



**University of Dundee**

## **Bridging the Gap? Police Volunteering and Community Policing in Scotland**

Dickson, Graeme

*Published in:*

Policing: a Journal of Policy and Practice

*DOI:*

[10.1093/police/paz070](https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paz070)

*Publication date:*

2019

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Dickson, G. (2019). Bridging the Gap? Police Volunteering and Community Policing in Scotland. *Policing: a Journal of Policy and Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paz070>

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in Discovery Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from Discovery Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

# Bridging the Gap? Police Volunteering and Community Policing in Scotland

Graeme Dickson\*

**Abstract** This article examines how far special constables can act as the ‘bridge’ between police services and local communities, within the context of Scottish policing. I consider the literature around the core concepts of community policing, the condition of community policing Scotland, and the role that volunteer police officers can play in enhancing local policing. Then, I draw upon the findings from qualitative interviews and observations of special constables in one division of Police Scotland, to explore the nature of the special constabulary as a potential resource in community and local policing. Finally, I consider these findings in relation to the ongoing discussions of special constables’ contribution to community policing, and how policing organizations might seek to enhance that contribution. This article, I believe, provides a unique contribution to the currently small but emerging field of research within police volunteerism, and brings the perspective of Scottish special constables to these discussions which have been primarily Anglo-centric.

## Introduction

The Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 saw Scotland’s eight police services amalgamated into one central organization, Police Scotland, justified on the basis of improving distribution of policing resources, reducing costs in times of austerity, and maintaining officer numbers (Fyfe and Scott, 2013; Terpstra and Fyfe, 2014). These reforms saw the removal and redistribution of local policing resources, resulting in the new organization becoming ‘more at a distance, more impersonal and formal. . . and more decontextualized’ (Terpstra et al., 2019).

As part of their strategic 2026 Programme, Police Scotland has highlighted the need to reengage with communities, identifying volunteers as a potential resource for community engagement.

Special constables—warranted, part-time, voluntary police officers—were identified as a means to enhance community engagement across Police Scotland. Referring to Police Scotland’s own website, these volunteers can provide ‘an excellent bridge between the police service and the public, representing both the community within the police service, and the police service within local communities’.

This article examines how far special constables can act as the ‘bridge’ between police services and communities, within the context of Scottish policing. I consider the literature around the core concepts of community policing, the condition of community policing Scotland, and the role that volunteer police officers can play in enhancing local policing. Then, I draw upon the findings

\*School of Social Sciences, University of Dundee, Dundee DD1 4HN, UK. E-mail: g.a.dickson@outlook.com

from qualitative interviews and observations with special constables in one division of Police Scotland, to explore the roles and experiences of these volunteers in relation to community engagement and their role as a link between the police and the public. Finally, I consider the ways in which Police Scotland might seek to enhance the structure of their Special Constabulary to enhance the contribution of these volunteers to community-orientated policing objectives. This article provides a unique contribution to the currently small, but emerging, field of research within police volunteerism, and brings the perspective of Scottish special constables to these discussions which have been primarily Anglo-centric. Support for the publication of these findings was provided by the University of Dundee, through the university's UK Research and Innovation block grant.

## Community policing in Scotland: core concepts and widening gaps

In order to consider the special constable's role in enhancing community policing practice, I have considered the core concepts of community policing and reflected upon the condition of community policing in post-reform Police Scotland.

### Core concepts in community policing

While definitions of 'community' policing mean different things to different policing organizations, common features are shared across the various definitions (Segrave and Ratcliffe, 2004). 'Community engagement', placing local knowledge and community participation at the centre of crime prevention, for example, is a fundamental feature of community policing, (Innes and Roberts, 2008; Skogan 2008). Effective community engagement, according to Skogan (2006), involves listening to the public's perceptions of local problems and modifying policing practices to address those issues (2006, p. 28).

This also involves 'mobilising' members of the community to work alongside policing

organizations—in Skogan's case, this was exemplified by Chicago police departments' attempts to lead neighbourhood watch initiatives (Skogan, 2006).

By ensuring that local people have access to police resources, the exchange of knowledge can enhance the public's trust in their police services, and enhance the legitimacy of the police services by generating strong links within a more supportive public (Skogan, 2006).

Additionally, visibility of local police officers also contributes to these feelings of legitimacy, along with enhancing accessibility of policing resources within local communities (Povey, 2001; Hamilton-Smith et al., 2014).

For the purposes of this study, I consider 'community policing' to be an amalgamation of these core concepts; providing communities with local access to visible policing resources, through engaging with local people, in order to respond to the concerns of those communities, defined and bound within a particular geographical area. This definition is used to reflect on the experiences of police volunteers in Scotland to explore the nature of their contribution to local policing.

### The 'widening gap' in post-reform Scottish policing

In Scotland, there has been 'intensive work conducted on community policing' (Hail, 2016), which has emphasized the need for engagement and accessibility between the public and the police (Aston and Scott, 2014). Historically, community policing has been a feature of policing in Scotland since its inception, which is often overlooked in contemporary analysis (Donnelly, 2010). At its roots, localism is a core element of the policing mission in Scotland.

The 2012 reform, however, introduced something of a retreat from organizational features that typify community policing (Terpstra et al., 2019). With Police Scotland's focus on improving the distribution of policing resources across Scotland, reforms saw a displacement of local officers from communities where they had developed local knowledge and relationships (Loveday, 2018).

Local beat policing was replaced by a more response-centric style of police patrol (Hail, 2016). Many of the pre-reform standards favoured in the West of Scotland were deployed nationwide—a process coined as ‘Strathclydification’ (Fyfe, 2014). Fyfe provides us with an example of the phenomenon, in the now-reversed decision made by Police Scotland to deploy firearm officers on police patrols in some parts of rural Scotland. This decontextualization of police policy exemplified the shift away from community engagement and consultation to identify appropriate, contextualized policing policies (Wooff, 2016).

The rolling back of both civilian staff and local police stations, prompted by a commitment to reduce costs in an era of austerity, removed many points of accessibility from communities (Terpstra and Fyfe, 2019). The ‘widening gap’ between the police and community, accompanied by a commitment to enforcement tactics rather than community engagement, has been defined by the term ‘Abstract Policing’ (Terpstra et al., 2019). Abstract Policing represents a direct challenge to the principles of community policing by jeopardizing community engagement, visibility, and accessibility to policing resources within local communities. Terpstra and Fyfe have highlighted the need to reflect on these changes to ensure that community engagement does not suffer further as a consequence of the reform (Terpstra and Fyfe, 2019).

Police Scotland’s Local Approaches to Policing programme has been developed to explore the nature of local policing strategies across the country. Within this, the role of police volunteerism is being examined as a resource to enhance community engagement, local access to policing resources, and policing visibility.

## A bridge between? Police volunteering and local policing

The office of special constable appeared in the 17th century; referring to those constables who

were called to act by local parish vestries in time of civil unrest (Leon, 2017). Throughout the 18th century, the special constable existed as a crisis responder, deployed in response to politically motivated protest and disorder (Radzinowicz, 1956). By the 19th century, legislation (mainly in the form of the 1856 County and Borough Police Act) established guidelines and procedures to frame and structure Special Constabularies across the country, and by the outbreak of war in the 20th century, the special constable was established as a legitimate policing resource, deployed more so to maintain the peace rather than to simply break up disorder (C. Leon, unpublished data; Leon, 2017). Now, each police force in England and Wales has an established Special Constabulary—as per the Police Act 1964—and in Scotland, auxiliary volunteers were identified as ‘members of the police force’—by virtue of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967.

Special constables are deployed in all manner of frontline policing roles (Bullock and Leeney, 2016), and represent a cost-effective police resource in times of economic constraint (Whittle, 2017). This economic benefit is often called upon as the central justification for their deployment and utilization by police services—which in many ways diminishes the other benefits associated with their contribution to policing to a ‘cheap alternative’ (Caless, 2017).

Bullock (2015), for example, has considered the ways in which incorporating special constables into police services can enhance representative of local communities within police services. Recruiting black, asian and minority ethnic and female volunteers can help to improve representation within communities, improving police legitimacy and trust. Having local people volunteering within these communities not only serves to create a more democratic police service (Garland, 1996) but also emphasizes a more informal, personable style of policing (Fielding, 1995). Community policing succeeds when community members are involved in the delivery of that

community's own policing (Bowling and Foster, 2002; Yarwood, 2007). With Police Scotland experiencing a perceived shift away from these informal styles of policing, police volunteering can reduce the shift away from community policing strategies associated with Abstract Policing.

Traditional styles of community policing are often characterized by images of the 'bobby on the beat' (Loader, 1997), emphasizing visibility and availability of police officers within local settings. Visibility is often considered key feature of the deployment of specials (Tuffin et al., 2006; Bullock and Leeney, 2016) with their deployment on local patrols improving access to police services and legitimizing the police service through promoting relationships between the police and the public (Neuberger, 2009). Although the 2012 reforms are not exclusively responsible for these changes (Hughes and Rowe, 2007), the shift away from these traditional features associated with community policing (Terpstra and Fyfe, 2015) may be remedied through meaningful deployment of specials.

With this in mind, Heike (2017) has highlighted that, where there are theoretical grounds to argue that specials enhance representativeness and visibility within police organizations, there is limited evidence to support these claims within the research around police volunteerism. Also, it is worth noting that while the Special Constabulary can enhance representativeness of the police service within local communities, in reality, this is not always the case (Bullock, 2015), and with numbers of specials declining in Scotland, mirroring the nation-wide trend (Home Office, 2019), then the capacity for a Special Constabulary to contribute to that representativeness is called into question.

Understanding the context of policing and police work within which special constables volunteer is crucial in understanding how these volunteers can contribute to its improvement. Exploring the nature of volunteering within Police Scotland provides important understanding about

the nature of special constables, and the role that they can play in enhancing community police work. This study contributes to the emerging field around police volunteering, by placing the community-oriented benefits associated with police volunteering into the Scottish policing context.

### **Building bridges: volunteering and community policing in the Scottish context**

The following data were collected from nine semi-structured interviews with serving special constables, and 60 h of ethnographic observations of special constables deployed on shift. These special constables all volunteered within one of Police Scotland's 13 policing divisions, selected for the study based on the geographical variation of the region, ranging from several large urban centres to very rural collections of villages, which enabled me to explore the data within various different policing contexts.

The participants in the interview ranged in age (from 25 to late 50s), gender (seven male and two female), and in lengths of experience as volunteers (from less than 1 year to over 20 years). These were semi-structured interviews, ranging in length from 45 to 90 min, focused on the participant's experiences of volunteering within Police Scotland, their own motivations and expectations, and the way they understood their role in the policing of communities within the divisions in which they worked. Data were audio recorded and transcribed for the purposes of analysis.

A smaller number of participants ( $n=7$ ) were selected for the observations, with a similar mix of genders (five male and two female), ages (from 25 to late 50s), and lengths of experience (from less than 1 year to over 20 years). These observations took place during the special constable's shifts and were organized to capture a variety of different geographical contexts (remote rural villages, sub-urban areas, and urban centres) and policing

activity (events policing, response shifts, and local ‘community’ initiatives) to capture a range of different contributions which these volunteers provide to policing. Data were organized in field reports, compiled from handwritten field notes, for the purposes of analysis.

The data were thematically analysed using qualitative analysis software, focusing on the features of the definition of community policing considered above. This would allow me to explore how far the volunteers aligned their perception of their role with Police Scotland to the objectives associated with doing community policing.

### Making up the numbers

Across the Scottish study site, there was a general sense that the priority for the inclusion of special constables within the police service was to provide an additional resource which contributed to, and enhanced, efforts of regular officers in response-based duties:

[We’re there] to supplement regular man power, the main thing is stuff like events and responding to calls on the radio, point duty, you know, all the normal stuff, and that’s fine, because that’s what we are there to do. (Interview, Kenneth, Special Constable)

Sometimes, personally, I felt like I was there to make up the numbers. I needed to be there so that Police Scotland could say, “we have this many cops out at this time.” (Interview, Ian, Special Constable)

The role that specials played in community policing was sometimes seen as secondary to response-based or demand-driven duties:

Sometimes you need a community engagement person, someone who can just chat to folk, or man the [stations]. I’ve manned the police [station]

before, and people come in, and it’s just like an active presence, and I think that’s an important part of policing. I just don’t think, with the way things are just now, that we can do that. The police are busy, and that’s where they need the support. (Interview, Mary, Special Constable)

Response is fast paced, if you don’t have your head in it, or the right set of skills, you are thrown in the deep end. I feel like there should be more options and more opportunity to work in community policing. (Interview, Elizabeth, Special Constable)

The clash between a desire to contribute to community-orientated police work and the realities of the police service as a responsive organization is typified in the above evidence. Opportunity to give back to the community is an important concept here; how often might a special constable be able to contribute to community-orientated policing when they are embedded in response-orientated roles? For the above special constables, the lack of opportunity to engage with the public in a non-response setting limited these opportunities. For others, the division between engagement- and response-based police work was not a clean-cut:

Whether you are responding or not, you are still serving the community, but that doesn’t mean you are ‘community-based’. I think as volunteers, it’s just assumed that we are helping the community. We might be on response, driving around, we are still ‘serving the community’, because we are volunteers. (Interview, Elizabeth, Special Constable)

There was a sense from this special constable that the nature of volunteering—which generally evoked images of altruism and helping—meant that special constables were still serving their

communities regardless of the nature of the policing tasks they were engaged with. This perception has been considered in contemporary literature around the role of non-warranted civilian volunteers within police settings, who are ‘working “with” rather than “on” the community’ (Millie and Wells, 2019, p. 373) to enhance ‘police-community relations’ by virtue of their volunteering status (Millie and Herrington, 2005). Whereas this may be the case with non-warranted volunteers, there is scope to argue that the special constables—as warranted policing volunteers—may not conform as readily to this, due the realities of their role. Being required to fulfil the responsibilities of their regular counterparts, special constables are directed in their policing tasks by response-driven tactics rather than the ‘softer’ policing approaches which often typify community engagement (Innes, 2005; Wooff, 2016).

That being said, there were observed scenarios which showed there was clear potential for special constables to contribute to visibility and community engagement:

Mary was pretty chatty with most of the supporters that were heading through the turnstiles. Anyone that she did need to pull up and search was pretty friendly, and there was a sense that she was quite comfortable with the whole thing. A number of people had come up to her to ask directions and she happily directed them to where they needed to go... I made comment in my notebook that there was a lot of scope for specials to help out at events like these and provide whatever local knowledge they might have. It wasn't immensely ‘exciting’ police work, but Mary was a friendly and helpful police presence, and she seemed to enjoy playing that role too. (Observation, Mary, Special Constable)

There is certainly a place for specials in contributing to visibility, particularly at public events. However, with volunteers more aligned with response than community policing, more work may need to be done to redefine the perceived role that they play within policing communities. This perhaps speaks to Grube and Piliavin's (2000) claim that the motivations of the special constables play an important part in shaping the volunteer's role identity within the police service.

### Pairing up and corroboration

Outside of events policing, there seemed to be limited opportunity for special constables to get involved in tasks which directly engages them with the public in a non-response environment. In most cases, the special constables were tasked with pairing up with a regular officer and responding to calls as the officer would:

You could be doing something like a point check, or if the regular you are paired with has paperwork you might have to go back and sit and wait on those things getting competed before you can go out anywhere. You might go out on patrol, late at night, and sit in the car somewhere and nothing happens. Sometimes that can get a bit menial. (Interview, Robert, Special Constable)

It was standard practice in the study site that special constables were paired up with regular officers—the ‘independent’ status enjoyed by some special constables in police services in England and Wales is not embedded in structure of the Special Constabulary in Police Scotland. This means that there is limited scope for the special constables to carry out tasks without the oversight of a regular constable. As such, the demands placed on the regular officer vicariously dictated the experience of the special constable, and the volunteer's capacity to engage with certain policing tasks:

The initiative at the industrial estate had been going on for about 16 weeks... the specials were able to walk around and chat to the young people that had decided to loiter around the area, ask them how they were and why they were hanging around in this place. The sergeant in charge was proud of the relationships that they had been able to form... After about 15 minutes, one of the officers paired with Andrew was needed elsewhere in the city, and we had to leave. (Observation with Neil, Special Constable)

Here, operational priority, and the need to 'double-up', removed the special constable from the opportunities for public engagement. Other features of operational policing in Scotland also limit the flexibility and opportunities available to specials:

We spent the next half an hour patrolling around [the city], before another call came over the radio. As they had been "doubled up", Andrew needed to go too... whether for safety reasons or for 'corroboration', doubling up was common practice. (Observation with Andrew, Special Constable)

Here, 'corroboration' is an important feature that deserves explanation. The laws of criminal evidence in Scotland demand that there are two pieces of evidence that speak to the same fact, in order for that fact to be admissible in court. Due to this evidential burden, it is strongly preferred that officers are 'doubled-up' to ensure evidential admissibility (Nicholson and Blackie, 2013; Davidson and Ferguson, 2014). With this in mind, there was a long-standing mentality across special constables that, if they were nothing else, they represented 'walking corroboration':

Sometimes, if I'm there, I just need to let the regular cop get on with it. I'll be there for corroboration... That's sometime how I see my role. Specials can be there to do a lot of things, but sometimes, that's the role that I think I best fit into, that sometimes we are there just to back up the guy that has all the knowledge. (Interview, Trevor, Special Constable)

This mindset, I believe, is an archaic one, at least within this particular study site, however, it cannot be ignored that the legacy of this mentality still permeates the conversation. Corroboration meant that it was rare to find a special constable working without being paired up with a regular officer.

Two specials within the study site, however, worked as a pair without the oversight of a regular constable—an exception to the observed status quo. These special constables, while still bound to response calls that required immediate attention, could still corroborate evidence as a pair, but also, could plan their day proactively. The two special constables actively planned their shift with 'community' in mind:

We had parked up next to the petrol station, and John and Malcolm stood using the speed gun to monitor the speed of the oncoming traffic. According to the specials, at a recent community forum, locals had complained about speeding drivers on this road, and that they believed they didn't know the speed limit. Whenever John and Malcolm saw a driver going just over the speed limit, they pulled them over, and explained to them that the speed limit on the road was not 40 mph, like the rest of the road, but 30. The driver's thanked them for letting them know, and the two special constables were happy that they were, in their words,



“educating”, the drivers and hopefully spreading the word about the speed limit on the road. (Observation, John and Malcolm, Special Constable)

By actively working to be a visible police presence, and tackling issues that were identified by local people, the two officers seemed to be contributing to community policing. By having the freedom to make those choices themselves, they could focus on tackling the issues which had been voiced by members of that community as important to them.

Whereas this may align with Skogan’s (2006) core concepts of effective community policing, we must remember that the ‘voice’ of a community might not always be the one that could be heard the loudest (Mastrofski and Greene, 1993). If there are groups within the community that do not have their voices heard, then the most well-intentioned attempts to do community-orientated police work might simply be perpetuating the desires of a privileged and well-represented few. This may be overly critical of John and Malcolm’s attempts to make themselves more community focused—at the very least, they had followed their desire to contribute to something akin to the community engagement we might see in community policing practices.

### The geography of police volunteering

Whether or not John and Malcolm were or were not doing community policing, it was their relative independence as special constables working without the oversight of regular constables which afforded them this opportunity. Within the study site, ‘independence’ seemed to be limited to more rural communities, where officers had lower workloads to manage:

Bruce explained to me that delivering citations [within the city] could be a tricky and time consuming. Getting one citation “out of the in tray” was a small victory. The job of delivering citation was not glamorous or

exciting, but it played a part in keeping the system ticking over, and Bruce was happy to partake. (Observation, Bruce, Special Constable)

For the special constables, these ‘menial’ tasks could be important. These were jobs that could be completed independently to reduce the intensive workload placed on urban constables, but it was far from the sort of independent, community-focused work that John and Malcolm were seen to be doing in the example above.

The geographical contexts of demand and workload played a role in shaping the opportunities available to special constables. John and Malcolm’s radio was pretty quiet for the majority of the shift travelling between the rural villages; the number of calls that could be heard on Bruce’s radio as he delivered citations across the city represented a much higher workload. Another example is illustrated above in Neil’s observation at the industrial estate, where the demand in urban areas may conflict with opportunities for community-oriented policing to take place.

In rural settings, the lower call volume meant that this sort of community-focused work could be dealt with more frequently, and in the case of John and Malcolm, this meant more freedom to directly contribute to something more like community engagement. These rural settings came with other perceived benefits:

A lot of people recognise me on the job, because I’m able to get in and out of places, do pub checks for example, and I’m known. I don’t live in [this town], because that just the way it’s done, but I do sometimes wish that I volunteered [in my hometown]. I would feel more like I’m directly helping the people that I know. But being recognised here doesn’t bother me. I quite like it. (Interview, Elliott, Special Constable)

Special constables working within their own local communities as a known point of contact embedded within the police service can open channels between community and police; enhancing community policing through providing local accessibility of policing resources (Aston and Scott, 2014). That being said, not all rural specials shared Elliott's enthusiasm:

I used to think that I might be called to something just around the corner, and then I would think 'what if I bump into the guy I just jailed when he is out getting his paper'. I wouldn't advertise my volunteering to family and friends. (Interview, Colin, Special Constable)

For this rural special constable, that risk of being recognized or known within their community, and the potential threat to their own safety, trumped a desire to become the local 'face' of policing in that particular community. Contrast this with evidence from another special, based in an urban setting:

[The city] is big, you don't actually get seen. I was doing a shift in [city] and there was a guy shouting at me 'I'll get you, you bald headed bastard'. Two days later I saw him in the high street, and he walked right past me. Had no idea who I was. (Interview, William, Special Constable)

Volunteering in more rural settings, for some special constables, came with the inherent risks of being identified as a member of the police organization, which created tension for some special constables who believed it jeopardized their safety while off duty. For urban special constables, anonymity was more easily maintained, with special constables less likely to be identified due to more varied, transient populations that they may encounter in these locales.

Safety is a priority, and therefore, it is important to ensure that volunteers are deployed in a place where they are not in any danger and feel secure. However, for some special constables, being accessible and a point of community engagement for the police service was an important part of their volunteering experience.

### Volunteer motivations

The attitude that policing one's own community was important was shared mainly among 'Career Specials'—longer serving, typically older, special constables who are motivated to volunteer by something other than a desire to become a regular officer in the future. As a volunteer that would stay within the police service longer, these volunteers represent better value for money than their otherwise motivated counterparts (Whittle, 2014), but among them are those who volunteer specifically motivated by a desire to give back to their community and enhance local safety. These Career Specials, then, are perhaps the most motivated and driven to contribute to a Special Constabulary focused on enhancing community policing objectives.

There is a concern, however, that as older Career Specials are retiring from volunteering, they are not being replaced by other Career Specials, but by special constables looking to get into the police service as a regular officer:

[This division] have been guilty of using special constables to try to get the numbers up, using it as a taster for joining the cops. I think if you joined now, it might be different, but for a while, I think if you wanted to be a Career Special and weren't interested in joining the cops, you weren't a priority. (Interview, Colin, Special Constable)

As the number of career-motivated special constables increase, and those motivated by other altruistic goals, like community, decrease, there is a

concern that the legitimacy of the Special Constabulary might be damaged, appearing far more like a training facility for new recruits rather than a group of committed and experience volunteers contributing to policing.

## Discussion and conclusion

The findings from the study do generate a number of questions about the contribution that special constables can have to community policing objectives within Police Scotland, when considered in its current form. Community policing, historically, has been a fluid concept, and at times can feel more like a rhetorical device within policing rather than a direct set of principles (Manning, 1984; Leighton, 1991). Sceptically, the claim that special constables can act as a 'bridge' between communities and police services, as Police Scotland claims, could be interpreted in a similar way. Marketing the Special Constabulary as a means to enhance community engagement is an attractive concept, but in reality, the opportunities for these volunteers to contribute to community policing are somewhat missing from the volunteers' experiences.

Corroboration, as an evidential burden in Scots Law, and 'doubling-up' with regular officers, can impact on the flexibility and independence of special constables while on shift. If more volunteers, like John and Malcolm, could be embedded within communities, attending local forums to understand community concerns, and having the flexibility and independence to respond to these concerns, it could go a long way to installing them within these localities as an accessible policing resource. This visible and accessible police presence within these communities would contribute to less distant, less 'Abstract' police service (Terpstra et al., 2019).

This, however, comes with further concerns associated with the geographical context of police volunteering. The above evidence suggests that although embedding special constables as accessible

local point of contact is more achievable in the less demanding rural environments, some volunteers may feel that advertising their status as a police volunteer in these settings might place them at risk. Enhancing the perception of police volunteers within Scottish communities, then, may enable more volunteers to feel more comfortable with this idea of becoming a local, accessible police resource.

Perhaps a solution to this is to reconstruct the Special Constabulary in a more community-centric fashion. Efforts have already been taken within some divisions of Police Scotland to place the command of special constables into the hands of community sergeants, though whether that move is to align volunteers more closely with community teams is yet to be seen. If special constables were both marketed and managed as members of community policing teams, then there is potential for the volunteers to become part of community-facing objectives and allow for relationship between the public and these volunteers to manifest. Consider the role played by PCSOs in England and Wales (O'Neill, 2014), and how the public perceived them as a potential replacement for the 'village bobby' (Merritt, 2010). Emphasizing the importance of the community engagement within the special constable role is crucial to prevent some of the problems encountered by PSCO's, particularly in relation to feeling undervalued as a member of the police service (Caless, 2007; Cosgrove and Ramshaw, 2015). Further still, enhancing community perceptions of special constables can be achieved by improving the number of BAME and female volunteers within the police service, to enhance the representativeness of the Special Constabulary as Police Scotland's community 'bridge'.

This presents us with a further challenge. Volunteers are motivated by their own sets of expectations and desires (Clary, 2004), and if volunteers are not motivated by community engagement, then the changes to align special constables with a more community-orientated role would be

fruitless (Heike, 2017). Further still, with the accepted trend expressed among regular officer and special constables that the majority of new recruits are motivated by a desire to join as a regular constable, there is a fear that these new recruits would want to experience as much of policing as possible, and not be limited to only community policing teams during their time volunteering. Enhancing the recruitment of those motivated by altruistic concerns around community and 'giving back' is a clear way to ensure that a more community-orientated Special Constabulary could thrive.

Career Specials represent a longer serving and more experienced volunteer within the Special Constabulary—along with being better value for money (Whittle, 2014). Longer serving volunteers can potentially generate better relationships with individuals within communities, representing a more accessible and trusted local police contact. Recruiting Career Specials, however, has been commented on by members of the police organization as a difficult job, as the concerns expressed above about the increase in recruits motivated by future policing careers tell us.

I would mirror the recommendations made by Alexander (2000) that the recruitment and management structures of police volunteering should take motivation, and subsequent expectations, more seriously. We know from volunteering literature that motivation shapes the expectations of volunteers, and opportunity for those expectations to be realized mould volunteer experience (Clary and Snyder, 1999), shaping the roles that volunteers define themselves as playing as part of the organization they volunteer within (Grube and Piliavin, 2000). Shaping the structure of Special Constabularies around motivation and expectation at the outset allows for expectations to be more specifically managed as volunteering continues, and with the majority of new recruits motivated by a potential career in policing, then providing a route through volunteering into the regular workforce seems like a good place to start. As Alexander (2000) has described, having

bespoke recruitment and management streams, based on motivations to volunteer, could contribute to volunteer experience, and help construct stronger volunteer role identities within policing organizations.

For Police Scotland, one stream could be focused on ensuring that potential recruits for the regular police service could have a broad experience, support for training and development, and could potentially work towards a more streamlined route into regular recruitment. Another stream could cater to those who do not wish to join the regular police force, developing a community-oriented role for special constables, embedded within community policing teams, tailored towards utilizing special constables to support and enhance community-orientated objectives.

Heike's (2017) caveat still applies—motivation is complex, and simply because the individual volunteer does not want to join the police force does not necessarily mean they want to work as part of community teams. By rebranding and dividing the specials into streams based on motivation, more work can be done to tailor each of those streams to the sorts of volunteers that will thrive in those roles and contribute to specific policing objectives.

If police organizations want the Special Constabulary to represent a resource through which response times and workload of regular officers can be more easily met, or represent a means by which potential regulars can get a taste of policing, then the status quo may be sufficient. However, if like Police Scotland, they truly want their Special Constabulary to act as a 'bridge' between the police and the community, then putting meaningful structures in place which take the volunteer's own perceptions and motivations into consideration can help to put the foundations in place to enhance special constables role in the policing of local communities. Otherwise, the 'bridge' may end up simply becoming another rhetorical feature of community policing;

ambiguously defined and lost underneath the demands of response-based policing.

## Reference

- Alexander, J. (2000). *An Investigation into the Premature Wastage of Special Constables*. Police Research Award Scheme Number 141. London: Home Office.
- Aston, L. and Scott, K. (2014). *Local Policing in Scotland: Three Pre-Reform Case Studies*. Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) Research Summary Number 18. Dundee: SIPR.
- Bowling, B. and Foster, J. (2002). Policing and the Police. In Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 980–1033.
- Bullock, K. and Leeney, D. (2016). On Matters of Balance: An Examination of the Deployment, Motivation and Management of the Special Constabulary. *Policing and Society* 26(5): 483–502.
- Bullock, K. (2015). Diversity in the Special Constabulary. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 9(1): 46–55.
- Caless, B. (2017). On the Nature of Volunteering and the Special Constabulary: A Critical Reflection. In Bullock, K. and Millie, A. (eds), *The Special Constabulary: Historical Context, International Comparisons and Contemporary Themes*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 149–68.
- Caless, B. (2007). “Numties in Yellow Jackets”: The Nature of Hostility towards the Police Community Support Officer in Neighbour Policing Teams. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 1(2): 187–195.
- Clary, G. (2004). Volunteer Sustainability: How Non-Profits can Sustain Volunteers’ Commitment. *Snapshots* 36: 1–6.
- Clary, E. and Snyder, M. (1999). The Motivations to Volunteer: Theoretical and Practical Considerations. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 8(5): 156–159.
- Cosgrove, F. and Ramshaw, P. (2015). It Is What You Do as Well as the Way That You Do It: The Value and Deployment of PCSOs in Achieving Public Engagement. *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy* 25(1): 77–96.
- Davidson, F. and Ferguson, P. (2014). The Corroboration Requirement in Scottish Criminal Trials. Should It Be Retained for Some Form of Problematic Evidence? *The International Journal of Evidence and Proof* 18(1): 1–27.
- Donnelly, D. (2010). Policing the Scottish Community. In Donnelly, D. and Scott, K. (eds). *Policing Scotland*. Oxon: Willan Publishing, pp. 201–233.
- Fielding, N. (1995). *Community Policing*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Fyfe, N. and Scott, K. (2013). In Search of Sustainable Policing? Creating a National Police Force in Scotland. In Fyfe, N., Terpstra, J. and Tops, P. (eds), *Centralizing Forces? Comparative Perspectives on Contemporary Police Reform in Northern and Western Europe*. The Hague: Eleven International Publishing, pp. 119–135.
- Fyfe, N. (2014). Observations on Police Reform in Scotland. *British Society of Criminology Newsletter*, No. 74 Summer, 2014.
- Garland, D. (1996). The Limits of the Sovereign State: Strategies of Crime Control in Contemporary Society. *British Journal of Criminology* 36(4): 445–471.
- Grube, J. A. and Piliavin, J. A. (2000). Role Identity, Organisational Experiences, and Volunteer Performance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 26(9): 1108–1120.
- Hail, Y. (2016). *Local Policing in Transition: Examining the Impacts and Implications of Police Reform in Scotland*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Dundee.
- Hamilton-Smith, N., Mackenzie, S., Henry, A. and Davidson, C. (2014). Community Policing and Reassurance: Three Studies, One Narrative. *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 14(2): 160–178.
- Heike, G. (2017). General Perspective on Volunteer Motivation within the Special Constabulary. In Bullock, K. and Millie, A. (eds), *The Special Constabulary: Historical Context, International Comparisons and Contemporary Themes*. London: Routledge, pp. 80–94.
- Home Office (2019). *Police Service Strength England and Wales*, 30 September 2018. London: Home Office. [http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/772792/police-workforce-sep18-hosb0219.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772792/police-workforce-sep18-hosb0219.pdf) (accessed 14 May 2019).
- Hughes, G. and Rowe, M. (2007). Neighbourhood Policing and Community Safety: Researching the Instabilities of the Local Governance of Crime, Disorder and Security in Contemporary UK. *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 7(4): 317–346.
- Innes, M. (2005). Why ‘Soft’ Policing Is Hard: On the Curious Development of Reassurance Policing, How It Became Neighbourhood Policing and What This Signifies about the Politics of Police Reform. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 15(3): 156–169.
- Innes, M. and Roberts, C. (2008). Reassurance Policing, Community Intelligence and Co-Production of Neighbourhood Order. In Williamson, T. (ed), *The Handbook of Knowledge Based Policing: Current and Future Directions*. London: Wiley. 241–262.
- Leighton, B. (1991). Visions in Community Policing: Rhetoric and Reality in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 33: 485–522.
- Leon, C. (2017). Special Constables and the Birth of ‘Regular’ Policing. In Bullock, K. and Millie, A. (eds), *The Special Constabulary: Historical Context, International Comparisons and Contemporary Themes*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 28–45.

- Loader, I. (1997). Policing and the Social: Question of Symbolic Power. *British Journal of Sociology* 48(1): 1–18.
- Loveday, B. (2018). Police Scotland: Challenging the Current Democratic Deficit in Police Governance and Public Accountability. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety* 20(3): 154–167.
- Manning, P. (1984). Community Policing. *American Journal of Police* 3(2): 205–227.
- Mastrofski, S. and Greene, J. (1993). Community Policing and the Rule of Law. In Weisburd, D. (ed.), *Police Innovation and Control of the Police: Problems of Law, Order and Community*. New York: Springer, pp. 80–102.
- Merritt, J. (2010). W(h)ither the PCSO? Police Perceptions of the Police Community Support Officer's Role, Power and Future Directions. *Policing: An International Journal* 33(4): 731–749.
- Millie, A. and Herrington, V. (2005). Bridging the Gap: Understand Reassurance Policing. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 44(1): 41–56.
- Millie, A. and Wells, H. (2019). Introduction: Contemporary Policing and Non-Warranted Volunteer. *Policing and Society* 29(4): 371–375.
- Neuberger, J. (2009). *Volunteering across the Criminal Justice System: Baroness Neuberger's Review as the Government's Volunteering Champion*. London: Home Officer.
- Nicholson, D. and Blackie, J. (2013). Corroboration in Scots Law: “Archaic Rule” or “Invaluable Safeguard”? *Edinburgh Law Review* 17(2): 152–183.
- O'Neill, M. (2014). Ripe for the Chop or the Public Face of Policing? PCSOs and Neighbourhood Policing in Austerity. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 8(3): 265–273.
- Povey, K. (2001). *Open All Hours: A Thematic Inspection Report on the Role of Police Visibility and Accessibility*. London: HMIC.
- Radzinowicz, L. (1956). *A History of English Criminal Law and Its Administration from 1750. Volume 3: Cross Currents in the Movement for the Reform of the Police*. London: Stevens and Sons.
- Segrave, M. and Raticliffe, J. (2004). *Community Policing in Australia: A Descriptive Overview*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Skogan, W. (2006). Advocate: The Promise of Community Policing. In Weisburd, D. and Braga, A. (eds.), *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Skogan, W. (2008). An Overview of Community Policing: Origins, Concepts and Implementation. In Williamson, T. (ed), *The Handbook of Knowledge Based Policing: Current Conceptions and Future Directions*. London: Willey, pp. 43–48.
- Terpstra, J. and Fyfe, N. (2014). Police Processes and Police Reform: Examining Similarities and Differences between Scotland and the Netherlands. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 42(4): 366–383.
- Terpstra, J. and Fyfe, N. (2015). Mind the Implementation Gap? Police Reform and Local Policing in the Netherlands and Scotland. *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 15(5): 527–544.
- Terpstra, J., Fyfe, N., and Salet, R. (2019). The Abstract Police: A Conceptual Exploration of Unintended Changes of Police Organisations. In *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032258X18817999> (accessed 14 May 2019).
- Tuffin, R., Morris, J., and Poole, A. (2006). *An Evaluation of the Impact of the National Assurance Policing Programme*. London: Home Office.
- Whittle, J. (2014). The Rise of the Special Constabulary: Are Forces Getting Value for Money from Their Voluntary Officers? An Empirical Study of Avon and Somerset. *Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles* 87(1): 29–40.
- Whittle, J. (2017). Increasing Value for Money Though Reducing Premature Wastage in the Special Constabulary. In Bullock, K. and Millie, A. (eds.) *The Special Constabulary: Historical Context, International Comparisons and Contemporary Themes*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 134–48.
- Wooff, A. (2016). ‘Soft’ Policing in Rural Scotland. *Policing: A Journal of Policing and Practice* 11(2): 123–131.
- Yarwood, R. (2007). The Geographies of Policing. *Progress in Human Geography* 31(4): 447–465.