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## **Citizen Involvement in Policing - A critical but under-researched aspect of policing**

How citizens are directly involved in policing and models for volunteering in policing represent a neglected aspect of the wider landscape of police reform. This paper argues that citizen involvement and volunteering deserves much greater attention than it currently receives, explores the case for voluntarism in policing, discusses some empirical findings relating to police volunteers, and paints a vision for the future identifying some of the implications of an expansion in direct citizen involvement in policing.

Voluntarism and public participation are both key themes across public services reform. There is a transformation, at least in thinking if not yet as consistently in practice, in seeing public services growing out of a 'doing to' and 'delivered by others' (public sector employees) paradigm, and towards a new mixed economy, participatory and co-producing model, 'working with' and 'delivering together'. Concepts such as 'big society' and 'localism' emphasise the strategic significance of involvement and voluntarism in social policy (Rochester et al, 2010). Citizen empowerment is framed as a key factor in delivering world-class public services (Cabinet Office, 2008). Recognition of the strategic importance of voluntarism is not new (Gaskin and Smith, 1995), but is now more visibly entering mainstream political discourse and social policy (Rochester et al, 2010). Citizen involvement is recognised as key to the functioning of criminal justice systems (Giangrande et al, 2008; Casey, 2008).

This paper argues that there is a paradox in policing in respect of citizen involvement. On the one hand, police volunteering is in many national settings a significant reality practised on a large-scale, and looking across direct citizen involvement more broadly as a whole few would question that such involvement is essential to effective policing. Whilst on the other hand, voluntarism and wider forms of citizen direct participation in policing remain in a peripheral and un-prioritised position within the discourse of police reform, policing futures and police leadership.

### **The different formations of police voluntarism**

The different formations of voluntarism and citizen engagement in policing vary widely in different national and local settings.

There are what can be described as the more 'direct' volunteering roles, operating within the 'command and control' of policing organisations (for example, Special Constables, auxiliary police officers and auxiliary sheriff's deputies, Police Support Volunteers, voluntary Cadet schemes, 'Volunteers in Policing', etc.). These roles operate within the policing organisation, fundamentally as part of it, and often mirror very closely the roles of paid 'Regular' warranted officers and other police staff. The long traditions in many national contexts of volunteer warranted police officers can perhaps at times cloak just how distinct and interesting an example of a volunteer role being a volunteer police officer actually is; in terms of the level of complexity, risk and empowerment inherent in the role of a police officer.

Beyond such roles, the scope of involvement and volunteering across policing is wide: 'watch' schemes; community preventative initiatives; citizen roles in accountability, advisory and oversight; victim support; citizen patrols; street pastors. The list is a long and highly varied one, and in its totality involving a very sizeable number of people. The scale of this voluntarism dwarfs the formal,

employed aspects of the criminal justice system and of policing within that; perhaps not so much in 'budgetary' terms but in scale of people involved, reach into communities, and value.

### **The case for direct citizen involvement in policing**

The concept of direct involvement of citizens in the policing of their communities has very deep roots in many country's policing traditions. The idea of 'community' as a fundamental element of policing approaches also has a long history.

Police volunteers play a significant part in policing in a long and diverse list of national settings, including England and Wales, Scotland, USA, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, Singapore, Hong Kong, Hungary, Estonia, some parts of Germany, Australia and the Netherlands (and many more). To take the context of England and Wales, the concept of volunteer Constables in policing stretches back to at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century and pre-dates both paid Constables and formalised police forces (Gill and Mawby, 1990). Far from being a new phenomenon, or one that is unsettling of policing traditions, the more ancient tradition of policing in many national settings is in fact one of community-embedded volunteer based models, with employed police personnel a more modern innovation. Fundamental concepts around the nature of policing, such as the so-called Peelian principles that 'the police are the public, and the public are the police', root an involved community at the heart of the very idea of policing.

Taking a broader concept of 'policing' beyond the narrow confines of policing organisations, and again to take England and Wales as an example, the various models of voluntary 'Watch' organisations represent the largest (by membership) volunteer organisations in the country. It is self-evident that the formal criminal justice system, with its reliance on the voluntary actions of victims and witnesses, with a Courts system built upon the foundations of a largely voluntary Magistracy, and with victims and witnesses supported through largely volunteer-based services,

would simply not function without the voluntarism that forms its bedrock. Charitable approaches such as 'Crimestoppers', an organisation primarily delivered through volunteers, provide important reach and additionality to the formal system. Once again, the roots of these broader elements of voluntarism across policing and community safety are deep and ancient. The formal state probation services provision had their origin in police court missionary arrangements, and today volunteers still play an important role across the management and support of offenders in prisons and the community. The origins of voluntary 'Watch' organisations, of voluntary organisations engaging communities in the apprehension of felons, of voluntary activity supporting victims and offenders, are all historical, spanning centuries, rather than being more modern phenomena.

Today, across England and Wales, a small 'army' of volunteers work directly in policing organisations, with an estimated 25,000 Special Constables and Police Support Volunteers; in headcount terms, the equivalent strength of several shire police forces. In some police force areas, volunteers numerically represent a third or even a half of the overall policing workforce. These numbers in part reflect the challenges policing faces. There is a scale of challenges for policing which is very clear, and mirrored consistently across a range of national settings. It is in response to these challenges that police voluntarism plays a potentially very important role.

The nature of threats to public safety and the nature of crime are both changing rapidly, with traditional models of the police workforce and legacy operating models for the police struggling to keep up (for example, in relation to cyber-crime and in respect of child sexual exploitation). These new and emergent threats speak to the need for new and different competencies, and voluntary models are one route to sourcing these new skill and experience requirements.

There is a requirement to reduce policing budgets at a scale which is unprecedented, which in simple terms makes traditional ways of thinking about the police workforce unsustainable. As Fredericksen and Levin (2004, 118) put it: "Government programs increasingly depend on volunteers to compensate for lagging fiscal support". Without change the only option is (much) less for less, with

a retreat into a very narrow and response-based model of policing focused upon a more sharply defined role for the decreasing number of 'Regular' (paid) warranted police officers that can be afforded. To avoid this will require policing to think radically differently about its workforce models and to reconceptualise how citizens are directly engaged, both as police volunteers and more broadly.

There are considerable challenges and opportunities facing the police in building a new paradigm of relationships with the public. Issues of legitimacy and fairness in police actions, and the treatment of communities remain fundamental. Visible police presence in and commitment to all communities remains a key challenge to building positive relationships with the public. Cohesion across diverse communities is being tested. There is a need to think differently about how to build a model of policing genuinely *with* communities, and a related *rethinking* (rather than simply a retrenchment) of workforce. This new thinking is required in order to deliver visible reassurance and genuinely engage and embed in all communities, building confidence most effectively particularly amongst those least likely to engage with policing or justice. And all of this whilst also maintaining a focus of expensive (paid) policing resources directed at the most challenging crime and public protection problems.

These challenges require a radical resetting of public involvement with the police. Redefining the relationship between the public and the police requires a significant level of shift in responsibility for the maintenance of police-community relationships and the ways in which they are fostered.

Central to this must be a more vibrant and imaginative rethinking of police volunteering, and wider citizen direct participation.

The cases put forward for police voluntarism and wider citizen involvement are numerous and varied. Bullock (2014) identifies contemporary political discourses that highlight wide-ranging benefits that are 'assumed' to flow from engaging volunteers – raising legitimacy, bringing police and communities more closely together, improving the 'representative' nature of policing, improving

efficiency and bolstering effectiveness, and sustaining and enhancing provision at times of fiscal constraint – but also rightly identifies the need for empirical grounding of these assumed benefits.

In essence, the core concept behind police voluntarism is essentially one that an (employed) police force on its own and without the direct involvement from communities will simply not be able to deliver against the myriad strategic policy goals of policing (crime prevention and reduction; deterrence, detection and enforcement, effective offender management, and a swift and efficient justice system; safer communities, confident, cohesive and feeling reassured and engaged by an accessible visible policing footprint; emergency response and crisis management; a public protected from serious harm, to name but a few).

#### **An aspect of policing neglected in terms of attention and imagination**

There is an argument that direct citizen involvement in policing has been relatively narrowly constrained, 'traditional' and unimaginative in approach. For example, in the England and Wales setting, with Special Constables primarily committed to a small number of specific contexts and traditionally accepted legacy roles. And that in most force contexts volunteers have not been sufficiently well embedded and integrated in wider policing models.

The wider landscape of citizen involvement in crime prevention, victim support, community confidence and cohesion, and the like is similarly typically subject to a limited, peripheral engagement. Policing organisations can be viewed to presently operate in a strategic cultural paradigm of seeing their world largely as one of direct service delivery of policing services through paid officers and other employees, rather than achievement of policing outcomes across a wide canvas of organisations and activities.

It can be argued that too often the 'as is' models of police voluntarism may be adding some resource to an existing unsustainable model, rather than being seen as key to unlocking opportunities to

operate differently, or being seen as part of a wider enterprise to re-imagine the different possibilities for what a police force of the future might deliver.

There is a hypothesis (backed up by some empirical evidence, e.g. Casey, 2008), that most individuals will take responsibility for keeping their communities safe under the right circumstances and for the right reasons. There is a need to develop thinking in much more sophisticated ways regarding what factors enable and discourage this propensity to engage, and to explore with greater innovation and imagination how that instinct to be involved can be better translated into activity and outcomes.

Linked to this is a need for more comprehensive thinking about the 'value' of voluntarism, and also about developing the business of managing volunteers in policing in a way which enhances and captures that impact. The impact upon the delivery of policing services and the effectiveness and sustainability of policing models, the impact upon public safety and crime reduction outcomes in local communities, the impact in building visibility and public confidence, the impact on diversity and the ability of the police to visibly reflect the communities they serve and to engage effectively across diverse communities, and the wider public goods associated with volunteering with police organisations (e.g. the opening up of policing, improving accountability and the sense of the police being genuinely embedded in the community). There is a limited research base in terms of establishing 'value for money' in the context of police voluntarism (cf. Whittle, 2014), but the whole concept of what represents 'value', and challenges of fully realising and measuring value in all its forms, deserve greater attention.

The issue of police volunteering and wider citizen involvement has suffered a neglect across policymakers, politicians, professionals and academics. The visions explored later in this paper – in effect seeing the potential of police voluntarism and wider citizen involvement as 'essential', as a 'critical success factor' to future models of policing – is not reflective of the current wider discourse of police reform. Police volunteering and citizen involvement remains a 'side issue'; it is not seen as

being on the 'critical path' to police service transformation. In part this peripheral status to wider conversations about policing futures reflects the under-developed state of police voluntarism and wider citizen direct involvement in terms of policy, practice and research. There is very limited reliable data – on who participates, how and to what effect. There are limited resources dedicated to developing and leading this aspect of police reform. The academic field is relatively small and under-developed. And there is simply a limited strategic focus amongst policing leaders; the priority 'to do' lists of most police chiefs do not have police volunteering very near the top of them.

This paper argues that this neglect needs to be vigorously and systematically addressed. That it is no longer possible to lead policing looking through the rear view mirror of past thinking, and that new thinking about policing futures needs to engage in a much deeper, more imaginative, and more mainstreamed way than has been the case in the past across the possibilities of what can be done voluntarily to achieve policing goals, and of the critical role the public directly play.

### **Introducing the 'Citizens in Policing' research programme.**

The 'Citizens in Policing' applied research and translation programme, led by the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice, is intended to be at the forefront of this new attention to an issue which is of significant importance to the future of policing. The 'Citizens in Policing' research programme is the largest of its kind ever conducted in England and Wales, empirically exploring a range of different manifestations of citizen involvement in policing.

The applied research and translation programme aims to engage with the big implications of the working relationships between citizens and their police in a way that has not been done before. It is argued that no other major applied research, transformation or translation programme is currently looking at these paradigmatic-scale issues of redefining this working relationship in the round, or at the scale and depth, that this programme intends to.



The research programme will over time span the totality of citizen involvement in policing, but the first key strand of research has been to focus on better developing the evidence-base across police volunteering. The goal of this research is ultimately to enhance the contribution of Special Constables and police volunteers. The intention of the research is to forge the 'what works' evidence across police volunteering, and then translate that evidence into more effective (and practitioner friendly) policy and practice. More specifically, this evidence-based programme exists to analyse, evaluate and evidence 'what works' in recruiting, retaining, managing, supporting and developing Special Constables and other police volunteers, and to develop the 'science' for most effectively delivering policing outcomes through Specials and other police volunteers. This is a significant moment for police volunteering; a time of significant commitment, ambition, investment and innovation. But this moment is threatened, in terms of impact, by limitations in the evidence-base, limited analysis and evaluation of current programmes, and limited sharing and learning across programmes. The applied research programme will form a core foundation for a comprehensive translation programme, which will emphasise the delivery of the evidence-base into real on-the-ground improvements in policy and practice.

One important aspect of this police volunteers research programme looks to develop international and comparative perspectives, to enrich understandings of police voluntarism and public involvement. There is only a very limited literature of comparative studies in relation to police voluntarism (cf. Pepper and Wolf, 2015). The formations of police voluntarism and direct involvement of citizens seem interestingly different in different national contexts, and there would appear to be considerable benefit in developing an empirical programme of comparative work across a number of national contexts.

Core initial stages of work on the research programme have had a focus on developing a clearer national picture of the 'state of play' in respect of police volunteering. The paper now explores

headline findings from a recent national survey conducted in England and Wales of police volunteers.

### **The national 'Citizens in Policing' survey undertaken in early 2016 in England and Wales**

In January 2016 a large-scale survey was undertaken across Special Constables and Police Support Volunteers in England and Wales, with 3,000 responses. Listening to those who volunteer in policing and 'giving them a voice' is important, and this is a survey which had a lot to say. The survey was administered by the national Citizens in Policing Community of Practice, and analysed by the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (Britton, 2016a).

In contrast to some recent surveys of (employed) 'Regulars' and police staff, which have made really challenging reading in respect of what they tell us about the state of morale, the results of the volunteer survey stand in contrast as being largely positive. Most of those who responded would recommend volunteering in policing to others. Most describe their morale as good and they enjoy the activities that they do, finding them worthwhile and rewarding. The majority feel appreciated and recognised, and they feel that they have good and respectful relationships with the 'Regular' (paid) police officers and police staff that they work most closely with. Mostly, their experiences as a volunteer have lived up to their expectations when they joined. Overall, the survey presents quite an uplifting picture of the morale and motivation of those who volunteer with the police, both Specials and Police Support Volunteers.

Across the survey there were also a number of areas where the responses identify scope for improvements. Overall, many volunteers do not believe that the police service is good at managing volunteers – not a ringing endorsement for senior leaders in policing, and one that should jolt the senior leaders of the policing profession to think carefully about what could be done to change that impression. Sadly, a sizeable proportion of Special Constables and Police Support Volunteers have

sometimes been made to feel more of a burden than a help. Linked to that, a sizeable proportion of the volunteers who responded felt that 'Regular' officers and police staff need to better understand volunteers, the work that they do, and what they are capable of doing. The responses also reflected a frustration that the pace of recruitment of volunteers into policing is simply too slow and cumbersome. Whilst for many who volunteer in policing the experience is overall a positive one, there is a significant minority of respondents who are less positive. It is important for leaders in policing to better understand what drivers lie behind this less satisfied group of volunteers, and what can be done to make that group a lot smaller when the survey is re-run in future years.

One of the most important findings is that the survey signals a strong appetite from both Specials and Police Support Volunteers to do more. They feel that their skills and what they are capable of doing are not always well understood or utilised. A sizeable proportion of Specials and PSVs would like to volunteer in more specialist areas of policing in the future. These include many areas where policing is in a clear need of extra capacity and for specialised skills, including 'cyber' crime, safeguarding and exploitation, roads policing and mental health, to name but a few. Clearly, expansion of voluntary roles into these (mostly) new areas for police volunteering will require careful management, and a focus on supervision, training and standards, but from the survey it is clear that there is a real enthusiasm from a vast number of police volunteers to get more involved in these specialist areas.

Both Specials and Police Support Volunteers would also like more focus on their continuing development. Professional development, supervision and support are all gaps, and it feels like there needs to be a cultural shift, a renewed commitment to continue the development and support for volunteers across their whole careers as volunteers, rather than focusing solely on initial training which seems to be the experience for many.

The survey reflects that volunteers in policing have a wide range and diversity of motivations for doing what they do. A sizeable proportion are interested in paid police careers (reflecting the study

undertaken by Pepper, 2014) down the line, but equally a sizeable proportion are not. Policing needs to get better at understanding this diversity of motivations to volunteer, and responding well to them all. For many of the volunteers who responded, they are committed to volunteering for the long term. One worrying aspect of the survey was the proportion of volunteers attracted through familial ties, word of mouth, and friends who volunteer or who already work in the police. Of course, this is in one way a good thing – that current volunteers and others working in policing see it positively and seek to draw in others who they know, is something to be welcomed. But it also heralds the need for more sophisticated models for attraction, marketing and recruitment, if police volunteering is genuinely going to reach out to a greater diversity of people across all communities. The survey tells us that there is a very positive story to be told about the experience of police volunteering. One that the police service has not always been very good at communicating. There is a really strong positive narrative across the survey which should be utilised in future efforts to attract volunteers.

### **Listening to volunteer voices – the national Specials conference**

In April this year Special Constables from all the forces in England and Wales met for their bi-annual conference. A key emphasis of the weekend was to hear their ‘voices’ and ensure they were able to be fed into strategic thinking about the future of Specials and volunteers in policing. To this end, interactive workshop sessions were run and the outputs analysed by the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (Britton, 2016b). A great deal emerged from these discussions, but some key points to highlight are as follows.

There needs to be a clarity of purpose for police volunteering, which understands at a corporate level priorities, purpose, focus and direction. And also at an individual level - so that every Special understands their role, task, purpose and how it fits into the wider picture. With police

volunteering, there is a need to start with the 'why': identify policing outcomes and community needs, understand what is needed to deliver against those community needs, and then recruiting the right volunteers and managing them in the right ways to deliver to those needs. Important within this is having clearer 'role offers', where the value and contribution is understood. It is important that when volunteers turn up to deliver in policing, that there is key and meaningful work for them to do. Planned duties which are worthwhile and visibly contributing to greater aims, in contrast to ad hoc poor deployments: "because the Specials have turned up we need to give them something to do" and Specials "suffering repetitive duties syndrome".

There was a discussion that 'expectation setting' is important. Specials may be volunteers but they are not amateurs and they are doing important and challenging things. There was an argument that a culture of expectation goes hand in hand with one of professionalism, and policing should not be scared to set high expectations of volunteers, as it is a sign that the police value them and the work that they are doing. This also resonates with the importance of achieving balance between supporting and recognising Specials as volunteers giving of their time, whilst also recognising the requirement for oversight, regulation and standards in the context of the role they perform and the powers that they have (Bullock and Leeney, 2014).

One element that was key to the Specials was helping them feel like professionals and to be part of the bigger team, not distinct from it. Integration is key. Big differences can be made in how much Specials feel part of the team by small actions of involving and thanking by front-line supervisors and 'Regulars' in the team. Some delegates had worked in teams as a Special where the 'Regulars' hadn't even bothered to know their names, whilst other force and team contexts were clearly very different and near fully integrated culturally. It is the latter that the police service needs to aspire to. Visibility of force leadership teams to Specials was important. Senior leaders need to "take an interest" and "own it". Where it works best there is Chief Constable level 'buy in', a dedicated senior officer rank lead with time to devote, the Specials Chief Officer has status and access and

integration, and there is a lot of integration into policy, procedure, and support departments. As one delegate put it: “The problem is policing is an organisation with a lot of volunteers in it which doesn’t understand volunteers” – there are key symbolic and practical things which leadership teams can do to turn around such perceptions.

What is clearly critical in Specials’ eyes is that the importance of volunteering and its value are seen as a “golden thread” across the force and everything that it does. This speaks to the importance of strategic culture in policing in respect of voluntarism, and to shifting paradigms of thinking at senior and strategic levels in respect of future models of volunteering and wider involvement.

### **Visions for the future**

Models of citizen involvement sit at the core of a need to fundamentally rethink relationships between policing and local communities. This rethinking can have profound implications. Resetting some of the relationships. Rethinking issues of responsibility. Redefining policing as being much more about working together, about co-producing, about doing things ‘with’ communities rather than just ‘for’ or ‘to’ them. Shifting from inherently responsive, enforcing, service provision modes of operating, to problem-solving, pro-active collaborative modes of interacting.

A growth in citizen involvement in policing would herald a much more open and engaging era in policing. This can take policing in radical new directions, but it is important also to see such developments as firmly rooted in the history of policing, and the principles of policing by consent. Citizen involvement in policing – and at the core of that the huge impact that those who volunteer in policing can have – has a huge potential to transform the ways that we are policed in the future, and to play a major part in achieving safer communities.

The development of police volunteering and wider citizen involvement has big implications for policing. And in particular for police strategic culture. A continuation of growth across police

volunteering will see police forces becoming one of the largest volunteer organisations in their areas. It will see forces where there are more volunteers than there are 'Regular' officers and police staff. Consequentially, it requires policing to rethink its relationship with its volunteers and to be more imaginative in doing things very differently for them and with them. Forces need to bring in or train up expertise in volunteer management and community engagement, both at senior leadership and more tactical and operational levels. Police volunteering needs to be high on the agenda of senior leadership training. The College of Policing and similar policing professional bodies need to see police volunteers – their support, their development, their professionalism - as core to their mission, purpose and membership. Policing needs to 'get out more', and understand what excellence looks like across different sectors in terms of volunteer attraction, volunteer engagement and empowerment, and volunteer management. And to appreciate what it is possible to deliver with volunteers, and in direct partnership with communities. There is a need to burst the artificial glass ceiling of assumptions about what it is and isn't possible or safe for volunteers to do. The national survey shows that the current population of police volunteers, both Specials and Police Support Volunteers, want to get involved in much more, across the breadth of policing.

The wider sense of citizens involving in achieving the outcomes of policing, beyond direct involvement in police organisations, potentially redefines fundamental understandings of policing models. Police strategic thinking often compartmentalises into 'delivery', into 'partnerships' (usually predominantly with other public sector structures), into 'community engagement' and 'community policing', and into 'volunteers'. Future models for thinking about police operating models will need to go much further in synthesising these various elements into a holistic model. Within such a reconstruction of policing models, the hegemony of service delivery through paid police officers and police employees may increasingly evolve to much more of a mixed economy of delivery.

Based upon the above arguments, there is a case, which this paper puts forward for exploration and discussion, that police voluntarism and wider citizen involvement need to shift from a largely

peripheral positionality in police strategic thinking, and become seen as a central pillar to the wider police reform agenda. Achieving a radical shift in police volunteering and direct citizen involvement, and very importantly doing so safely and doing it well, is a decade-and-more policy and practice agenda. Policing needs a substantial, long-term, seriously thought through and properly invested approach. If police volunteering and citizen involvement is to grow, it needs to 'grow well', with the right leadership, cultural support, investment and infrastructure.

### **Exploring a potential future state for volunteers in policing**

In a potential hypothetical future state, police volunteers are central to policing models, core to how police organisations see themselves, and fundamental to organisational development.

In this future state, the police are recognised as being very good at leading, managing and supporting their volunteers. The ability to lead volunteers is seen as a critical capability for senior leaders in policing. Police organisations provide a great experience for those who volunteer with them. The cultures of police organisations are ones in which volunteers can grow, develop and flourish. There are many more volunteers playing a much broader role across policing, public safety and criminal justice. This potentially heralds a future in which volunteers might significantly outnumber paid police roles. And a future where police volunteers are seen as a primary delivery mode for many aspects of policing. Policing achieves far more as a result of the volunteers who deliver within it.

In this hypothetical future, there are imaginative approaches to 'non-warranted' volunteers, and many more of them. Volunteering is thought about differently – different people are able to contribute in very many different ways. Some may volunteer for a few hours, others over a lifetime. 'One size fits all' is a distant memory. This broad pool of volunteers deliver across community engagement, early intervention and prevention, and partnerships, as well as across a range of



specialist areas of policing delivery. In this future, policing thinks about volunteering in less conventional ways. The enormous time commitments and personal dedication of many Specials and Police Support Volunteers is laudable and its potential needs to be realised to the full going forwards, but there is also always going to be a much larger proportion of the population who will be prepared to actively help out policing without being able to offer that quantum of time commitment in their lives. Concepts such as micro-volunteering need to be introduced into the policing vocabulary. Citizens in policing is not just about those people who volunteer directly into police organisations, but also the enormous wider potential of direct citizen action, community involvement and support. The forms in which this community involvement can take are limited only by our imaginations.

In this future state, volunteer and involvement approaches are genuinely multi-agency and collaborative. True transformation rarely occurs one agency at a time. Policing needs to be thinking more broadly and collaboratively than just 'police' volunteers. Across blue-light services. Across public safety. Across criminal justice. Across preventative services. So much of current thinking, language, structures and processes constrains police leaders from doing so.

Leaders prioritise the agenda to ensure success. There are big ambitions of what is being delivered through volunteers, but it is also properly recognised that volunteering is not 'free'. Investment is critical. Growth in volunteers is managed well. Costs and benefit are well captured and understood.

In the future vision, police volunteering is fully professionalised. Being a volunteer is not the same thing as being an amateur. There are evidence-based core skills programmes. There is the development of an evidence-base for maximising the effectiveness of volunteers.

## **Implications of a new era of voluntarism and direct involvement in policing**

The vision and 'future state' explored above prompt some interesting questions in terms of social policy and future considerations of policing in society.

A policing model delivered in large-measure by volunteers, and fundamentally embedded in directly involving citizens, brings new dimensions to a number of long-running debates; such as, in respect of police accountability, police representativeness and police diversity. These debates are traditionally framed primarily within the paradigm of a police organisation as a public-sector employer, distinct from and delivering services 'to' and 'for' citizens. A police operating model that sees citizens as involved and fully integrating, co-producing, designing and delivering, reshapes those debates. How do accountability systems adapt to that very different model? How is that 'balance' found; of achieving full accountability in the context of voluntary activity, rather than paid employment? What implications do the (inevitably?) looser formations of 'command and control' that emerge from a model of greater citizen action and voluntarism have for how police organisations interface with and are held to account by the communities they serve?

The reshaping of police working relationships with citizens is intertwined with debates about what it is police organisations should do, how they go about doing it, and about what it is to be 'effective' as a policing organisation. Voluntarism and greater citizen involvement carry fundamental implications for policing organisations and how they operate – in terms of organisational development, leadership, shape and functioning. But the implications are much broader than that. Voluntarism in policing is in part about capacity and capability to deliver the 'as is' of policing. It is also concerned with processes of identifying, exploring and choosing amongst options for what needs to be done differently, and what is different that needs to be done. Voluntarism and citizen engagement potentially help open up new debates about what it means to 'police', and new options and opportunities for what it is possible for the police to do. Such debates are bigger than citizen involvement and volunteering alone; but the new possibilities and different thinking that greater

citizen involvement and new and growing models of police volunteering prompt and provoke have serious implications for these wider debates about policing and society.

This paper has argued that police voluntarism and citizen direct involvement in policing have been relatively neglected, but that they are important to future deliberations of police reform. This is an agenda which deserves to be shifted from the fringe of discourse about policing futures, and given a much more serious attention and prominence.

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