, and is accessible via the NCALT (National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies) Managed Learning Environment (MLE). Nationally, there is inconsistency in adoption of the WPLDP product.

Consultation has revealed that this inconsistency has resulted from forces developing their own products to meet local need at a time of high recruitment. Many forces invested significant time and resources and as a consequence wish to benefit from their investment. Feedback from forces regarding the WPLDP is largely positive, although a minority do perceive it as bureaucratic and not appropriate for their needs.

There was consensus from the consultation that there is a need for standardisation of training provided to PCSOs thereby allowing for national consistency and the realisation of investment should PCSOs become police officers.

The review found that the WPLDP is a robust product with clearly identified learning outcomes that are linked to National Occupational Standards (NOS) and widely available through the NCALT MLE. As such, it forms a foundation for the development of NVQ qualifications and for the adoption of Accredited Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) principles for PCSOs who may wish to apply to become police officers. Ideally, the adoption of WPLDP in all forces would achieve the national consistency that was expressed by forces responding to the consultation. It is accepted that due to the differing nature of some aspects of PCSO roles, there will be local tailoring to meet specific training needs but training for the core PCSO role should be met by the WPLDP.

It is proposed that all forces adopt this by April 2009 and in the interim forces that continue to use their own initial training products ensure they meet the WPLDP learning outcomes for the PCSO core role (the WPLDP is fully aligned to Initial Police learning and Development programme (IPLDP) learning outcomes). A substantial amount of the IPLDP e-learning also meets the PCSO curriculum requirement. There is potential for far greater alignment of the WPLDP with IPLDP which would facilitate a common foundation for the recognition of APEL.

Over the last two years forces have focused on initial PCSO training due to the need to recruit significant numbers of PCSOs over a limited period. This has resulted in a gap in ongoing or refresher training for PCSOs. Many forces are now actively seeking to address this need. Research continues to show the importance of engagement and problem solving activity to achieve the outcomes of neighbourhood policing. As part of the consultation process, Local Authority Chief Executives identified that joint training opportunities should be actively pursued within Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships or Community Safety Partnerships. It is recommended that forces seek to develop the skills of PCSOs in engagement and problem solving and that the NPIA provide advice and guidance on good practice to assist forces.

There also appears to be a case, established from feedback from forces, for PCSOs to be tutored by PCSOs, who have been selected and trained for this tutoring role. Such an approach would afford a means of lateral development for experienced PCSOs and could potentially attract a reward or recognition payment for the additional responsibility. The tutoring should be carried out in neighbourhoods allowing experience and skills to be passed on without detracting from visibility and accessibility.

Lastly, a number of training related issues were raised which the Review did not have the capacity to consider in the time allowed. These included swimming/life saving, first aid and fitness testing, some of which have implications for the service as a whole.

Recommendation 7:

Forces should adopt the WPLDP product by April 2009. (In the interim, forces who have not should ensure their product meets the learning outcomes of the WPLDP product).

Recommendation 8:

Forces should ensure that tutoring for new PCSOs is done by trained PCSO tutors.

Recommendation 9:

Forces should review their refresher training to ensure it includes elements on problem solving and engagement. The NPIA should distribute good practice in these areas to assist forces.

5. Career development

The consultation reinforced the view that there was a lack of career development opportunities for PCSOs. It was clear that staff 'churn' presented risks to the potential benefits of PCSOs whose role is primarily to work within a community where there is a need and expectation that relationships and knowledge will develop over time. Some forces have already offered the opportunity for lateral development by developing appropriate neighbourhood related skills for example, victim support role and tutoring. Such options have been positively received by those performing the role and viewed as advantageous by stakeholders during consultations. The provision of such opportunities will need to be carefully balanced in order not to detract from the requirement for high visibility within the core PCSO role.

A working group comprising representatives from IPLDP Executive Services, Skills for Justice and force members from England and Wales has been working on the development of an NVQ for PCSO's. This review provides the opportunity to re-define the core PCSO role and thereby base an NVQ qualification on that role, common to all forces. Such an approach could be achieved by separating out the induction related National Occupational Standards and assessing 5 or 6 operational units core to the PCSO role which would form a PCSO qualification at NVQ Level 3.

The NPIA Core Leadership Development Programme (CLDP) includes a Neighbourhood Policing module comprising 7 workbooks designed to be delivered within a blended learning approach (i.e. supplemented by workshops, e-learning etc). Successful completion of the programme can result in the award of an 'Introductory Certificate in Neighbourhood Management' through the Chartered Management Institute. The programme is suitable for joint delivery and the involvement of partners, and therefore has potential to build more effective partnership working. The product is available to all forces, together with support from CLDP Field Officers who can offer guidance regarding local implementation and development.

Recommendation 10:

Forces should consider the adoption of a national NVQ developed between the NPIA and Skills for Justice and/or the CLDP Neighbourhood Policing module.

Recommendation 11:

The NPIA should develop a national strategy for the recognition of Accredited Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) for PCSOs transferring to become police officers.

6. Supervision

The current ACPO guidance states that although day to day direction and tasking can be provided by a constable, the responsibility for supervision remains with a uniformed sergeant, operating within the Neighbourhood Policing team. This was supported by Home Office research in 2005 which stated PCSOs were most effective as part of teams with police officers and supervised from within the team. Career structure and progression for PCSOs have continually been raised as issues by stakeholders and staff who see this as a means of retaining PCSOs. Two forces currently have adopted a system of PCSO supervisors mainly to increase supervision ratios, free up sergeants and to improve the front line supervision of PCSOs.

Nearly all forces reported a desire to maintain the position as outlined in current ACPO guidance. They did not identify any operational advantage by creating a separate tier of supervision within PCSOs and felt this would not aid their integration into neighbourhood policing teams. A large number of forces had reviewed the issue of supervision for PCSOs, with only two forces introducing PCSO supervisors as a result. However, the feedback from practitioners and Field Officers was that the ratio of supervisors to neighbourhood constables and PCSOs was higher than recommended in many areas which affected supervision on the ground.

The Police Federation commented that they do not see the need for a career structure within the PCSO role and therefore believe a supervisory structure was unnecessary in terms of career development. They also highlighted that such a structure would impact on integration within the policing family and reiterated their desire for supervision by sergeants and not constables. The APA retain a view across the majority of authorities that PCSOs form an integral part of neighbourhood policing teams and, therefore, should be line managed under one clear structure, i.e. police sergeant supervisors, to ensure there is clarity of purpose and consistency of approach in delivery of service. They also raise concerns that the role of constable should not become combined with supervisory duties and go beyond the scope and skill of that post.

UNISON believe it is important that a career framework is developed for PCSOs which recognises that many PCSOs wish to remain in neighbourhood policing or make lateral moves into other police staff posts. UNISON supports the introduction of a dedicated PCSO supervisor role in every police force on the rational that it allows for the development of leadership and supervisor skills whilst remaining in a police staff role. UNISON highlighted that not every PCSO wanted to become a police officer and that current ACPO proposals for a strategic employment framework wrongly assumed that this is the natural career path for PCSOs.

Overall, it appears that the current position should be maintained with PCSOs being supervised by sergeants within neighbourhood policing teams. However, it is accepted that in some forces Neighbourhood Team Constables are involved in the tasking, deployment and direction of PCSOs as part of their dedicated beat officer role. Such close involvement will legitimately require these officers to feedback performance to supervisory Sergeants. In such cases forces should ensure that Sergeants retain responsibility for the quality and consistency of PCSOs development and performance in order to inform the PDR (Performance Development Review) process. The review also found that in certain forces the ratio of supervision was a concern and felt forces should consider this aspect as a matter of importance.

Recommendation 12:

Forces should ensure supervision of PCSOs is provided by police sergeants working as part of a Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Recommendation 13:

Forces should review their existing supervision ratios to ensure these are realistic and in line with good practice.

7. Uniform

The current ACPO guidance states that PCSOs should be recognisable to the public as police staff, but visibly distinct from regular police officers. Some variations in uniform and approach have appeared including the wearing of force crests on hats/uniform, the inclusion of the separate word `Police` on uniform and the use of chequered hat bands (blue or black).

The consultation revealed a consensus that the PCSO should be clearly recognisable as such by the public and distinct from a police officer. UNISON has been pro-active in this area stating a need for *'a standard identifiable uniform for PCSOs across England and Wales, comprising force crest, blue and white chequerboard hat/ cap band, blue tie/ epaulettes, "Police Community Support Officer" clearly signed on the uniform, all other kit to be standard police officer issue.'* Both UNISON and some practitioners commented on the poor quality of uniform in certain forces.

The issue of some PCSOs needing to wear "traffic" insignia was raised during the consultation and the Home Office have indicated an intention to address this at the earliest opportunity.

The review concluded that to set a standard uniform for PCSOs was unrealistic and the potential cost implications would be prohibitive. It therefore proposes a set of

principles with certain elements specified to ensure a common approach and appearance:

- The uniform should be of good quality, fit for the duties performed and ensure the health and safety of the wearer
- It must be distinct from that of a police officer
- It should identify the wearer as a “Police Community Support Officer” or “Community Support Officer”
- The uniform should identify the wearer as a member of the wider police force they belong to
- The PCSO identifying features should be nationally consistent:
 - Plain blue hat band
 - Plain blue epaulettes
 - Plain blue tie

The review did not have the opportunity to specifically test the validity of the `identifying features` listed above and a degree of professional judgment has been applied by the Review Team, however there may be benefit in the future of undertaking an assessment of whether these features are the most appropriate.

Although it is accepted that for some forces this will involve additional costs, it is felt that to re-establish a clearly identified national image of PCSOs is important for the service and should be achieved as soon as possible. It is also recommended that any future issues relating to PCSO uniform should be referred to the reconstituted ACPO Uniform Appointments Board.

Recommendation 14:

Forces adopt the above principles related to PCSO uniform by September 2008.

Recommendation 15:

Future issues relating to PCSO uniform should be referred to the ACPO Uniform Appointments Board.

8. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Current ACPO guidance allows for forces to determine what level of personal protective equipment is allocated to PCSOs. The guidance states that protective vests have become common place and forces should consider issue of this equipment in light of local health and safety assessments. At the time of the review, 40 forces in England and Wales issued protective vests to PCSOs. The guidance considers that the issue of other PPE equipment; in-capacitant spray, handcuffs and batons would not be appropriate to the role expected of PCSOs, and should only be

considered 'in extreme circumstances', again at the time of the review only two forces issued any of these items of PPE (handcuffs) to PCSOs. One of the latter is the British Transport Police whose risk assessment is based on the role they perform and specific dangers of their operating environment. There was no appetite for extensions of PPE beyond protective vests, although both the APA and some forces felt consideration should be given to providing some form of defensive capability to PCSOs.

All forces have risk assessments for deployment of PCSOs and most forces appear to manage the risks by the primary control measures of appropriate training, deployment restrictions and management control. The review found that despite considerable guidance on risk assessment processes, some forces made different decisions and implemented different control measures having identified the same or similar risks.

The issue of PPE is a matter for individual Chief Officers based on their risk assessment process. Although the review received strong views from UNISON, practitioners and other stakeholders supporting a requirement to provide protective vests, the review concluded that this should remain the responsibility of Chief Officers and that Forces should establish effective arrangements to ensure risk assessments are refreshed and properly managed.

There was also a perception by many PCSOs and other front line staff that PCSOs do not receive sufficient training, especially refresher training, in personal safety and conflict management/resolution. There was some inconsistency across forces in this area and the review felt that forces should ensure the establishment of an appropriate training strategy to address these needs.

Recommendation 16:

The NPIA should provide guidance in operational risk assessment to ensure that decision making and control measures are consistent.

Recommendation 17:

Forces should conduct a full risk assessment around PPE issued to PCSOs, which is aligned to the corporate role and expectations of PCSOs as set out in recommendation 1.

Recommendation 18:

Forces should ensure a clear training programme for PCSOs in personal safety and conflict management/resolution.

9. Age

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, which came into force on 1 October 2006, outlawed age discrimination, victimisation and harassment in employment and vocational training. Whilst forces can set a minimum age for recruitment of PCSOs, any such criterion would need to be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. If it were not it would be unlawfully discriminatory under these age discrimination regulations.

A small number of forces had recruited PCSOs under the age of 18, this received negative media attention and some public criticism. There was universal support within the review for employing PCSOs over the age of 18 years and so in November 2007 the Home Secretary, with the support of ACPO, announced that it was considered that the minimum age for PCSOs should be 18 years.

Recommendation 19:

Forces should employ PCSOs over the age of 18 years.

10. PCSO Volunteer Scheme

In Sir Ronnie Flanagan's Interim Report (Oct 2007), a recommendation was included that *"the NPIA should research the feasibility of a volunteer PCSO scheme and report on its findings by summer 2008."*

Most forces, staff associations, stakeholders and practitioners voiced little support for the concept of such a scheme. A number of forces did indicate an interest 'in principle', however, they also expressed the view that the timing was not appropriate with the need to resolve the role of PCSOs prior to looking at volunteering. The benefits of volunteering and involvement of citizens in this community based activity are potentially large for the service and the volunteer PCSO role offers an alternative to the Special Constabulary. This in itself was considered a negative aspect by many respondents.

4. Other Issues

During the Review a number of other issues were identified and those deemed important to be considered further are outlined below.

Awareness and understanding by public and media

There was significant agreement by practitioners that inconsistencies in the areas highlighted in the main body of this report had not enabled an effective national communication plan to be established. Simply the differences across forces are likely to have led to public misunderstanding and confusion, especially with the critical media coverage using certain comparisons between forces. UNISON in particular has called for a much stronger and co-ordinated stance by the tripartite organisations to challenge adverse media coverage and those critical of PCSOs. UNISON has also proposed a strategic media campaign aimed specifically at increasing public awareness of PCSOs.

Whilst a national campaign solely for PCSOs is not recommended the review team believes that a more co-ordinated strategy should be developed between the tripartite members with key national messages agreed. It is essential that this forms part of the ongoing neighbourhood policing communications plan. This should be led by the NPIA and sit with the Neighbourhood Policing Programme Team.

The co-ordinated publicity campaign "A name in every neighbourhood – keeping the promise" undertaken in March 2008, has already provided the opportunity to 'market' neighbourhood policing teams and the role of PCSOs within them. In addition, the Home Office produced a second series of the television programme, "Life on the Beat", which included 'raising awareness of neighbourhood policing teams' as its primary aim, and results indicate very high viewing figures. A third series is planned for Autumn 2008 as part of a 3 year Home Office community safety campaign.

Recommendation 20:

The NPIA, with the support of the tripartite, should work together to raise public awareness of the role of the PCSO in Neighbourhood Policing

Recommendation 21:

Forces should seek to increase awareness of the role of PCSOs internally.

Funding

In Sir Ronnie Flanagan's Interim Report he identified the need to continue the ring-fencing of the Neighbourhood Policing Fund (the Home Office fund specifically for PCSOs) for an additional year and in her subsequent response to Sir Ronnie the Home Secretary agreed that the ring fence should remain for 2008/09.

The APA, LGA, WLGA, ACPO and Superintendents Association have all identified the sustainability of funding as a key issue for maintaining the number of PCSOs and embedding neighbourhood policing. UNISON have requested the extension of the ring-fencing until the end of the next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period. It is clear that the match funding element has attracted inconsistent funding from partners and other interested bodies, and has in the majority of forces led to the main burden falling onto the Police Authority. With the present challenging funding situation within the public sector, both partners and police authorities are going to have to make difficult decisions regarding the amount of funding they can allocate to this area of policing.

Recommendation 22:

The Tripartite partners consider how to address the issue of financial sustainability beyond 2008/09.

5. Next Steps

The NPIA Neighbourhood Policing Programme, on behalf of the tripartite organisations, is in the process of drafting an action plan to monitor the progress of the 22 recommendations made in this report. This plan will be circulated to Forces, Police Authorities and other stakeholders in due course. The Neighbourhood Policing Programme will report progress to the tripartite in the Autumn 08.

6. List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Forces to adopt the role and principles for PCSOs.

Recommendation 2

The NPIA consider with the tripartite partners whether further evaluation of the use of PCSOs is required, specifically looking at:

- Contribution of PCSOs to confidence and satisfaction
- Benefits in efficiency, costs and freeing up sworn officers (added value)
- Contribution to crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB) reduction
- Improvements in the awareness and understanding of the role by the public

Recommendation 3

Forces should review currently designated powers to ensure they are all required and used by their PCSOs

Recommendation 4

Following the Home Office powers audit, the NPIA will work with forces and the Home Office to consider additional and/or alternative powers and seek to resolve any anomalies.

Recommendation 5

The NPIA will work with forces to ensure that suitable training and awareness is available at all levels of the service in the role, deployment and powers of PCSOs.

Recommendation 6

Forces should recruit to defined National Standards using the national application form (long or short version) and the Integrated Competency Framework (ICF) behaviours agreed as core to the PCSO role.

Recommendation 7

Forces should adopt the WPLDP product by April 2009. [In the interim, forces who have not should ensure their product meets the learning outcomes of the WPLDP product.]

Recommendation 8

Forces should ensure that tutoring for new PCSOs is done by trained PCSO tutors.

Recommendation 9

Forces should review their refresher training to ensure it includes elements on problem solving and engagement. The NPIA should distribute good practice in these areas to assist forces.

Recommendation 10

Forces should consider the adoption of a national NVQ developed between the NPIA and Skills for Justice and/or the CLDP Neighbourhood Policing module.

Recommendation 11

The NPIA should develop a national strategy for the recognition of Accredited Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) for PCSOs transferring to become police officers.

Recommendation 12

Forces should ensure supervision of PCSOs is provided by police sergeants working as part of a Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Recommendation 13

Forces should review their existing supervision ratios to ensure these are realistic and in line with good practice.

Recommendation 14

Forces adopt the principles related to PCSO uniform by September 2008.

Recommendation 15

Future issues relating to PCSO uniform should be referred to the ACPO Uniform Appointments Board.

Recommendation 16

The NPIA should provide guidance in operational risk assessment to ensure that decision making and control measures are consistent.

Recommendation 17

Forces should conduct a full risk assessment around PPE issued to PCSOs, which is aligned to the corporate role and expectations of PCSOs as set out in recommendation 1.

Recommendation 18

Forces should ensure a clear training programme for PCSOs in personal safety and conflict management/resolution.

Recommendation 19

Forces should employ PCSOs over the age of 18 years.

Recommendation 20

The NPIA, with the support of the tripartite, should work together to raise public awareness of the role of the PCSO in Neighbourhood Policing

Recommendation 21

Forces should seek to increase awareness of the role of PCSOs internally

Recommendation 22

The tripartite partners consider how to address the issue of financial sustainability beyond 2008/09.

7. Acknowledgements

Throughout the course of the review a large number of extremely insightful and valuable contributions were made or submitted by a wide range of individuals and organisations, all of which have ensured that this review remained focused on the views and experiences of operational practitioners at all levels.

The review team lead and tripartite partners would like to thank those individual police officers and staff, PCSOs, members of the public, local government employees, police authority personnel and staff association representatives who made these important contributions.

We would also like to thank all those Police Forces, Police Authorities, the Police Federation, UNISON, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), Police Superintendents Association, the Local Government Association and the Welsh Local Government Association for both contributing to this review directly and for allowing participation in the review by personnel from their organisations.

Martin Bagshaw
NP Programme Manager & PCSO Review Team Lead

Appendix A

NPIA POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS REVIEW

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

On 7th November 2007 a paper outlining a number of issues relating to Police Community Support Officers was presented to ACPO Cabinet. The paper made a number of related recommendations, all of which were accepted (subject to minor alteration). To address these ACPO have requested the NPIA (Neighbourhood Policing Programme) to lead a tripartite Review (Home Office, APA and ACPO) to implement the recommendations.

Aim and Scope of Review

The review will consider a range of issues that have been assessed as essential in supporting the improved use and deployment of PCSOs. The review will seek to capture the good practice and learning that has emerged and apply this to ensure that the full benefits of PCSOs can be used by the Police Service in responding to the challenges of 21st century policing. The review will make recommendations to ensure that there is national consistency and standardisation where appropriate whilst continuing to allow Chief Officers flexibility and continued innovation to respond to locally identified circumstances.

General Principles

In commissioning the Review, the following general principles were highlighted;

- That the current ethos and philosophy for PCSOs is robust and appropriate and any further considerations will generally focus on improving their effectiveness in engaging with communities.
- PCSOs should continue to be deployed in direct front line public facing roles focusing on engagement with their local communities within a neighbourhood policing structure.
- PCSOs deployment should continue to directly impact on improving communities' confidence and satisfaction in local policing.

In addition to the general principles above it was also agreed that ;

- Forces should continue to comply with the current ACPO guidance on uniform pending further research in the review.

- PCSOs should continue to be supervised by sworn police officers pending further research in the review.

ACPO and the Home Secretary also agreed that;

- PCSOs should not be recruited under the age of 18

Governance

The Review will be led by the NPIA Neighbourhood Policing Programme in partnership with and assisted by ACPO, the Home Office and the Association of Police Authorities. The Review will come within the remit of the Tri-partite Responsiveness and Accountability Sub Group. Tri-partite organizations will also report via their own governance structures.

The review will begin in December 2007 with work completed by February 2008 and will report on its recommendations by early March 2008. The review will be undertaken by a small team consisting of members of the tri-partite organisations and overseen by the Senior Responsible Officer ACC Jerry Kirkby, Director of the NPIA Neighbourhood Policing Programme. The review will be led by Superintendent Martin Bagshaw, the NPIA Neighbourhood Policing Programme Manager.

Terms of Reference

1. To review the current guidance and strategies for PCSOs to consider their role within a Workforce Modernisation framework.

2. The review will make recommendations necessary to achieving greater national consistency in the following areas;

- Role and function of PCSOs
- Age of PCSOs
- Powers allocated to PCSOs
- Issue of PPE to PCSOs
- Recruitment, selection and training methods, processes and standards
- Supervisory and career development structures and opportunities
- Use of the `Traffic` designation on PCSOs` uniform

3. The review will assist the NPIA in its ongoing work to consider the feasibility of a PCSO Volunteer Policing scheme. This work will also take into account wider policing volunteering opportunities including the H&S considerations of the use of such volunteers.

4. To identify and evaluate emerging good practice identified as part of the review.

5. To ensure the relevant recommendations relating to PCSOs made in Sir Ronnie Flanagan's review interim report are considered.
6. To make recommendations regarding future work that the review may identify as necessary.

Appendix B – PCSO Role Variation Examples

The core role and principles have been applied to the range of PCSO roles that are currently being undertaken in forces.

Where the assessment identifies that this is not a function for a PCSO, it does not mean that this should not be carried out by a suitably trained member of police staff, rather the Review considered that it is inappropriate to be carried out by a PCSO.

Proposed core role and principles:

PCSO's should be:-

Integrated into a Neighbourhood Policing team (normally geographic but could be for a defined community of interest for example, Safer Transport teams)

Or

Deployed to directly support Neighbourhood Policing team(s) in their neighbourhoods (in both the above the PCSO should spend the majority of their time within neighbourhoods and not be office/police station based and/or undertaking administrative roles)

And

With all the below principles applying:

- *Undertake public facing duties in uniform*
- *Visible in the communities on foot or cycle patrol (vehicle if rural community)*
- *Deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB), low level crime and incidents, local problems/priorities and quality of life issues*
- *Support and improve service to victims and vulnerable people*
- *Conduct engagement and problem solving activity*

The following are roles that are currently being carried out by PCSOs in forces across the country:

Safer Transport Teams – Acceptable Variation

Many forces have teams attached to transport hubs, routes and networks. This is an acceptable variation as it deals with a community of interest, with the PCSOs carrying out public facing duties in uniform, and spending the majority of time in the

community, dealing with problem solving and supporting other Neighbourhood Policing teams.

Schools and Youth involvement - Acceptable Variation

There are many examples of this type of work carried out by PCSOs. There are examples of PCSOs attached to a particular school or schools as a full time posting. These are acceptable provided the PCSO is in uniform, working with educational personnel in partnership to solve problems within the school, and patrolling within the immediate locality/community around that school. It is also acceptable, and good practice, for PCSOs based in neighbourhood policing teams to visit and interact with schools within their geographic community. PCSOs replacing the schools involvement role and attending multiple schools to provide lectures or lessons would not be commensurate with the role defined above. There is no regular patrol, no attachment to a neighbourhood policing team or problem solving/engagement activity.

Youth Focus/Engagement PCSO - Acceptable Variation

This role will fall within the criteria if the PCSO supports neighbourhood policing teams with patrol advice and activity regarding young people. These PCSOs often work alongside neighbourhood policing teams, conducting visible foot patrol, gathering community intelligence and being part of planned engagement and problem solving activity.

Police Station Reception Officers - Acceptable Variation

There are presently station reception officers in many forces who provide a dedicated and effective service to the public. Although these staff are often attached to and work closely with neighbourhood policing teams, the role needs to extend to spending a considerable amount of their time in public, patrolling and problem solving. If the exclusive function of this role is based within a police station, performing administrative tasks, then the PCSO role and principles are not met. A number of forces are combining this role with patrol and ways of reaching further into communities with surgeries and other engagement methods.

Mobile Police Station Reception - Acceptable Variation

If the role is primarily that of Station Reception Officer (full time) then the above will apply. Should the role form part of neighbourhood engagement and problem solving, with elements of foot patrol, then it would be considered appropriate. It is totally appropriate for PCSOs who form part of neighbourhood policing teams to perform this function within their neighbourhood as an element of their duties, which is more often the case. A number of forces are combining this role with patrol and reaching further into the local communities with surgeries and other engagement methods.

Support and Partnership Teams - Acceptable Variation

This is an area where variations in the core role can be acceptable dependent on the specific nature of the function they are carrying out. A good example in this area would be the Anti-Social Behaviour Team who although not attached to a specific neighbourhood provide support to a number of neighbourhood policing teams by working alongside teams in highly visible problem solving activity, gathering of intelligence and patrol functions. Within this role the PCSO spends their time primarily in neighbourhoods conducting activity that accords with the principles.

Trainers and Tutors - Acceptable Variation

Training and tutoring new staff is considered a good variation in role and a development opportunity for experienced PCSOs. Ideally this should be within their neighbourhood but a pragmatic approach must be adopted with both tutoring and training functions, as the benefits of a short term abstraction may outweigh that of remaining within a neighbourhood.

Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer – Outside Core Role

Hate crime & vulnerable people liaison - Outside Core Role

Family, community or witness liaison/domestic violence - Outside Core Role

Liquor and Firearms Licensing - Outside Core Role

The key deciding features in these specialist cases would be the need for the PCSO to spend the majority of their time working and patrolling within the defined community of interest or neighbourhood (s). These roles have traditionally been primarily administrative/office based functions which involve calling on specific individuals/groups and/or witnesses/victims. The core role of the PCSO extends beyond purely engagement and liaison activity.

Offender Management - Outside Core Role

This variation was created to carry out a number of functions previously carried out by police officers, and is very much a role around liaison, working with partners in the judicial system and ensuring compliance with court conditions. There is no involvement as part of a neighbourhood policing teams and as such this sits outside the core role of the PCSO. Very little emphasis in this role is on the principles of the PCSO role as described above.

Detention Officers/Investigating Officers - Outside Core Role

The Police Reform Act 2002 makes allowance for the role of Detention Officer and Investigating Officers. These officers can have powers designated by the chief constable. This function falls outside of the core role and principles of the PCSO.

Roads Policing/ANPR teams - Outside Core Role

This function falls outside the core role for the PCSO as the officers are not based within the neighbourhood policing teams and appear not to spend the majority of their time supporting neighbourhood policing teams on foot or cycle patrol involved in engagement and problem solving activity.

national AGENCY POLICING

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