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# THE FUTURE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

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## **About The Police Foundation**

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# SUMMARY

The Police Foundation's *Future of Neighbourhood Policing* project set out to bridge the gap between the end of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme in 2008 and 2025, by which date the Policing Vision's promise of a more *proactive preventative* form of local policing is due to be realised<sup>1</sup>. It has done so by investigating how and why neighbourhood policing has changed in England and Wales since 2008, and what it looks like in 2017/18, then using this new knowledge as a platform to establish sound principles for delivering sustainable, preventative, integrated and publicly connected local policing services for the future.

The exercise was necessary for four reasons. First, because localism has fragmented the national narrative of neighbourhood policing; second, because, including for rhetorical reasons, the meaning of the 'neighbourhood' label has become opaque; third, because progress towards a shared national goal requires an understanding of where we are now; and fourth, because it is clear that – in the context of funding cuts, shifting priorities and new patterns of demand – neighbourhood policing has not fared well, with warnings of 'erosion' to capacity and capability repeatedly issued<sup>2</sup>.

A broad set of research methods were employed: police workforce data was analysed, police forces were asked to provide information on past developments and future plans, focus groups were conducted with 14 sets of neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs across seven police forces, force leads and national stakeholders were interviewed and practitioners were asked for input through a web survey. In total, force-level input was secured from 31 out of 43 territorial police forces alongside a rich pool of practitioner insight. These investigations led to a number of conclusions<sup>3</sup>:

## **Neighbourhood policing has diversified considerably since 2008.**

Workforce data analysis indicates that from a relatively consistent starting point, forces have pursued different and often contrasting strategies in relation to their neighbourhood and broader local policing models (eg consolidation versus

radical redesign, specialism versus generalisation, civilianisation versus de-civilianisation etc.). On the ground, variation is apparent within as well as between forces. Local iterations can be universal or more targeted, high or low intensity, pragmatically allowed to dissolve into general local policing or reconfigured to accommodate this more 'hybrid' remit. Alternatively, neighbourhood policing can be reformed and refocused with either a community or harm/vulnerability focus, if the latter this can be thematic or case-based.

## **The traditional outputs of neighbourhood policing have been eroded.**

Front line practitioners consistently report that the number of staff available for core neighbourhood work has diminished substantially during the period while the demands on local policing have intensified and changed. The result has been significant attrition to the outputs and outcomes traditionally associated with neighbourhood policing; community engagement, visibility, community intelligence gathering, local knowledge and preventative proactivity are consistently reported to be in decline. However erosion is only part of the change narrative.

## **Neighbourhood policing has undergone two distinct shifts in purpose since 2008, towards vulnerability/harm prevention and towards servicing reactive demand.**

Police force statements about the current purpose and meaning of neighbourhood policing demonstrate how 'traditional' aspects such as community engagement, problem solving, partnership working and reassurance, now sit alongside an emphasis on vulnerability/hidden harm, demand reduction, evidence based practice and early intervention. Although pragmatic rather than idealistic, neighbourhood personnel have increasingly also been used to service reactive demand; 14 from 22 responding forces said neighbourhood personnel were abstracted *to some extent* or *a lot* (with the rest saying *a little*). Some forces have designed the abstraction into a broader 'neighbourhood' remit.

1 APCC and NPCC (2016), p7.

2 HMIC (2017a), p4.

3 A more detailed summary of these conclusions is provided in Section 9.2.

**Community engagement and harm prevention tend to be viewed as separate elements of neighbourhood policing – less frequently, the former is articulated as a mechanism for achieving the latter.**

More traditional community/reassurance focused elements of neighbourhood policing can sometimes sit uncomfortably with the more recent focus on harm and vulnerability, competing for attention and resource. Some practitioners reported a tension between the demands from their forces and those of local communities. Occasionally, a rationale for delivering crime/harm/demand prevention *through* (rather than in addition to) community engagement was offered.

**Hybrid' and 'semi-hybrid' workforce models, that combine neighbourhood policing with elements of reactive local policing, have emerged since 2008.**

A number of forces have sought to absorb reactive demand pressures, while maintaining some element of neighbourhood policing, by adopting a more general or 'hybrid' approach in which local police officers perform both response and neighbourhood tasks, with PCSOs typically providing a more dedicated neighbourhood resource (although they too are increasingly abstracted to reactive work). Other approaches are best described as 'semi-hybrid', for example where a smaller dedicated neighbourhood cadre is supplemented by a more general local resource. Reports suggest these models can struggle to release capacity for proactive working and can even lead to 'over-resourcing' of immediate demand.

**The unpredictability of hybrid workloads can undermine local engagement and proactivity.**

There is consistent testimony from practitioners that a workload that contains significant amounts of responsive police work is unsuited to also delivering core neighbourhood policing activities like community engagement and partnership working. This is not just a matter of the time reactive tasks take up, but also that they make for a highly unpredictable workload, which can undermine efforts to make and keep appointments and commitments. There is evidence that the depth and range of activities neighbourhood officers choose to undertake can be constrained by anticipated disruption.

**There is an emerging trend towards 'de-hybridisation' (ie for forces adopting smaller neighbourhood policing functions with more tightly defined remits).**

Realising the drawbacks of hybrid and highly abstracted models, some forces are choosing to designate smaller, functionally discrete policing teams to 'neighbourhood'/local preventative duties and to (partly or wholly) insulate these from reactive demand.

**The shift in emphasis toward threat, risk, harm and vulnerability provides a basis for a geographically differentiated neighbourhood policing offer.**

Linked to the above, greater functional distinctiveness is only made possible by greater targeting and, with the focus on crime/harm/demand reduction; it makes sense to concentrate resources where these are most likely to occur. Forces are developing a range of tools to assist resource allocation in this way.

**Forces are searching for ways to redefine the universal local policing offer.**

With forces increasingly separating local preventative functions from universal access and communication channels, there is broad agreement that the latter should continue to be provided in some form that amounts to more than just response policing. Social media is increasingly being used in this space. It should be noted that universal neighbourhood policing is not in retreat everywhere; London's version of de-hybridisation retains a strong universal ethos.

**The use and remit of PCSOs has become more varied and remains in flux.**

PCSOs are performing a broader role than initially conceived, often including elements of incident response, police support work and safeguarding/risk assessment work. Some concern was encountered that this was pushing them to (and perhaps beyond) the limits of their training, powers and comfortable responsibility. Several forces had developed innovative and specialist roles for PCSOs, although many had decided to reduce their numbers.

**Community-led priorities have become more marginal to the work of neighbourhood policing and prioritisation within neighbourhood policing has become more ambiguous and multifaceted.**

This relates to the broadening neighbourhood role and the shift to higher-harm and less visible concerns that may not be known to or impact on the community at large. There is some evidence that communities are seeking other channels, such as appeals to local councillors and MPs, to get things done.

**While central to the contemporary formulation of neighbourhood policing, ‘problem solving’ has become more broadly understood and now includes the case-management of vulnerable or problematic individuals.**

There is some evidence of local systems being used to manage and organise proactive work that are broadly in line with SARA or other systematic problem solving frameworks. However, the working understanding of ‘problem solving’ has expanded to include (and may often default to) case-based working around vulnerable/high-risk/high-demand individuals.

**The health of neighbourhood policing is interconnected with the effectiveness of systems for dealing with reactive demand.**

Neighbourhood practitioners reported an ever-present tension with control rooms and others seeking to allocate incoming demand. Strong supervision, to resist and push back against such requests was identified as an enabler of local proactivity. Several force leads discussed ongoing efforts to optimise the efficiency of response, without compromising safety or effectiveness. This appears to be a key dependency for securing local proactive resource.

**Public sector austerity can make neighbourhood-level partnership work highly challenging. Police forces and neighbourhood practitioners face the dilemma of ‘stepping in’ or ‘pulling back’, and both strategies are being adopted.**

Many local partnerships have matured and consolidated since 2008, however, funding cuts have also created gaps and in some cases led to retrenchment and ‘threshold raising’. This creates dilemmas for local police as to whether they step into unfamiliar service territory to fill gaps, or seek to delineate their remit more tightly. Differences of philosophy exist at both strategic and practitioner level.

**Integrated partnership approaches are emerging in some places and tend to support case-based modes of working.**

There is evidence of deeper and more integrated working between local police and key partners emerging in a number of forces, often involving the co-location of some staff. This is seen as an improvement on previous processes. These arrangements tend to focus on coordinating the case-management of vulnerable and/or problematic individuals and to the extent that neighbourhood police personnel are involved in these initiatives, their work can also tend toward ‘case’ rather than problem orientation.

**Neighbourhood policing requires unique skills but has failed to gain recognition as a policing specialism.**

Neighbourhood policing can be a rewarding occupation for those committed to its values, affording opportunities to use initiative and judgement and develop a broad set of policing skills and experience. For this reason it is sometimes used as a career stepping stone for ambitious officers, which can lead to a lack of continuity. While there is broad acknowledgement that the neighbourhood policing requires a particular skill-set it has failed to gain formal recognition as a ‘specialism’ and can be undermined by inappropriate postings, low base-line skills and a lack of professional status.

Based on these insights, and drawing on the wider evidence-base, a set of principles has been developed as a framework for transition to the more proactive, integrated and publicly connected form of local policing described in the Policing Vision 2025.

The nine-point framework (presented overleaf and discussed in detail in Section 9.4) seeks to strike a balance between the need for universal public access and connectivity, with the realities of current (and likely future) demand and resourcing. It highlights the interconnection between form and function, and the importance of developing policing models that facilitate the types of activity research tells us are most likely to achieve preventative ends.

It argues for the enduring value of locally embedded, problem-oriented practitioners, with a remit to develop a deep understanding of local risk in context, and to intervene to reduce it *through* (rather than in addition to) local engagement and partnership work. It reflects the finding that embedded, proactive activity does not combine well with routine, reactive police work, but

acknowledges that dedicated functionality is resource intensive and will need to be delivered in ways that are targeted and scalable.

It builds in some caution about the current trend for orienting prevention and neighbourhood police-work towards multi-agency case management processes, which focus on identifying and mitigating *individual* vulnerability and risk, on the basis that these tend to deflect attention from the local *problems* that contribute to vulnerability and to potential community solutions to them. The need to build sustainable and

resilient foundations within organisations through training, professional recognition, conceptual clarity and linguistic transparency are also reflected.

Finally, while the framework emphasises the need for ongoing, incremental realignment of resources towards local proactivity, it is also recognised that realistic opportunities for redirecting significant amounts of existing resource toward these capabilities are likely to be limited, and that without additional investment only modest, fragile and contingent progress can be expected.

# A FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERING PROACTIVE, PREVENTATIVE LOCAL POLICING<sup>4</sup>

## **Principle 1**

Everyone should have access to, information about and an opportunity for dialogue with the police and the other local services that have a role in improving community safety and quality of life in the place where they live.

## **Principle 2**

In line with the Policing Vision 2025, police forces should seek to deliver 'proactive preventative' local policing. They should do so by adopting structures and models designed to deliver the types of activities that are known to be effective in preventing crime, harm and demand. Where the evidence is lacking, these models should follow a clear preventative logic.

## **Principle 3**

The evidence-base supports selective, targeted deployment of embedded, place-based practitioners, with a remit to develop and maintain a deep understanding of the problems that underlie local risk in context, and to develop, implement and review creative, tailored interventions to impact on them.

## **Principle 4**

Locally embedded preventative proactivity should be delivered by functionally distinct teams and personnel.

## **Principle 5**

Dedicated, embedded preventative resource should be provided where it is most needed and to the extent that resourcing allows, while also maintaining a balanced local policing model that can adequately respond to reactive demand.

## **Principle 6**

(While adhering to Principle 5), police forces and local partnerships should seek to incrementally shift resources into local proactive prevention.

## **Principle 7**

Multi-agency casework relating to individuals should be undertaken in addition to, rather than as a substitute for local problem-oriented proactivity.

## **Principle 8**

Efforts should be made to improve the status of neighbourhood policing/embedded local prevention as a field of practice; this should begin with establishing a body of professional knowledge and recognised training packages. Systems of recognition and reward should be developed that promote ongoing development within the field and, ideally, continued attachment to place.

## **Principle 9**

Police forces should adopt (and inspectors and overseers should ensure) clear and transparent labels for job roles, teams and units that clearly convey what those in them spend their time doing.

<sup>4</sup> Following the lead set by the Policing Vision for 2025 the question of whether any or all of this function might usefully carry the 'neighbourhood policing' label is left open. Principle 9 sets out the recommended stance on nomenclature.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN 2008 AND 2025

Neighbourhood policing was developed in the first decade of the twenty-first century to address local crime and disorder issues, reassure the public, and reconnect the police with communities throughout England and Wales. Delivered by a patchwork of small teams of police and community support officers, it had three main functions: to provide a visible presence, to engage with communities and to tackle their concerns through 'problem solving'. It was universal, centrally designed and funded, and resource intensive. Although the pilot evidence was strong, it failed to demonstrate measurable success when rolled out nationally between 2005 and 2008<sup>5</sup>.

Looking to the future, the Policing Vision 2025 only refers to neighbourhood policing as the way things have been done in the past, however it does set out the intention of the police service for *local* policing to become more focused on *proactive preventative activity*, based on a *sophisticated understanding of community needs* and to *keep people safe*, while maintaining a *tangible link between citizens and the police*, including through deeper integration with other local services<sup>6</sup>.

But while we know where we have come from and the direction of travel, it is less clear where we are at present. With the shift from centralised to local governance, priority setting and service design we have lost the national narrative of neighbourhood policing. Including for rhetorical reasons the term has become looser and more nebulous and, as police forces have adapted to tighter budgets and shifting priorities and demands, we have been repeatedly warned that local preventative capability is being "eroded"<sup>7</sup>.

The Police Foundation's *Future of Neighbourhood Policing* project set out to provide a link between the past and the future by taking stock of what has happened to neighbourhood policing in the decade since the end of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme, and to use this as a platform

for considering how local policing services might best progress towards a proactive, publicly connected and locally integrated future. Specifically the project set out to:

- Understand how and why neighbourhood policing has changed in England and Wales since 2008 – and what it looks like in 2017/18.
- Chart the various forms in which neighbourhood policing is delivered and identify what, if anything, can be said about the impacts and consequences of the different approaches taken during the period.
- Understand how prioritisation decisions are made in terms of allocating resources to neighbourhood policing, how these in turn are allocated between neighbourhoods and then to the various activities neighbourhood police officers and staff carry out within them.
- Identify enablers, barriers and innovations in current delivery, at both operational and strategic levels.
- Examine how neighbourhood policing connects to, supports and is supported by other local services and police functions.
- To look to the future and examine how police forces might realistically seek to deliver more effective, preventative local policing, and the role that a 'next generation' of neighbourhood policing might play within this.

This report contains the findings of these investigations. The remainder of this introductory section sets out the historical and more recent context in which neighbourhood policing should be understood.

## 1.2 ORIGINS

With the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 Sir Robert Peel formalised the mixed economy of parish constables and watchmen who patrolled the streets of London into a 'New Police'. Given instructions to prevent crime by patrolling on foot, checking

5 Tuffin, Morris and Poole (2006); Quinton and Morris (2008); Mason (2009).

6 APCC and NPCC (2016).

7 HMIC (2017a), p4.

the security of buildings and apprehending 'suspicious persons'<sup>8</sup>, the new constabulary fell naturally into a 'beat' structure with each constable taking responsibility for a small geographic patch. Despite some variation for rural and urban settings, this 'jigsaw' structure provided the basic organisational framework for British Policing for the next 130 years<sup>9</sup>.

The mode of policing the beat model encouraged – locally focused, (theoretically) preventative and delivered by consistent, familiar, uniformed civilians – has been celebrated as uniquely British and uniquely consensual, from at least the 1930s to the present day<sup>10</sup>. While both claims are open to challenge, it is intuitively plausible that a system that consistently allocates the same officers to the same streets, and instructs them not just to catch criminals but to prevent crime from happening in the first place, might be beneficial in terms of developing an informed, accountable and cooperative/ consensual approach.

It is widely accepted that attempts to modernise policing from the late 1960s onwards inadvertently undermined some intrinsic benefits of the traditional model and were ultimately counter-productive<sup>11</sup>. In 1967, Home Office Circular 142 encouraged police forces to move to a system of 'Unit Beat Policing' which aimed to exploit what were then new technologies – personal radios and 'panda' cars – to increase police productivity and respond more quickly to calls for service, leading, it was reasoned, to improved satisfaction and better community relations<sup>12</sup>. In fact the opposite occurred. Police officers were taken off the beat and put into patrol cars, reducing opportunities for regular face-to-face interactions with the public. They patrolled, and increasingly responded to calls, over larger areas, diluting personal familiarity and local knowledge and shifting police activity onto a more reactive footing. It has been suggested that the prevailing police culture amplified the opportunities for 'action' provided by the new operating model to the detriment of 'service'<sup>13</sup>.

It is debatable whether these organisational changes precipitated, or were merely unhelpful in responding to the series of crises that beset British policing over the following decades. The 1970s and early 1980s saw police corruption and miscarriages of justice hit the headlines with increasing regularity, while the police were pitched into direct conflict with contrasting communities during race riots in urban areas and against striking miners in the provinces<sup>14</sup>. The disconnect between the police and the public they served became increasingly stark and problematic.

The growing crisis of legitimacy was accompanied by mounting questions about the effectiveness of police practices, and criminal justice processes more generally, to control soaring crime rates and rehabilitate offenders<sup>15</sup>. In particular the lack of emphasis given to preventing and addressing the causes of crime within the response-oriented 'standard' policing model began to receive scrutiny<sup>16</sup>.

Against this backdrop, many of the ideas that have come to be associated with 'community' and then 'neighbourhood' policing emerged as correctives to increasingly disconnected and reactive policing, and as a realignment to the needs of a more diverse, liberal and plural society.

In the UK, the early formulation of community policing is most closely associated with radical chief constable John Alderson. Alderson's Community Police Order to his officers in Devon and Cornwall in 1979<sup>17</sup> contains many of the building blocks for subsequent iterations of community/neighbourhood policing implemented over the following decades. It advocates shifting from an authoritarian to consensual style, from reactive enforcement to proactive prevention, from unilateral to partnership working, all guided by crime analysis and community consultation. Significantly, Alderson envisaged community policing as a 'first-tier' strategy backed up by second tier response and third tier investigation. The vision was to transform – not just augment – the way policing was done.

8 Emsley (2003).

9 Newburn (2003), p85.

10 Emsley (2003), p66. APCC and NPCC (2016), p7.

11 Williamson (2008).

12 Newburn (2003), p85; Myhill (2006), p12.

13 Holdaway, cited in Newburn (2003).

14 Newburn (2003).

15 Mackenzie and Henry (2009), pp.10–11.

16 Goldstein (1979).

17 Alderson (1979).

Despite the urgent need identified by Lord Scarman in the wake of the Brixton riots, for the police to re-engage with the public<sup>18</sup>, community policing remained culturally marginal and patchily implemented in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s<sup>19</sup>. In the USA more sustained initiatives, most notably the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS), emerged and began to produce a body of learning that could be used to develop and refine practice<sup>20</sup>.

### 1.3 RECENT HISTORY

The modern history of neighbourhood policing in England and Wales begins with the National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP) which ran in 16 pilot sites between 2003 and 2005. Influenced by CAPS, and building on initiatives in Surrey and The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the NRPP set out, in particular, to address the 'reassurance gap' – the mismatch between falling crime rates and the public's perception that crime was going up<sup>21</sup>. The approach drew on the 'signal crimes' perspective<sup>22</sup>, which held that specific (but varying) types of crime and disorder – including some incidents not traditionally considered to be 'serious' – can disproportionately convey messages to individuals and communities about their security. The implication for the police was that by identifying and targeting the crimes and (particularly in this period, the forms of antisocial behaviour) with the strongest local signal values, they might reduce fear, improve confidence and reassure the public.

The NRPP was therefore built on three principles: providing a visible and accessible policing presence, involving communities in identifying priority problems, and tackling these in collaboration with other agencies and the community through a problem solving approach. Evaluation in the pilot sites showed that the approach improved public perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour, feelings of safety,

and confidence in the police<sup>23</sup>. Although it had not been a specified aim, the programme was also found to have had a positive impact on crime, with survey measures showing a decline in victimisation. Importantly, the evaluation carried lessons on implementation; specific positive outcomes were associated with strong delivery of the particular activities designed to achieve them. A follow-up study showed that positive effects were largely sustained over a second year<sup>24</sup>.

Prior to the completion and evaluation of the NRPP, and in line with the New Labour ideal of 'new localism', the 2004 White Paper 'Building Communities, Beating Crime' committed to a national roll-out of (newly badged) *Neighbourhood Policing*, supported by a £50m fund and provision of 25,000 Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs)<sup>25</sup>. Starting with Pathfinder sites in each police force area, between 2005 and 2008, the Neighbourhood Policing Programme (NPP) set out to scale-up and roll-out the key elements the NRPP approach on a national basis. Although visible foot-patrol, community engagement and problem solving remained at its core, the NPP acknowledged the need for flexibility across implementation contexts around its 10 key principles<sup>26</sup>; it also contained a subtle shift in expectation towards law-enforcement and crime reduction outcomes, alongside improvements in public perceptions of safety and confidence in the police<sup>27</sup>.

After its first year however, evaluation across five experimental Basic Command Unit (BCU) sites (which were significantly larger than the NRPP's ward based pilot areas) showed no consistent pattern of change in public perceptions or experiences. It was suggested that immature implementation and difficulties in delivering the public engagement, and (particularly) problem solving elements, had curtailed effectiveness. Visible foot-patrol, it was concluded, was unlikely to deliver positive outcomes without the other aspects of the approach<sup>28</sup>. At the end of year-two, analysis

18 Lord Scarman (1981).

19 Myhill and Quinton (2010).

20 For example Skogan (2004).

21 Tuffin, Morris and Poole (2006), p17.

22 Innes and Fielding (2002).

23 Tuffin, Morris and Poole (2006).

24 Quinton and Morris (2008).

25 Longstaff et al. (2015).

26 ACPO and Centrex (2006), p10.

27 Quinton and Morris (2008), p2, p15.

28 Quinton and Morris (2008).

again identified no statistically significant relationship between implementation levels and outcomes, although small positive (non-significant) improvements were identified in BCUs (but not police forces) with more advanced delivery<sup>29</sup>. The challenge of implementing at scale was demonstrated once more.

No final evaluation of the NPP was carried out; however in October 2008 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)<sup>30</sup> reported that all forces had achieved basic standards by making neighbourhood policing teams a 'core part' of operational policing – resulting in a national patchwork of 3,600 local teams, staffed by nearly 30,000 police officers and PCSOs. The Inspectorate drew encouragement from small national improvements in public confidence (although the tide had started to turn several years previously)<sup>31</sup> and clearly viewed the NPP as the foundation for a sustained approach, which had potential to yield benefits over the longer term.

## 1.4 NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING SINCE 2008

The narrative of neighbourhood policing in England and Wales after the end of the national NPP roll-out in 2008, is less well established<sup>32</sup> – and in part, this study aims to fill that gap. The changing context however, is worth reviewing.

At the start of 2009 the Labour government issued its *Policing Pledge*, which included commitments that neighbourhood teams would continue to spend 80 per cent of their time 'visibly working' in their designated areas, respond promptly to enquiries and that staff turnover would be minimised<sup>33</sup>. Soon after, all central police targets were replaced with a single public confidence measure<sup>34</sup>, which forces largely delegated to neighbourhood teams to deliver,

and in 2010, the Home Office published its *Safe and Confident Neighbourhoods Strategy* which focused on improving service standards, including to crime victims, and sought to catalyse neighbourhood-level partnership working<sup>35</sup>.

These developments however were quickly brushed aside by the incoming coalition government<sup>36</sup>. From 2010, Conservative Home Secretary Theresa May oversaw a programme of sweeping police reforms, including, in 2012, the introduction of elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) who, along with chief constables, took the lead in deciding policy at a local level, while the Home Office stepped back. Although they continued to support the general principles of neighbourhood policing<sup>37</sup> the government now saw PCCs and chief constables as best placed to make decisions on how local policing should be organised and delivered; a policy that has continued, under the current Conservative government, to this day. In line with this philosophy, ring-fenced funding streams, including those for neighbourhood policing and PCSOs, have generally been rolled into the Police Main Grant<sup>38</sup>, allowing local decision makers greater flexibility in how they deliver services.

PCCs and chief constables have had other matters, in addition to public reassurance and local crime reduction, to attend to since 2008. Between 2010/11 and 2015/16 central government police funding reduced by 25 per cent in real terms, with forces absorbing overall budget reductions of between 12 and 23 per cent (average 18 per cent) depending on differential revenues from local taxation<sup>39</sup>. While the 2015 comprehensive spending review ushered in a period of notionally protected budgets, this was in cash (not real) terms and was subject to council tax precepts being raised every year by the maximum amount permitted<sup>40</sup>. Cost reduction measures, of different kinds, have been a defining characteristic

29 Mason (2009).

30 Now known as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). When referring to its publications the organisation will be referred to by its name at the time of publication.

31 HMIC (2008a), p4.

32 College of Policing (no date), p15.

33 HMIC (2009).

34 BBC (2009).

35 Home Office (2010).

36 Travis (2010).

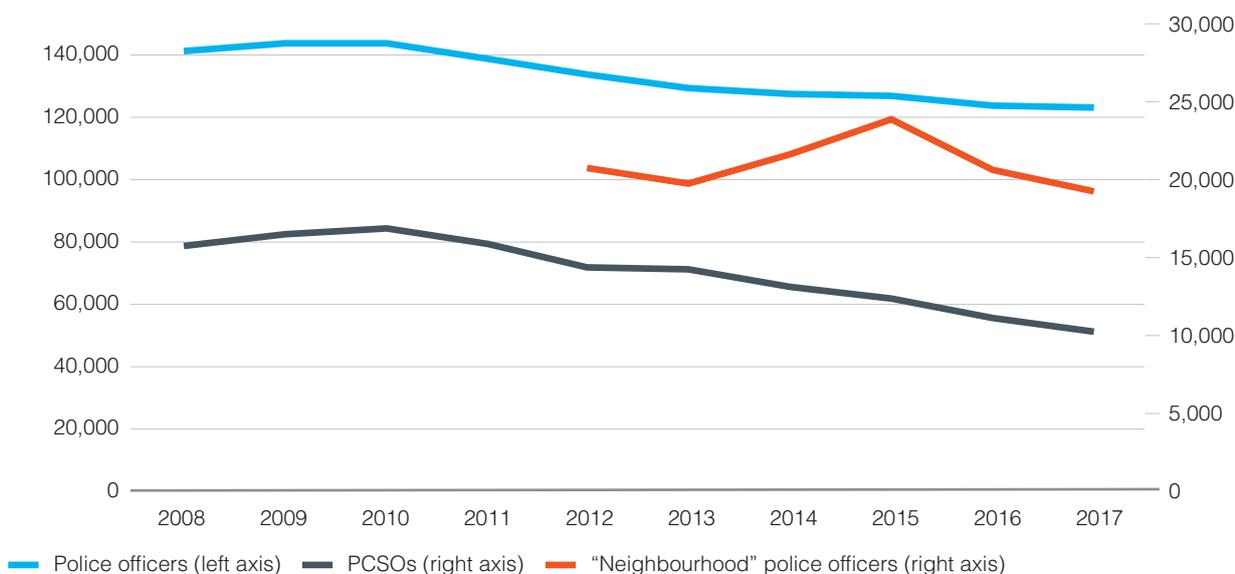
37 House of Commons Library (2017); Home Office (2015).

38 HMIC (2013), p136.

39 National Audit Office (2015).

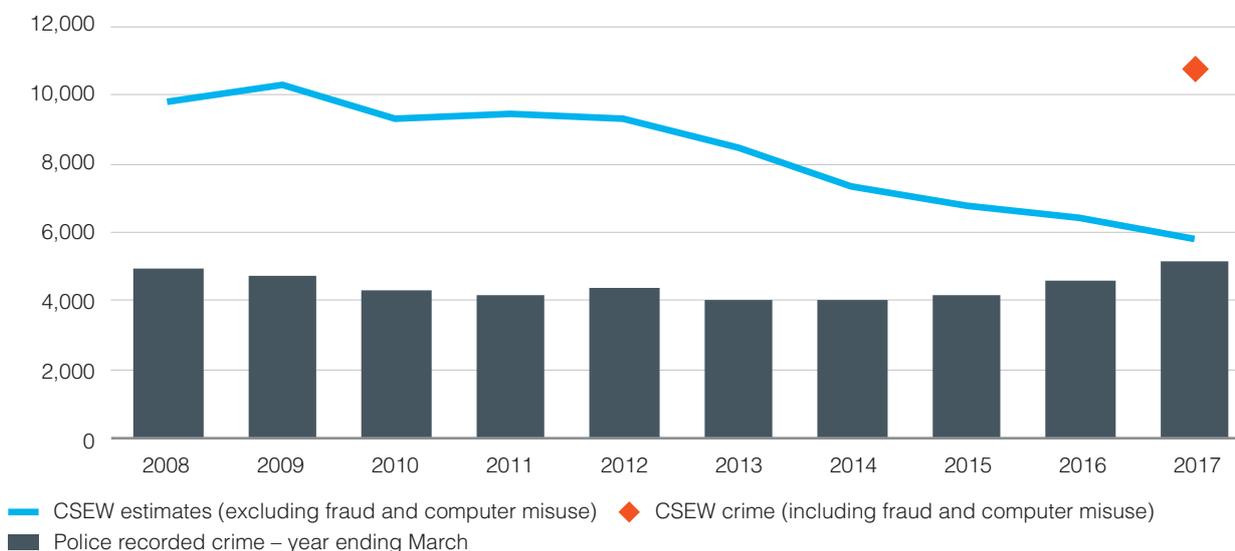
40 Hales (2015). Muir (2017).

**CHART 1:** Police workforce 2008 to 2017



Source: Home Office.

**CHART 2:** Crime in England and Wales 2008 to 2017 (thousands)



Source: ONS.

of the period and, as one element of this, the number of police officers, and in particular police staff (including PCSOs), has declined (see Chart 1).

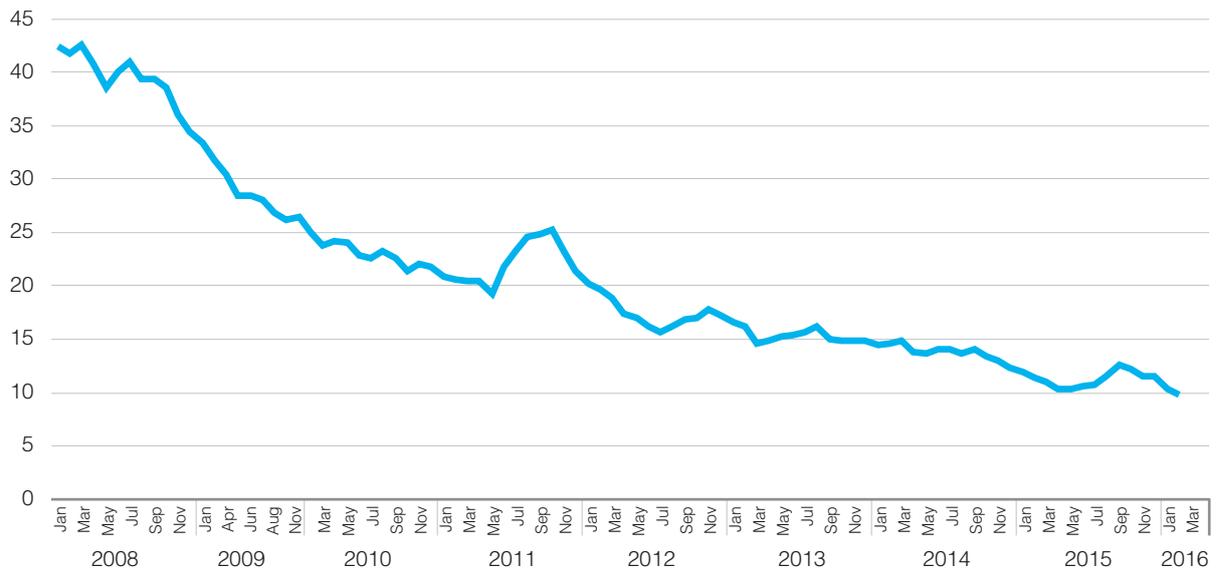
The nature of the challenge facing the police has also changed considerably since 2008. Crime (at least as traditionally measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales<sup>41</sup>) continued to fall throughout the period (see Chart 2); however the emphasis has progressively swung from the volume of crime to its harmfulness and from public-place and property crimes to those affecting vulnerable individuals and

groups, often hidden from public view. Child sexual exploitation scandals and the emergence of large volumes of non-recent abuse, including by prominent public figures, exposed the way victims had been failed by public institutions, including the police, and triggered a surge in reporting of both recent and older sexual offences. This formed part of a marked shift in the nature of police demand, towards more resource intensive activities, including investigating serious sexual offences, and responding to those in mental health crisis<sup>42</sup>. Scrutiny of crime recording,

41 ONS (2017b).

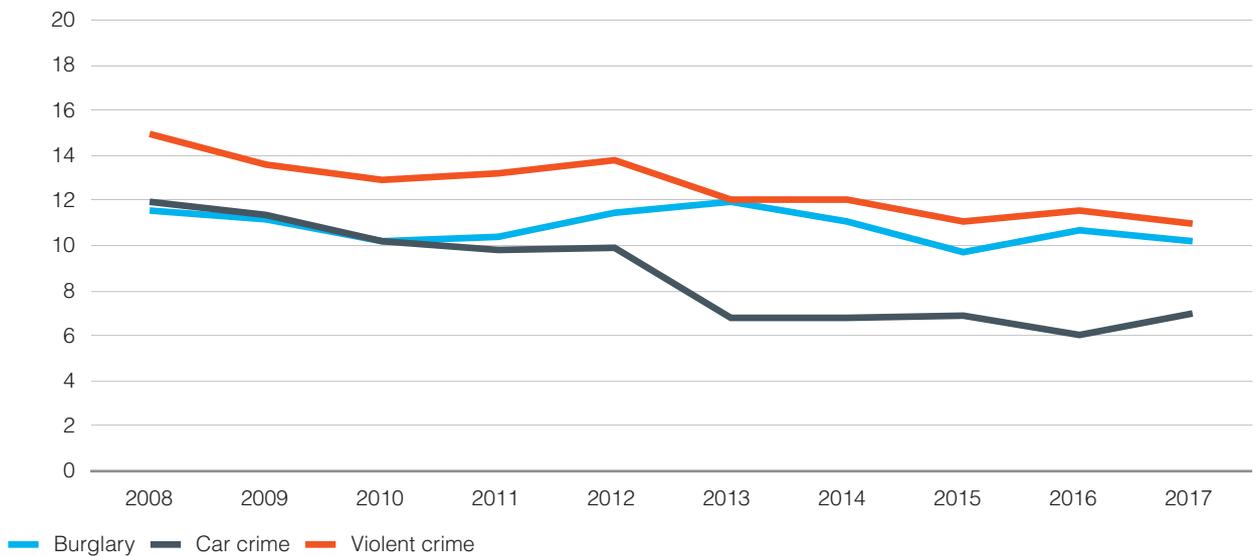
42 College of Policing (2015).

**CHART 3:** Per cent of public identifying crime/law and order as an ‘issue facing Britain today’ 2008 to 2016



Source: Ipsos.

**CHART 4:** Per cent worried about crime 2008 to 2017



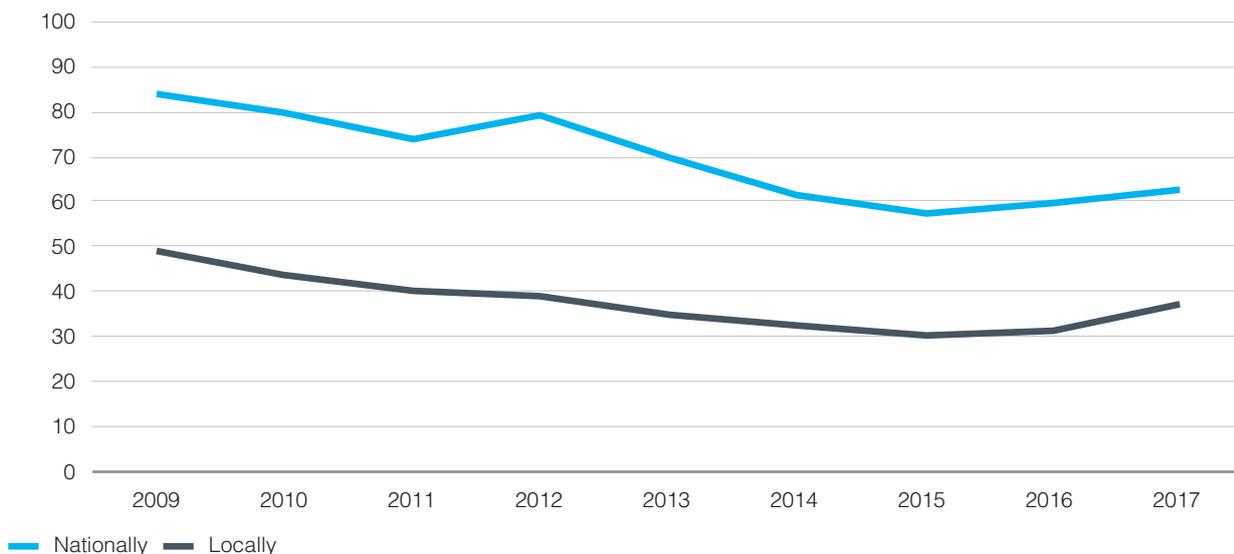
Source: CSEW.

part of a general turn against ‘performance culture’, found significant deficiencies, leading to subsequent increases in the number of recorded violent and sexual crimes as practices improved. In addition, online and ‘cyber’ crime, including a vast quantity of online fraud, gained prominence during the period, while, in more recent years, an escalation of Islamist terror attacks in Western Europe (though rarely directly affecting the UK prior to 2017) kept threat levels high.

In terms of public opinion, crime and law and order have generally reduced as matters of concern since 2008, thus, arguably, reducing the relevance of policing to the national political debate (see Chart 3)<sup>43</sup>. Worries about ‘traditional’ acquisitive crime have steadily reduced (Chart 4), but while the proportion of the public that believes crime is going up, both nationally and locally, fell markedly up to 2014/15, this has since begun to rise again (Chart 5). Similarly, although the ‘reassurance gap’ (as measured by the difference between perceived and actual likelihood of victimisation) appeared to close in 2012/13, there are signs that it has

43 Latter (2011); Hales (2016).

**CHART 5:** Per cent who think crime has gone up 2009 to 2017



Source: CSEW.

**CHART 6:** Perceived and actual victimisation risk 2009 to 2016



Source: CSEW.

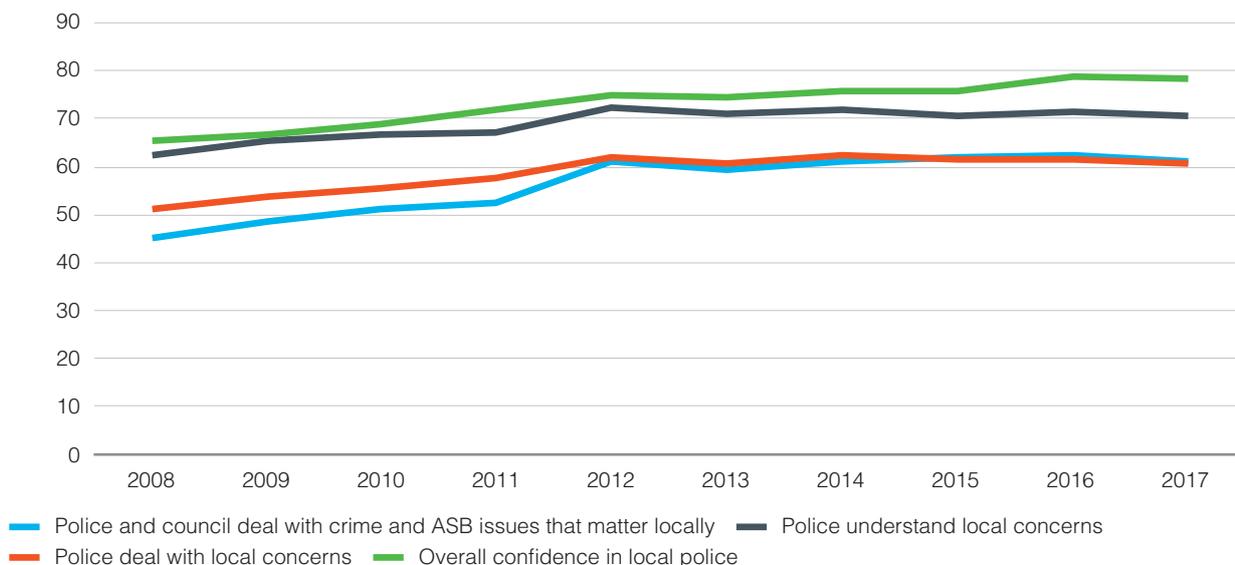
since have started to re-open (Chart 6). Confidence in, and perceptions of the police, including on measures associated with neighbourhood policing (such as understanding and dealing with local problems) have generally improved over the period, but progress has slowed since 2011/12 (Chart 7). Police visibility, however, has declined markedly; in 2016/17 only 22 per cent of the public said they saw a foot patrol at least weekly, compared with 39 per cent six years earlier (Chart 8).

There is evidence that neighbourhood policing has not fared well under this set of conditions. Although the number of police officers in designated ‘neighbourhood’ roles has remained relatively strong (see Chart 1), since at least 2013, HMIC has raised increasingly strong warnings about the health of the neighbourhood policing,<sup>44</sup> and thus about the ability of the police to prevent crime at a local level. In its 2016 PEEL Effectiveness report HMIC noted a “further erosion of preventative policing in our neighbourhoods”<sup>45</sup>, observing that: “Many forces

44 HMIC (2013), p15.

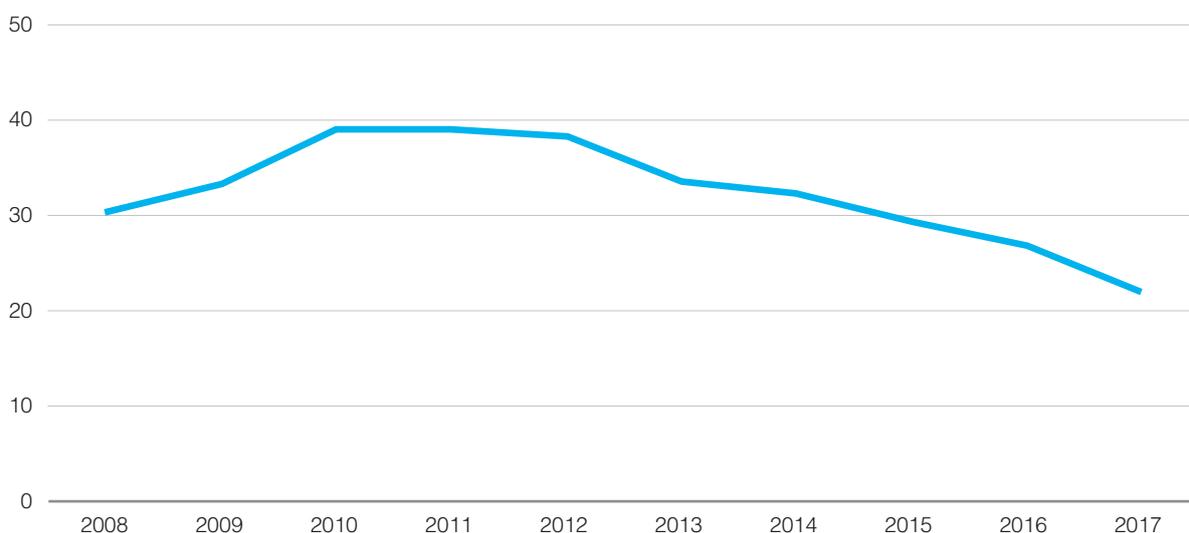
45 HMIC (2017a), p4.

**CHART 7:** Public perceptions of local policing (per cent who agree)



Source: CSEW.

**CHART 8:** Police visibility 2008 to 2017 (percentage saying they see police foot patrols about once a week or more)



Source: CSEW.

have failed to redefine their local policing models to fit today’s reducing budgets, changes in demands on their service, and changes in communities”. In particular they draw attention to inconsistencies in policing models, the pull of resource towards managing vulnerability, extensive and (sometimes) poorly managed abstraction and, in fewer cases, budgetary reductions as contributory factors. The recommendation that the College of Policing develop evidence-based guidelines on the “essential

elements of neighbourhood policing which all forces should provide”<sup>46</sup> is in progress and due to report in 2018<sup>47</sup>.

To the extent that the police service speaks with a single voice, its recent stance on neighbourhood policing has been rather ambiguous. In its initial response to the challenge of policing in austerity an ‘advisory group’ of senior figures in policing was unequivocal in its support, stating: “As neighbourhood policing plays the most important

46 HMIC (2017a), p23.

47 See: [www.app.college.police.uk/changes-to-app/neighbourhood-policing-guidelines/](http://www.app.college.police.uk/changes-to-app/neighbourhood-policing-guidelines/). The author served on the Guidelines Committee responding to this recommendation.

role in this proactive problem-solving activity, maintaining these local teams is essential if the public is to be protected<sup>48</sup>. Their report suggests that robust neighbourhood policing and local public protection teams might be resourced by rationalising specialist capabilities into cross-force structures and outsourcing business support functions. By the time these ideas had been refined into the Policing Vision for 2025 however, the tone was somewhat more nuanced<sup>49</sup>. While there were strong commitments on shifting from reactive to “proactive preventative activity”, resolving “recurring problems”, understanding “the wide ranging concerns of citizens” and supporting “more cohesive communities”, neighbourhood policing is referred to only as a historic mechanism for achieving these ends. In the future, these are to be the business of “local” policing, operating in a more “integrated” way with partner agencies. In theory at least, this keeps open the possibility that these outcomes might be delivered without the traditional ‘neighbourhood’ machinery of dedicated, locally embedded, police and support officers – although what an effective alternative might look like is not clear.

In particular, it is of note that the Policing Vision clearly frames the future purpose of local policing in terms of public protection, safety, and ‘need’; public reassurance, *feelings* of safety and communities’ explicit requests, are recessive if not absent.

Running alongside these official shifts in emphasis and language, the rhetorical commitment to neighbourhood policing as the ‘bedrock’ or ‘cornerstone’ of the British policing model has endured and intensified at times – particularly when further cuts have loomed and in the context of the ongoing terror threat<sup>50</sup> – while local and national politicians have continued to evoke the rhetoric of *neighbourhood* policing, as a synonym for ‘bobbies on the beat’, regardless of shifts in delivery on the ground<sup>51</sup>.

Finally, it is worth noting that internationally, community policing has developed in different ways over the recent period, including in relation to non-geographic, vulnerable (indigenous/ethnic) communities<sup>52</sup> and, in the USA, into Guardian Policing; a counter-movement against the aggressive, militaristic ‘warrior’ mode that has become increasingly problematic in some parts of that country<sup>53</sup>.

## 1.5 WORKFORCE ANALYSIS: THE DIVERSIFICATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING MODELS SINCE 2008

At the outset of this research programme the Police Foundation published a high-level ‘typology’ to provide a starting point for exploring recent changes in neighbourhood policing in England and Wales<sup>54</sup>. The typology was based on analysis of force-level workforce data, published by the Home Office and HMIC, between 2008 and 2016<sup>55</sup>. The analysis indicated increasing diversification in the models used by forces to deliver neighbourhood policing (and local policing more broadly) over the eight-year period, both in terms of ‘size’ (defined as the proportion of workforce allocated to *neighbourhood policing*<sup>56</sup>, shown on the x axis of the following charts) and the balance between officers and PCSOS (and other police staff) within neighbourhood teams (shown on the y axis).

### 2008

As shown in Chart 9, at the end of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme in 2008, forces assigned an average of 13 per cent of their workforce to *neighbourhood policing*, and maintained close to a one-to-one balance between officers and PCSOs within these teams (the force average is shown by the red point). There was some variation;

48 National Debate Advisory Group (2015), p17.

49 APCC and NPCC (2016).

50 Eg Stevens (2013), Clarke (2015).

51 In November 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron was challenged over his claim in Parliament that neighbourhood policing in London had increased by 500 per cent. See Simons and Waugh (2015).

52 Bartkowiak-Theron and Crehan (2010).

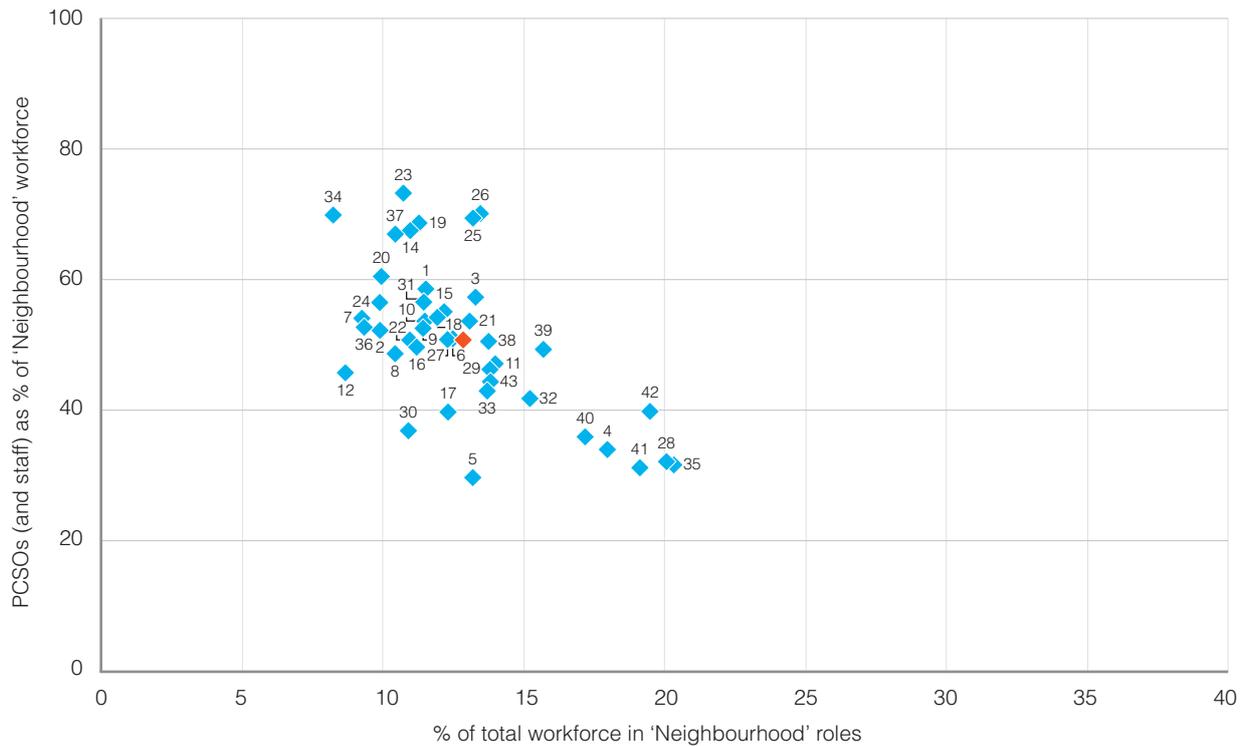
53 Rahr and Rice (2015).

54 Higgins (2017).

55 For full methodology see Higgins (2017: p3).

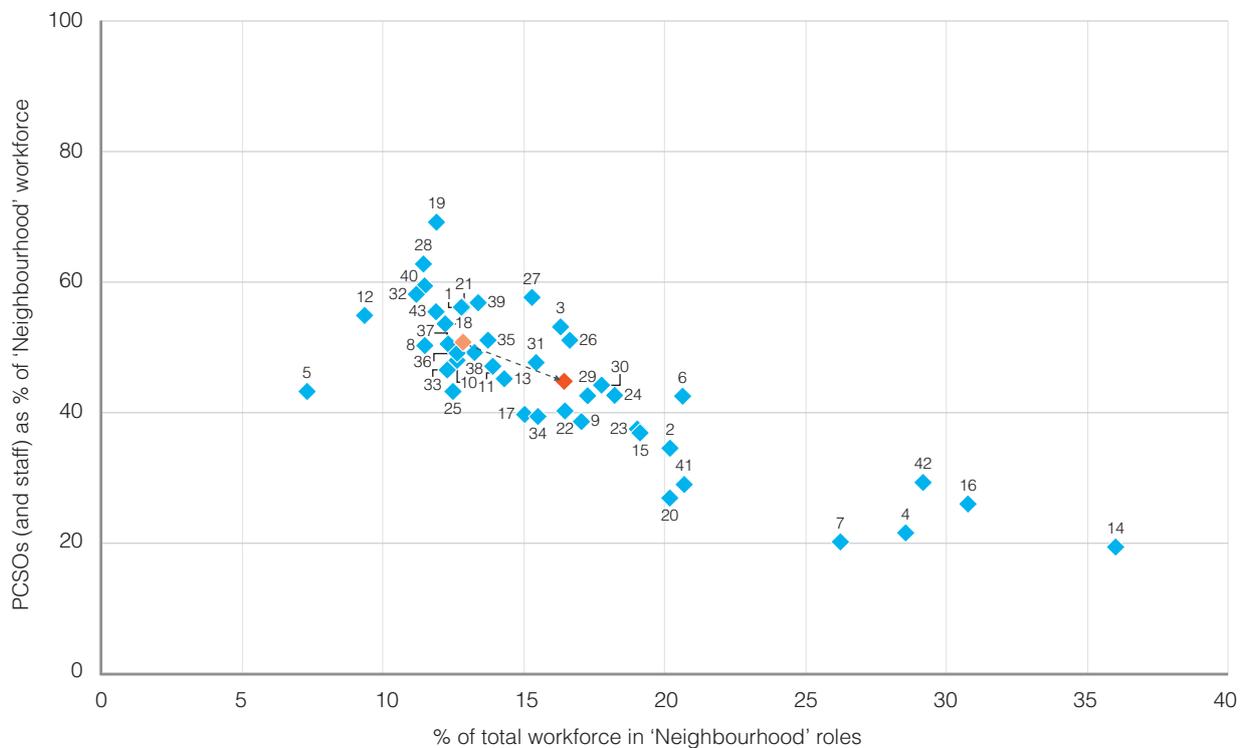
56 Within this section where *neighbourhood policing* appears in italics, this refers to the contingent designated to this function within the workforce data.

**CHART 9:** The size and shape of 'Neighbourhood Policing' in police forces in England and Wales (2008)



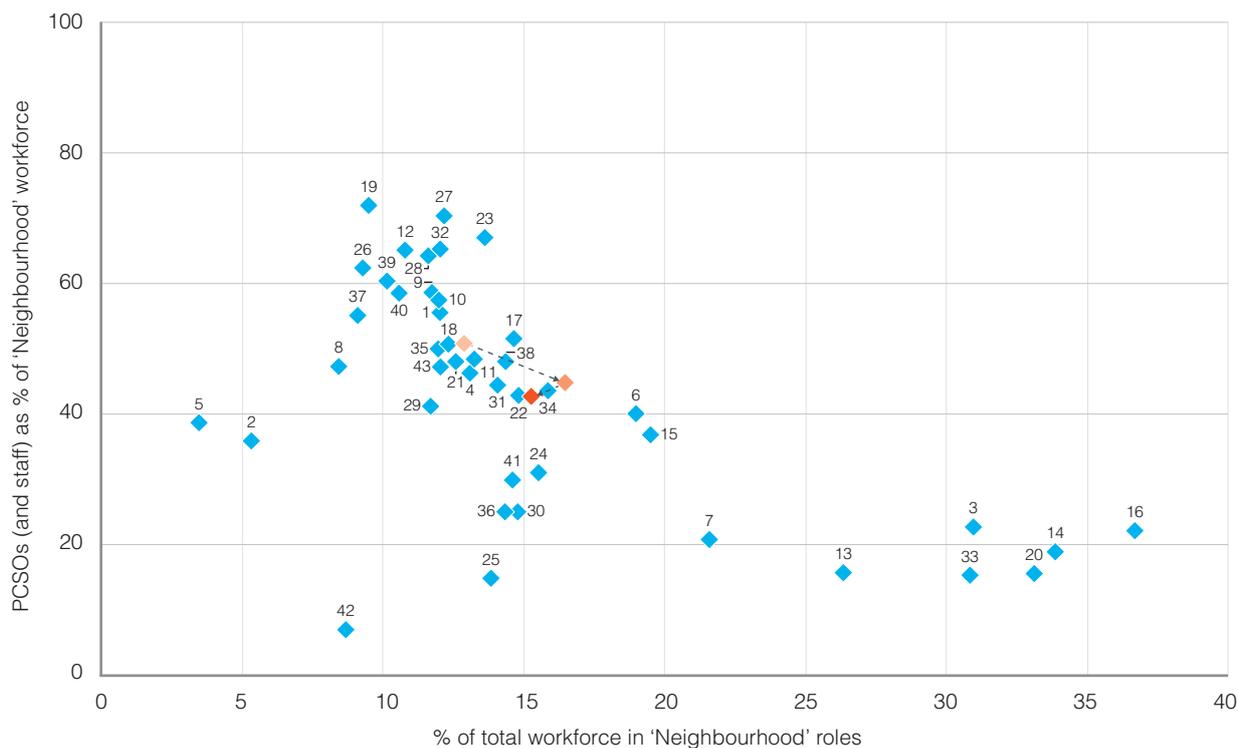
1: Avon and Somerset; 2: Bedfordshire; 3: Cambridgeshire; 4: Cheshire; 5: City of London; 6: Cleveland; 7: Cumbria; 8: Derbyshire; 9: Devon and Cornwall; 10: Dorset; 11: Durham; 12: Dyfed-Powys; 13: Essex; 14: Gloucestershire; 15: Greater Manchester; 16: Gwent; 17: Hampshire; 18: Hertfordshire; 19: Humberside; 20: Kent; 21: Lancashire; 22: Leicestershire; 23: Lincolnshire; 24: Merseyside; 25: Metropolitan Police; 26: Norfolk; 27: North Wales; 28: North Yorkshire; 29: Northamptonshire; 30: Northumbria; 31: Nottinghamshire; 32: South Wales; 33: South Yorkshire; 34: Staffordshire; 35: Suffolk; 36: Surrey; 37: Sussex; 38: Thames Valley; 39: Warwickshire; 40: West Mercia; 41: West Midlands; 42: West Yorkshire; 43: Wiltshire; Dark orange: Force average.

**CHART 10:** The size and shape of 'Neighbourhood Policing' in police forces in England and Wales (2012)



1: Avon and Somerset; 2: Bedfordshire; 3: Cambridgeshire; 4: Cheshire; 5: City of London; 6: Cleveland; 7: Cumbria; 8: Derbyshire; 9: Devon and Cornwall; 10: Dorset; 11: Durham; 12: Dyfed-Powys; 13: Essex; 14: Gloucestershire; 15: Greater Manchester; 16: Gwent; 17: Hampshire; 18: Hertfordshire; 19: Humberside; 20: Kent; 21: Lancashire; 22: Leicestershire; 23: Lincolnshire; 24: Merseyside; 25: Metropolitan Police; 26: Norfolk; 27: North Wales; 28: North Yorkshire; 29: Northamptonshire; 30: Northumbria; 31: Nottinghamshire; 32: South Wales; 33: South Yorkshire; 34: Staffordshire; 35: Suffolk; 36: Surrey; 37: Sussex; 38: Thames Valley; 39: Warwickshire; 40: West Mercia; 41: West Midlands; 42: West Yorkshire; 43: Wiltshire; Orange: 2008 Force average; Dark orange: 2012 Force average.

**CHART 11:** The size and shape of 'Neighbourhood Policing' in police forces in England and Wales (2016)



1: Avon and Somerset; 2: Bedfordshire; 3: Cambridgeshire; 4: Cheshire; 5: City of London; 6: Cleveland; 7: Cumbria; 8: Derbyshire; 9: Devon and Cornwall; 10: Dorset; 11: Durham; 12: Dyfed-Powys; 13: Essex; 14: Gloucestershire; 15: Greater Manchester; 16: Gwent; 17: Hampshire; 18: Hertfordshire; 19: Humberside; 20: Kent; 21: Lancashire; 22: Leicestershire; 23: Lincolnshire; 24: Merseyside; 25: Metropolitan Police; 26: Norfolk; 27: North Wales; 28: North Yorkshire; 29: Northamptonshire; 30: Northumbria; 31: Nottinghamshire; 32: South Wales; 33: South Yorkshire; 34: Staffordshire; 35: Suffolk; 36: Surrey; 37: Sussex; 38: Thames Valley; 39: Warwickshire; 40: West Mercia; 41: West Midlands; 42: West Yorkshire; 43: Wiltshire; Light orange: 2008 Force average; Orange: 2012 Force average; Dark orange: 2018 Force average.

*neighbourhood* functions ranged in size between eight per cent of the total workforce in Staffordshire and 20 per cent in Suffolk and North Yorkshire, while PCSOs made up as little as 30 per cent of the *neighbourhood* workforce in the West Midlands and Suffolk (along with City of London Police), and up to 70 per cent in Lincolnshire, Norfolk and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Generally however, reflecting the legacy of the national programme, the data suggest a relatively consistent approach being taken across the country, (reflected in the clustered points on the chart).

## 2012

Four years on (see Chart 10), forces' *neighbourhood* functions had, on average, grown as a proportion of workforce<sup>57</sup> and contained slightly more officers than PCSOs (ie the red average point has moved down and to the right). This is reflective of the first reductions in force headcount, as budgets began to contract, which focused on 'back office' and police

staff posts (including PCSOs), leaving 'front-line' *neighbourhood* teams, (and especially the police officers within them), comparatively protected. However, Chart 10 also shows, that this general shift was accompanied by substantial workforce reorganisation in a number of forces.

In particular, by 2012, five forces (in the bottom right of Chart 2) – Gloucestershire, Gwent, West Yorkshire, Cheshire and Cumbria – were allocating more than 25 per cent (and as much as 36 per cent) of their entire workforce to *neighbourhood* roles. These expanded teams were predominantly made up of police officers, with only 20 to 30 per cent PCSOs or other police staff. Additionally, the number of forces that now had *neighbourhood* functions consisting of at least 60 per cent PCSOs reduced from eight to two.

57 Against an overall police workforce reduction of six per cent, 31 forces allocated a greater proportion of workforce to Neighbourhood roles in 2012 than in 2008.

## 2016

Between 2012 and 2016 local policing models, and the *neighbourhood* functions within them, continued to diversify<sup>58</sup>. Although the average force position had changed only slightly since 2012, a number of disparate trends are apparent within the data (see Chart 11).

First, the group of forces (in the bottom right of the chart) that maintained large *neighbourhood* functions primarily staffed with officers, moved further to the right – that is, they *further* increased the proportion of workforce in *neighbourhood* roles. However, the composition of this group changed over the period with Kent, Essex and Cambridgeshire joining, while West Yorkshire, Cumbria and Cheshire reduced the proportions of workforce in *neighbourhood* roles.

Second, while more than half of forces retained between 10 and 15 per cent of their workforce in *neighbourhood* functions, more achieved this using larger proportions of PCSOs (and other police staff). In 2016 eight forces – including most Welsh forces<sup>59</sup>, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire – staffed their *neighbourhood* teams with at least 60 per cent non-officers, compared to just two forces in 2012.

Finally, unlike in 2008 and 2012, by 2016 a number of forces reported smaller *neighbourhood* functions dominated by officers. Seven forces, including large forces like the MPS and West Midlands, had *neighbourhood* functions that were both less than 15 per cent of workforce and comprised less than 40 per cent PCSOs/police staff.

## 1.6 A WORKING TYPOLOGY

By closely examining the trajectories of individual forces over this period (including during the years between 2012 and 2016 not covered by Charts 9, 10 and 11), it was possible to hypothesise that five distinctive strategies had been taken in respect of local and neighbourhood policing, and to formulate a typology based on the approaches taken, summarised below<sup>60</sup>.

### Consistent traditionals

16 forces had maintained a workforce model broadly similar to that typically employed by forces in 2008, with around 10 to 15 per cent of the total workforce allocated to *neighbourhood policing* roles, made up of roughly equal numbers of police officers and PCSOs. Avon and Somerset, Dorset, Durham, Hertfordshire, Thames Valley and Wiltshire were all ‘classic’ examples of this type, while a number of others had varied a little more over the period, but generally not strayed far from the ‘traditional’ (average 2008) position.

### Integrated hybrids

Eight forces had substantially increased the number of police officers allocated to neighbourhood roles, resulting in a neighbourhood function accounting for 20 to 40 per cent of the workforce comprised of around 80 per cent police officers. However, these forces had also substantially reduced the size of their declared ‘incident management’ function, indicating that ‘neighbourhood’ officers were fulfilling a dual role and that a broader interpretation of ‘neighbourhood policing’ had been adopted. The data suggests that between 2008 and 2012 Gloucestershire, Cheshire, Cumbria, Gwent and Kent adopted this approach and that Essex, Cambridgeshire and more recently South Yorkshire later followed suit. Cheshire appears to have reverted to a more typical configuration in 2015/16.

### Civilianised rurals

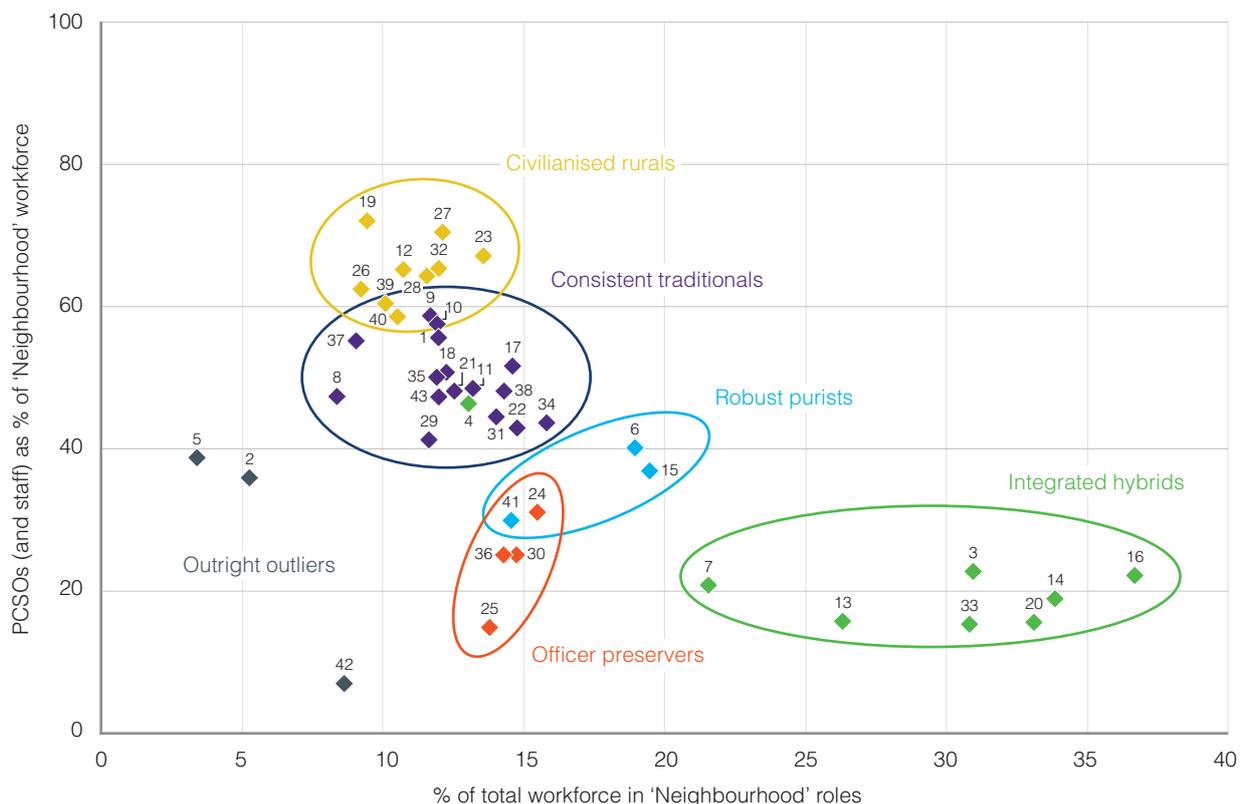
Nine forces had maintained roughly 10 to 15 per cent of workforce in neighbourhood roles but had done so by increasingly relying on PCSOs. These forces clustered geographically into two blocks of (relatively) rural forces; in the west (Dyfed-Powys, North Wales, South Wales, Warwickshire, West Mercia) and on the east coast (Humberside, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, North Yorkshire). It seems plausible that this format is suited to more sparsely populated areas, where the geography necessitates a comparatively well-resourced and mobile response function, making use of PCSOs to provide local visibility. It is worth

58 The diversification is reflected in qualifying notes in the Home Office workforce data such as “*Essex’s and Kent’s Policing Model of Local District Policing teams includes multi-skilled officers who deal with both response and neighbourhood policing*” (2015) and “*Some forces are not able to make a clear distinction between certain functions and therefore record the majority of, or all, employees under one function. This is particularly apparent for the ‘Neighbourhood Policing’ (1a) and ‘Incident (Response) Management’ (1b) functions*” (2016).

59 Following previous additional funding, in 2015 the Welsh Government committed £16.8m to continue to fund 500 PCSOs. See: Welsh Government (2015).

60 Charts for individual forces were published within a supplementary slide pack available at [www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/holding/projects/np\\_typology\\_sup\\_slides.pdf](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/holding/projects/np_typology_sup_slides.pdf)

**CHART 12:** A working typology of Neighbourhood Policing in England and Wales (2016)



1: Avon and Somerset; 2: Bedfordshire; 3: Cambridgeshire; 4: Cheshire; 5: City of London; 6: Cleveland; 7: Cumbria; 8: Derbyshire; 9: Devon and Cornwall; 10: Dorset; 11: Durham; 12: Dyfed-Powys; 13: Essex; 14: Gloucestershire; 15: Greater Manchester; 16: Gwent; 17: Hampshire; 18: Hertfordshire; 19: Humberside; 20: Kent; 21: Lancashire; 22: Leicestershire; 23: Lincolnshire; 24: Merseyside; 25: Metropolitan Police; 26: Norfolk; 27: North Wales; 28: North Yorkshire; 29: Northamptonshire; 30: Northumbria; 31: Nottinghamshire; 32: South Wales; 33: South Yorkshire; 34: Staffordshire; 35: Suffolk; 36: Surrey; 37: Sussex; 38: Thames Valley; 39: Warwickshire; 40: West Mercia; 41: West Midlands; 42: West Yorkshire; 43: Wiltshire.

noting however, that other largely rural forces (such as Cumbria and Devon and Cornwall) have taken different approaches.

**Officer preservers**

Four forces appear to have taken the opposite approach to the *civilianised rurals*. These have maintained roughly average proportions of workforce in *neighbourhood* roles (10 to 15 per cent) but have progressively *de-civilianised* their *neighbourhood* function, replacing PCSOs with warranted police officers. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is the most notable example of this approach having reduced the proportion of PCSOs (and other staff) in the *neighbourhood* workforce from 70 to 15 per cent over eight years. Merseyside, Surrey and Northumbria have followed broadly similar trajectories.

In the MPS, and possibly also elsewhere, the strategy is likely to relate to the well-publicised commitment to maintain the overall number of police officers within the

force<sup>61</sup>, meaning that efficiencies have been sought elsewhere, including by reducing PCSO and other police staff posts.

**Robust purists**

Three forces (Cleveland, Greater Manchester and West Midlands for much of the analysis period) had maintained comparatively large neighbourhood functions alongside substantial incident management contingents, theoretically suggesting the potential for a well-resourced, functionally discrete neighbourhood policing offering.

**Outright outliers**

In 2016 Bedfordshire (along with City of London and West Yorkshire<sup>62</sup>) reported a particularly atypical workforce model. In the case of the former, this was the result of previous decisions to adopt a 'back to basics' policing model in response to austerity, which it has subsequently acknowledged to be a "big mistake"<sup>63</sup>.

61 See for example MOPAC (2016), p22.

62 It has since been identified West Yorkshire's apparently unusual model was the result of an error in their Home Office data return for 2016.

63 Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (no date), p9. See also Higgins and Hales (2017).

While acknowledging that workforce data can only provide a partial account of change, and that the workforce categories used in the official data collection are increasingly inadequate to capture the range of practice, this analysis highlighted a number of emerging themes, including:

- Growing diversification in the way neighbourhood policing is delivered.
- Differing and sometimes opposing strategies being adopted across forces (consolidation versus redesign, generalisation versus specialism, civilianisation versus de-civilianisation).
- A clear imperative, at least in some forces, to innovate and reform.
- The inconsistent and changing use of PCSOs.
- An apparent dissolution of the boundaries between reactive and proactive local policing (in some forces).
- The co-option of neighbourhood policing into broader strategic aims (eg maintaining officer numbers).
- A looser, less specified formulation of what 'neighbourhood policing' means and a breakdown in consensus about its functions and component activities.

These findings provided key pointers for further exploration during the subsequent qualitative elements of the research programme.

#### **An update...**

Since initial publication of the typology in April 2017, a further set of workforce data has been published describing police force staffing structures in March 2017<sup>64</sup>. This shows further diversification and remodelling activity during 2016/17. Most notably:

- Wiltshire, having maintained a static *consistent traditional* model since 2008, moved to an *integrated hybrid* workforce structure.
- Essex, having previously adopted the *integrated hybrid* model, now allocates only six per cent of its workforce (mostly police officers) to *neighbourhood* functions.

These examples, and neighbourhood/local policing models more broadly, are discussed further in Section 5.

64 See [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2017](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2017) data tables, tabs (F1, F2, F3).

# 2. METHODOLOGY

Evidence has been gathered in a number of ways, with the overall intention of securing both in-depth operational insights and strategic perspectives on contemporary neighbourhood policing. The research design set out to be both a geographically comprehensive 'fact-finding' exercise and to capture the experiences, views and reflections of those involved in delivering neighbourhood policing at all levels. To this end, the following activities were undertaken during the spring and summer of 2017.

## 2.1 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

### Workforce data analysis

Home Office police workforce data was collated and analysed<sup>65</sup>. This detailed the numbers of full-time equivalent police officers, PCSOs and other police staff, deployed to *neighbourhood policing* and other functions by English and Welsh forces between 2012 and 2016. This was supplemented by additional data for 2008 sourced from a set of HMIC reports<sup>66</sup>. Variables describing the relative 'size' and 'shape' of forces' *neighbourhood policing* contingents were calculated for each year of available data and trends examined over time. This analysis formed the basis of the *typology* outlined in Section 1.6 and reported in detail elsewhere<sup>67</sup>.

### National stakeholder consultation

Meetings and interviews were held with representatives from a number of organisations that hold a stake, at the national level, in guiding or influencing policy and practice relating to neighbourhood policing. These initial conversations took place between March and May 2017 and were used to shape the focus of the project and highlight key issues for exploration. A list of the organisations consulted is included in Appendix 1.

### Police force information request

All 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales were asked to provide information on the recent history and current delivery of neighbourhood policing in their force area, in the form of a written questionnaire return (see Appendix 2). Forces were informed that all information provided would be attributable at police force level. The request was endorsed and initially sent to force assistant chief constables (ACCs) by the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) lead for neighbourhood policing<sup>68</sup>, on behalf of the Police Foundation, in early May 2017. In early July, where appropriate contacts could be identified, forces that had not provided a return were re-contacted directly and asked to consider submitting a response. In total 22 police forces provided a written return.

It is acknowledged that in the intervening months between providing information and publication of this report, developments will have occurred within some forces which it has not been possible to reflect.

### Practitioner focus groups

14 focus group discussions were held with police officers and PCSOs currently involved in the delivery of neighbourhood policing in seven English police forces (two groups per force). The police force typology (see section 1.6) was used to structure selection, with one force from each of the six 'types' included, along with a second from the largest 'consistent traditionals' grouping. Police forces were also chosen to provide a broad spread in terms of size, geography<sup>69</sup> and HMIC grading (see Table 1).

It was also considered important to capture some of the internal variation *within* force areas; in most cases this took the form of a contrast between the two focus groups, in terms of the type of area participants policed (eg urban versus rural, city versus small town, commercial centre versus suburban/housing estate etc.). In some forces the groups were geographically

65 See: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales). Since 2012, the March edition for each year includes a breakdown of the numbers of officers, PCSOs and police staff in each force, into 10 functional categories (including *Local Policing*) and around 70 sub-categories (including *Neighbourhood Policing*); data formats differ, but for 2016 see tables F4, F5 and F6 of the data tables.

66 In 2008 HMIC inspected all forces on *Neighbourhood Policing and developing citizen focus policing*. Each report records the number of officers and PCSOs delivering neighbourhood policing in the force at that time. These Inspection reports are available on the HMICFRS website; see for example HMIC (2008b), p5.

67 Higgins (2017).

68 The Police Foundation would like to extend our thanks to Deputy Chief Constable Gavin Stephens for his assistance and support.

69 For practical reasons it was not possible to include those forces most distant from London, the lack of coverage of Welsh forces in particular is an acknowledged omission.

focused (ie included personnel from the same district, town or neighbourhood), while in others participants were pulled from a number of similar (eg either urban or more rural) areas. In the case of the Metropolitan Police Service, both groups covered urban locations; however one was conducted with a team operating under a newly introduced pilot model, while the other contained those from an area working within a more established system. All but one of the police forces approached to participate in this element of the research agreed to do so, and we are indebted to their leaders for their assistance in facilitating access.

The groups ranged in size from four to 12 participants (mean six). Although forces were asked to invite PCSOs, constables and sergeants, in several cases inspectors or chief inspectors with an appropriate remit also took part. The group discussions were semi-structured (see the interview guide in Appendix 3) around a number of broad topic areas including: policing models, purpose and remit, enablers and barriers, prioritisation,

intelligence gathering, partnership working and neighbourhood policing 'as a job'. Group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis (see below). Focus groups took place between early June and early September 2017. For practical reasons one of group was conducted via video conferencing.

### Strategic lead interviews

In each of the seven forces included in the focus-group programme, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 4) were also conducted with individuals who had strategic responsibility for overseeing, reviewing or coordinating/supporting the delivery of neighbourhood policing within the force. These individuals varied in rank from assistant chief constables to inspectors. In several cases principal respondents were accompanied by relevant colleagues. The strategic lead for one further force, Bedfordshire, was also interviewed. Responses were captured in the form of detailed interviewer notes.

**TABLE 1:** Police forces participating in focus group research

Police Force	'Type'	Region	Size (total workforce, rank out of 43)	HMIC rating (PEEL Effectiveness 2016, grading for 'preventing crime and ASB' <sup>70</sup> )	Areas policed by focus group participants
Gloucestershire	Integrated Hybrid	South West	39	Requires improvement	Urban: (Cheltenham, Gloucester) Rural: (Stroud, Cotswolds, Forest of Dean)
Greater Manchester Police	Robust Purist	North West	3	Good	City of Manchester Tameside
Leicestershire	Consistent Traditional	East Midlands	21	Good	Urban: (Leicester) Rural: (Charnwood, Eastern Counties, Hinckley and Blaby)
Metropolitan Police	Officer Preserver	London	1	Good	Lambeth Islington
Norfolk	Civilianised Rural	Eastern	26	Excellent	Norwich King's Lynn
Staffordshire	Consistent Traditional	West Midlands	24	Good	Central Stoke South Staffordshire
West Yorkshire	Outright Outlier	Yorkshire & Humber	4	Requires improvement	Bradford Wakefield

70 HMIC principally assess the effectiveness of forces' neighbourhood policing under the Preventing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour component of the PEEL Effectiveness process. In 2016 they assessed two forces as Outstanding, 30 as Good, 10 as Requires Improvement and one force as Inadequate, see HMIC (2017a).

## Online practitioner survey

Between April and July 2017 a short, anonymous online survey was hosted on the Police Foundation's website. Although principally aimed at police officers and staff, the survey was open to 'anyone with local knowledge' to share local insights and provide views on the delivery of neighbourhood policing in their area. The survey was advertised and promoted through a variety of policing and social media channels.

This exercise generated 37 usable responses. Although fewer than originally anticipated, the qualitative information obtained through the largely open ended questions has been used to supplement the other materials collected. Given the data collection method and limited number of responses, on the few occasions that results are provided in quantitative form, these should be considered as illustrative of the general tone of respondent feedback rather than representative of any wider group or population.

Among the web survey respondents, three individuals identified themselves as force leads for neighbourhood policing and provided substantial factual information about local arrangements. This information has been processed and reported along with the force information returns; however care has been taken to ensure this information is not attributable at the force or individual level.

## Open source desk research

The primary data collection described above has been supplemented by desk research structured at the police force level. This has included searches of force websites, published strategic documentation, Police and Crime Commissioners' websites and Police and Crime Plans, HMIC reports and local press coverage for information pertaining to local delivery of neighbourhood policing.

## Analysis

The substantial quantity of factual and qualitative material generated through primary data collection (focus group transcripts, notes from interviews with force leads and national stakeholder, police force information returns and web survey responses) has been collated, reviewed and coded using Nvivo software to identify similar and contrasting content and identify key themes and organising concepts.

## Police force coverage

In combination, the completed information returns, key leads interviews and online survey responses from strategic leads, represent **force level input from 31 forces** (just under three quarters) of the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales. A summary table of the material collected for each force is provided in Appendix 5.

### Quotation and attribution

Throughout this report factual information and direct quotations provided by research participants have been used to evidence and illustrate key findings. The following approach has been taken to labelling and attribution:

#### Police force information requests

Respondents providing written feedback to information requests were advised that the material provided would be attributed to the force. The information provided, including direct quotations, is therefore attributed at force level.

#### Focus groups

A short description of the main characteristics of the approach to neighbourhood policing taken in each of the 14 examples encountered in the focus groups is provided in section 3.1, with the descriptions attributed to sites (described at the divisional level or equivalent rather than naming particular neighbourhoods or sub-areas). Direct quotations have not routinely been linked to particular research sites except where it is necessary for interpretation (eg where they describe a particular approach), similarly the rank or role of the respondent is only included where it aids understanding. In all cases, care has been taken to avoid direct or indirect identification of any respondent. To indicate the range of locations to which sets of quotations relate, each focus group has been labelled with a randomly allocated reference number (ie FG1 to FG14).

#### Key leads interviews

Interviewer notes (rather than voice recording) were used to capture key leads' responses and thus direct quotations are rarely included. Consistent with the approach taken for focus groups, responses are only attributed to particular forces where this is necessary for interpretation and, again, care has been taken to avoid identifying individual respondents.

#### Web survey

The online survey was anonymous and therefore responses are marked only as *Web Survey*.

## 2.2 CONTEXT FOR RESEARCH

It is worth briefly locating the responses provided by police officers and staff in this research within the context of events occurring in the spring and summer of 2017.

- In March 2017 HMIC published its 2016 PEEL Effectiveness inspection drawing attention to the further 'erosion' of neighbourhood policing and indicating further scrutiny would take place against a set of new 'evidence-based guidelines'<sup>71</sup>.
- In March, May and June Islamic extremists carried out terror attacks in Westminster, Manchester and London Bridge killing five, 22 and eight people (respectively) and injuring many more. Later in June a van was driven into a group of Muslim worshippers outside Finsbury Park Mosque, killing one man. In September an explosive device was detonated on a tube train at Parsons Green, London. In the wake of these events attention turned to police funding and, in particular, the role of neighbourhood policing in generating community intelligence. Sara Thornton, chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) said: *"Fewer officers and police community support officers will cut off the intelligence that is so crucial to preventing attacks. Withdrawal from communities risks undermining their trust in us at a time when we need people to have the confidence to share information with us"*.<sup>72</sup>
- In June, Grenfell Tower, a public housing block in North Kensington was gutted by fire, killing more than 70 people. Criticism of the relief efforts that followed fell predominantly on the local authority; however the events brought broader scrutiny of the local infrastructure for ensuring public safety, managing the relationship between the state and communities and facilitating collaborative working between public services and local residents.
- During summer 2017 reports emerged from police forces around the country of unprecedented volumes of emergency calls for service<sup>73</sup> and of the pressure this was placing on local policing services.
- In July 2017 the Office of National Statistics published data showing a 10 per cent increase in police recorded crime (in the year ending March 2017)<sup>74</sup>. While some part of this is likely to reflect changes to recording practices (particularly in relation to violent and sexual offences), increases in theft, robbery and vehicle crime appear to be 'genuine' and suggest the possibility of an end to the long-term downward trend in acquisitive crime. There was also evidence of a real increase in more serious violent crime.

71 See: [www.app.college.police.uk/changes-to-app/neighbourhood-policing-guidelines/](http://www.app.college.police.uk/changes-to-app/neighbourhood-policing-guidelines/) (accessed 01/03/2018).

72 Dodd (2017).

73 See, for example: Keith (2017); Brown (2017); Stocks (2017).

74 ONS (2017a).

# 3. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING IN 2017/18: VARIATION AND ATTRITION

The evidence collected in the course of this project strongly confirms two already emerging trends<sup>75</sup>;

- In 2017/18 neighbourhood policing is a broader and much more varied set of practices than it was in 2008; and
- Since 2008 it has suffered substantial and multifaceted attrition.

This section illustrates the current breadth of practice – which is often as varied *within* forces as between them – by providing a short overview of the 14 examples of neighbourhood policing practice encountered in the focus group component of the research. It then reflects on the practitioner narrative common across these sites, that resourcing for neighbourhood policing had substantially contracted, demand on local policing services had increased and changed, and that, in combination, this has impacted negatively on the outcomes and effects neighbourhood policing has sought to deliver.

## 3.1 DIVERSE PRACTICE

Within the focus group research coverage, three practice examples stand out as concerted attempts to deliver tightly conceived (and *comparatively* well resourced) versions of neighbourhood policing, with elements of innovation. The first, operating in one area of **Norwich** (Norfolk), was perhaps closest in spirit to mid-2000s neighbourhood policing, in that the team's work took strong direction from the local community, including through a formal priority setting process<sup>76</sup> that had been modernised and reinvigorated through use of social media. This resulted in a principal focus on public-place, quality of life issues. A neighbourhood sergeant position had been reintroduced, helping to maintain a functional distinction from the investigative and response teams covering the same geographic area.

In contrast, the two other examples had principally been designed to address threat, risk, harm and vulnerability at a local level (as opposed to overtly expressed community concerns), but in different ways. In the more **urban parts of Gloucestershire** a small, largely ring-fenced group of 'elite' neighbourhood officers and PCSOs had been assembled to focus on areas, communities and issues of high risk, where 'specialist' community engagement, partnership working, proactivity and intelligence was deemed essential. These included particular estates, a specific ethnic minority community and the on-street sex trade.

Whereas Gloucestershire's approach to risk was thematic, neighbourhood policing in **Tameside** (Greater Manchester) had been reimaged as a key component of Integrated Neighbourhood Services (INS); a case-based, multi-agency approach to managing and responding to vulnerability. This is the local iteration of 'place based working', a working philosophy characterised by close, ongoing, multi-agency partnership as 'business as usual' made possible by the wider devolution agenda within Greater Manchester. INS is driven by a daily meeting at which any partner can raise individuals or issues of concern. After initial information sharing and research, these referrals form cases, which are managed to resolution by allocated staff. While cases can be owned by staff from any agency, Neighbourhood Beat Officers and PCSOs take many of these, and have a key role in visiting and developing relationships with individuals of concern. The onus is on seeing cases through, even where assistance from other agencies is sought, rather than generating referrals and handing over responsibility.

Both Norfolk and Gloucestershire also contain substantial rural areas, and in both cases the form of neighbourhood policing encountered

75 HMIC (2017a); College of Policing (2015a).

76 While community priority setting processes were in operation elsewhere this was often relatively peripheral to the day to day work of the local teams. Nowhere else were priorities as clearly understood or as influential in driving the teams' activity as in Norwich (see Section 6.1).

within these was less intensive than the more urban variations described above. In **King's Lynn** (Norfolk) neighbourhood policing was almost entirely delivered by PCSOs – although they also reported regular abstraction to reactive duties and away from their nominated beats. A single PC beat officer (who also carried a significant investigative workload) had recently been appointed to cover the town's commercial centre, supported by a proactively-minded sergeant (on the occasions when resourcing allowed him to pull away from response duties). PCSOs also carried the weight of problem solving and engagement work in **rural Gloucestershire**. While each area also had a nominated PC, supervised by a divisional-level Sergeant, these tended to perform a 'general' local policing role with respondents emphasising the safeguarding elements of their role as being particularly resource intensive.

PCSOs also formed the backbone of the neighbourhood offer in other more rural areas. In **south Staffordshire**, except for a small Neighbourhood Action Team that carried out proactive enforcement work, no PCs were allocated to the neighbourhood policing function. PCSOs (and the sergeants who supervised them) saw their main challenges as providing the visibility that local communities told them they wanted across a large, sparsely populated area with limited staff and vehicles, and in finding resource to respond to community intelligence.

In a very different context, providing visibility was also a principal concern in **central Manchester** where Neighbourhood Beat Officers reported spending meaningful amounts of time on patrol – a service they felt was highly valued by local businesses. Across the force, an attempt to supplement neighbourhood policing by allocating response officers to smaller geographic areas and freeing up some of their time for local proactive work was reported to have faltered, but had (rather confusingly) left these responders with the job title of 'Neighbourhood Police Officers'.

In contrast to south Staffordshire, in **rural Leicestershire**, police officers as well as PCSOs provided neighbourhood policing, but the challenge of maintaining a presence and a service-based relationship with demanding 'lower-risk' communities was also evident here. In addition to taking on an increasingly general policing role in 'outposts' of the force – responding to incidents, investigating crime and providing a 'general sweep up service' – these officers conceived of their function as promoting

the force (a public-facing 'good news' role), while attempting to reduce demand by addressing recurring issues. Although local policing was theoretically organised into separate response, investigation and neighbourhood functions, neighbourhood officers in **Leicester** reported increasingly covering the other two functions. They reflected on how the unpredictability of their workload impacted on the activities they felt able to undertake with the time available, while regular abstraction left PCSO colleagues feeling increasingly unsupported.

In **Bradford** (West Yorkshire) the 'collapse' of neighbourhood policing into a more general policing remit, dominated by responsive duties, was linked by respondents to the decision to remove dedicated sergeant-level supervision, leaving beat officers and PCSOs unprotected from control room tasking. The recent reintroduction of a number of sergeant posts was viewed positively. Elsewhere in West Yorkshire, in part of the **Wakefield** district, a more traditional neighbourhood structure had been retained. Although much diminished in size, a sergeant-led team worked on 'problem-solving occurrences' and investigated hate crime, although community involvement in priority setting had fallen by the wayside. On a larger scale, the battle to retain a 'traditional' neighbourhood policing structure was echoed in a busy part of **Stoke on Trent** (Staffordshire) where diminishing staffing levels had led to the decision to move from a ward to a 'cluster' structure. Neighbourhood policing was described as being at the 'tipping point', beyond which a recognisable neighbourhood offer would become untenable.

Whereas many of the forces described above were delivering a differentiated service, with resourcing levels concentrated in areas of greatest demand or risk, the approach being piloted in London retained a strong universal ethos, with each community (ward) getting a similar basic allocation. In the area of **Islington** visited, one of the MPS 'Pathfinder' boroughs, each ward had been allocated two dedicated officers, who were ring-fenced from aid, and carried a more limited investigative workload. Respondents reflected on a number of challenges including dealing with the over-flow of 'low level' or secondary responsive work from highly stretched response teams, maintaining contact with supervisors and colleagues and bringing additional resources into the ward when required, for example to execute warrants. Elsewhere in London, neighbourhood policing in **Lambeth** was still organised around a Local Policing Model introduced several years previously. Within this system, in addition to a single

Dedicated Ward Officer (DWO), boroughs (or sections of boroughs) were allocated a pool of officers that could be deployed more flexibly. This more general version of neighbourhood/local policing also took on routine crime investigations and serviced a significant aid demand (for example to police pre-planned events across the capital). In the area of Lambeth visited, a 'beat crime unit' had been carved out of the neighbourhood contingent to investigate local crime reports, and the remaining resource had been substantially eroded. The remaining capacity was principally geared toward delivering intelligence-led enforcement activity. Officers reported a growing disconnect from the local community.

This whistle-stop tour begins to suggest some rough dimensions of difference on which to start mapping out practice variation. Neighbourhood policing can be universal (as in Islington) or more targeted, and if the latter it can be high intensity (as in Norwich or urban Gloucestershire) or low intensity (as in King's Lynn or South Staffordshire). It can be preserved in an approximately traditional shape (although not size – Wakefield or Stoke on Trent) or it can be allowed to dissolve, pragmatically, into general local policing (Leicestershire, Bradford). Alternatively it can be reformed and repurposed, and if so it can be principally community focused (Norwich) or focused on harm/vulnerability. If the latter this can be done thematically (urban Gloucestershire) or it can be case-based (Tameside). Approaches can emphasise visibility (central Manchester, south Staffordshire), safeguarding (rural Gloucestershire), reassurance and public relations (rural Leicestershire) or enforcement (Lambeth). As several of the vignettes suggest however, the one constant feature across all sites – and key to understanding the trajectories of neighbourhood policing since 2008 – is significant and sustained attrition.

**KEY FINDING:** Neighbourhood policing is a broad and varied set of practices in 2017/18, with substantial variation within, as well as between, forces.

## 3.2 DEPLETION AND ATTRITION

In all of the forces visited during the focus groups programme, front line practitioners provided 'then and now' comparisons, such as those below, to illustrate how neighbourhood policing staffing levels had reduced over recent years. In the view of the vast majority, this had resulted in significant deterioration in capability and service. These narratives are consistent and appear at odds with the relatively robust neighbourhood officer headcount indicated by the official data (see Chart 1).

*"The best way to sum it up for you is, I used to [work in an area] where they had the riots in 2001, and 1995, so you can imagine what sort of an area it was. We used to have 15 cops that covered that area, and we had around 12 PCSO ... around 27 people for that area. Now we've got two ward officers and probably what, three PCSOs ... and they don't have a sergeant." (FG9)*

*"If you came to [the force] five, ten years ago and asked about neighbourhood policing and Safer Neighbourhood Teams, you'd get a very different answer in terms of what we were putting out into local community issues, and what we're putting out now. To put it into perspective, I joined in 2006 ... we had a lot of resources, we could put the time and effort into looking at problems and problem-solving. I think at the height ... we had 28 PCSOs. We're now down to six. So that gives you an idea of what operationally we're up against." (FG13)*

*"We now run one small team, me and half a dozen officers, four or five PCSOs, to run the whole [area]; there used to be four sergeants, 20 plus officers, 25 PCSOs, and so the way we deliver it [neighbourhood policing] is really different." (Sergeant, FG3)*

*"We had a police station and there were six officers and sergeant and now there's one officer, a PCSO and we're based in a school." (FG2)*

At the same time, and particularly in the most recent period, respondents reported that demand on local policing had intensified and changed, creating a 'perfect storm' of increasing workload and shrinking resource. This was variously attributed to an increased organisational focus on safeguarding and

vulnerability, growing populations, societal changes and increasingly complex communities, but most often, to one or more of three factors.

1. Attrition to other services, leading to demand displaced onto policing as the 'service of last resort':

*"Safeguarding is a huge issue now and that takes a huge amount of officers and our [PCSOs'] time. And other agencies aren't equipped enough ... we're a one-stop shop for everything."* (PCSO, FG14)

*"What I find now, we're going through a lot of ambulance issues. So the ambulance won't even resource it, and they expect the police to resource it. All right, we've had first aid training, very minimal ... But it seems to be us as first port of call for the ambulance, obviously they're very busy. They just see us as a mini response for them, as well. And it's more pressure on you."* (FG1)

*"A couple of the high schools ... and the pupil referral unit ... used to have a full-time officer in there, but they withdrew the funding. Now that's had a massive impact on my ward area because rather than there being an officer in there dealing with that, it just comes down to that local ward officer to try and manage that pupil referral unit on top of all the other stuff that they do in the ward area."* (FG9)

2. An increase in demand (linked to the above) relating to individuals in the community suffering from poor mental health.

*"I would say 75 per cent of it [reactive demand] features mental health, because the NHS is failing and the whole mental health service is just wholly inadequate ... then they're there causing what could be considered antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood issues as well. But they're not criminals, they're just mentally unwell, so if the NHS were able to deal with the mental health, then neighbourhoods would have at least 50 per cent of their time back to deal with what the police are there to deal with."* (FG11)

*"I mean we've got a massive problem with mental health in the [area]. There's an awful lot of people that, quite frankly, are out in the community and have got a lot of issues. So we have a lot of repeat callers."* (FG8)

*"Police play a part in that but massively, health is so underfunded on it that it's got to be pushed a lot more, it's got to be pushed back to the NHS to really deal with vulnerability and mental health in a big way."* (FG2)

3. And finally, a vicious circle arising from a lack of police(-led) problem-solving and timely attention:

*"If something's really risky then it will get dealt with, but if someone's more low level then it will get just put to the side, but the thing is, these low-level things can just continue, continue, continue, until they become risky, and then all of a sudden they're problematic."* (FG8)

*"We are in that circle at the moment of where, if all we are doing is chasing and chasing, and we don't put resources into problem solving, then ultimately we will never reduce that demand, and that's what we need to do."* (FG12)

*"At the moment the balance has sort of shifted the other way, because we don't have that timely intervention we're having to deal with everything at the back end, which ultimately creates more calls to service."* (FG9)

As described in detail in the next section, this intensification of often complex demand, has meant that neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs increasingly find themselves called on to deal with reactive aspects of local police work; attending calls for service, investigating crimes and generally dealing with 'whatever is happening right now'.

This increasingly reactive workload, in the context of reducing staffing levels, was felt to have squeezed out many aspects neighbourhood policing.

Respondents consistently reported that:

- Community engagement had reduced;

*"Because we just haven't got the time. You know if somebody says they've got an event going on we have to think; well okay we're in [on duty] that day but do we actually have the time to go and stand in a field with a bunch of kids and a clown? No, we don't. And then people don't see us and when it comes to [updating the teams page on] Facebook, we've nothing to put on."* (PCSO, FG7)

*"For me it's about being in the community, that's why I joined, to be in the community, to work with schools ... I used to call into my schools*

once a week ... I had one kid in there who used to run every time I walked in the door, after about six weeks I got there and he was dressed as a police officer. That's the difference now, we haven't got time to go and spend that half an hour just saying, 'hello, how are you?'" (PCSO, FG12)

"Going back a few years ... we had lots of engagement groups, we used to do the midnight football league where all the kids that were, you know, on the cusp of offending ... would come and do football engagement, they'd come and do work with police. Now there's very little." (FG9)

- Visibility had reduced;

"Visibility and community engagement is probably at an all-time low in the model that's in place at the moment." (FG11)

"I walked down one of the main areas in my route, and I had three people stop me and say, 'blimey, a police officer walking on this beat', that wouldn't have happened four years ago." (FG4)

"What should happen ... you have 'presence areas', which is where you tell members of the public we are going to go via this street or this estate every day. In reality, does it happen? No." (FG8)

- The flow of community intelligence was reported to be in decline, along with the ability to interpret it in context, due to a diminished presence in communities, a reduction in trust, and a weaker track record of responding to information received.

"The issue of withdrawing our PCSO teams and essentially our beat bobbies from the street – that can only absolutely destroy our intel[ligence] pathways; and if it destroys that, they can do as many bloody Facebook videos about modern day slavery, but who's out there? Who's out there getting that information? [Service reductions are] blocking up the tributaries of this whole river of information; because this is where it's coming from." (FG14)

"If you're not there, you're not picking up the information ... our computer systems are massive these days and there's lots of information there, but the thing is, the computer system can't tell you that context." (FG10)

"Unfortunately ... whether they're losing faith in what we're doing or whether they're just not telling us what's going on ... they're just telling everybody else ... but they're not telling us." (FG11)

"They [the public] are constantly passing intelligence to do things and we put the intelligence in [to computer systems] and it can't be done and we know it can't ... when it's not done we have to face those people again and then some of them won't tell you anything else because you've not actioned it." (FG7)

- Local knowledge was in decline;

"I think if you look at [stop and search] logs and proactive arrests. You'll find that they've reduced dramatically since we moved over to this model ... we don't have the time to do them and also, in the old days you'd drive out [of the local station] and go 'I know him, he's up to no good, it's two in the morning' ... I can drive out of [the area patrol base] and have no idea who that person is and just keep going." (FG2)

"You had all the kids in school, they knew those officers, they had that personal connection, but not just that. Let's just say it's an ASB issue and you need the kids identified all you needed to do was show that officer [a photograph] bang, straightaway, they would know all of them." (FG9)

- And proactive, preventative policing activity had fallen.

"Our desire has always been to get upstream and be proactive to identify crime trends or issues before they become issues, we're nowhere near that. Everything that we do in neighbourhoods is still reactive to a greater or a lesser extent." (FG14)

"So as a ward officer I was tasked to deal with specific things, there were definitely things I could do but I just didn't have the time or the kind of creative space to deal with them. Because there are other more pressing things, and you get abstracted for aid ... these things aren't facilitated." (FG11)

"Neighbourhood policing for me was around quality of life issues, it's about improving people's quality of life through the work that we do, and that for me is the key thing with the role. Unfortunately I don't think we have got the capability to deal with that as effectively as we could do five years ago. It's not gone completely, because we still do solve problems,

*we just don't solve them as fast as we would like to, or as efficiently as we would like to, because of lack of resources.” (FG4)*

It is clear from the accounts of those working within it, that neighbourhood policing is under strain. The practice variation described at the start of this section can, in part, be seen as different manifestations of varying degrees of system stress, in different contexts, and of varying attempts to adapt to this through innovation and/or accommodation.

This is, however, only part of the story of neighbourhood policing since 2008; the next section looks at the way in which it has also been fundamentally repurposed –

or rather had its purpose extended – in two distinct ways during the period. Neighbourhood policing has not only been shaped by external erosion, it has metamorphosed and evolved from within.

**KEY FINDING:** Neighbourhood policing is under strain everywhere and has suffered substantial attrition. Outputs and outcomes including community engagement, visibility, intelligence gathering, local knowledge and preventative proactivity are consistently reported to be in decline.

# 4. FUNCTION: IDEALISM AND PRAGMATISM

The remit of neighbourhood policing in its mid-2000s NRPP/NPP format was clearly articulated; to provide a visible presence, to engage with the local community – including to identify the problems that affected them the most – and to work with them, and other agencies, to ‘solve’ them. Although perhaps muddled to some degree in the implementation, a key purpose of this activity, at its most abstract and theoretical, was to improve on the psychological wellbeing of local citizens; to reduce fear of crime, to reassure and improve the public’s confidence, not just in the police (at least prior to 2010’s single confidence target), but in their own safety and security. According to the theory, as well as keeping people safe, preventing crime and antisocial behaviour was valuable according to the strength of the ‘signal’<sup>77</sup> that event would have sent to individuals within the local community. To this end, ‘low level’ visible, problems that affected the many were emphasised and the public service aspect of policing was, to a significant extent, framed in terms of a ‘*you said, we did*’ response to explicitly expressed demands and directions. In this early-century version of neighbourhood policing, the police asked the community what they were worried about and then set out to fix it.

In 2017/18 the purpose and function of neighbourhood policing is much more broadly, imprecisely and inconsistently defined, with variation between police forces, both in terms of overall philosophy and specific functionality. Although there is broad consensus on some core features, and although elements of this earlier formulation remain, the term – and the alternatives sometimes used in its place – has become much more nebulous.

This section describes two ways in which neighbourhood policing has been re-purposed during the period since the end of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme. The first is subtle, fits with the broad ideological shift in policing over the period and is thus generally accepted and, to some extent, has gone unrecognised. It relates to the gradual co-option of neighbourhood policing into a crime,

demand and, in particular, harm prevention mission, in which the direct impact of crime on victims is re-emphasised while its psychological effect on the wider community is given less importance. Within this new formulation ‘hidden’ crimes are given at least as much importance as those the public know about and identify as problematic, and public *protection* is emphasised over public *responsiveness*.

The second shift is more blatant, is pragmatic rather than ideological and to those in charge of delivering local policing often appears unavoidable. It relates to the use of personnel with nominally, relatively conventional (ie proactive/preventative) ‘neighbourhood’ remits to carry out responsive and reactive local policing functions, resulting from acute demand pressure. This is largely viewed as ‘abstraction’ and an illegitimate – or at least non-ideal – use of resource allocated to one purpose for others (although as described in the next section some police forces have simply subsumed these reactive functions within a broader definition of what neighbourhood policing is).

**KEY FINDING:** External erosion is only part of the narrative of change to neighbourhood policing since 2008, it has also metamorphosed from within in two distinct ways.

## 4.1 REPURPOSING 1: THE TURN TO HARM REDUCTION AND VULNERABILITY

Responses to police force information requests reflect the way many forces now see neighbourhood policing as the delivery mechanism for broad range of crime, harm and demand reduction techniques that expand beyond the original narrower focus on community problem solving.

77 Innes and Fielding (2002).

Sussex Police, for example, outlined their plans (now officially launched<sup>78</sup>) to reconstitute neighbourhood officers as Prevention Officers who will carry out 'protective' demand work, focusing "on communities and hidden crimes" such as "domestic abuse, sexual assault, exploitation and hate crime". The model includes a small number of "dedicated Prevention Police Officers who will work in our most vulnerable areas".

Durham's neighbourhood officers have also diversified into a range of non-traditional tasks, in accordance with a risk/demand reduction agenda. These include: "problem solving to reduce repeat missing persons and management of low/medium risk Registered Sex Offenders". According to the force respondent, the main purpose of neighbourhood policing is to "problem-solve issues – persons/places to ensure a sustained solution which reduces vulnerability and demand".

West Mercia Police officers also have a broader remit than the traditional one of engagement and community problem solving. Their officers are expected to: "Contribute to Domestic Violence Care Plans, Child Protection issues, Multi-Agency Protection Agreements, crime reduction and intelligence-gathering and work relating to Prolific and Priority Offenders", as well as being responsible for alcohol licensing.

The respondent for Lancashire provides a neat explanation of this expanding remit. S/he writes:

*"There has been a move from traditional purist neighbourhood policing of engagement and community priority setting towards ensuring neighbourhood officers are problem solving, dealing with vulnerable people, visible and engaged"*

The implication being that officers remain visible and engaged while dealing with vulnerability, rather than as the principal function. The respondent explains this change in policy has been brought about by cuts to public services which mean work such as "missing persons, dementia, mental health, concerns for safety" is increasingly falling on the police.

A senior officer responding to the web survey explains the rationale within his/her force:

*"We've moved more away from the original reassurance, accessibility and visibility agenda to more targeted joint action, using [the] evidence base where it's available. We previously had **universal** structures across the force, which has changed to **threat and risk demand led**. A catalyst has clearly been reducing budgets across public sector".* (Emphasis added)

The shift from the 'universal' to a more targeted philosophy, linked to assessments of risk but also necessitated by shrinking resources, was widely (although not universally) evident across forces, and is reflected in the structural changes to neighbourhood policing, described in the next section.

The variety of functions now ascribed to neighbourhood policing, the shift away from earlier, more tightly defined formulations, and the degree of inconsistency between forces, are all illustrated in Chart 13. Information requests, sent to forces as part of this research, asked respondents to describe the 'meaning' and purpose of neighbourhood policing in their force; their responses (along with other relevant force-level feedback, captured in key leads interviews etc.) has been content coded and summarised in the chart.

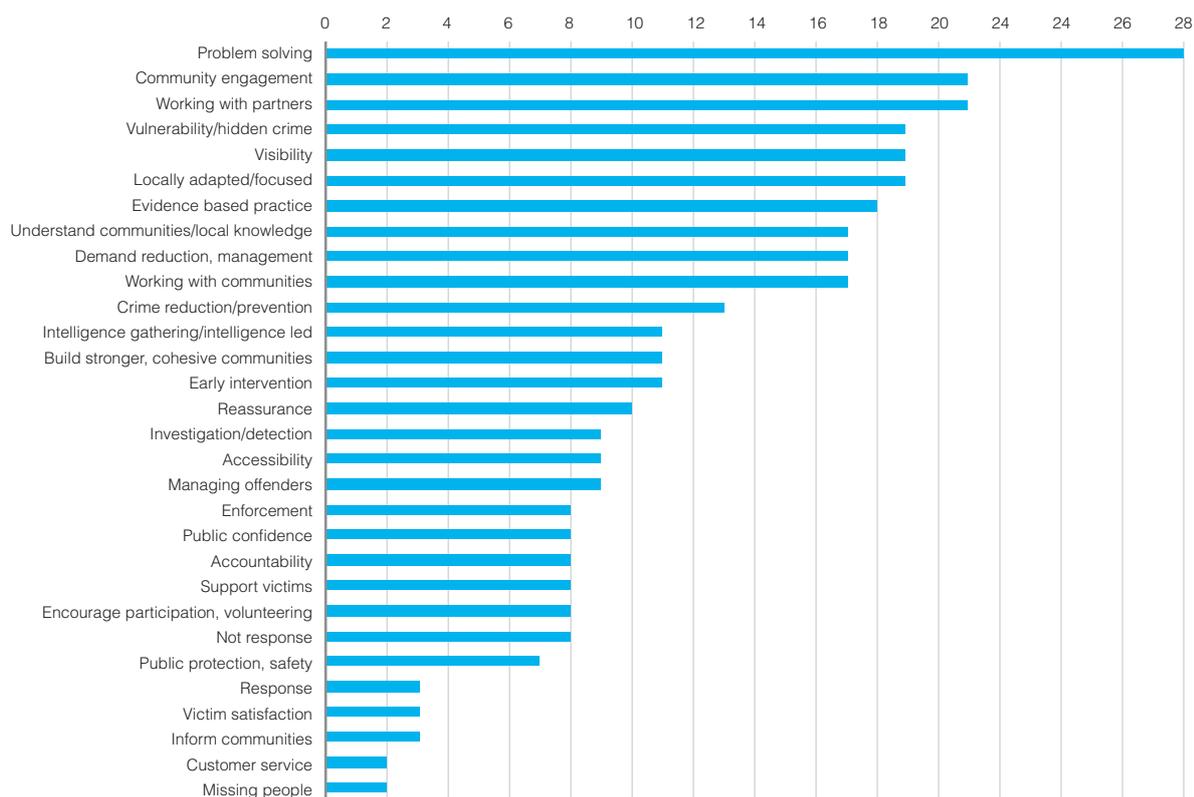
As illustrated, *problem solving* is the most commonly cited function of neighbourhood policing. Along with other well-established pillars, such as *community engagement* and *local focus*, this demonstrates clear continuity from earlier iterations. *Visibility* also remains central to force ideas, while *local knowledge*, *working with communities* and, in particular, *partnership* remain core concepts.

Other traditional features such as *public confidence* and *reassurance* appear to have dwindled somewhat in saliency but these still feature in the official narratives of a number of forces, (only one force made explicit reference to signal crimes).

In line with the shifts outlined above however, there are new additions to the composite official discourse. In 2017, addressing *vulnerability* is as central to the purpose of neighbourhood policing as providing *visibility*, while *early intervention* is a more prominent feature than *reassurance*. Being *evidence based* and *reducing demand* are as prominent as *understanding communities*.

78 See: [sussex.police.uk/about-us/priorities-and-direction/local-policing-model/](https://sussex.police.uk/about-us/priorities-and-direction/local-policing-model/)

**CHART 13:** Police force descriptions of the meaning, purpose and function of neighbourhood policing (coded material extracted from force information returns, key leads interviews etc. from 31 forces)



This expanded remit reflects the growing imperative to ‘work smarter’ during the last decade, by liberating resource and doing ‘what works’. More fundamentally however, it also illustrates the partial repurposing of neighbourhood policing to prevent and reduce crime and harm – particularly that which is hidden from public view – including by reducing risk and addressing vulnerability. It also indicates some of the functional activities neighbourhood policing has taken on in some forces, as part of transition to a broader preventative remit, including *offender management, intelligence led policing, enforcement and missing people*.

A few of the many examples of this shift include:

- Neighbourhood officers in Northumbria supporting domestic abuse victims, and tackling trafficking and sexual exploitation<sup>79</sup>.

- Neighbourhood teams in South Wales working with local children’s homes and young person’s hostels in relation to children previously reported missing<sup>80</sup>.
- The transfer of responsibility for managing Registered Sex Offenders to neighbourhood teams in Durham<sup>81</sup>.
- The alignment of neighbourhood policing and offender management within a single directorate in Avon and Somerset<sup>82</sup>.

**KEY FINDING:** The first functional shift reflects the turn within policing toward harm and vulnerability; this has resulted in a shift in the focus of neighbourhood policing from providing reassurance to preventing/reducing crime, demand and harm.

79 HMIC (2017b).

80 HMIC (2017c).

81 HMIC (2017d).

82 See [www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/media/27528230/aspire-2025.pdf](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/media/27528230/aspire-2025.pdf)

## 4.2 COMBINING COMMUNITY FOCUS WITH HARM PREVENTION/ VULNERABILITY

Forces vary in the extent to which they emphasise more traditional community focused elements of neighbourhood policing or have embraced a preventative philosophy. Contrast, for example, Suffolk's interpretation of neighbourhood policing as: "providing visibility, reassurance and a close point of knowledgeable contact to local communities", with Devon and Cornwall's position that: "policing for local neighbourhoods is focused upon protecting the public and keeping people safe from harm". Others have formulated definitions that attempt to balance the two elements:

*"Neighbourhood Policing in South Yorkshire provides communities with teams ... who listen to and work with the public, community groups, partner agencies and businesses to reduce crime, protect the vulnerable and enhance community safety through problem-solving approaches."*

Broadly, the general turn to harm prevention is accepted and advocated by strategic leads and neighbourhood practitioners and (linked to this), it was not uncommon to hear critiques of earlier approaches for focusing on groups with whom engagement was easy, and therefore ignoring hidden vulnerability.

*"We catered to the people with the loudest voices; and the people with the loudest voices are, in my experience, generally, often the middle-class ... well-meaning local councillors and church folk – and those kind of people get around the table and they ... bang their fists about bike riding on the pavement ... and so, that's who we catered to ... that wasn't necessarily covering where the problems were and that wasn't really representative of the communities we were policing."* (FG3)

*"It's great going out and being visible in the community, but I also want you [my staff] to stop, I want you to source intelligence, I want you to bring back information that we can act on. I want you to be in hotspot areas where you do get crimes, rather than just going and engaging with the nice primary school down the road who love seeing the police officer,*

*but actually they didn't have any problems. So neighbourhood policing has to be about preventing crime as well."* (Sergeant, FG6)

Bringing the two aspects together however is not straight forward and some expressed concern that more traditional priorities might be squeezed out in the turn to vulnerability, leading to a loss of community connection. The respondent from Lancashire writes:

*"It is essentially important that neighbourhood policing does not withdraw **entirely** from its traditional activity because much of the legitimacy of policing is generated through this contact with communities."* (Emphasis added)

For those on the frontline the experience of this shift could be of an ever expanding remit, a lack of clarity on purpose and priorities, and having to negotiate the tension between community (low level) and force (high harm/vulnerability) priorities.

*"The things that the force want us to do ... are not necessarily the things that the community want us to do. So we've got force objectives, so at the moment because of all the things around safeguarding, CSE, missing from homes, organised crime groups ... we've got, like, a parallel world going on at the minute where the stuff that the community and councillors and the ward officers want ... is not the same as the stuff that the force want us to deal with."* (FG9)

In Tameside (GMP) where neighbourhood officers and PCSOs were strongly supportive of the new Integrated Neighbourhood Services (INS) approach, (a case-based approach to addressing local vulnerability in which they played a key role), focus group respondents nonetheless expressed some unease that more traditional aspects of neighbourhood policing (visible patrolling, dealing with antisocial behaviour, attending engagement events etc.) had reduced as a result of their new role.

*"There's no patrolling. I mean six weeks I've been here and I've not even put a cap on and gone walking. There's always a job to do. There's always INS to do so people aren't seeing us."* (PCSO, Tameside)

Occasionally however, respondents articulated a rationale for combining traditional community focused elements of neighbourhood policing with

a focus on harm prevention and vulnerability, that reconciled and strengthened both elements, rather than setting them in tension or competition.

*“The purpose of [neighbourhood policing] is to embed the policing function within the communities to provide the consent ... and the purpose of that will be to maximise the reduction of threat, harm and risk to people who live in those communities ... which is both the right way to do it and the most effective way to do it.” (FG3)*

*“You need to build relationships with your partners and your community, that’s the whole point ... safeguarding local communities through engagement.” (FG14)*

*“Neighbourhood policing involves – indeed revolves around – building relationships with various community groups. By building a rapport with local communities we build trust, and increase public confidence. Increased public confidence encourages people to tell us that little bit of information that might be nothing, or could be really important.” (Web survey)*

Given that neighbourhood policing has largely embraced the reduction of risk, harm and vulnerability as its principal purpose, narratives such as these that articulate how and why these outcomes can best be achieved through engagement and close connection with communities appear particularly important, yet were rarely encountered during the research.

**KEY FINDINGS:** The blend between older ‘reassurance’ and newer ‘prevention’ focused elements differs between forces and the two sometimes stand in uneasy tension. The rationale for delivering preventative policing through an embedded neighbourhood mechanism is present but rarely articulated.

## 4.3 REPURPOSING 2: SERVICING DEMAND

Returning to Chart 13 it is clear that most police forces do not see reactive police functions (incident response and routine investigation) as core elements of neighbourhood policing. In fact, when asked to describe the meaning and purpose of neighbourhood policing, more forces stated that it did *not* include incident response (8) than explicitly said that it did (3) (although more indicated it did include some

element of investigation (9)). It is clear however that while it may not generally be part of the ideology, reactive policing is a strong feature of the current reality.

Across the focus groups, respondents regularly reported that the balance between demand and local policing resources was such that they, as neighbourhood officers, were frequently required to carry out reactive functions, and that this was having a substantial impact on capacity to deliver local proactive prevention and community engagement work. This included responding to calls to attend incidents in progress:

*“Most beat-managing PCs in the county or in the rural parts of the county now are spending between 60 and 90 per cent of their duties [doing] response work.” (FG14)*

*“I think nationally the picture is the front line is being reduced and obviously we have had that hit as well. Now sometimes when there are those grade As or Bs [emergency/urgent calls] that are stacking and response is all committed, then we use the beat manager. Obviously the downside of that is that they’re taken away from their focus for the community work.” (FG6)*

*“That is a real challenge now, and it’s really difficult to balance the need for problem solving and actually reducing demand through partnership working and through community work and good old fashioned neighbourhood policing, to actually what I need [my neighbourhood officers] to do, is go to the road traffic collision before somebody dies, because we have got nobody from response to get there at the moment.” (Inspector, FG12)*

*“We shouldn’t [do reactive work] we’ve got an allocation policy, we know what we should deal with, but ... well, it’s how it is, we’re at the beck and call of the radio.” (FG9)*

*“We are being used as walking response officers ... this takes us away from the community we need to be with.” (Web survey)*

It also included carrying a caseload of routine crime investigations:

*“There’s a push back now coming from the Force Investigation Unit. We were told you’re going to be left alone to generate your own work and deal with it. But now [the force is] backing up with jobs and sickness, it’s pushing back to us and I view us as a last contingency, really.” (FG2)*

*"Supervisors who administer crime [allocate investigations], not all of them seem to appreciate that me carrying a workload of 25 crimes is going to drastically impact upon my ability to do my job."* (FG6)

Even where neighbourhood officers were tightly 'ring-fenced' from abstraction, the overflow from other highly stretched functions had a way of finding its way to them:

*"Say if a response team came across something ... and they've decided that there's no grounds to arrest anybody. Or sometimes there's not even offences that can be really proven or anything. It often comes back to us in the form of a[n ASB tasking log]. And we pretty much rake over the whole thing again. Now sometimes it's useful. But other times, we're sort of getting second-hand work from the response team."* (FG8)

Respondents were quick to acknowledge that in certain situations responding to incidents in progress was a part of their fundamental duty as police officers.

*"Yes, that's my job. If a grade one comes out, an emergency job comes out, you know, the nearest mobile should go to it and that's how it should be."* (FG2)

*"The fact is if the control room call me up and say we need you to grab a car ... that might have nothing to with my role but the fact is, the priority of the police service is to protect life and limb. I am a PC, I'm lawfully bound to do that, that is an order and I'm not going to disobey it. And, you know, if you run out of officers the bottom line is me."* (FG6)

They also felt that it was appropriate for neighbourhood personnel to attend incidents or investigate crimes, where these were linked to ongoing local problems or individuals, or where their skills and approach was particularly suited. These were opportunities to put their broad policing skill-set to locally focused, ultimately preventative ends.

*"An example would be, there was a mental health job a couple of weeks ago, somebody threatening self-harm ... because of my neighbourhood work, with some of the partnership work, I can then work with that person ... and signpost that person to some sort of outreach support, mental health support, which might reduce demand."*

*So sometimes it's a good thing having a response officer and a neighbourhood officer [attend], because we have got different tools."* (FG12)

*"My role is predominantly to be visible and a friendly face to the good guys and a not so friendly face to the less good guys and to problem solve issues as they arise and identify them and do something about it and investigate crime; relevant crime on my beat."* (FG6)

**Interviewer:** *"So should neighbourhood policing teams do investigations in an ideal world?"*

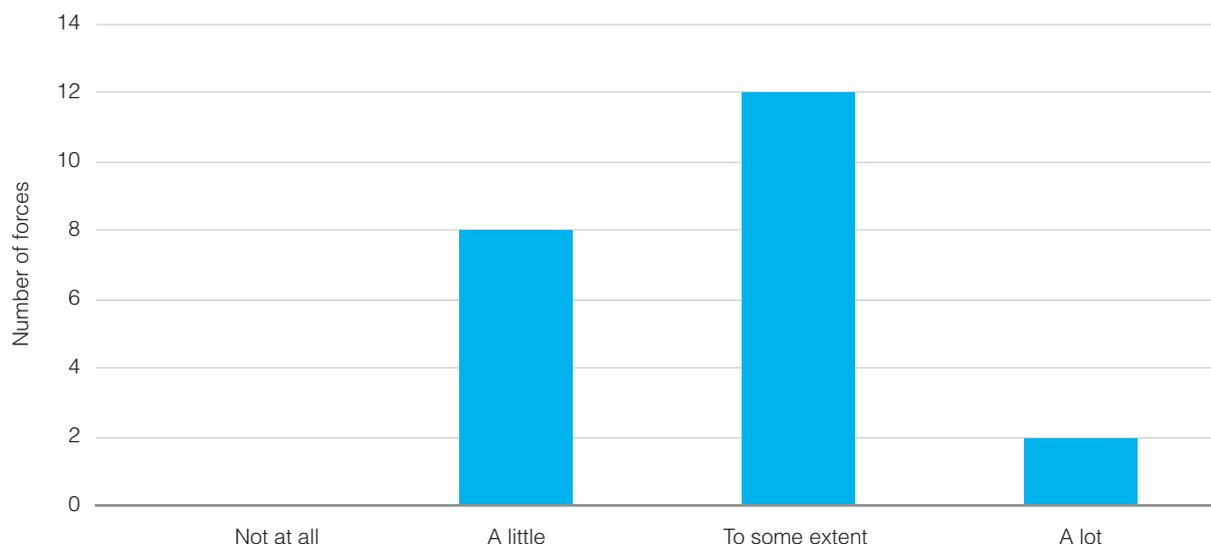
*"Yes, but specific [ones] ... in my ward area, there are some problem youths, without intervention, they are going to end up being criminals quite early on ... if you've got different officers dealing [they will end up in the] Criminal Justice System ... and the parents can't see that you're trying to help and deter the youths from committing crime ... you want to try and steer the kids away from criminality and on the right track. If I take on ... the investigation ... I put them all into a youth community conditional caution, devised by this panel, with all the services on board including education, the council and community."* (FG9)

However, the extent to which neighbourhood police teams were being used to deliver reactive and responsive policing functions was often seen to go significantly beyond these parameters. Practitioners largely view this as an illegitimate, or at least regrettable (if unavoidable), mismatch between the rhetorical commitment to the neighbourhood approach and the pragmatic reality, as these comments on the hollowing out of the neighbourhood policing function reflect.

*"It's complete lip service, everything that this force has done, despite what it thinks, has been a response methodology for the last two years. We have not invested at all in neighbourhood policing, we have pretended we have, whilst robbing it blind from behind the scenes."* (FG14)

*"I think the way it's going there won't be neighbourhood policing because the amount of bobbies there are that do response and have to do response ... what are we actually going to achieve? You know, with so few of us on such a big area. The honest answer is [nothing]. So why not actually be brave and say we are no longer doing neighbourhood policing?"* (FG2)

**CHART 14:** To what extent are neighbourhood policing personnel abstracted from [their designated] responsibilities? (22 forces)



*“It feels to me, as though we’ve made certain promises, you know, ‘neighbourhood policing is here to stay, it’s not going to go anywhere’. Sometimes it just feels as though it’s just here in name. That’s how it feels, we can’t say we’ve taken it away but just keep that name there, doesn’t matter how many staff are underneath that banner, we’ve still got neighbourhood policing. That’s what it feels like.” (FG5)*

*“We pay lip service to this. I’ve seen police leaders and some politicians pontificating about the intrinsic value of community policing but the reality of it is we’ll have less than a dozen PCSO’s on duty today and no police officers. The PCSO’s will invariably be doing speed awareness or property marking. Very low level stuff, simply because there isn’t the funding and commitment to provide the police officers to drive and support the more important work.” (Web survey)*

Force leads also recognise the functional shift from proactive prevention to reactive response. Of the 22 that returned information requests, 14 said neighbourhood personnel were abstracted from their designated duties *to some extent* or *a lot* with the remaining eight saying *a little* rather than *never*.

As discussed in the next section however, these responses depend on the extent to which response duties are ‘designed in’ or set outside of, the ‘neighbourhood’ role.

**KEY FINDING:** The second functional shift relates to the pragmatic use of ‘neighbourhood’ resources to service responsive/reactive demand; while elements of response and investigation are seen as compatible with of a preventative remit, in most cases the level of routine reactive work being undertaken exceeds these parameters.

# 5. FORM

With the two shifts in the function of neighbourhood policing (described in the previous section) in mind, this section returns to form; the variety of models and organisational structures through which neighbourhood policing is delivered. Building on the workforce analysis presented in Sections 1.5 and 1.6, and on the descriptions provided by forces in their information returns, it describes how some forces have adapted their local policing models to accommodate reactive demand, and how, more recently, some have redesigned with preventative functions in mind. The changing role of PCSOs within these models is also discussed.

## 5.1 FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

### 'Hybrid' models

With responsive demand clearly impacting on forces' capacity to deliver 'traditional' neighbourhood policing, it is unsurprising that some have adopted operating models that seek to absorb these pressures while maintaining some characteristics of the neighbourhood approach – although in reality, this can sometimes amount to little more than a named individual or, as West Mercia Police put it, a *"familiar face of policing"* in each area.

A number of forces have therefore adopted a 'hybrid' approach, within which officers are given a joint response and neighbourhood function, with PCSOs typically providing the dedicated engagement and problem solving resource. This model maps onto the 'integrated hybrid' type described in Section 1.6, characterised by larger proportions of the officer workforce allocated to the *neighbourhood policing* category within the workforce data, but with few officers in separate 'incident management' roles<sup>83</sup>.

Wiltshire Police, for example, has recently launched a new Community Policing Team model, that brings its response and neighbourhood functions together

(the transition is illustrated in Chart 15 below, based on analysis of the force's official workforce data). The new model, they report:

*"Increases capacity, reduces bureaucracy, is more efficient and improves customer service" by providing a "24/7 community policing service."*

The respondent explains that this:

*"Consists of two complimentary core components; community partnership and problem solving. This will include multi agency working and **initial response to incidents.**"* (Emphasis added)

Community engagement and problem solving principally fall to PCSOs under the direction of a (PC or police staff<sup>84</sup>) Community Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the response to "medium and long term issues within the community area, working with partner agencies and Community Policing Team colleagues to provide a problem solving approach".

Kent Police also describe a 'hybrid' model in their information return (which the workforce data indicates has been in place since 2014/15, see Chart 16), in which neighbourhood policing is seen as the net outcome of *"several teams who collectively service neighbourhood policing in different ways, but often working together"*. The Local Divisional Policing Teams (LDPT), respond to calls for service while also being tasked to *"work on local problem solving initiatives in partnership with key stakeholders"*. The Community Policing Teams (CPT), part of the Community Safety Unit, also respond to calls as well as resolving longer term problems, although they are not allocated crimes to investigate.

Workforce data suggests that in 2017 Gwent, South Yorkshire, Cumbria and Cambridgeshire (who by 2012 had removed *"traditional barriers between investigation, response and neighbourhood policing"*<sup>85</sup>) were operating a similar approach.

83 There are numerous examples of correspondence between the workforce data and the narratives provided by forces (see Charts 15, 16 and 17 for example), however there are also cases where the two do not appear to tally; the arrangement encountered on the ground in Gloucestershire for example did not appear to conform to the Integrated Hybrid type suggested by the workforce data.

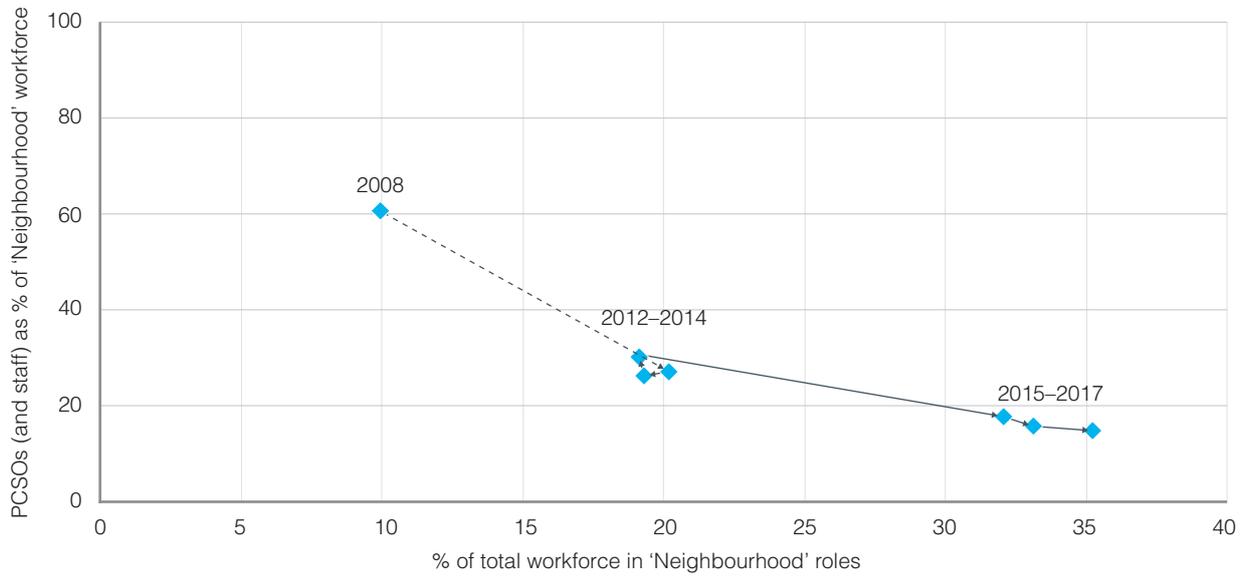
84 Murray (2017).

85 Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner (no date).

**CHART 15:** Wiltshire Police 'neighbourhood policing' workforce 2008–2017



**CHART 16:** Wiltshire Police 'neighbourhood policing' workforce 2008–2017



**Semi-hybrid models**

Some forces might be described as 'semi-hybrid' in that they seek to maintain some dedicated neighbourhood officers, along with a pool of more general/flexible resource.

West Yorkshire has brought its response and neighbourhood functions closer together in this way, and includes both under a broad 'neighbourhood' banner. According to the information return, within each of its Partnership Working Areas, an inspector and sergeant oversee Ward (police) Officers, who (supported by PCSOs) are tasked with problem solving, early intervention and working with partners;

alongside Neighbourhood Patrol Officers who are "expected to undertake problem solving activity and engagement rather than just respond to calls".

In Suffolk the response function is also provided by officers with a 'neighbourhood' designation. The force has geographic inspectors overseeing Neighbourhood Response Teams (NRT) who deal with immediate and priority calls within an area of the force, and Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) who deal with priority calls, scheduled appointments and also "forge local relationships, identify proactive work and work locally with partners". SNT officers sometimes work in response (NRT) teams, but the force respondent describes this as "remain[ing] in neighbourhood policing,

*just a different function*”; although s/he admits that the officers involved take a less fluid view of their remit. (This interpretation of abstraction stands in contrast to Devon and Cornwall’s stricter line, for instance, where neighbourhood officers are considered to be abstracted even if they answer a call on their own patch because *“this does not allow them to carry out their planned work”*).

Surrey has designed a model along similar principles (with a small dedicated cohort and a larger pool of more general resource), dramatically reducing the number of Safer Neighbourhood Team officers, from 110 in 2015 to just 22 across the entire force. These officers are tasked with focusing on *“chronic problem solving”*. The community engagement and visibility work is left to PCSOs and to the Area Policing Teams, who, as well as responding to emergency calls are given the broad remit of *“community engagement, visibility, proactivity ... investigations, public protection, offender management, and organised crime”*.

Norfolk’s model<sup>86</sup> appears similar in practice, but conceptually the force has resisted the temptation to bring response within the ‘neighbourhood’ umbrella. Norfolk’s response officers are *“district based and ‘owned’”* which has enabled a reduction *“on paper of the number of SNT [Safer Neighbourhood Team] officers”* while increasing the *“neighbourhood focus”* of uniformed staff<sup>87</sup>. The respondent stressed however that: *“If someone is given the title of a neighbourhood officer that is all they do. Whilst our response officers are now neighbourhood based and expected to work with the local community, we do not classify them as neighbourhood officers.”*

Lancashire might be described as ‘semi-hybridised’ in a different way. The force either integrates or separates response and neighbourhood functions in different areas depending on its demand profile. In what it calls *“high need areas”* there are dedicated Community Beat Managers (CBMs) who work on foot and have a responsibility to solve problems. In areas which are *“low need”*, these CBMs perform a hybrid neighbourhood/response role in cars, while, in mixed need districts, officers are split across both roles according to the wards they cover. Like Norfolk, Lancashire’s response officers are also aligned to local communities which it claims will *“increase*

*engagement, visibility and problem solving in addition to local neighbourhood staff”*. It also keeps response and neighbourhood officers conceptually separate as: *“responding to emergency and priority calls, operates more within the short term sphere and usually lacks the conditions in which problem solving can flourish”*.

Leicestershire operates yet another ‘semi-hybrid’ variation, using a ‘red, amber, green’ status to signal when call demand hits a point at which neighbourhood and other officers should switch to response duties.

**KEY FINDING:** A number of forces have sought to absorb reactive demand pressure by adopting a more general or ‘hybrid’ approach to local policing, in which officers (nominally) perform both response and ‘neighbourhood’ tasks. Some models are best described as ‘semi-hybrid’.

## 5.2 EXCEPT SOMETIMES FUNCTION FOLLOWS FORM

In several of the forces visited, respondents reported that elements of hybridisation, or more flexible working across functional boundaries, had been introduced but had failed to deliver their intended outcomes.

The key-lead from one force described how a model had previously been introduced in which response, neighbourhood and investigation personnel worked in a more coordinated way, including by sharing a shift pattern. In part of the force, neighbourhood and investigation staff were co-located, while response teams covered a larger area from a separate patrol base. It was reported that this had hindered the timely handover of investigations from response officers to investigators and resulted in neighbourhood teams backfilling for response officers who were busy with investigative work.

Echoing several of the ‘semi-hybrid’ examples above, an attempt had been made in Greater Manchester to provide greater local focus by assigning response officers to smaller geographic areas and by building time in to their shift pattern for work alongside Neighbourhood Beat Officer colleagues. It was widely

86 Norfolk’s response was made prior to the announcement that it plans to remove all PCSOs from its local policing model. See Norfolk Constabulary (2017).

87 The apparent equation of ‘neighbourhood’ with ‘district’ in this example reflects a broader loosening of the geographic designation of the ‘neighbourhood’ term.

reported however that this had proved difficult to implement with Neighbourhood *Police Officers* (as these local responders were called) often pulled away from their allotted area, and that their rostered ‘down time’ was typically used to catch up on investigation work.

As described above, West Yorkshire had taken a similar approach, but as one respondent explained:

*“We tried to allocate the patrol officers so that when they have downtime they were allocated to a ward area ... but, invariably that never happened because of the sheer weight of demand that goes on in the district. So the decision was made that there’s no point in having patrol officers allocated to a ward area.”*

As in the above example, the breakdown of these remodelling efforts tended to be attributed to the sheer weight of demand. However, one key lead offered a more nuanced explanation, suggesting that by bringing neighbourhood and other local policing functions closer together (through aligned shift patterns, shared supervision, parade locations and more flexible remits) neighbourhood resources had become more available to service immediate oncoming demand. Given high call volumes, and control room pressures to allocate calls quickly, these resources were quickly sucked into reactive work. It was suggested that this had led to a degree of ‘over-responding’ leading to improvements in response times and victim satisfaction, but at the expense of proactivity and non-immediate goals.

There is some evidence that similar ‘pull effects’ have occurred elsewhere, for example in 2017 HMIC noted that in Cumbria (where a ‘hybrid’ model was in place):

*“Those NPT police officers not in problem-solving roles reported that their time was almost exclusively taken up with responding to calls for service, with very little time available to support their problem-solving colleagues working in traditional neighbourhood policing activities. They had a crime investigation workload to manage in addition to the daily requirement to respond to calls, and frequently drew on support from PCSOs to assist them with their investigations by carrying out specific tasks”<sup>88</sup>.*

Emerging thinking around improving the effectiveness and efficiency with which call demand is dealt with is discussed in Section 6.6, it seems likely, however, that without sufficient system-wide discipline, the

functions that neighbourhood policing teams carry out can be influenced, in unintended ways, by the model within which they are deployed. Function it seems can respond to form.

**KEY FINDING:** Hybrid and semi-hybrid models can struggle to release capacity for proactive working and might even lead to ‘over-resourcing’ of immediate demand as ‘neighbourhood’ resource becomes more readily available for reactive tasking.

## 5.3 THE TROUBLE WITH HYBRIDISATION

Whether it is designed in to the neighbourhood role, as in the above examples, or manifests as abstraction, there is consistent evidence from neighbourhood practitioners that regularly dealing with reactive demand impairs their ability to deliver key aspects of their role. This is not just a matter of the amount of resource this reactive work consumes, but its unpredictability. Fundamentally, community engagement and problem-solving work requires those doing it to be able to plan their time, make arrangements and keep commitments. When this is disrupted by unplanned reactive assignments, not only is ongoing work undermined, but relationships with the public and partners can be damaged.

*“[Response work] has a massive knock on effect to the work that we are trying to do because if you’re doing neighbourhood policing, you need to be able to plan. When you can’t do any of that, you’re letting down people and therefore we’re in a danger of our confidence levels in the police is starting to go down.” (FG10)*

*“I had a school up on [a local] street where ‘problem’ children go to learn skills. They felt they hadn’t had contact from the police for a while so I ... arranged for two beat managers to go, give that reassurance and that support [but I] had them taken away by the control room ... I think good policing, if you ... say you’re going to do it you need to follow it through because if you don’t do that ... people lose faith in you. And I think sometimes the control [room] don’t understand that, they just see what’s in front of them as demand; they don’t appreciate the ongoing work.” (FG6)*

88 HMIC (2017e).

*“You can plan to go into your schools, you can plan to go and do your police surgeries, but if some demand comes in, then that has to be put on hold, because we have got nobody else to deal with it. You are letting down the people.” (FG4)*

Several focus group respondents suggested that the unpredictability of their workload was impacting on the type of activities they felt able to undertake with the time that was available to them, inevitably leading to a shallower set of working practices, as these quotations make clear.

*“We do a lot of work with [a housing association], you want to try and do work with joint partnership because it does work. I say to [a colleague there] “what can we do now, today? I’ve got this shift. No this afternoon, if you want to do any door knocks and try and do visits, we’re going to have to do them now” ... hopefully I won’t get abstracted ... you try and do things immediately or very quick time.” (FG10)*

*“We’ve got something at the weekend coming up and we can do with a police officer there, just because there are a lot of people going and a lot of people will be able to see you. And I knew there was no point promising to go because you’ll get an abstraction ... and lo and behold [I’ve since] had an abstraction to cover response at the weekend.” (FG2)*

*“We find the actual downtime we do get, it’s purely spent just going, “we’re still here, we’re still here”, because people haven’t seen us for weeks and weeks and weeks. They think we’ve changed areas or we’re not in the job anymore, because they’ve just not seen us at all.” (FG9)*

**KEY FINDING:** Workloads that contain significant amounts of unpredictable reactive police work are unsuited to also delivering neighbourhood functions, which tend to require planning, and the making and keeping of commitments. The range of activities neighbourhood staff choose to undertake with the time they have available is constrained by anticipated disruption.

## 5.4 AN EXPERIMENT REJECTED?

Whether it had grown organically or been built into operating models, a more general remit, including both neighbourhood and responsive duties, was often viewed as overly detrimental to neighbourhood work, and hence a range of corrective measures have been implemented at different levels. This includes informal local ‘fixes’ that sometimes bend the rules of official models as well as adaptations developed by local or divisional leaders, given autonomy to make things work within their area:

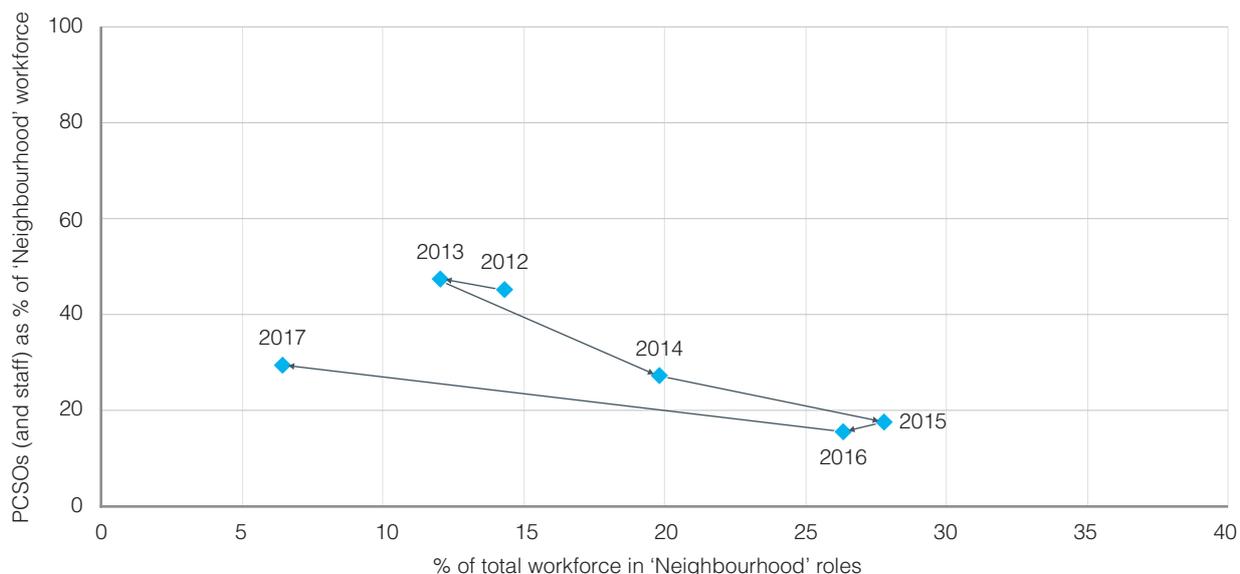
*“It only works because we don’t stick to the model ... We make it work because we disregard the model ... I try and move the boys’ shifts around as much as possible so they can actually go out together.” (FG8)*

*“So what we’re trying to do in [this town] is put back in the supervising sergeants ... for the different areas and we’re trying to, sort of, backtrack a little bit and try and get the PCSOs back to doing some of the work that they used to do, which is still a difficult sell because ... the control room are still pulling the PCSOs and the ward officers to do work that they want.” (FG9)*

*“This is very much bottom up ... So, effectively as a force we’ve been through this reorganisation about two years ago, where the top imposed a model, which ... was effectively geared around response in [urban areas]. And two years later we’ve finally woken up and said, yes, that’s fine, but [some rural parts of the force] are losing out, and the control is being released back to the area commanders to say, ‘right, well you structure it in a way you want, just bear in mind there’s no more troops coming’ ... which is why, yes the areas have cut down on the number of neighbourhood officers, but made them more role specific and we’re attempting to ... insulate them from doing response duties.” (FG14)*

In addition, however, in a number of cases, the approach described in the last quotation – creating smaller, dedicated or ‘ring-fenced’ teams to concentrate solely on proactive problem solving and community engagement – had been adopted at the force level, including by several forces that had previously introduced elements of hybridisation.

**CHART 17:** Essex neighbourhood policing workforce 2012–2017



South Yorkshire Police for example, initially achieved budget cuts in 2014 through *“combining response and dedicated neighbourhood police constables and sergeants into large multi-skilled teams”*. The force respondent noted however that there was no clear definition of what neighbourhood policing was and this uncertainty, coupled with abstractions, *“led to a clear loss of neighbourhood policing”*. At the time of their response a new model was being designed in which within *“high-need communities, PCSOs and police officers will form a cohesive team to problem-solve, reduce risk and harm, through problem-solving approaches”* overseen by dedicated neighbourhood inspectors.

Humberside and Lincolnshire had both previously tried integrating response and neighbourhoods policing but had reconsidered the approach. The former had opted for *“omni-competent policing”* in which officers performed a broad set of functions, while the latter previously deployed the *“one response system”* which had a small response team who went to priority calls and a large neighbourhood team who did everything else. But both forces found it to be ineffective and instead brought in a larger response and patrol function and a smaller, dedicated neighbourhood function. Avon and Somerset has also gone back from having neighbourhood and response teams geographically aligned, *“sharing briefings and taskings”* to a more efficient, borderless *“directorates”* model that places greater separation between neighbourhood and response functions.

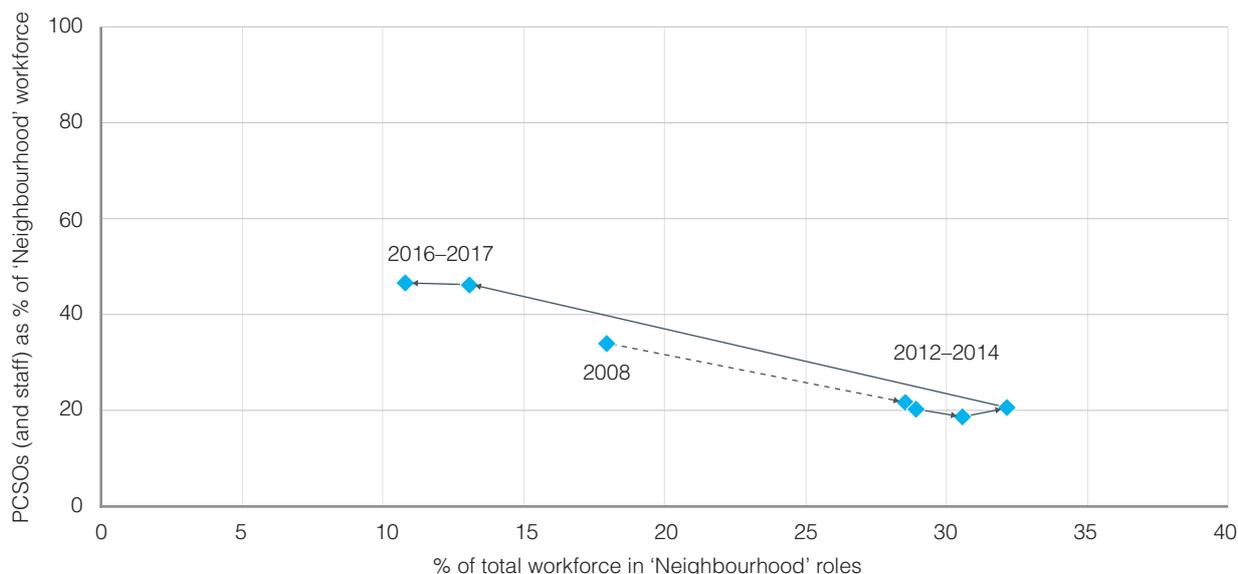
Essex and Sussex also say they have moved, or are moving, to a model that separates response and neighbourhood functions. The respondent from Sussex states that in the past neighbourhood policing was neglected with officers spending half their time abstracted to other functions. In this new model: *“Neighbourhood Policing is everyone’s business ... We are aligning our policies and procedures to match our narrative that the work of our NP Teams is important”*. This means, they say, newly named Prevention Officers, will have a clearer remit and will be abstracted less.

Essex’s representative states that: *“Neighbourhood Policing has [previously] involved a combination of proactive and reactive response, however, the new Community Policing Team model is designed to provide dedicated Community Policing teams with minimal abstraction”*. The adoption and subsequent rejection of hybridisation is evident in Essex’s workforce data (see Chart 17).

Workforce data for Cheshire police – apparently an early adopted or the ‘integrated hybrid’ approach – suggests the force made a similar realignment in 2015/16 (although they did not provide an information return). In 2015 the chief constable stated that the force was *“grow[ing] Neighbourhood Teams by two thirds”*<sup>89</sup> at the same time as their workforce return showed a substantial reduction of staff in the *neighbourhood* workforce category.

89 Byrne (2015).

**CHART 18:** Cheshire neighbourhood policing workforce 2008–2017



This suggests a recognition that (at least some of) those previously allocated to the category were not performing 'neighbourhood' roles.

**KEY FINDING:** There is an emerging trend away from hybridisation. Some forces are increasingly choosing to designate smaller, functionally distinct policing teams to 'neighbourhood'/local preventative duties and to take steps to insulate them from reactive demand.

## 5.5 TAILORING TO RISK AND DEMAND

Decisions to concentrate neighbourhood capability within smaller dedicated teams, as opposed to spreading it widely but in a more dilute form, inevitably pose questions about how and where that ring-fenced resource should be deployed. In line with the shifts towards harm and vulnerability described in Section 4.1, these decisions are increasingly being based on assessments of threat, risk and harm (as the focus group participant sets out below) although a more pragmatic demand reduction rationale, and a perhaps under-examined assumption of equivalence between the two, was also apparent:

**Interviewer:** "If you've got a small amount of resource to do this kind of work, how do you decide what to do?"

*"And the answer is the only way you can do is by prioritising where the highest need is and the highest harm is; it's got to be about threat, risk and harm, and you say, let's be honest, we have capability to extract this much [of the] problem out of the community, where is the most harm? Target there, and then let's move on to the next."* (FG3)

As described in Section 3.1, Gloucestershire had explicitly adopted this approach, aligning a small, largely ring-fenced neighbourhood team to locations and issues perceived to present greatest risk. In this case it was reported that allocation decisions were based on the informed judgement of local leaders, in other forces however more systematic analytical process have been developed to guide these decisions, a sample of which are outlined below.

West Midlands Police allocates a neighbourhood establishment of 735 PCs and 452 PCSOs between its 213 ward areas using a five-tier typology model<sup>90</sup>, based on assessment of *Need for Local Policing*, resilience and transitional status (ie likely future trajectory). The model has influenced emerging practice in South Yorkshire, where a resilience-based three tier structure has been proposed, with services differentiated between "town/city centre; high need and universal needs" localities. More resilient 'universal needs' communities will have a named PCSO who may cover a larger area.

90 West Midlands Police (no date); West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (2015).

According to the force respondent from Lancashire, in 2015 the Police and Crime Commissioner's pledge to maintain the number of Community Beat Managers stood in tension with the need to deliver savings. This was reconciled by cutting the response function and changing the Beat Manager role. The respondent writes: "*We chose to tailor the neighbourhood service to meet the differing needs of Lancashire's communities rather than offering a universal service*". Priority districts with the highest need retained the dedicated Beat Manager while others were allocated officers with a broader set of duties.

The respondent from Lincolnshire stated that although "*Neighbourhood Policing is the preventative arm [of] frontline policing services*" the role has lost out to immediate priority functions such as response. Part of the problem is that the force does "*not understand our demand well enough*" to be proactive. Along with several other forces, Lincolnshire uses the Jill Dando Institute's Vulnerable Localities Index (VLI) which utilises data on crime, deprivation and socio-demography to prioritise vulnerable areas on a "*threat, risk and harm basis*", although the respondent says this is augmented with a dose of "*gut-feeling*" and admits the profiling may not be dynamic enough to adjust to changes in communities.

North Yorkshire Police also uses the VLI to tailor resources to demand. The respondent writes: "*The accessibility of NPTs to local people [is] based on the actual needs of the community and not a one size fits all approach to coverage by neighbourhood policing teams irrespective of threat, harm and risk.*" This means that areas deemed to be the most urban or with the highest number of vulnerable people have the most police constables and PCSOs. As well as engagement work, these officers are tasked with problem solving to reduce demand by "*focused activity on repeat calls for service*".

Under its new model, Wiltshire also allocates resource according to demand. It uses the programme QlikView which amalgamates data from command and control and record management systems, to analyse data relating to crime and antisocial behaviour volumes, response times, number of troubled families and mental health incidents. It looks at the demand these factors generate by geographical area and allocates resources accordingly. Neighbourhoods with the highest demand are staffed by police constables and have more community coordinators whereas areas with

the fewest reported crimes, such as rural areas, are predominantly staffed by PCSOs. The respondent adds that this is dynamic, so that if the "*pull-basis*" increases, the number of officers assigned to an area will "*change to reflect that change*".

North Wales uses the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) to allocate PCSOs. It was developed by the Welsh Government as a tool to identify and understand deprivation in Wales, so that funding, policy and programmes can be effectively focused on the most disadvantaged communities. Gwent also has allocates resource based on demand modelling and South Wales bases allocation on police demand, deprivation and levels of crime and antisocial behaviour.

**KEY FINDING:** The functional shift in emphasis from universal reassurance to targeted prevention provides a rationale for a more differentiated neighbourhood policing offer. Forces are developing a range of tools to assist resource allocation to places where risk/harm/demand is greatest.

## 5.6 THE END OF UNIVERSAL NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING?

Greater targeting implies a break from earlier versions of neighbourhood policing which drew on a principle that every neighbourhood should have its own team to work on what mattered locally, however, this idea has not been abandoned entirely.

In 2013 the Metropolitan Police Service introduced its version of 'semi-hybridisation', moving from 'ring-fenced' ward teams, consisting of a sergeant, two constables and three PCS (with extra PCSOs in larger wards) to a new Local Policing Model. This change saw dedicated ward staffing trimmed to one PC and one PCSO, supported by a larger pool of more general resource, originally organised at the sector or ward-cluster level, which serviced most local demand (including local investigations and aid requirements) with the exception of emergency response.

In line with the trend described in the previous section, London is now also moving away from this generalised model to a more functionally distinct one, dubbed by Mayor Sadiq Kahn as a return to

'real neighbourhood policing'<sup>91</sup>. The new approach is based on a standard offer of two dedicated PCs and a PCSO per ward, working alongside larger response teams that shoulder much of the investigative and aid requirement previously serviced by local cluster teams. At the time of research this model was being piloted in several London 'Pathfinder' boroughs that had also slimmed down their supervision ratios by merging with neighbours.

While there is some provision made for a limited amount of additional resource in higher demand/ need areas, the MPS approach differs from those described above, in that it retains a strong emphasis on neighbourhood policing as a universal (rather than targeted) service. The intent is "*a safer city for all Londoners, no matter who you are or where you live, with extra Dedicated Ward Officers in all of London's 629 local neighbourhood wards*"<sup>92</sup>. In the foreword to his Police and Crime Plan the mayor also states:

*"Community policing is the bedrock of all our efforts to protect our city, and there is no substitute for **visible officers** out on the beat in neighbourhoods. We are putting an extra dedicated Constable back in every ward in the capital to help **tackle people's very real concerns** about crime and antisocial behaviour in their communities<sup>93</sup>."* (Emphasis added)

The emphasis on universal provision<sup>94</sup>, police visibility and answering local concerns suggests that, rather than embracing the shift to risk/harm/demand-based targeting, the MPS is retaining a stronger continuity with the universal service ethos of mid-2000s neighbourhood policing.

Of course, particularly in lean times, universal rather than targeted provision risks stretching resource thinly and, while acknowledging the early stage of implementation and the very limited snapshot glimpsed in this research, this did appear to be a risk in the pilot site visited. Focus group respondents there had experienced problems with:

- Finding personnel to fill neighbourhood vacancies that had arisen after initial roll out, particular at sergeant level (leading to gaps at ward officer level when PCs act up);

- Highly stretched response teams, and thus some 'demand leakage' to neighbourhood teams, in the form of follow-up visits to low priority calls for service that had not been attended and then reallocated for neighbourhood attention via the antisocial behaviour case-management system.
- Shift-patterns and supervision ratios that could result in officers and staff becoming isolated from their supervisors, while more generally the model militated against team working and contact with colleagues.
- Difficulties in finding resources to complete irregular activities (like executing search warrants or holding action days) – in particular due to the requirement for ward officers to remain on their ward (preventing them from assisting colleagues with this kind of activity on neighbouring areas).
- Inexperienced, unsuitable and unwilling postings in the rush to 'staff-up' the model.

It remains to be seen whether the MPS can deliver universally accessible, visible and publicly responsive policing, through its footprint of ward officers and PCSOs, with the resources available and within an effective, interdependent local policing system. In other forces, where neighbourhood policing has been refocused toward targeted harm prevention in priority locations, the need to provide some form of ongoing, non-emergency, two-way interface with the public was recognised. One force lead spoke of the need to generate '*a fine mist of understanding*' among the general public, another, who was in the process of designing a new model, spoke of the viability of maintaining a network of PCSOs as the '*face of community policing*' while the dwindling coverage of neighbourhood police officers posed difficult questions about how these were best utilised – although in circumstances where individual officers or PCSOs are allocated to an area containing upwards of 50 villages (as reported in several of the rural focus groups) it is questionable how familiar that face can be.

91 MOPAC (2017).

92 MOPAC (2017).

93 GLA (2017).

94 It is worth noting that despite the apparent universality of the model (and regardless of need or demand) London Ward populations vary considerably. While 40 of the 629 MPS wards have populations of less than 10,000, 13 have more than double that number. (Data available at [data.gov.uk/dataset/crime-rates-in-the-metropolitan-police-area-by-ward](https://data.gov.uk/dataset/crime-rates-in-the-metropolitan-police-area-by-ward).)

More broadly, online services and social media were increasingly seen as affordable mediums for providing accessible services, promoting awareness and maintaining a broad public dialogue, as one focus group participant explained:

*"We can give live updates through social media. I've been out today doing patrols in key areas and we can put it straight on social media so our digital footprint has gone through the roof. Not everyone's going to tap into that, [but] it's still reaching people and our visibility then has increased and that's just me doing it. I've hit three key areas, put it out on social media but the perception is that we're out there."* (FG6)

West Midlands Police's *WM Now* two-way community messaging service has in excess of 30,000 subscribers<sup>95</sup>.

A number of examples were encountered of local police providing designated points of contact or liaison officers to non-geographic communities or groups with particular sets of concerns or needs, for instance religious/ethnic communities, farmers and canal-boat owners.

**KEY FINDING:** London is seeking to maintain a neighbourhood policing offer more closely aligned to universal ethos of earlier versions. Elsewhere, where greater targeting is being introduced, forces are seeking new ways to deliver universal public access, visibility (or 'presence') and communication.

## 5.7 PCSOS

As indicated by the workforce analysis (see Sections 1.5 and 1.6) local policing models differ substantially in the extent to which they utilise PCSOs as part of their neighbourhood provision. There is also evidence that the activities PCSOs perform, as well as the powers they are given, vary considerably across forces.

It was not uncommon to hear that PCSOs were considered to be the last vestige of neighbourhood policing in some areas, carrying out engagement and problem solving tasks that they would previously have shared with officers.

*"PCSOs I think they're our productive, proactive arm. They do a lot of proactive stuff in their own communities. Going out listening to people, if we've got a proactive arm they are it at the minute."* (FG14)

*"They're the ones that are going out and walking the streets getting the intel[ligence]."* (FG11)

*"PCSOs are our eyes and ears, because the ward officers don't get out and about in their areas, as such, walking round. They're our visibility."* (FG9)

However it was also clear that PCSOs were often performing a much broader role than originally intended. They regularly reported being asked to carry out police (rather than community) support work, such as collecting and viewing CCTV, standing on cordons or staffing road closures. In addition, like their neighbourhood officer colleagues, PCSOs said they were increasingly acting as responders, leading to situations in which their powers and training were (or at least felt) insufficient.

*"More and more now, in the city centre, [we are] a mini response. So you've got response officers. [Then] It goes on to these guys [neighbourhood police officers]. If they're not available because they're busy as well, it goes on to us. So we're going to jobs. We're going to shoplifters, that shouldn't really be going to."* (PCSO FG1)

*"We are called more and more to jobs because we haven't got enough PC colleagues. We're getting called to jobs as well that we haven't really got skills to do, but obviously we have to go to them because there is no-one else and you're there to help out ... Working in the city, we literally can walk around a corner and be faced with a grade one [an emergency situation] ... but then we haven't got permission to be allowed to deal with that ... for example about a week ago there was a male who had assaulted somebody and they were literally on scene. I turned up because we were round the corner and I was told not to touch them, just to leave them ... which is quite frustrating ... It's not just that, [it damages] confidence in the public to see a uniformed officer just standing there."* (PCSO FG10)

95 See [www.wmnow.co.uk](http://www.wmnow.co.uk)

*“Yeah, we get sent to jobs that come out and it might be just five minutes away from us and we say well, it’s not really suitable for a PCSO and you’ll be told, well just go in the first instance but don’t go too close.” (PCSO, FG9)*

In one force, PCSOs had been given responsibility for liaising with local care homes and putting in place individual plans for children considered to be ‘at risk’. It was clear that, as well as viewing this as detracting from their core visibility function, these PCSOs felt undertrained for the task and carried the additional responsibility uneasily.

Force information returns provide the strategic perspective on these developments with several reporting enhancements or additions to the PCSO role.

Kent, whose chief constable pledged to maintain PCSO numbers, sought to improve cost effectiveness by giving them new powers. PCSOs continue to provide a *“highly visible uniformed presence in order to provide public reassurance and to assist in the prevention and reduction of incidents of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour”*. But specialist PCSO posts will also be created: *“to enhance our service to the most vulnerable members of our community”*. These roles will include: Domestic Abuse Support Officer, Vulnerable Adult Intervention Officer, Youth Engagement Officer and Missing and Child Exploitation PCSO. Humberside Police has also given PCSOs a role in early intervention, hiring 20 new ones in 2017 to help staff its Early Intervention teams, which also contain two sergeants and 10 PCs.

Sussex reported that they had been forced to cut PC numbers as part of its task to save £28m out of the annual £110m budget. To partly make up for the shortfall it has reviewed the role of PCSOs under its new Local Policing Model. It increased PCSO powers and changed their contracts to enable them to work more flexibly as well as *“upgrading”* the role. Gwent also reported that it has *“enhanced the remit”* of PCSOs.

Avon and Somerset reported that they been forced to cut PCSO numbers due to loss of funding. But it has also widened their remit by having

them respond to calls for service including from outside their neighbourhoods, as well as tasking them with assisting in investigations. In Wiltshire, the remit of PCSOs has been stretched further, being used to cover police officers as the new model *“beds down”*.

Elsewhere however the narrative tended towards attrition rather than reinvention. Lancashire has dramatically reduced the numbers of PCSOs it employs without changing their remit. From a high of 427 PCSO posts (195 part-funded by partners) in 2010, it has cut numbers to 288. The force representative states the reason for not having enhanced PCSO powers is *“we see the officers as problem solvers rather than law enforcers”* who work closely with a Community Beat Manager with full police powers.

Suffolk has followed a similar path, slashing the numbers of PCSOs as, they state, it is *“cheaper to employ a new PC than a PCSO”*<sup>96</sup>. The representative adds that the PCSOs that were retained had fixed daytime hours as *“overtime or out-of-core hours is cost prohibitive”*.

North Wales is cutting its PCSOs from 212 currently to 191 in 2020. In contrast it is recruiting ten more Safer Neighbourhood Team Constables. These changes are justified by a need to refocus and reprioritise in the wake of austerity. In Devon and Cornwall, PCSO numbers are expected to drop from 360 to 150 by 2020/21.

In October 2017 Norfolk announced plans to get rid of all of its 150 PCSOs in order to create 62 new officer posts, 16 police staff roles and to generate £1.6m of required savings<sup>97</sup>.

**KEY FINDINGS:** PCSO numbers are being cut and, in some places, their roles redesigned. In general they are performing a broadened role, including elements of response, police support work and safeguarding in addition to their community focused role. Some PCSOs expressed discomfort at the risks and responsibilities they were being asked to carry and concerns that this is pushing them to the limits of their training and powers.

96 Although, presumably, with pay progression, this saving is only short-term.

97 Norfolk Constabulary (2017).

# 6. DOING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

This section deals with a number of key themes, including enablers and barriers relating to the operational delivery of neighbourhood policing that (principally) emerged from focus group discussions with practitioners.

## 6.1 PRIORITISATION

Limited resource clearly increases the importance of prioritisation among leaders, supervisors, and operational staff, in terms of how they use their time and direct their attention<sup>98</sup>. Focus group discussions indicated that the basis for operational prioritisation was rarely explicit or formalised, and had become more complex, multi-faceted and (by implication) ambiguous.

In some cases, formal community priority setting meetings (often referred to as Police and Communities Together or PACT meetings) – once a key component of neighbourhood policing machinery – had fallen into disuse or been discontinued. Merseyside for example reported that, following a review, community meetings (along with surgeries, leaflet drops and antisocial behaviour call-backs), had been removed from the neighbourhood remit. In other places, where they had continued, these were generally reported to be poorly attended, unrepresentative and illustrative of the tension between the ‘low level’ local issues those attending wanted the police to address, and the ‘higher-harm’ remits created for neighbourhood teams by their forces. This had resulted in explicit, community-set priorities becoming more marginal to the work of neighbourhood teams<sup>99</sup>.

*“We used to have PACT meetings but they seem to have gone by the way[s]ide for a number of different reasons, I think the main one ... being that they weren’t very well attended, or the same people would turn up to the same meetings, and the issues that they complained about wouldn’t*

*necessarily require a police response. You know, our focus is on crime, regardless of what job we do, you know, prevention and detection of crime, but then to go to a PACT meeting where nobody is really interested about who’s been burgled, they’re interested about the cars speeding up and down, or the dogs fouling outside and things like that. So, they seem to have, as a force ... fallen by the wayside really.” (FG9)*

*“When I go to a ward panel, I’ve got to then try and persuade them what we’ve been doing around their issues that they want.” (FG11)*

*“You’ve got a PACT meeting on the first of June, you set the priorities. Your next one is the first of July. You’ve got all your other priorities. You realise that you’ve got a PACT meeting in a few days, right what were those priorities? We’d then go and look at what they were and do what we can before the meeting.” (FG11)*

As described in Section 3.1, the work of the team visited in part of Norwich stood in marked exception; here community meetings and priority setting had been supplemented by concerted digital engagement efforts, with the focus emerging from these consultations providing clear direction to the team’s work, as illustrated by the officer’s response below.

**Interviewer:** *“As neighbourhood officers are you clear what your priorities are?”*

*“The priority set for us at the moment is begging; the question of begging in the city centre. Prior to that it was prostitution [in a named street] ... The fact is people don’t live in [our area], a lot of them travel in. So the [area] is the shop window ... drinking, acting in an antisocial manner ... begging that is what my priority is now.” (Norwich)*

98 See Hales and Higgins (2016).

99 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (Pt 1, Ch5, s34) places a statutory duty on chief officers to make arrangements for consulting and informing the public on local crime and disorder ‘within each neighbourhood’. This must include holding regular meetings between the public and local police officers. The interpretation of ‘neighbourhood’ (and ‘regular’) is left to chief officers to decide. This legislation makes no mention of the use of such meetings to set local priorities. See [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/13/section/34/enacted?view=interweave](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/13/section/34/enacted?view=interweave)

More often however, community input provided only one (sometimes minor) element to decisions about how available resource was used. Top-down force tasking processes also played a role:

*“the SLT [Senior Leadership Team] will have their meeting and out of that meeting will come certain tasks that may or may not fall to us, but it’s down to whoever is about and whoever can gets allocated that task, be it going to make some arrest inquiries for people who are wanted, whether that’s in our area or not.” (FG5)*

There were also several reports that local politicians were increasingly having an impact on neighbourhood work, particularly in more affluent areas, perhaps reflecting the way residents were seeking alternative mechanisms to address local issues, as community priority setting processes broke down.

*“It’s a little bit like, who you know as well, people get in touch with the chief constable people get in touch with the PCC or get in touch with the MP “we’ve got drug dealers in this area, speeding in that area” ... so you get three, four emails about the same issues from really high up ... you might have only one person moaning about it but because they’re moaning to the right people ... they get the response.” (FG9)*

In addition (and as previously discussed), assessments of threat, risk and harm were also increasingly factored into prioritisation decisions. While this had influenced the locations or issues to which resource was directed, it could also feature in the rationale for shifting to a more immediate, reactive footing in response to incidents and events. The quotations below, from an officer and his supervisor, illustrate the broad, multi-faceted role and the potential for conflicts within it.

**PC:** *“Day to day policing, I have to prioritise somebody jumping off a bridge or if there’s a drunk on the street, you know, general policing. From the neighbourhood point of view, the community tell us what they would like us to police, parking, nuisance, litter, proper community issues if you like, that’s how I will look at it.”*

**Supervisor:** *“It’s competing demands, is it dog fouling, is it counter terrorism, is it community engagement? Everything is a priority within neighbourhood policing, but if all he [the PC] ends up doing is responding to calls for service, we will never do any of it.” (FG12)*

**KEY FINDING:** With occasional exceptions, formal community-led priorities – where they are set at all – are increasingly marginal to the work of neighbourhood teams.

## 6.2 PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem solving was consistently referenced by forces as a key element of the neighbourhood remit (see Chart 13), although on the ground the term tended to be used in a broad sense to refer to any proactive or planned responses to ongoing issues or concerns. A number of respondents referred to systems and processes for identifying and logging local issues, devising and recording a response and (on occasions) reviewing the success of the activity taken.

*“We have got a Citizen Focus Toolkit on our computers, and basically we will record the issue on there; what it is, what we plan to do about it, plans involving partners, ... and then there’s a record of what we have done to solve that problem ... and then getting back to the [person who raised the concern] as to ... has it really stopped, [or did] you just get fed up and you stopped calling us? Have we solved it, and is there some best practice as a result of us dealing with that, can we share that with other people?” (FG12)*

These processes led to occasional accounts of creative interventions being developed and implemented:

*“We’ve just had an [example] where a lot of the problem is the rubbish. The kids are throwing the rubbish in the back gardens and being general pains so that’s been really successful, we’ve done leaflet campaign, been out in the area, spoken to the kids, had a clean-up day with the kids, moved 4.5 tonnes of rubbish ... But again it was a long time to get that all organised and, certain days when we’re supposed to do leaflet drops you’re pulled out to other things.” (FG10)*

However, perhaps as a result of the type of frustrations expressed in the above quotation, more often the proactive activities undertaken in response to identified issues came from a relatively limited police tool-box (for example providing a targeted visible presence at key times or executing warrants).

There was also a notable absence of analytical support provided for local problem solving with practitioners understanding of local issues most often derived from community intelligence, knowledge of individual cases or regular monitoring of incident records through various accessible police IT systems.

One notable feature of the contemporary formulation of 'problem solving' is that it has expanded to accommodate a case-based approach, in which vulnerable, problematic or 'high-demand' individuals (or occasionally families) are framed as the 'problems' (or at least the subjects of problem solving) and multi-agency information sharing and coordination is the stock-mechanism through which an appropriate 'solution' is formulated and delivered.

*"There's a set of criteria for creating what's called a problem-solving occurrence ... And then it's down to managing them within the team, we have a tri-weekly tasking meeting with partners. Some of them are individual based; that's graded high, medium or low depending on the risk to that person. Some are location based, and some are based on repeat calls for service to a particular location." (FG5)*

As set out in Section 3.1, this was most clearly apparent in Tameside (GMP), where neighbourhood officers and PCSOs worked within an integrated multi-agency team, largely dedicated to casework with individuals of concern; although in a small minority of instances the same process were used to manage 'issues' (such as antisocial behaviour in a particular park) rather than people.

**KEY FINDING:** 'Problem solving' is core to the 'official' understanding of what neighbourhood policing is for. The working understanding of 'problem solving' has expanded to include (and may even tend to default to) case-based working, in which vulnerable/high-risk/high-demand individuals are the subjects, and multi-agency case work the mechanism for response.

## 6.3 CORRALLING RESOURCES

One frequently reported operational barrier was the difficulty teams faced in bringing additional resources into their area for short concerted deployments, for example to conduct a search warrant in response to community intelligence, carry out an operation or hold an action day. This was seen as the result of team sizes shrinking, distributed shift patterns and stretched resources in other functions (such as response teams) that had no spare capacity to help out.

*"The problem we've got is when intelligence comes in, you may need to do a warrant, but to do a warrant we need staff ... Response, they're too busy. So this intelligence is there and you think well I can't do anything. I physically cannot do anything because I can't go to these addresses on my own or with just one colleague." (FG7)*

*"Before, if we had an address that we needed to target or an area, or some speeding operation we needed to do, we could all go out there, we could all work together and it showed that big impact to the community. But now we're so spread out." (FG2)*

Occasional corralling of neighbourhood resources was one solution, although in some situations force policies designed to maintain dedicated local coverage, prevented staff occasionally leaving their own patch to assist colleagues elsewhere.

*"We tried something last week ... we had all of our PCSOs and all of our available staff, volunteers, specials, everything, we all went to one area and just focused on certain issues in one area. So, we took a bit of a risk in the other areas, but that one area then got a real, bespoke, heavy policing, we could hit a few of the issues with drug dealers, speeding ... we had quite a successful day, quite good feedback. So, that's something that we might do again and again." (FG9)*

Another common solution was the creation of small auxiliary teams (often with names like Neighbourhood Action teams or Neighbourhood Priority teams) with the remit to support work of this kind. These teams often appeared to have adopted an overtly enforcement-focused role and expertise, raising the question of whether the availability of such

teams might skew neighbourhood work towards intelligence-led law enforcement activity; another example perhaps, of function following form.

## 6.4 SHIFT PATTERNS

Linked to the planned use of 'neighbourhood' staff to carry out (or at least provide contingency for) response work, a recurring theme across sites was the imposition of shift patterns that were tailored to match the demand profile, but were not necessarily conducive to neighbourhood work. It was suggested that these could separate team members across shifts, and make it difficult to engage with partners during standard working hours.

*"There's not as much flexibility anymore is there? Whereas before ... you used to be able to change shifts, you know, weekdays, day time, where you've got your partner agency stuff and your council to get in and deal with that problem, whereas now if you're on a late shift or a night shift, you know, that doesn't get changed. You can't change it because you're a number; you're needed in the city or whatever."* (FG10)

*"From a supervisor's perspective, if I had six dedicated officers that weren't taken for anything, not on a specific shift pattern where they've got to do earlies, lates and nights on a set rotation, purely because they are needed to back up the [response] team, then ... you could achieve something, but not at the moment."* (FG11)

*"It's part of our daily business; part of that problem solving is consulting partners... The only barriers to it, at the minute it's our shift pattern ... So if our early shift is on a weekend, we've got quite a number of days either side with days off and late shifts where we may not come into contact with any partners, which is good for policing and being out being visible, but not for working with partners to try and solve what we want to solve."* (FG5)

## 6.5 THE PULL OF NOW

Where, by design or necessity, neighbourhood officers also regularly responded to calls for service, the working experience was often characterised

by a constant tension with the control room and despatch operators who, it was felt, were working within narrow systems that had little appreciation for broader policing aims.

*"It's a bit like a tug-of-war if you imagine with some of the officers, we've got them here [they are tasked and supervised locally], then you've got the control rooms on the other side that's pulling them that way ... so it's a real tough balancing act for us, and really hard for them [the local officers] to know what they should be doing and who they should be, sort of, listening to."* (Inspector, FG9)

*"The control room is just about churning over these jobs, that's all it is. 'I've got to get rid of these jobs', that's all it is, it's just a game. 'I've got to get rid of these jobs'. You're a collar number, your radios switched on, 'can you do this job?' Next person, 'can you do this job?', 'Can you do this job? I'll try and get you back up. Are you really busy?'"* (FG10)

Under these conditions the role of supervising sergeants was seen as crucial in providing some protection to neighbourhood staff by negotiating with, and where necessary pushing back against the control room – indeed against others seeking to allocate tasks and demand. Where sergeants had been designed out of neighbourhood policing models or were otherwise absent, neighbourhood staff were particularly vulnerable to abstraction.

*"I think a lot of that comes from our comms operators. They see a resource. They don't see what they're doing. They just want to get rid of that job on their queue as quickly as possible. So I often spend my days trying to protect my resources away from them, so that they can do the neighbourhood problem solving work."* (Sergeant, FG1)

*"If I've got a weak supervisor, I'm going to be quite top heavy with stuff that I shouldn't be dealing with and I'm sure, depending on what sergeant you've got, depends on what level of investigations you will carry."* (FG10)

*"I'm part-time ... and I think it's fair to say that when I'm not here it's easy pickings to come and, kind of, allocate [my staff], you know people pull rank and it happens."* (Sergeant, FG5)

Stepping back, the impression is of a system in tension, often fighting against itself, within which considerable time and internally-focused effort goes into attempting to maintain form and prevent a collapse into total reactivity.

**KEY FINDING:** Enablers of local proactivity include mechanisms for occasional corraling of resources, appropriate shift patterns and strong sergeant-level supervision to resist and protect against reactive abstractions.

## 6.6 RESPONDING SMARTER (AND LESS?)

It is clear from the above that local policing is an interdependent system and the effectiveness of neighbourhood policing relies on having the systems, processes and resources in place to deal with reactive demand. In an unbalanced model, non-urgent preventative work will always lose out.

*“Your 999, your call for service will always come first at the end of the day won’t it? Because somebody wants you or something has happened. I absolutely get that, we [the neighbourhood team] have got enough resources in the main, but response wise we haven’t, because that’s why these folks [neighbourhood staff] are having to stand at an RTC for hours, because actually we haven’t got the resilience in response policing to let neighbourhood policing do their job.” (FG4)*

Of course, over the longer timeframe, the interconnectedness runs in both directions; without sufficient attention to prevention, responsive demand will only escalate. However as the force respondent from Cleveland articulates, moving “from a very reactive response to demand, to one of prevention and early intervention” presents forces with a seemingly intractable problem: “[There is] very little resilience to be able to easily transform to the latter without impact[ing] on our necessary reactive requirements”.

In relation to this dilemma, it is relevant to note that several force respondents, particularly at the strategic level, discussed emerging efforts not only to reduce demand, but to rethink and reconfigure the way it is dealt with. These efforts were focused

on improving efficiency (and thus, in theory at least, freeing resource for demand reduction work) without compromising safety or effectiveness. In different forces these measures and ideas included:

- Introducing Resolution Centres/Local Resolution Officers (or similar); police officer and/or staff teams that deal with crime recording but also attempt to resolve non-urgent demand via a telephone appointment, reducing the need for physical attendance by officers and staff ‘on the ground’.
  - Using video calls to allow more interactions with the public to be dealt with remotely (therefore minimising travel time).
- Additionally/alternatively, developing processes to enable crime to be recorded, and for ‘problem-solving’ to occur, at the point of the first call (for example by improved initial routing and referral, including to other more appropriate agencies, at the first opportunity).
- Introducing/improving/promoting online crime reporting tools.
- Improving training of call centre staff to make better decisions about the most appropriate resource to send to different incidents.
  - Including by developing systems to identify and deploy the most appropriate individual officer or PCSO (for instance based on knowledge of a particular case or individual, or on their skills and powers).
  - And/or by aligning call centre staff to areas and teams to encourage local knowledge and team working.
- Introducing, improving and layering triage systems (including using systems such as THRIVE<sup>100</sup>) to ensure vulnerability is properly recognised and dealt with.
- Improving the efficiency of investigative processes, for example by taking statements over the telephone and working with (eg) store security guards to obtain relevant CCTV by email.
- Using mobile technology to enable ongoing communication between members of the public and officers (removing the need to route communications through control rooms).

100 THRIVE is a model for prioritising emergency calls based on Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement. See: Capita (no date).

While much of this work involves dealing with demand more systematically and remotely, supervisors also described local dimensions to delivering a smarter response, for instance through officers and staff being alert to opportunities for self-tasking to incidents where their knowledge, skills or relationships could add value, and by ongoing dialogue between supervising sergeants across functions, about best use of resources.

In addition to improving these processes, several key leads spoke of the (both practically and politically) difficult decisions that needed to be made about “*what we won’t service, to release capacity*”. While such decisions sit uneasily with a function to which reassurance and public responsiveness are engrained, those in front line neighbourhood roles are finding it increasingly difficult to bridge the gap between public expectations and what is feasible, and welcome leadership, where it is forth-coming, on defining and communicating a realistic service offer to the public.

*“We’re too worried about image and stuff. For example, we were told to leave the lights on at [X] police station and let the public think there’s*

*actually cops on duty. What a load of tosh. I actually take a great pleasure in turning the damn things off. Why should we lie about that? ... Reassurance has to be based on truth and not on a lie.” (FG2)*

*“We have to explain that we just haven’t got the resources, you know. Although at one time we had to keep that quiet now it’s like why? People need to know we haven’t got the staff there to deal with warrants etc.” (FG7)*

*“I take a lot of pride and I get embarrassed to a certain extent from the comments that I pick up ... Because we can’t provide that service.” (FG10)*

**KEY FINDING:** Neighbourhood policing is part of an interdependent demand management system. Efforts are underway, in some areas, to improve the efficiency of the response to immediate, reactive demand, which have potential to release resource for longer term prevention. Questions of where not to respond are also being considered.

# 7. TOWARDS INTEGRATION?

The Policing Vision 2025<sup>101</sup> places particular emphasis on achieving greater alignment and integration between the police and other local services. This section assesses developments in local multi-agency working, in particular as they relate to neighbourhood policing and are experienced by neighbourhood police officers and staff. The expanded understanding of ‘problem solving’, in the context of a system becoming increasingly geared toward multi-agency case-based working, is also highlighted.

## 7.1 A MIXED PICTURE

Partnership working is viewed as a core component of contemporary neighbourhood policing (see Chart 13). At both practitioner and force levels, research respondents provided numerous examples of positive multi-agency cooperation and demonstrated a strong commitment to partnership principles. Overall, police forces described continuity and maturation of key partnerships since 2008, with new relationships developing, particularly with third sector organisations. A minority pointed to deterioration in some arrangements due to funding challenges, with mixed progress reported on the perennial problem of engaging with health services, which has become more urgent as mental health and Early Action/Intervention have gained salience.

On the ground, as well as reflecting on productive cooperation, there were relatively frequent reports from neighbourhood officers and staff about the problems and frustrations experienced when attempting to engage partners in making provisions for individuals generating repeat policing demand (especially those with mental health needs). This was generally acknowledged to be the result of cuts across the public sector, which sometimes resulted in ‘threshold raising’ and retrenchment, by all parties.

*“I think it’s just this last 18 months, some of the boundaries have been put up again a little bit ... there are still those really good links between key partners, NHS, Council, social housing providers,*

*fire service, we haven’t lost them totally but I think they’ve probably just been diluted just because we’ve had to look at other priorities.” (FG9)*

*“In order to problem solve you also need to be able to liaise with the partner agencies, mental health, social services, the council, and there’s not a great deal of appetite for that at the minute because everybody’s short staffed ... people get left in the middle ... the people who aren’t being dealt with properly by mental health teams, and it’s not solely the responsibility of the police to deal with them and there’s this kind of middle ground, but if everybody came together to solve these problems then they would work effectively, but that means the time and the capacity to deal with that, and it’s just not there.” (FG11)*

*“Getting help from social services at times is a real nightmare. It takes a long, long time, like many, many reports. You talk to them by phone. You send emails. I don’t really have time to go and do one-to-one meetings, and neither do they. But getting that help with mental health crises, long-term care in appropriate living arrangements is hard work ... And I’m sure they’re saying the same thing when they need our help.” (FG8)*

## 7.2 BREAKING NEW GROUND OR DIGGING IN?

Both at the strategic and neighbourhood level a number of respondents expressed a view that policing was being expected to take on more. This was both in terms of local service delivery; as the force respondent from Lancashire writes *“The demand created by missing persons, dementia, mental health, concerns for safety and the reduction in other services/agencies has created a service gap, which the police, as a service of last resort are being expected to fill”*, but also in terms of local leadership for catalysing and coordinating partnership activity. The research encountered examples of the police both accepting and resisting this imperative to step forward.

In one force a strategic lead spoke of the current necessity of taking on a role *‘beyond public expectation and natural fit’* for example by using

101 APCC and NPCC (2016).

PCSOs to fill some of the gaps left by reductions in local authority resourcing of adult social care. A previous mantra of 'lead on what you do best and strongly support the rest' was no longer felt to be tenable. Similarly, a senior strategic lead responding to the web survey wrote, "The reality is that social care are struggling locally to deal with demand ... so we are scoping what additional training the partnership funding will buy our local [police] teams, for them to be able to deal with vulnerability more effectively."

In relation to local coordination, another force lead spoke of the intention that ward officers would act as community leaders, brokering partnership working at the local level. Several practitioners also acknowledged and embraced the unique role that they could play in catalysing and organising local collaboration.

*"Our strengths as an organisation is managing people and issues ... if we turn up an RTC [Road Traffic Collision] we're not really there to bandage people up or cut people out, but we turn up and we manage the scene and we manage the partners, and I think we forget that when we come to neighbourhood policing. So for me neighbourhood policing is about managing neighbourhoods, with partners, to improve safety."* (FG14)

*"If it's important to the community it's got to be important to us. [We] don't need to go and pick up the dog fouling ... But what you do need to do is signpost and bring in the relevant partners that are going to do it."* (FG12)

Conversely however, in a minority of cases – faced with a seemingly ever-broadening local remit, and in response to the perception that other agencies were in retreat – some practitioners expressed a desire to stake out a remit for themselves, based on their unique set of police powers. This may carry a risk of reverting to an (overly) enforcement-based version of neighbourhood policing, as the quotations below might suggest.

*"We can't be all things to all people, you know, there has to be an element of, this is the ship that we're responsible for, you want to make*

*us responsible for that, and I'm sorry, we don't have the tools to fix what is essentially a health problem ... I want neighbourhood policing not just to be soft and cuddly stuff ... but also ... the iron fist of it, you know, [if] there's somebody who is involved in some sort of criminality ... neighbourhood policing can still address that by putting that person into the criminal justice system."* (FG14)

*"[Neighbourhood policing should be about] patrol work, intelligence and deal[ing] with crime ... our job is to use our local powers that we have ... and to make sure there are other agencies take part in what they need to be doing."* (FG11)

On occasions the need to demarcate and tighten the police remit was also apparent in the force-level narrative. The respondent from Wiltshire writes:

*"It had been identified that some of the work carried out by the NPTs [Neighbourhood Policing Teams] should not be the role of the police just because it is something that has always been done. For example: attending Parish Council meetings with the expectation being that the police officer will take minutes, expected attendance at all local events, Community Speed Watch, dealing with road traffic matters ... would be better managed by other agencies."*

Kent reported some progress in the realignment of agency remits, "Since 2008 I believe there is now a stronger emphasis on other partners taking the lead on matters where they have the best knowledge and expertise to deal, moving away somewhat from the police always being the lead agency", citing in particular, local success in involving partners in initiatives to tackle organised crime.

**KEY FINDING:** Partnership working has matured and become mainstream but gaps and operational frustrations persist. Police forces and practitioners are sometimes stepping in to fill local service gaps and provide 'neighbourhood management', while in other instances are tightening remits and falling back on police powers to define their role.

## 7.3 DEEPER INTEGRATION

Some of the frustrations expressed by practitioners about local partnership working were linked to flaws in the machinery of inter-agency communication and coordination, such as regular set-piece meetings and referral processes.

*“You will do a mental health referral, you then have a similar issue with the same person three, four or five weeks down the line, and you get back in touch with the mental health teams and they say, ‘yes, yes, we had an appointment with them, but they didn’t turn up’. ‘Have you then followed it up?’, ‘No, we don’t do follow ups’. So, you then have to refer them again ... so, we can put all the referrals in, but unless they follow up the referrals, then we end up dealing with the same people over and over again.” (FG14)*

*“Sometimes the meetings just seem to be held for the sake of holding a meeting, rather than getting to a conclusion. I know it’s all fun and games, kind of all chuckling about another incident happening at that address again. But actually ... since the last month where we talked about them, nothing seems to have been achieved. And then you just roll it on to the next month and roll it on to the next month.” (FG8)*

Partly as an attempt to improve on these processes a number of examples of more deeply embedded joint working had been introduced. Local police in Norfolk are linked into district-level Early Help Hubs, which provided a daily forum for information sharing and coordination. Avon and Somerset have set up a number of “*‘One Teams’ for seamless partnership working between public sector and voluntary sector, who identify and address the issues causing harm to the communities they serve*”, while Kent police interface with other agencies through their Community Safety Units. Essex and North Yorkshire have both introduced Community Safety Hubs; with the force respondent for the latter describing the transition from ‘inefficient’ and slow-time Multi-Agency Problem Solving Teams, (which previously met on a monthly basis), to a more permanent arrangement in which “*Police Officers/PCSO’s ... work on a daily basis on medium or high risk issues alongside relevant partners*”, the advantage being “*that Case Conferences can be called quickly and dynamic action taken (where appropriate)*”.

Co-location appears to be a key catalyst for, and facilitator of, these forms of deeper integration; a senior respondent to the web survey identified that his/her force’s best relationships were with local authorities where there is “*some co-location and integration*”, and it is now “*moving towards better integration and not purely sharing space*”. Returns from Thames Valley and West Yorkshire state that they practice co-location with their partners in some areas of their force, the latter adding that neighbourhood officers and partners have “*joint responsibility for delivering and commissioning services to and on behalf of their communities*”. South Yorkshire reported plans for co-locating services to create “*inter-agency synergies*” in four local authority areas.

On the ground, practitioners also noted the benefits of co-location, although this had sometimes been catalysed by the need to cut costs by sharing buildings.

*“From a vulnerability point of view and from a mental health point of view, there’s partners working in this police station upstairs who we’ve got access to on a regular basis, and it just opens up all sorts of avenues of ... we’ve got people on board, you know, partner colleagues who can help.” (FG5)*

*“The police station is in the council offices and, they do have very good links, if they want to go and speak to anybody, they’re literally in the same building and they have built some good links.” (FG14)*

## 7.4 INTEGRATING FOR CASEWORK?

These steps toward more integrated working have coincided with a shift in the focus of partnership activity (relating to the expanded understanding of ‘problem solving’ discussed in Section 6.2) from ‘problem’ and community oriented issues to individual-level safeguarding (and to some extent, offender management). The respondent from Devon and Cornwall notes the shift in the focus of local partnerships; “[the] *high level of involvement in diversionary activities in the earlier years, linked to ASB and volume crime*” has reduced and been “*replaced by the increased number of meetings linked to safeguarding for child sexual exploitation concerns and mental health issues*”.

The implications of this change, specifically for *neighbourhood* policing was most clearly demonstrated in Tameside, Greater Manchester (previously discussed in Section 3.1) where neighbourhood officers and PCSOs had effectively become the fieldworkers for an Integrated Neighbourhood Services approach, addressing individuals generating concern across a range of services. Those officers saw clear benefits in integration:

*"In the past, if you went to a vulnerable person you would be emailing people, phoning people, well we've got people in there [partners in the police station] now that can access it straight away. We would [previously] be waiting a week for an email to ping back and things like that. Because you'd phone up Adult Social Care the person you wanted to speak to wouldn't be there, all that sort of stuff, but they can now access their systems, so that was great. And of course we've got this [daily] meeting. We've got the help at our fingertips so that combined approach is actually changing people's lives. So it makes a huge, huge difference."*  
(Tameside, GMP)

However they also expressed a nagging sense that something was being missed:

*"This is completely different for me, but we just seem to spend, [in] my opinion an inordinate amount of time dealing with INS [Integrated Neighbourhood Services]. So I'm not doing*

*anything I used to do. Again the house to house and CCTV and walking the beat, there just doesn't seem to be the time, and that's why we're not being seen out ... we're dealing with all the vulnerability issues and repeat demand, which is great, But ... we used to do, ASB and dealing with the community."* (Tameside, GMP)

Although the Merseyside respondent (for example) emphasised the need for neighbourhood teams to *"Maintain partnership engagement to support problem solving and the reduction of vulnerability"* (emphasis added), it is clear that the primary focus of more concerted multi-agency working has been to improve the coordination of the response to individual cases, rather than to support problem-oriented activities focused at the area or neighbourhood level.

Most recently, the growing involvement of neighbourhood teams in early intervention and responding to adverse childhood experiences – for example the using the Tool for Intervention and Prevention Triggers (TIPT) referral process developed in the West Midlands<sup>102</sup> – further serves to reinforce a case-based working style.

**KEY FINDING:** *Integrated working, often involving co-location, is being introduced to improve inefficient inter-agency referral and meeting-based processes. These arrangements tend to focus on casework and – where they involve neighbourhood policing teams – can push these toward that mode of working.*

102 West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (2017).

# 8. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING AS A JOB

This section briefly looks at the experience of being a neighbourhood policing practitioner and the place and status of the role within policing.

## 8.1 A GREAT JOB... FOR THE RIGHT KIND OF PERSON

For all the barriers and frustrations, neighbourhood policing can be a highly rewarding and satisfying role for those who identify with its values and embrace its philosophy. It can offer opportunities to make genuine connections with local residents and directly impact on the quality of peoples' lives:

*"I've just come off two years doing response, every time I just got to the end of 10 hours and thought, 'I've survived another shift' ... we dealt with symptoms ... and I asked to come back to [neighbourhood policing] because there's some things that people will never see and nobody will ever know, and you'll never get a pat in the back for it, but I go home with a sense of pride that we have made a significant difference ... life is better for somebody as a result of what we've done. So, I get an immense sense of satisfaction about the small things that we do in neighbourhood policing."* (FG14)

In comparison to other local policing roles it was felt to allow practitioners some space to take a longer-term view of issues and see projects through to conclusion, with potential to achieve real and lasting results. Perhaps reflecting the change in the role over recent years, neighbourhood policing was increasingly identified as 'real' police work.

*"On neighbourhoods, if you come up with a problem and you say right, well, there's no rush to this, but I can plan something around putting a stop to it. And then you get the satisfaction of actually of seeing it all the way through."* (FG8)

*"It [neighbourhood policing] was always very fluffy beforehand. The kick-arse coppers would be on response and the nicer sort of problem-solvers were on SNT [Safer Neighbourhoods*

*Teams] ... It's almost been switched round where the neighbourhood side of policing is where you can target the villains and do some good ... and those poor guys that are answering the radio are literally going out and fire-fighting."* (FG13)

Several practitioners also emphasised the opportunities neighbourhood policing afforded to use a degree of initiative, judgement and discretion.

*"Freedom to go and do what I want, when I want to and come back with results ... going out and talking to people on their own doorsteps. So they know there's somebody there if they want us for whatever reason in the future."* (PCSO, FG7)

*"We can dip in if it's a local issue. So if we're having a rise in vehicle crime ... I can take it. Likewise if I have a couple of pub fights and I want the licence reviewing, I can take that. And it's a bit of a freedom to do it, but you've got to fit that into everything else ... It is that ability to look at something and go, that needs dealing with, and take it on."* (FG2)

For these reasons, neighbourhood roles were seen as an attractive option for those looking to build experience and evidence for promotion applications. While this could inject energy into delivery, it could also lead to short tenures and a lack of much needed continuity, as ambitious individuals gained promotion or moved on to seek broader experience.

*"Long term, if you're looking to go to somewhere specialist, being a DWO [Dedicated Ward Officer] allows you to plan warrants or plan things long term. Which ... on your applications, looks so much better than just saying I've been on a response team for eight years and I've gone to 999 calls over and over again."* (FG8)

*"There's partner working, there's public-facing [work], there's a lot of elements of neighbourhood policing that you don't get in any other policing team. So ... If you want promotion I think you'd push towards it, which is where a lot of the non-continuity comes in, where you'll have people in posts for three months, six months, a year and then*

*they go again. And I think it takes you about two years to even know where you are with neighbourhood policing, if I'm honest.” (FG2)*

Respondents also identified a set of distinctive characteristics, skills and personal qualities – including empathy, patience and communication skills – that made for a good neighbourhood policing practitioner, but also emphasised that commitment, motivation and ‘buy-in’ to its values and philosophy were crucial.

*“I’ve done neighbourhood policing for nearly 13 years, a neighbourhood police officer is not similar to a response office or to a desk officer, you’ve got to really have the skills. You really need to have communication skills; to go to the public and you sit down with them and they think you’re one of them.” (FG3)*

*“You need that empathy and you need to be able to be very patient, very calm with people and just know that you’re not always going to [be able to] help them, but sometimes you’re just ... a sounding board.” (FG7)*

*“You have got to have that sort of desire to want to police differently.” (FG12)*

## 8.2 AN UNRECOGNISED SPECIALISM

It was suggested that applying these qualities and aptitudes to achieve policing ends required a valuable and rare, but underappreciated, set of talents and skills which could and should be considered a specialism.

*“It takes a special someone to be able to engage with the community, know what information you’re after, know what to do with it, and know how valuable that information is that you’re getting from them.” (FG5)*

*[Neighbourhood policing means] “Having specialist knowledge about the people and places in your neighbourhood. Having the time to devote to building trust and relationships with members of the public. Identifying local priorities and being the face of the police in your area.” (Web survey)*

On several occasions however respondents reported that neighbourhood roles were too often filled by individuals without the requisite motivation or personal attributes. In some cases this was the

result of hastily implemented change programmes and the need to ‘staff up’ new models without regard to personal ‘fit’. In other instances it was suggested that neighbourhood posts had, at times, been attractive to those looking to ‘coast’ or become a repository for supervisors to place less able or motivated members of staff.

*“It’s just fill the jobs. That’s all it is at the moment, it’s just fill the jobs with people and it doesn’t matter what experience they’ve got or anything else.” (FG2)*

*“In the old days it could be a bit of a soft touch. And even now you’re not ... a slave to the radio, so there is an attraction to that and some people really don’t like being too busy ... as a supervisor, you have to say, ‘no, no, no, I need good people’. You don’t want the sick, lame and lazy sent to community [policing] to keep them out the way. You need really good, specialist community officers.” (Sergeant, FG3)*

*“We end up with police officers in a neighbourhood role who, if they had gone through some recruitment and selection process, would not have been in that role ... we’re getting square pegs in round holes ... If you want [to recruit] a police detective we take people with a skill for it, an inquisitive mind ... people need to understand that if you work in neighbourhood policing you need to have an empathy and an understanding of what partners do, because then you’ll also have an understanding and empathy of what goes on in the community. We don’t select for that, we tend to just pop people into the [vacant roles].” (FG14)*

These comments express a perceived need for the professionalisation of neighbourhood policing. Practitioners felt action was required to improve the status of the function, articulate its value, and recognise and promote the core skills and attributes of effective practice, in order to attract, select and (most importantly) retain the most able personnel, for meaningful portions of their career.

*“The more you, I don’t know if it’s ‘specialise’, but the more you make community [policing] a recognised skill ... someone [will] say, hang on, that’s what my skill set suits ... it’s a very generalised or a wide set of policing skills. But the more you make that an attractive thing, so that people say, hang on, that’s where I want to go, I don’t just want to deal with every stupid [incident] as a response officer and I don’t want*

*to sit behind a desk doing files all day; make it a really desirable role and have the right people steering up from ground level.” (FG3)*

*“Neighbourhood officers are not given the kudos that the role should hold. This is because the role ... has become blurred and they are seen by some officers from response and specialist departments as the ‘menial task person’.”*

(Web survey)

The lack of a recognised training package or body of professional knowledge – particularly in comparison to other policing ‘specialisms’ – was identified as a particular gap. Although the value of on-the-job learning and mentoring by experienced colleagues was acknowledged, few practitioners reported having received any formal training for their role. This was felt to be a barrier to improving the quality of delivery and the status of the discipline.

*“What would make it more of a specialist role is if there was actually a package of training that was put behind it. So, if I want to be a road police officer, I would go through a whole load of driving courses ... so, it wasn’t that you were specialist because you were titled ‘traffic officer’, you were a specialist because we gave you some training to do that job. We still don’t do that with neighbourhood policing.” (FG14)*

*“There’s a complete lack of specialist training, I mean, the idea that someone can just turn up and do this and be expected to do that without training, I think is a failing of the police as a whole ... Why isn’t there a couple of weeks course when someone’s going to join?” (FG11)*

*“You can tape up a leak in a pipe which will last until you drive away but your customer will not want you back to fix the leak again. We are currently issuing tape to untrained plumbers.”*

(Web survey)

The gap in skills and training was acknowledged as a problem by some at force level – particularly where neighbourhood policing had been significantly eroded and was being rebuilt, or where staff churn had been greatest. Several key leads reported efforts to develop training in some aspects of neighbourhood work; Leicestershire for example are working with a university to develop a formally accredited package and are considering introducing a minimum tenure policy to promote continuity in neighbourhood roles.

**KEY FINDING:** Neighbourhood policing can provide rewarding work and is recognised to require a particular set of skills, aptitudes and motivation, however it has not achieved the status of a police ‘specialism’. This contributes to issues with staffing continuity and the suitability of personnel. The lack of formal training was identified as a particular barrier to professionalisation and improvement.

# 9. THE FUTURE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

## 9.1 LOOKING BACK

In the latter part of the twentieth century, community policing developed out of a perceived need to reconnect the police with the increasingly diverse and plural public(s) they served. The gap it sought to close had appeared, at least in part, as the result of a shift towards a more reactive, 'technologically' enabled operating model, designed to better deal with a growing volume of public calls for service.

The first decade of the new millennium saw substantial public investment in British community policing, as well as a new name. *Neighbourhood* policing, took the community policing root and grafted on a new set of objectives. Reassurance became a prominent idea; communities did not just need familiar and accessible police officers, they needed a confidence boost and to be freed from the sense of insecurity that affected wellbeing and prevented them from flourishing. Influenced by 'signal crimes' theory, this was to be achieved in three interconnected ways; visible patrolling, public engagement (including to identify the problems that impacted local people the most), and collaborative 'problem solving' to fix them. The approach emphasised tackling the often 'low-level', public-place, highly visible problems – including antisocial behaviour – that affected the many, and promoted a responsive public-service ethos, in which local residents set the priorities and the police took their lead.

And it worked, at least in its early pilot versions. When implemented well, local people said they felt safer and their views of the police improved. What is more, they actually got safer – fewer reported experiencing crime and antisocial behaviour, with clear correspondence between the problem solving activities undertaken and the types of improvements seen<sup>103</sup>. Yet (as is so often the case) implementing

at-scale proved more of a challenge. Although it was not clear what impact they had had, when the national roll-out ended in 2008, nearly 30,000 police officers and PCSOs had been placed at the disposal of local communities across England and Wales.

This study has sought to establish what has happened since, under conditions of public sector austerity, the emergence of new and complex forms of demand and with increased focus on hidden harm and vulnerability.

The exercise was necessary for four reasons. First, after briefly being given a public relations assignment for the police (in the form of the single confidence target) during the last years of the New Labour government, Conservative localism cast neighbourhood policing to the countervailing winds in 43 police force areas. With no central author, the narrative has become fragmented and required piecing together. Second, partly due to the rhetorical capital it has come to carry, the meaning and content of the 'neighbourhood' label has become increasingly nebulous and opaque; local accounts therefore required scrutiny and close comparison. Third, because progress towards the shared national goal of more '*proactive preventative*' local policing – as promised in the Policing Vision 2025 – requires an understanding of where we are now and how we got here; and fourth, because it is clear that all is not well, with HMIC(FRS) repeatedly warning of 'erosion' to capacity and capability<sup>104</sup>.

## 9.2 WHERE WE ARE AND HOW WE GOT HERE

The fact-finding and qualitative evidence gathering undertaken in the course of this research, combined with quantitative workforce data analysis, leads to a number of conclusions about

103 Tuffin, Morris and Poole (2006).

104 HMIC (2017a), p4.

the way neighbourhood policing has developed in England and Wales since 2008, and where it has arrived in 2017/18.

### **1. Neighbourhood policing has diversified since 2008.**

Neighbourhood policing is now a much broader set of arrangements and practices than it was in 2008, with variation within as well as between police forces. To some extent this reflects adaptation to place, however it is also the product of different forces' responses to a complex set of challenges including shrinking budgets and high volumes of complex demand, as well as different points in the 'reinvention cycle' and differences in philosophy (see 3 below). Iterations of neighbourhood policing differ according to whether a more 'universal' or 'targeted' approach has been adopted and, if the latter, whether they are of high or low intensity. In some places attempts have been made to preserve neighbourhood policing in a relatively traditional (although shrunken) form, in others it has been pragmatically allowed to dissolve into a more general form of local policing – in others still, it has been specifically redesigned to take on this more 'hybrid' remit, building in elements of response and investigation. Alternatively, neighbourhood policing can be reformed and re-energised with either a community or a harm/vulnerability focus, if the latter this can be thematic or case-based. More broadly, elements such as visibility, safeguarding, reassurance and enforcement can take on greater or lesser prominence.

### **2. The traditional outputs of neighbourhood policing have been eroded.**

Regardless of the form it takes, neighbourhood policing is under strain everywhere and has suffered substantial attrition. Contrary to the official workforce data (which shows that in 2017 there were still just under 30,000 police officers and PCSOs in nominal 'neighbourhood policing' roles<sup>105</sup>), front line practitioners consistently report that the number of staff available for core neighbourhood work (like community engagement and local problem-solving) has substantially diminished. At the same time they report that demand on local policing has intensified and changed, particularly as a result of demand displacement from other agencies, from those suffering mental ill-health and a lack of local preventative problem solving. The

result has been significant attrition to the outputs and outcomes traditionally associated with neighbourhood policing; community engagement, visibility, community intelligence gathering, local knowledge and preventative proactivity are consistently reported to be in decline.

### **3. Neighbourhood policing has undergone two distinct shifts in purpose and function, towards vulnerability/harm prevention and towards servicing reactive demand.**

External erosion is only part of the narrative of change to neighbourhood policing since 2008, it has also metamorphosed from within. This has taken the form of two distinct functional shifts. The first reflects the turn within policing toward harm (including 'hidden' harm) and vulnerability. This realignment is generally accepted and, perhaps for that reason, has occurred without ceremony. It has resulted in a shift in the focus of neighbourhood policing from providing reassurance and addressing public-place issues, to preventing/reducing crime, demand and harm, including that hidden from public view. This change places greater emphasis on the harm that crime causes to victims and less on the confidence and wellbeing of the community at large. It has a number of consequences for structure (legitimising a more targeted approach – see 9 below), prioritisation (de-centring low-level, high-visibility issues and the priorities set directly by the community) and practice (bringing functions like offender management and finding missing people within the scope of neighbourhood teams in some forces).

The second shift is pragmatic (rather than ideological) and generally seen as illegitimate by practitioners and unavoidable by forces; it relates to the increasing use of 'neighbourhood' resources to service the responsive/reactive workload, including responding to public calls for service and investigating crimes. Of the 22 forces who responded, 14 said neighbourhood personnel were abstracted from their designated duties *to some extent* or *a lot*, (with the remaining eight saying they were abstracted *a little* rather than *not at all*) – although responses depended on the degree to which response duties were 'designed in' to the 'neighbourhood' role. Neighbourhood practitioners emphasised that elements of response and investigation could be an appropriate part of

<sup>105</sup> The result of some forces adopting a 'hybrid' approach in which officers performing a joint neighbourhood and response role are classified within the 'Neighbourhood policing' category of the official workforce data.

a preventative, problem-focused remit, although in most cases the level of routine reactive work being undertaken went well beyond these parameters.

#### **4. Community engagement and harm prevention tend to be viewed as separate elements of neighbourhood policing – less frequently the former is understood as a mechanism for achieving the latter.**

This more recent focus on harm prevention and vulnerability has been added into, rather than replacing, the earlier community reassurance formulation of neighbourhood policing. The 'blend' differs between forces and the two elements sometimes stand in uneasy tension competing for resource. Occasionally, practitioners articulated a rationale for delivering preventative policing *through* an embedded neighbourhood mechanism, for instance by building consent and therefore deepening access, mobilising community resource or building trust and gaining intelligence. These appear vital ideas for defining the role a 'neighbourhood' approach can play in a future prevention-focused local policing offer and it is important that they are made explicit.

#### **5. 'Hybrid' and 'semi-hybrid' workforce models – that combine neighbourhood policing with elements of reactive local policing – have emerged since 2008.**

A number of forces have sought to absorb these reactive demand pressures, while maintaining some element of neighbourhood policing, by adopting a more general or 'hybrid' approach in which local police officers perform both response and neighbourhood tasks, with PCSOs typically providing a more dedicated neighbourhood resource (although they too are increasingly abstracted to reactive work). Kent and Wiltshire police described fully hybrid models, while workforce data suggests Gwent, South Yorkshire, Cambridgeshire and Cumbria were taking a similar approach in 2017. Some other approaches are best described as 'semi-hybrid', either in the sense that forces supplement a smaller dedicated neighbourhood cadre with a more general local resource (which often also carries the 'neighbourhood' badge), or because they adopt dedicated and hybrid approaches in different areas or at different times. Local reports suggest these models can struggle to release capacity for proactive

working and can even lead to 'over-resourcing' of immediate demand as 'neighbourhood' resource becomes more readily available for reactive tasking.

#### **6. The unpredictability of hybrid workloads can undermine local engagement and proactivity.**

There is consistent testimony from practitioners that a workload that (either by design or adaptation) contains significant amounts of responsive police work is unsuited to also delivering core neighbourhood policing activities like community engagement and partnership working. This is not just a matter of the time reactive tasks take up, but also that they make for a highly unpredictable workload which can undermine efforts to make and keep appointments and commitments. Neighbourhood policing requires diary planning and response policing militates against this. There is evidence that the range of activities neighbourhood officers choose to undertake with the time they have available is constrained by anticipated disruption.

#### **7. There is an emerging trend towards 'dehybridisation' (ie for forces adopting smaller neighbourhood policing functions with more tightly defined remits).**

Although some forces (most recently Wiltshire) continue to move to a hybrid approach, the stronger recent trend is in the opposite direction. Realising its drawbacks, forces (and sometimes divisions or smaller units within forces) are increasingly choosing to designate smaller, functionally discrete policing teams to 'neighbourhood'/local preventative duties and to (partly or wholly) insulate these from reactive demand. Essex undertook this transformation in 2016/17, workforce data suggests Cheshire did so in 2015/16 and South Yorkshire, Humberside, Lincolnshire and Sussex provided responses that suggested their thinking was heading in this direction. Gloucestershire had also adopted this approach, allocating a small, dedicated neighbourhood resource to selected communities and issues which were judged to present the greatest risk, while other parts of the county received a more generalised local policing offer.

## **8. The shift in emphasis toward threat, risk, harm and vulnerability provides a basis for a geographically differentiated neighbourhood policing offer.**

The shift in function from community reassurance to more focused harm prevention provides the rationale for a more targeted and differentiated neighbourhood policing offer. If the primary function of neighbourhood policing is to prevent harm (rather than provide universal reassurance and access), then it makes sense to concentrate resources where it is most likely to occur. Forces are developing a range of tools to assist resource allocation in this way. West Midlands Police, for example have developed a five-tier model to differentiate the 'Need for Local Policing' in each neighbourhood, and allocate their resources accordingly. Elsewhere tools like the Vulnerable Localities Index are used to tailor services to need, risk and/or demand.

## **9. Forces are searching for ways to redefine the universal policing offer.**

As the above implies, forces are increasingly separating local preventative functions from universal access and communication channels, which were previously combined within the early-century version of neighbourhood policing. There is broad agreement that forces must continue to service the latter element in some form that amounts to more than just response policing, for example by retaining a named officer/PCSO network and/or improving alternative channels of communication such as social media. It should be noted however that universal neighbourhood policing is not in retreat everywhere. London's version of de-hybridisation involves a (near) 'blanket' offer of two dedicated officers and one PCSO per electoral ward, with minimal resource tailoring to demand/need; the (admittedly limited) evidence collected in this study suggests that, in its early implementation at least, the model may stretch resource thinly and contain some built in barriers.

## **10. The use and remit of PCSOs has become more varied and remains in flux.**

Although sometimes seen as the last bastion of community engagement and local proactivity, PCSOs are also performing a broader role than initially conceived, including elements of incident response, police support work and safeguarding/risk assessment work. Some concern was encountered that this was pushing them to (and perhaps beyond) the limits of their training, powers and comfortable

responsibility. While several forces had developed innovative and specialist roles for PCSOs, many had decided to reduce their numbers; across England and Wales PCSO numbers have fallen by 35 per cent since 2008, compared with a 13 per cent reduction in police officers.

## **11. Community-led priorities have become more marginal to the work of neighbourhood policing and prioritisation within the neighbourhood function has become more ambiguous and multifaceted.**

With occasional exceptions, formal community-led priorities – where they are set at all – are increasingly marginal to the work of neighbourhood teams, with some practitioners reporting a gulf between community and force priorities and expectations. Again this relates to the policing shift to higher-harm and less visible concerns, that may not be known to or impact upon the community at large. There is some evidence that communities are seeking other channels, such as appeals to local councillors and MPs to get things done, and that local teams tend to feel obligated to address these demands when they arise.

## **12. While central to the contemporary formulation of neighbourhood policing, 'problem solving' has become more broadly understood and now includes the case-management of vulnerable or problematic individuals.**

'Problem solving' is core to the 'official' understanding of what neighbourhood policing is for. On the ground, there is some evidence of local systems being used to manage and organise proactive work, which were broadly in line with SARA and/or other systematic frameworks. There were indications, however, that proactive responses can often be directed by the readily available responses – for example where forces maintain a local tasking team, the work of neighbourhood teams can be (perhaps overly) preoccupied with generating intelligence to execute search warrants. In addition, it is important to note that the working understanding of 'problem solving' has expanded to include (and may default to) case-based working in which vulnerable/high-risk/high-demand individuals are framed as the 'problems' (or the subjects of problem solving) and multi-agency information sharing and coordination has become the stock mechanism for response (see 15 below).

### **13. The health of neighbourhood policing is interconnected with the effectiveness of systems for dealing with reactive demand.**

Neighbourhood practitioners reported an ever-present tension with control rooms, (and others within their organisations) seeking to allocate incoming demand. Strong supervision, particularly at sergeant level, to resist and push back against such requests, was identified as an enabler of local proactivity. This paints a picture of an interdependent system fighting with itself to maintain form, under the weight of incoming demand. Force respondents reflected on the dilemma of finding resource to work on demand reduction without compromising their response to the current demand profile. Several key leads discussed ongoing efforts to optimise the efficiency of response, without compromising safety or effectiveness, this included finding ways to refer on or resolve more calls remotely, without the need for physical attendance, while ensuring vulnerability was identified and dealt with appropriately. Some were also bracing themselves for difficult conversations about what they would no longer do. The fate of neighbourhood policing may depend on the success of both processes.

### **14. Public sector austerity can make neighbourhood-level partnership work highly challenging. Police forces and neighbourhood practitioners face the dilemma of 'stepping in' or 'pulling back', and both strategies are being adopted.**

Many local partnerships have matured and consolidated since 2008, while new ones have been established, leading to numerous examples of productive joint-working. However, funding cuts and priority shifts have also created gaps and led, in some cases, to retrenchment and 'threshold raising'. As a result, some neighbourhood policing personnel report frustrations in their attempts to engage partners in making provision for individuals generating repeat demand, however some also accept that the service they (and police colleagues) provide to their partners can be equally flawed. These conditions create dilemmas for local police; to what extent should they step in to fill the perceived

gaps left by service contraction elsewhere? And, to what extent should they seek to fill vacuums in local coordination and leadership where they appear? Differences of philosophy exist at both strategic and practitioner level. While some forces are preparing to move into unfamiliar service territory, others emphasise the need to delineate remits more tightly, and while some practitioners embrace a 'neighbourhood management' role others fall back on police powers to define their remit.

### **15. More integrated partnership approaches are emerging in some places and tend to support case-based modes of working.**

There is evidence of deeper and more integrated working between local police and key partners emerging in a number of forces, often involving the co-location of some staff. This is seen as an improvement on sluggish referral arrangements and inefficient meeting cycles. These arrangements tend to focus on coordinating the case-management of vulnerable and/or problematic individuals (rather than on identifying and addressing local 'mid-level' problems<sup>106</sup>). To the extent that neighbourhood police personnel are involved in the work of these integrated 'hubs' their work can also become 'case' rather than problem oriented.

### **16. Neighbourhood policing requires unique skills but has failed to gain recognition as a policing specialism.**

Neighbourhood policing can be a rewarding occupation for those committed to its values, affording opportunities to forge relationships, work on longer-term projects, use initiative and judgement and develop a broad set of policing skills and experience. For this reason it is sometimes used as a career stepping stone for ambitious officers, which can lead to a lack of continuity – a precious and all too rare commodity in neighbourhood policing. While there is broad acknowledgement that neighbourhood policing requires particular attributes, aptitudes and skills, to date it has failed to gain formal recognition as a 'specialism', and as such can be undermined by inappropriate postings, low base-line skills and a lack of professional status. The lack of a firm disciplinary anchor makes it prone

106 In describing the process for identifying suitable objects for attention within a problem-oriented approach Sparrow (2016) notes that these; "lie *in between*; where the object of study is larger than a single incident or event but smaller than a general class of harms. It is in this *in-between* realm where much exciting work seems to take place." (p141). Case-management might be thought of as one step up from 'individual incidents and events'. Between it and 'general classes of harm', there remains a great deal of unexamined space within which impactful interventions might be constructed.

to conceptual drift and ambiguity of purpose. Developing formal training is seen as a key step on the road to professionalising the discipline, and attracting, selecting and retaining the most able and motivated personnel.

### 9.3 THE FUTURE

Practitioners feel that neighbourhood policing has been particularly neglected in recent years and fear that its future is bleak. The (admittedly small and self-selecting) sample of police officers and PCSOs who completed this project's web survey gave an average score of 3.5 out of 10<sup>107</sup> to reflect their level of optimism about the function in their own force, and 3 out of 10 for neighbourhood policing more generally. When only those below the rank of inspector are included the ratings fall to 2.8 and 2.6 respectively. The extent to which forces are reviewing and reforming their local policing models suggests leaders share the sense that all is not well.

To a large extent the direction of travel has been set. The Policing Vision 2025, agreed by all forces and their PCCs in 2016 outlines how, working towards that date, local policing will be increasingly focused on *proactive prevention*, based on a *sophisticated understanding of community needs in order to keep people safe*, and force plans are beginning to echo its language and emphases. The document states that ensuring local safety will be achieved by identifying and tackling recurrent issues and individuals, adapting to local evidence of impact, supporting (but not leading) efforts to build cohesive communities, sharing data, using academic knowledge and investing in analytics. In particular, the need for far greater alignment and integration with other local public services is emphasised, moving towards a 'whole-system' approach. This represents a clear break from previous preoccupations with reassurance and responding to community-led priorities, but it is also a clear rejection of a slide towards reactive 'fire-fighting'.

Given the current state of neighbourhood policing as described in this report (within which much of the proactive preventative capability of local policing has been invested in recent years), while also drawing on the broader evidence-base and setting aside, for the moment, the issue of what the resulting delivery

system is called<sup>108</sup>, it is important to consider *how* the vision can, and should, be made reality. The next section is an attempt to establish some firm foundations applicable across the highly varied local contexts to which they might be applied – but first it is worth briefly thinking about what the future might hold.

The future is hard to predict. A forward looking vision for policing written at the time of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme would have failed to take account of the financial crisis, public sector austerity, the turn to localism and the 'discovery' of vulnerability – and its commitments would very likely lack relevance today as a result. This underlines the importance of building an approach based on strong basic principles that are as resilient as they can be to shifting context. That said, it would be foolhardy not to test those principles against probable future conditions. They must be suitable for a world in which resources remain limited and demand remains complex and intense, in which threats to personal security increasingly come through an internet connection and from far beyond the boundaries of the neighbourhood, but in which the threat of 'traditional' crime has ceased to diminish and may be resurgent. They must be suitable for neighbourhoods that are increasingly varied from each other, internally diverse and which can change rapidly. Within these places, local interconnections, relationships and norms may be weaker and less collectively shared, while some of the greatest risks and threats to individuals living within them still inhere in interpersonal relationships with others, including within households.

Such conditions mean that prevention will also need to be considered within frames that are less local and not constrained by 'the neighbourhood'. Ideally, responses should reflect the natural size and shape of problems (as revealed by analysis)<sup>109</sup>, and it is safe to assume that some of these are expanding and gaining complexity, while narrower and more intimate ones will continue to demand attention. There is, however, a strong argument that the local should remain the 'bedrock', as the gateway to the reality of crime and risk as experienced by victims and the vulnerable, as a vital source of information about it, and of resilience against it. To harness these, the police will continue to require presence, connection and trusting, personal relationships forged over time. What next then for proactive preventative local policing?

107 Base of 36 respondents, 28 below the rank of inspector.

108 The Policing Vision 2025 (APCC and NPCC, 2016) identifies neighbourhood policing as the means by which such aims have been delivered in the past but does not presume its continued relevance.

109 Sparrow (2016).

## 9.4 TOWARDS THE FUTURE: A FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERING PROACTIVE, PREVENTATIVE LOCAL POLICING<sup>110</sup>

The following set of principles is intended to provide a framework for transition to the more 'proactive preventative' form of local policing described in the Policing Vision 2025, drawing on the insights generated through this research and with reference to the broader evidence base. It is not intended as a prescriptive national model – the importance of adaptation to local context is clearly apparent from this research – however it is likely to be more applied than, and is intended to be complimentary to, the Neighbourhood Policing Guidelines currently being prepared by the College of Policing.

**Principle 1: Everyone should have access to, information about and an opportunity for dialogue with the police and the other local services that have a role in improving community safety and quality of life in the place where they live.**

In its early-century version neighbourhood policing sought to provide universal public access to and familiar contact with the police, alongside some elements of proactive crime and disorder reduction (in the form of local problem solving). In the current decade however, this has proved unsustainable and compromises have had to be made. Hybrid and semi-hybrid models (and highly abstracted 'traditional' models) have attempted to preserve a form of universal coverage, often at the expense of proactivity. Conversely, the current trend towards more geographically targeted models may provide a greater preventative emphasis, but raises questions about what policing services (beyond emergency response) the public should expect in non-priority areas.

Although it is no longer feasible to maintain a dedicated, proactive policing team in every neighbourhood, police forces need to maintain a *'tangible link between citizens and the police in their area'*<sup>111</sup> in other ways. This might include through use of social and other media, by maintaining a universal

patchwork of local PCSOs, and/or by assigning liaison officers to non-geographic communities or groups most likely to require policing services or reassurance. The police must also continue to fulfil (and should make the most of) their statutory duty to hold regular meetings to consult with the public in every neighbourhood.

Given that public demands and requests for local improvements to community safety and quality of life are not constrained by organisational remits, and often fall wholly or partly outside the gift of the police, it would make sense that (in line with the broader ambition) these public contact channels should become more integrated and jointly owned. This might, for example, include a network of Community Support Officers shared between police, local authority, and potentially other members in the Community Safety Partnership, providing a single access point to local safety services, and/or joint public consultation meetings.

**Principle 2: In line with the Policing Vision 2025, police forces should seek to deliver 'proactive preventative' local policing. They should do so by adopting structures and models designed to deliver the types of activities that are known to be effective in preventing crime, harm and demand. Where the evidence is lacking, these models should follow a clear preventative logic.**

Given the intensity of reactive demand confronting local policing, the service's commitment to prevention is ambitious and commendable; a bleak, 'blue light'<sup>112</sup> future has been evoked but firmly rejected. However, the promise of proactivity will not be delivered by defensive policing models principally designed around the imperative to respond to calls for service. Dealing with what is happening now must always be balanced against longer-term prevention (and this is dealt with under Principles 5 and 6), however, as this study has shown, form and function are intimately connected. Neighbourhood policing functions aligned with response shifts and made available to control rooms for tasking will inevitably end up doing reactive work; practitioners who know they are likely to be abstracted will root themselves less deeply in communities and in proactive work.

110 Following the lead set by the Policing Vision for 2025 we leave open the question of whether any or all of this function might usefully carry the 'neighbourhood policing' label. Principle 9 sets out the recommended stance on nomenclature.

111 APCC and NPCC (2016).

112 BBC (2015).

Omni-competence and flexibility, while they may have been adopted with sound intentions, have become metaphors for abstraction.

It is for police forces, under the oversight of their elected PCCs, to determine how best to deliver local policing services; however, with the commitment to prevention already made, there is clear evidence on the type of activities that policing models and structures should seek to facilitate, enable and encourage.

**Principle 3: The evidence-base supports selective, targeted deployment of embedded place-based practitioners, with a remit to develop and maintain a deep understanding of the problems that underlie local risk in context, and to develop, implement and review creative, tailored interventions to impact on them.**

The evidence base on prevention is incomplete and has, arguably, failed to keep pace with changes in the nature of crime and societal priorities; however, it offers a number of broad lessons<sup>113</sup> including:

- Problem-Oriented Policing (sometimes referred to as problem-solving) can reduce crime and disorder across a range of settings<sup>114</sup>. This involves taking a structured approach to developing in-depth understanding of the nature and causes of local problems, developing and implementing creative, tailored interventions, and assessing progress and refining practice accordingly.
- Focusing on small hotspots or micro-locations, including by using problem solving approaches can effectively reduce crime,<sup>115</sup> and approaches targeted on small localities tend to be more effective than those based on wider geographies or on individuals<sup>116</sup>.

- Interventions that extend beyond standard policing activities<sup>117</sup>, for example involving other agencies<sup>118</sup> and the community<sup>119</sup> are more often effective.
- Nothing works everywhere<sup>120</sup>: crime prevention activities are situated interventions in unique, complex social systems and as such tailoring to local context is vital.

Taken together these well-established research findings imply that a preventatively oriented policing model should:

1. Allow practitioners to develop an in-depth knowledge of places (defined flexibly but tending towards a small geographic scale<sup>121</sup>) and the risks to safety within them, for example by;
  - Embedding them within those places for an extended period of time.
  - Enabling them to engage with and form trusting relationships with a broad range of individuals living in and frequenting those places – especially those most likely to be at risk, or to have access to those who are.
  - Providing them with access to data and intelligence about the threats and risks to safety within that place, and to the services of those who can analyse and interpret it (or with the skills, tools and capacity to do so themselves).
  - Sharing knowledge and information with local practitioners from other agencies who also have insights into the risks and threats in that place.
2. Enable practitioners to develop and implement (or coordinate/'commission' the implementation by others of) creative interventions that respond to this deep, contextual understanding of the problem, informed by knowledge about what

113 It is likely that these will feature strongly within the evidence based guidelines for neighbourhood policing currently being prepared by the College of Policing.

114 Weisburd et al. (2008), Weisburd and Eck (2004).

115 Braga et al. (2012).

116 Lum et al. (2010).

117 Weisburd and Eck (2004).

118 Berry et al. (2011).

119 Myhill (2006), Mutual Gain (2017).

120 Laycock (2014).

121 Likely to be closer to the average ward size of around 7,000 residents, than the average Local Authority area size of more than 160,000 residents.

has, and has not, been effective elsewhere. It should also assist them in finding creative ways of securing resources, including community resources, to get things done. This might include, (but should not be limited to) a comprehensive tool kit of policing activities including:

- Providing an immediate response to problem-relevant incidents,
- Investigating particular crimes and, where appropriate, prosecuting offenders,
- Providing a deterrent presence,
- Introducing situational crime prevention measures,
- Developing intelligence and carrying out intelligence-led enforcement/disruption,
- Providing crime prevention advice,
- Managing offenders,
- Safeguarding vulnerable individuals.

However, where these are delivered by locally embedded practitioners they should always be done **in pursuit of specific preventative ends, in relation to particular, defined local problems.**

This should not be the generic mechanism through which all activity of any of these types is delivered within the area.

It may well also involve conducting or instigating a range of activity less traditionally connected with the police including, (again) in response to defined local problems:

- Mobilising and enabling communities,
- Facilitating Early Intervention,
- Making improvements to the physical environment.

3. Equip practitioners with the skills, or (more likely) with access to the expertise required, to review and assess the impact of these activities to build deeper knowledge and refine plans and activity in the light of these insights.

The above provides an evidence based rationale for delivering aspects of local proactive prevention, *through* a locally embedded and engaged policing/ community safety resource.

**Principle 4: Locally embedded preventative proactivity should be delivered by functionally distinct teams and personnel.**

The evidence gathered in this study clearly shows that local proactive, preventative policing is significantly compromised when functionally combined with substantial volumes of routine reactive police work. The role of locally embedded preventative practitioners should not, therefore, also involve *routine* incident response or investigation in any but the most exceptional circumstances, while their shift patterns and other working arrangements should be designed with their preventative function in mind. It may however be appropriate for these practitioners to undertake reactive work *in support of specific local preventative ends*, ideally by self-tasking (see Principle 3).

**Principle 5: Dedicated, embedded preventative resource should be provided where it is most needed and to the extent that resourcing allows, while also maintaining a balanced local policing model that can adequately respond to reactive demand.**

The approach advocated under Principles 3 and 4 is resource intensive and, therefore, it will rarely (if ever) be feasible to provide it as a universal service in all locations. To the extent that it is provided by local police, this will always be within an interdependent local policing system that must also deal with reactive demand. Reactive and proactive resources should be balanced so that the former can adequately deal with responsive demand in all but the most exceptional of circumstances.

**Principle 6: (While adhering to Principle 5), police forces and local partnerships should seek to incrementally shift resources into local proactive prevention.**

Strategic efforts should be made to progressively increase the amount of resource available for dedicated local preventative work including by: reinvesting resource that is made available as demand is reduced by prevention<sup>122</sup>, improving the efficiency and preventative effectiveness of reactive

122 Although it is acknowledged that, while sound in theory, this may be difficult to realise in practice.

police work including by reducing 'failure demand'<sup>123</sup>, increasing the efficiency of back office functions and specialist policing capabilities, including through greater inter-force collaboration. The extent to which a force succeeds in shifting resource to proactive prevention might be considered to be an indicator of effectiveness.

**Principle 7: Multi-agency casework relating to individuals should be undertaken in addition to, rather than as a substitute for local problem-oriented proactivity.**

Multi-agency case management should not be mistaken for problem oriented prevention. Dealing with at-risk or risky individuals, whose needs cut across agency remits has become a new orthodoxy for local policing and community safety partners<sup>124</sup>. While this activity shares a preventative purpose with problem oriented approaches, and may also require some planning and coordination, case-based approaches deal with risk and harm in a more granular way and tend not to be conducted following systematic scanning and analysis of problems<sup>125</sup>; the evidence-base for this mode of working is also more equivocal<sup>126</sup>.

While it is unthinkable, with the current emphasis on vulnerability, that these types of approaches (which form the basis of much public protection work) should not form part of a more integrated local policing/community safety offer, they have a different preventative logic from problem-oriented prevention and – being principally concerned with *individual* needs and risks – do not tend to draw value from being embedded within communities. Their delivery systems should therefore be considered separately, and it would seem practical that they should be arranged on the geographic basis that best supports efficient and effective working between police and partners. This is likely to be at a level above the very local, for example at local authority level.

123 For a summary see Caulkin (no date).

124 Higgins, Hales and Chapman (2016).

125 Sparrow (2016) identifies the tendency for community and problem oriented policing strategies to be implemented in 'reduced forms', which are organisationally more straight-forward to deliver. While the multi-agency case management of individuals may be an appropriate form of response to some 'problems', there is a risk that, as agencies become better organised to operate in this way, this becomes the default 'reduced' form of proactive response and the opportunities for intervention at other levels are ignored.

126 Of the 10 robustly evaluated studies which, when synthesised, provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of problem solving (Weisburd et al., 2008), only two focus on individuals rather than places and both of these were implemented in response to scanning and analysis of specific problems. Of the studies examined to establish the positive value of partnership working on crime reduction, only one that showed positive results could be considered 'case-based' and was programmatic rather than individually tailored (Berry et al. 2011). It has also been shown that interventions targeted at individuals tend to fare less well than those targeted at small places (Lum et al. 2010) and the recent failure of Troubled Families programme (a multi-agency case based approach) to demonstrate impact (Day et al., 2016) should give us pause to consider how and in what circumstances the approach is adopted.

**Principle 8: Efforts should be made to improve the status of neighbourhood policing/embedded local prevention as a field of practice; this should begin with establishing a body of professional knowledge and recognised training packages. Systems of recognition and reward should be developed that promote ongoing development within the field and, ideally, continued attachment to place.**

Doing locally-embedded proactive prevention can be rewarding and challenging, and to do it well requires analytical rigour as well as strong practical and interpersonal skills, however policing has failed to establish neighbourhood policing (or crime/harm/demand reduction) as a professional specialism. The lack of a disciplinary anchor has, in part, been the cause of considerable conceptual drift. If proactive prevention is to be prioritised, and for change to be robust, expertise needs to be developed, nurtured and valued.

**Principle 9: Police forces should adopt (and inspectors and overseers should ensure) clear and transparent labels for job roles, teams and units that clearly convey what those in them spend their time doing.**

Developing and maintaining an evidence-based system of preventatively focused local policing is highly challenging, particularly under conditions of high demand. Conceptual clarity is paramount. This will be aided by precise and transparent terminology that conveys the specific functional remit of individuals, teams and departments to staff, partners, and to the public. This will also aid leaders and those providing scrutiny in identifying drift or excessive abstraction from proscribed remits and identifying system stresses. Where the 'neighbourhood' label is chosen for any part of the

apparatus, the forthcoming College of Policing guidelines should help to define what an individual carrying that badge should spend their time doing.

National collations of functional workforce data should use a more naturalistic taxonomy based on a periodic survey of the organisational structures forces actually employ.

### **A final word on resources**

These principles are intended to be resilient to changes in context, for example the approach advocated is scalable and applicable regardless of any future changes in police funding. However, the resources available will inevitably impact on what

can be achieved. The attrition to neighbourhood policing and local proactive capability, encountered during this research is stark and should be of concern to anyone who believes the state should retain a positive and capable presence within local neighbourhoods to protect and enable its citizens. While there may be some scope for policing to incrementally shift some fraction of its existing resources from reactive and specialist functions into local preventative ones, on the evidence of this study it is difficult to escape the conclusion that without additional resources, any success will be limited in scale and vulnerable to unforeseen shifts in priorities and context.

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# APPENDIX 1: NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED IN INITIAL PROJECT STAGES

- College of Policing
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)
- Home Office
- National Crime Agency (NCA)
- National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)
- Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales

# APPENDIX 2: FORCE INFORMATION REQUEST

## WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING TO NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING IN YOUR FORCE?

### **Request to complete a short survey for our Police Foundation research project on the *Future of neighbourhood policing***

#### **1. An overview of the research project**

The Police Foundation is currently undertaking research exploring the *Future of neighbourhood policing*. We aim to:

- Chart how neighbourhood policing has changed in England and Wales since the end of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme in 2008 – and what it looks like in 2017.
- Identify what, if anything can be said about the impacts and consequences of the different approaches taken over the period.
- Understand how forces allocate resources to neighbourhood policing, and how these, in turn are allocated between neighbourhoods.
- Examine how neighbourhood resources are deployed to specific policing activities and how different approaches and policing styles are tailored to particular neighbourhoods.
- Examine how neighbourhood policing connects to, supports and is supported by other local services and other police functions – and how this might be improved.
- Explore how changes in crime, technology, society and the public's expectations have changed the policing needs of neighbourhoods, how neighbourhood policing has adapted so far, and how it might do so in the future.

This Police Foundation is grateful to the Hadley Trust (charity no. 1064823) for funding this work.

For more information, please see [www.police-foundation.org.uk/the-future-of-neighbourhood-policing](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/the-future-of-neighbourhood-policing)

#### **2. Our analysis so far**

The first output from the project is a **paper analysing published workforce data** on a force-by-force basis, this examines:

- The proportion of each force's workforce engaged in neighbourhood policing;
- The composition of the neighbourhood policing workforce (police officers vs. PCSOs and other police staff); and
- How these have changed over the period since 2008.

We have used that analysis to develop a working **typology** of force approaches to neighbourhood policing, with individual force details included in an accompanying **slide pack**. Both are available at: [www.police-foundation.org.uk/neighbourhood-policing-a-police-force-typology](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/neighbourhood-policing-a-police-force-typology)

#### **3. Can you help us understand what has been happening to neighbourhood policing in your force?**

For the next stage in our research we are asking representatives from each police force to help us by providing a **narrative** about what has been happening to neighbourhood policing in their area. In the first instance, this request is being addressed to **Local Policing ACCs**, but it may be that other personnel are better placed to answer some or all of the questions and you are welcome to ask others to assist as appropriate.

#### **4. What else is the Police Foundation doing as part of the *Future of neighbourhood policing* research project?**

- We started the research project by identifying and analysing published **data on the police workforce**, which forms the basis of our first paper, typology and accompanying slide pack.

- We then met with a range of **stakeholders** to explore current thinking on neighbourhood policing, to ensure that we aren't duplicating work going on elsewhere, and to ensure that the research will have impact when it is complete.
- In addition to this **information request**, we are reaching out more broadly to police officers, PCSOs and staff (of all ranks and roles) to share insights and views about the way neighbourhood policing has developed, and the direction in which it is headed, through a **short, anonymous online survey**. Should you also wish to take part in this, or encourage colleagues to so, we'd be very grateful for your support. The online survey can be found at: [www.police-foundation.org.uk/what-s-been-happening-to-neighbourhood-policing-in-your-force](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/what-s-been-happening-to-neighbourhood-policing-in-your-force)
- Finally, we intend to **visit** a number of police forces – probably based on the typology that we have developed – in order to examine in more detail how neighbourhood policing is delivered today.

## 5. If you want to get in touch with the research team at the Police Foundation

Please e-mail us at [neighbourhood.policing@police-foundation.org.uk](mailto:neighbourhood.policing@police-foundation.org.uk) or call us on 020 3752 5630.

### Questionnaire

Please refer to the slide for your force in the supplementary pack that provides force-by-force data and charts, available at [www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/holding/projects/np\\_typology\\_sup\\_slides.pdf](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/holding/projects/np_typology_sup_slides.pdf).

If you are interested, further detail can be found in our paper *Neighbourhood policing: a police force typology*, available at [www.police-foundation.org.uk/neighbourhood-policing-a-police-force-typology](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/neighbourhood-policing-a-police-force-typology)

### How we will use this information

The questionnaire is in two parts.

1. **Part A** asks for factual information about your force and may be used in our publications with your force identified, for example alongside our workforce data analysis.

2. **Part B** asks for the contact details of the most appropriate person at your force for us to contact if we have any further questions. This will be treated in confidence and no personal information will ever be shared or published.

We may use information collected as part of our research on the *Future of neighbourhood policing* in other research or policy publications, presentations and related outputs.

### Our questions

We would be grateful if you could provide as much information as possible, but you do not have to answer all the questions.

#### A. Factual information about neighbourhood policing<sup>128</sup> in your force

- A1. Please could you provide your force name

*Answer:*

- A2. What does 'neighbourhood policing' mean in your force in 2017? For example, what is its purpose and how do you understand 'neighbourhood'?

*Answer: (boxes will expand as you type)*

#### With reference to our slide pack, which includes detail about how the neighbourhood policing workforce in all forces, including yours, has changed over time:

- A3. Can you describe **how and why** neighbourhood policing has changed **in your force** (ideally since 2008) where possible with reference to the dates of any major changes. For example, this might include changes in resourcing, the balance between officers, PCSOs and other staff in neighbourhood teams, remodelling the activities and tasks undertaken by neighbourhood policing teams (and others), and/or changes in the boundaries or size of 'neighbourhoods'.

<sup>128</sup> We understand that 'neighbourhood policing' is delivered differently across forces and may be referred to using different terminology. We ask that you respond in relation to neighbourhood policing or its functional equivalent in your force.

Answer:

A4. Do you recognise the picture for your force presented in our analysis of published workforce data, including changes over time, workforce numbers and resourcing (please indicate with an 'x')?

Not at all
A little
To some extent
A lot

A5. Can you explain your answer to Q.A4?

Answer:

A6. What is the official or designated remit of neighbourhood policing (including PCSOs and any other staff) in your force in 2017 – what *should* officers and staff spend their time doing? That might include their relationship to: community engagement, visibility, proactivity, response, investigations, public protection, offender management, and organised crime?

Answer:

A7. To what extent are neighbourhood policing personnel abstracted from those responsibilities (please indicate with an 'x')?

Not at all
A little
To some extent
A lot

A8. Is there anything you can add to explain your answer to Q.A7? If neighbourhood police personnel *are* abstracted to any degree, what is that they typically have to do? Have any measures been put in place to protect officers from abstraction?

Answer:

A9. How do you allocate resources to neighbourhood policing in your force in 2017? Has this changed in recent years (if not already mentioned)?

Answer:

A10. Do you tailor neighbourhood policing (resourcing, style) to different neighbourhoods in your force? If so, how?

Answer:

A11. What are the key partnership links for neighbourhood policing in your force in 2017? How has this changed since 2008?

Answer:

A12. Do you have any additional information you could send us to assist our understanding of neighbourhood policing in your force? We would be pleased to receive anything at [neighbourhood.policing@police-foundation.org.uk](mailto:neighbourhood.policing@police-foundation.org.uk)

## B. Contact details at your force

B1. Please could you provide us with some contact details in case we have any further or follow-up questions? This information will be treated **in confidence**.

Name:

Rank/role:

Contact details:

Thank you very much for taking the time to give this questionnaire your consideration

Please e-mail your completed questionnaire to [neighbourhood.policing@police-foundation.org.uk](mailto:neighbourhood.policing@police-foundation.org.uk)

Please also feel free to use this e-mail address to get in touch with us for any other reason, or you can phone the Police Foundation office on 020 3752 5630. Alternatively, you can register your interest in our research and find more information at [www.police-foundation.org.uk/the-future-of-neighbourhood-policing](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/the-future-of-neighbourhood-policing)

### About the Police Foundation

The Police Foundation is the only independent think tank focused entirely on developing knowledge and understanding of policing and crime reduction, while challenging the police service and the government to improve policing for the benefit of the public. The Police Foundation acts as a bridge between the public, the police and the government, while being owned by none of them.

[www.police-foundation.org.uk](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk)

Registered charity 278257

# APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

## NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAMS – DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Interviewer introductions

- Thanks and introduction
- Introduce research on neighbourhood policing:
  - increasing variation in practice and models across country, policing and NP also facing new challenges
  - need to build an understanding of national picture as platform for looking to the future
- As part of research, visiting a number of forces and speaking to those delivering NP to get a feel for how it's currently being done, how it has changed and the challenges you are facing.
- Confidentiality
- Permission to record
- Frank, honest views
- Word on nomenclature.

### Participant introduction and warm up

- Name, current role, brief police career history
- Can you tell me be a bit about the areas you police?
  - What are the main problems and issues?

### Local policing

- How is local policing organised in (place)?
  - What teams are there, what geographic areas do they cover and what do they do?
    - Who investigates crime?
    - Who does emergency and appointment based response?
    - Who protects vulnerable people?

- Who does crime prevention and proactive work?
- So what is the role of **neighbourhood policing** in that design?
  - What's the theory/the role as designed/what are your formal terms of reference etc.
- And what's the reality, what do you *actually* spend your time doing?
  - (If abstracted): why? What's wrong in the system that means the reality doesn't match the theory?
  - To what extent is that work within your area or elsewhere?
- And what's missing with that design? Is there anything the police *should* be doing, or doing more of, but aren't?
  - Why is that?

### Change:

- What can you tell me about how **neighbourhood policing** has changed here over the last decade or so?
  - What prompted those changes?
  - Have the communities or the problems changed? How?
  - Have the priorities changed? How?
  - Has the policing response changed? How? What's better, what's worse?
  - What else has changed?

### Geography:

- What are your thoughts on the way the geography is organised and divided up?
  - Are the blocks small enough to know local people and what's going on?
  - Have the boundaries changed over time?
    - If so, what was the impact of that?

## Resource allocation:

- Do you know how decisions are made about how resources are allocated between areas?
  - Does each patch get the same number of officers/PCSOs or does it vary and how is that done?
  - And does the focus or the style of neighbourhood policing vary between areas?
    - How and why? Is that organised or does it just evolve like that?
  - And what about within your patch, how are decisions made about what you do?
    - Discretion/self-guide versus external tasking?
    - Which parts of the area do you focus on and why?
    - Which people or groups of people do you tend to focus on and why?
  - Do you have priorities for your area?
    - How are they set?
    - Are local people consulted? Tell me about that process?
    - What kinds of work and activity does that lead to?

## Golden thread:

- You often hear about neighbourhood policing as being the 'eyes and ears' of specialist policing units dealing with terrorism or organised crime?
  - Is that the reality? Can you give me any examples (without getting into sensitive details)?
  - What information do you get from specialist units about what's going on in your area or what to look out for?
  - How well connected into those broader processes?

## Partnership:

- Which other agencies or partners do you find yourself dealing with – and in what regard?
  - How has that changed over time?

- What's missing, what's challenging? Are there links that could be improved? How and with whom?
- It's been suggested that in the future local policing could be much more closely integrated with other local services, what are your thoughts on that?
  - What would be the advantages?
  - What might be the challenges?

## Purpose (change focus from way things are and were, to the way, in your view they should be)

- **Pen and paper exercise:** Could you each write down your one sentence answer to the question: *What should neighbourhood policing be for?*
  - Go through and explore responses – commonalities and differences
  - On a one to 10 scale how close is the current situation to this?
  - What would need to change to get closer to it?
- **OR Cards exercise:** Arrange on scale from core functions of NP at top, to things NP *should* never do at the bottom, with things should do some times in the middle. (*photo*)
  - If anything is missing feel free to fill in some new cards.
  - Explore responses

## Probes:

- What do you understand by problem solving?
  - Can you give me any examples?
- How important is visibility?
  - Which kind of activities best support that?
- Now can you rearrange them to show what you currently do? (lots, some, none) (*photo*)
- And what's your job on paper? What does the official job description say you should be doing lots, some and none of? (*photo*)

## Neighbourhood policing as a job

- What's the best thing about being a neighbourhood police officer?
  - And the worst thing?

- What are the key attributes/talents/skills of a good neighbourhood police officer?
- How have you learned the role?
  - What formal training have you had?
  - How long does it take to be a good neighbourhood police officer?
  - Do you see neighbourhood policing as being a specialist role?
- What's the status of neighbourhood policing within the force?
  - How do others see the role?
  - Has that changed in your experience? (How?)
  - What might improve its status and attractiveness?
- In terms of your careers as police officers (and PCSOs) how do you see your time in neighbourhood policing?
  - Is it a career, or a stepping stone, or a hurdle?
  - Is it something you see yourselves doing for a significant period of time? (why/not?)
- How important is consistency in the role?
  - How long does it take to get to know a neighbourhood and be a functioning NP officer?
  - Can you be in a role too long?
- How do you know if you are doing a good job?
- Has doing this role changed you as a police officer? How and why?

### Language

- Finally, I'd like to ask you about language and what things are called. Do these three terms mean the same things or different things to you (neighbourhood policing, local policing, community policing)
  - How do they differ?
  - What does each mean?
  - Which best describes what you do and why?
  - Are there any other words or phrases that would be better?
- Thank and close

Anything you'd like to ask me before we finish?

# APPENDIX 4: STRATEGIC LEAD INTERVIEW GUIDE

## NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING – STRATEGIC LEADS – DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Introduction

- Thanks and introduction
- Introduce project
  - Growing awareness of diversification and possible erosion
  - Broadly about taking stock of where NP is in E&W at mid-point between end of NPP and vision 2025
  - As platform for looking ahead with recognition that NP has different focus in 2017/2025 than in 2008
- Work so far:
  - Stakeholders
  - Workforce data analysis and typology paper
  - Information request/survey/open source
  - Visits c8 forces, key leads and teams
- Agreement for discussion to form part of the research:
  - Confidential – name forces/organisations engaged with but won't identify individuals
  - Attribute factual information to force but opinion or sensitive views will be reported in general terms that would not cause embarrassment

### Respondent background

- Could you briefly tell me a bit about your current role(s)?
  - Perhaps a little about your background and previous roles?

### Narrative

- One of the aims of our project it is to piece together a narrative of how and why neighbourhood policing has changed across the country since 2008 – what's the narrative here, can you give me a brief history?
  - *Probe for:* remodelling/change programmes
  - Changes in remit and responsibilities of NPTs
  - Changes in geography
  - Motivations, drivers and rationale for changes

### Current

- What is the current situation, how is local policing organised in [force]?
  - What teams are there, what geographic areas do they cover and what do they do?
  - Who does investigation/response/appointments etc.?
- And what is the official and actual role of Neighbourhood Policing within that?
  - How Neighbourhood Policing is currently configured?
    - Numbers, structure, remit, geography, shift patterns.
- What are the main challenges and problems with local policing as currently configured?

### Future

- And what's the plan? is there a blueprint for how that might change in the future?
  - What's the rationale for the change?
  - What is the purpose of neighbourhood policing in 2017/18 and beyond?
    - How has that changed?

- The neighbourhood policing of a decade ago was explicitly framed in terms of visibility, engagement, including through local priority setting and problem solving.
  - What's the current state and status of each of those three elements?

### Resource allocation/prioritisation

- How are decisions made about the amount of resource to allocate to neighbourhood policing compared with other functions?
- And what about allocating resources *between* neighbourhoods? Do different areas get different resources and how is that decided?
- And what about differences in style and approach how is neighbourhood policing tailored to different areas?
- With fewer resources it seems inevitable that more local decisions will need to be made about what officers and teams do and don't do – how are those decisions made?
  - Tasked versus discretionary?
  - To what extent are they guided by formal priorities?
  - How are those set and at what geography?

### Golden thread

- Neighbourhood policing is often talked about as the 'golden thread' linking grass roots intelligence to specialist units in CT or organised crime.
  - What is the current state and health of those links in [place]?
  - What are the processes by which that information and intelligence moves?
  - Does there need to be more of a two way flow?

### Partnership

- How has the partnership picture changed for neighbourhood policing?
  - Are there relationships and links that have become stronger or weaker or more or less important?
- It's been suggested, including in the Vision 2025, that local policing needs to become more closely integrated with other local services.

- Do you see that happening in [place]? Is it starting to happen already?
- What would be the advantages and what are the challenges?

### Neighbourhood policing as a job

- What makes a good neighbourhood police officer?
  - Talents/skills/attributes etc.
- How are those qualities learned and taught?
  - What training/mentoring/professional development is in place?
  - How could that be improved?
- What is the status of neighbourhood policing within the force?
  - How has that changed over time?
  - Is it a role people are keen to do?
  - How is seen as a career choice, a job for life or, a stepping stone, a hurdle?

### Language

- It occurs to me that the language is quite confused at the moment, we have terms like Neighbourhood policing, local policing, community policing being used to mean both the same and different things (in London we have the mayor talking about a return to 'real neighbourhood policing') and there are also sorts of hybrid terms like *neighbourhood patrol teams*, *beat officers*, *neighbourhood task force*.
  - Do you think we could benefit from new or more consistent terminology?

### Finally

- HMIC's last PEEL effectiveness inspection recommended that the College of Policing come up with some national guidelines for neighbourhood policing. Would that be something that you would welcome?
- Any final thoughts, pressing issues we haven't talked about? Anything you'd like to ask me?

### Thank and close

# APPENDIX 5: SUMMARY OF SOURCE MATERIAL COLLECTED BY POLICE FORCE

	Information return	Focus groups	Key lead interview	Web survey responses <sup>129</sup>
Avon and Somerset	✓			
Bedfordshire			✓	1
Cambridgeshire				
Cheshire				1
City of London				1
Cleveland				1
Cumbria				
Derbyshire				
Devon and Cornwall	✓			1
Dorset				
Durham	✓			
Dyfed-Powys				1
Essex	✓			1
Gloucestershire		2	✓	
Greater Manchester		2	✓	2
Gwent	✓			
Hampshire				1
Hertfordshire				
Humberside	✓			
Kent	✓			1
Lancashire	✓			
Leicestershire		2	✓	
Lincolnshire	✓			
Merseyside	✓			1
Metropolitan Police		2	✓	11
Norfolk	✓	2	✓	1

<sup>129</sup> Two respondents were from other organisations. Three web-respondents identified themselves as force leads, although these forces have not been identified, with information returns and key leads interviews, this amounts to force-level input from 31 of 43 territorial police forces.

	Information return	Focus groups	Key lead interview	Web survey responses <sup>129</sup>
North Wales	✓			
North Yorkshire	✓			2
Northamptonshire				
Northumbria				
Nottinghamshire				1
South Wales	✓			
South Yorkshire	✓			
Staffordshire		2	✓	1
Suffolk	✓			
Surrey	✓			
Sussex	✓			
Thames Valley	✓			2
Warwickshire				
West Mercia	✓			1
West Midlands				3
West Yorkshire	✓	2	✓	
Wiltshire	✓			

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