

# **Police Community Support Officers in Surrey**

**A Police Foundation report**

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## Summary

In January 2003 Surrey Police invited the Police Foundation to conduct an evaluation of its first intake of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). The Police Foundation subsequently subcontracted this work to the Criminal Policy Research Unit (CPRU) at South Bank University. Two reports were agreed with Surrey Police. An interim report was produced in October 2003. Fieldwork for this was conducted between February and September 2003, and was based on information from all eleven boroughs and districts. The focus was primarily on process issues, and involved site visits, tape-recorded interviews, and conversations with PCSOs, regular police, and council representatives and training providers. The interim report also offered a series of recommendations based on the implications of the findings at that time.

This report<sup>1</sup> introduces findings based on supplementary work in seven of the eleven boroughs and districts, and direct feedback from members of the public. An update is offered on process, and comments about impact are more detailed, reflecting the longer period on which respondents could draw. This report also adds a section on possible directions in which the PCSO role could be progressed.

Chapter One describes the context within which PCSOs were introduced nationally and within Surrey. Chapter Two sets out the theoretical and practical criteria against which the PCSO initiative has been judged. It then assesses the progress made on each of these criteria. Implications are offered for those who are planning to introduce other initiatives of this nature. The Appendices describe the findings from each of the eleven areas. They include the survey instrument used to gauge public perceptions in Tandridge district, along with demographic data on each of the districts and boroughs, and a breakdown by borough and division of the allocation of the first PCSOs recruited.

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<sup>1</sup> Produced by the same team, now based in the Institute for Criminal Policy Research, School of Law, King's College London.

## Chapter 1 The introduction of PCSOs

This section presents a brief account of the origins of the Police Community Support Officer role in England and Wales, and of how the role was tailored to the circumstances of Surrey Police and subsequently fielded.

### National context

In December 2001, the Government produced a White Paper<sup>2</sup> outlining proposals for the future of policing in England and Wales. The stated aim of the proposals in the White Paper was to “reduce crime and the fear of crime”, and envisaged several ways in which this might be addressed. These included

- greater presence of other agencies, accredited by the police
- new powers available to enable accredited organisations to tackle lower-level anti-social behaviour
- better partnerships involving CDRPs and DATs.
- policing priority areas, and
- firmer action on anti-social behaviour.

Introduction of Community Support Officers [sic] was at the head of the list of approaches. The White Paper was not prescriptive about the detailed nature of the proposed role. It was, however, made clear that the powers available to be employed would be spelt out in the subsequent Police Reform Bill. It would be open to Chief Constables, in consultation with the local police authority, to determine which powers would be designated for use in individual jurisdictions.

Progress thereafter was swift. The Police Reform Bill was introduced in the House of Lords in January 2002, and in the House of Commons three months later. Royal Assent was received on July 24<sup>th</sup> 2002. Full Government funding was available for the first year, reducing to 75% majority funding in year two, and 50% in year three.

It was scarcely a reform accepted with open arms, principally because of fears within the police service that the role would serve as a replacement for police officers rather than as a

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<sup>2</sup> Home Office (2001). *Policing a new century: a blueprint for reform*.

complementary resource. Criticism was exemplified by a former HM Assistant Inspector of Constabulary<sup>3</sup>, who contended that

“When the public is asked what it wants, its response is unequivocal: fully trained, fully warranted officers performing the myriad of functions usually expected of them. They do not want a semi-skilled support service”

Others saw PCSOs as vital, senior police officers among them<sup>4</sup>. PCSOs were seen as part of a reformist agenda from within the service which would address the issues of “more accountable local policing, arguments for re-structuring policing and how we can put in place and measure the sort of community reassurance policing we are asked to deliver.”

The response in party political terms has also reflected debate about the role. Eight months after PCSOs started work in London, Simon Hughes, The Liberal Democrats’ Home Affairs Spokesman, told the Police Federation conference that more PCSOs should be recruited<sup>5</sup>. In March 2003<sup>6</sup>, Oliver Letwin set down a marker for the Conservatives, stating that “we have to give [CSOs] time...but if they are not successful we will seek to convert them into police officers. Having championed the idea, Davis Blunkett acknowledged that some sections of the police service were reluctant to accept it<sup>7</sup>.

## Surrey

Surrey Police’s decision to augment its own personnel with PCSOs<sup>8</sup> was taken in light of its conclusions that

- the demand for reassurance would expand.
- police funding would be insufficient to meet this expansion.
- the growth of the mixed economy of policing would continue irrespective of police involvement.

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<sup>3</sup> Gilbertson, D. “*Plastic Policemen*”. Police Review: vol 111, no. 5712, pp28-29. February 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Metropolitan Police Commissioner deputy commissioner Sir Ian Blair “The UK’s future police force - what do the police think?” One-day ‘*Future of Policing*’ conference organised by the London School of Economics and Political Science. October 10<sup>th</sup> 2003

<sup>5</sup>Police Review: vol 111, no. 5725, p10. May 2003.

<sup>6</sup>Police Review: vol 111, no. 5715, p7. March 2003.

<sup>7</sup>Police Review: vol 111, no. 5726, p6. May 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Taken from internal Surrey Police document “Allocation of PCSOs”. November 27<sup>th</sup> 2002.

- negotiation at a local level to fund and deliver services would become more imperative.

Targeted Neighbourhood Policing had begun in Surrey in 2002. This had seen 84 police officers deployed under the branding of Neighbourhood Specialist Officers (NSOs). The NSO was intended to be<sup>9</sup> a “local champion of crime reduction and community reassurance”, but the role was not seen as capable of achieving success in isolation. It was to be supported within the force by other specialist police units. Crime Reduction Officers and Youth Affairs Officers were two possible sources. PCSOs were a third. In addition, the co-ordinated support of other local agencies was considered critical.

Introduction of PCSOs in Surrey was seen as addressing one of the key objectives of the Police Authority’s annual policing plan<sup>10</sup>, namely to

“keep public places safe and feeling safe [by] maintain[ing] public confidence in the use of public spaces and combat[ing] the fear of crime in Surrey.”

Implicit in this was a belief (repeated in earlier discussion nationally) that reassurance work should include a focus on areas (and populations) exhibiting levels of fear of crime disproportionate to those they actually experienced – the so-called ‘reassurance gap’.

In 2002, the Policing Standards Unit awarded Surrey Police a grant of £250,000 to enable pursuit of this aim. It enabled recruitment of 52 PCSOs across the county. Allocation of PCSOs was to be decided in consultation with the CDRPs, and took account of

- the quality of CDRPs’ proposals for deployment;
- the extent to which these proposals supported the local Community Safety Strategy;
- the availability of local systems to support joint working and problem solving;
- the degree of planned or existing complementary activity; and
- the expected impact.

Table C2 in Appendix C shows how the initial 52 PCSOs were distributed in Surrey, broken down by local authority area and police division. Introduction of PCSOs throughout the

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<sup>9</sup> Set out in the Surrey Police strategy document, *A vision for Neighbourhood Policing: Neighbourhood Specialist Officers and Police Community Support Officers*.

<sup>10</sup> Surrey Police Authority. *Policing plan for Surrey, 2002/3*.

county was staggered at three-week intervals. The first group completed their initial training in early February 2003.

#### *Data sources for Surrey evaluation*

Fieldwork for this report was carried out between February 2003 and February 2004. During this period the number of individuals interviewed<sup>11</sup> were drawn from the following groups:

PCSOs <sup>12</sup>	41
Police Officers	69
Borough/District Council staff	25
Residents/traders	51

Police officers were predominantly members of Neighbourhood Specialist Teams but also included Borough and District Inspectors and some members of Targeted Patrol Teams and Borough Support Teams. Council staff were primarily Community Safety Officers and Community Safety Co-ordinators but also included Housing Officers and Community Safety Wardens. Residents and traders comprised both those who took a keen interest in local affairs (such as elected councillors and attendees at residents' meetings or PCPGs) and those whose involvement was less active. The breakdown of interviewees in each borough or district, along with details of documentation provided, is given at the start of each of the eleven segments of Appendix A.

The initial suggestion contained in the initial proposal for evaluation, that a public attitudes survey be conducted throughout the county as part of this evaluation, was not taken up. A representative survey of the public's views would have served as a crucial element of the assessment of the introduction and receipt of the initiative. It would have enabled identification of gaps and correction of misunderstandings, and consequently gauge public expectations of PCSOs at a more informed and realistic level. This evaluation has however been able to draw on a fear of crime survey carried out in one district<sup>13</sup>. Several questions on the role were included in this survey.

Public views were also gained via face-to-face interviews with members of the public, drawn from six of the eleven boroughs and districts. Some of these interviews were prearranged,

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<sup>11</sup> Three PCSOs, two police officers and two council employees were interviewed on two occasions.

<sup>12</sup> Includes one YPCSO.

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix A for full results of this survey and Appendix B for the survey instrument.



such as meetings with residents who were also elected borough, district or parish councillors. Other cases did not involve the selection of named individuals, but followed attendance at residents', community or PCPG meetings. The remainder were *ad hoc*, resulting from unannounced canvassing with traders, their customers and other local residents in areas where PCSOs operated. The findings, while not representative of the whole community, nevertheless offer a perspective on the activities and impact of the role.

## **Chapter 2 Assessment rationale and findings**

This chapter assesses progress of the PCSO initiative in terms of several key components. The general intention of this report is to ensure that those involved in future initiatives of this sort elsewhere, or introducing new roles in Surrey, can benefit from the lessons learned during this evaluation. To an extent, with Surrey's decision to introduce the role on a division-by-division basis, this was envisaged from the inception of the initiative as an ongoing process. Subsequently, training of eleven Youth PCSOs, to concentrate on youth-related issues in each borough and district, has been informed by the issues encountered during PCSOs' initial tuition period. However, full documentation and dissemination of the problems and successes encountered by the initiative is essential if lessons are to be learned.

### **Components for success**

In any evaluation, effectiveness can be judged against several key criteria. Arguably the importance of this is greater when the initiative examined is innovative and previously unexamined. Surrey was not the first police force to recruit and train PCSOs. Neither is civilian employment for elements of traditional police work a fresh concept in the county<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, when Surrey police took on PCSOs, they were working in uncharted territory. The criteria discussed below, to which we have chosen to anchor the assessment of this initiative, have been selected on the basis that they have emerged as important factors in previous evaluations of newly-established initiatives. The criteria are relevant not just for initiatives within the policing arena, but apply across the social sciences.

#### *Specification of remit*

The need for a clear vision of what is to be implemented and who is to be involved is central to even the most straightforward initiative. In the case of projects which depend upon activity of other agencies for implementation and public awareness for recognition, this requirement is especially important.

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<sup>14</sup> See for example the number of Surrey Scenes of Crime Officers who were civilian in 1989 - <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm198889/cmhansrd/1989-01-16/Writtens-1.html>

Ideally, spelling out the rationale of an initiative should be done in consultation with representatives of the other organisations who are likely to be involved in aspects of the plan's delivery. Involvement in planning also encourages joint ownership of an initiative, especially important if it involves the recruitment of staff who will be employed by one organisation but jointly serve the needs of others.

In Surrey the rationale behind introducing PCSOs was laid out within several documents<sup>15</sup>. These offered a theoretical basis for the role, suggesting ways in which PCSOs might be deployed, and attempting to link this to the objectives within the overall Surrey Policing Plan of reassurance and crime control.

However, these documents were not reduced into one comprehensive and detailed specification covering

- what was to be achieved
- what groups had a role to play; and
- what tasks needed to be carried out

Further, the contents of the several documents were not routinely passed down to those members of the police and the local authorities alongside whom PCSOs would be expected to work. Through the course of the initiative, the repercussions of this were broad.

Asked about their thoughts and expectations of the Community Support Officer role being adopted in Surrey prior to its introduction, many interviewees' replies drew on national coverage of the role based on other police forces who had already introduced it. Few mentioned being furnished with any Surrey documentation. Several PCSOs confirmed that NSOs did not have a profile of the job role, and that when they first arrived at the police station, police officers appeared not to have been briefed about how this new resource was to be integrated into daily operational activities and supervised, or about what activities they would undertake. As one police officer put it, there were "lots of questions, but not really any answers".

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<sup>15</sup> Strategy document, *A vision for Neighbourhood Policing: Neighbourhood Specialist Officers and Police Community Support Officers*; Surrey Police Position Paper, *Neighbourhood policing – the future*. October 15<sup>th</sup> 2002; O'Connor, D. (2002). *Civility first – the reassurance concept*. Criminal Justice Management 27.

Given the fact that PCSOs were a new role nationally, decisions about deployment could only ever be made through a process of evolution rather than managerial prescription. In the words of West Yorkshire Police's Head of Community Safety<sup>16</sup>, "form follows function". The expectation in his area was that PCSOs' work would largely be shaped by their own ideas about the activities in which they should become involved. Implicit in this was the idea, supported by research literature, that local problems demanded local solutions. Under such circumstances, trial and error was anticipated.

In Surrey, even though this period of evolution was anticipated, the speed with which the role was introduced was believed to have created problems. These confusions persisted even after PCSOs had been operational for some weeks. Ultimately, without guidance, many regulars and council staff formed an inaccurate view of how PCSOs' might be deployed.

Police superintendents, borough and district inspectors, and local authority chief executives and community safety co-ordinators were involved during the planning and specification of the initiative. As a result, they were in a position to gain an understanding of what the initiative was seeking to achieve. This joint planning was achieved through the process of bid application to Surrey's Chief Constable from each of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. Typically these were signed by the Chief Executive of the local council, and the Chief Superintendent for the police division, or the borough or district Inspector.

However, even at this level, confusion existed about the basis upon which PCSOs were to be funded. Government initiatives are rarely funded for more than three years. This initiative was no exception. When PCSOs were first introduced, full funding was available from central government for the first twelve months. However, areas will subsequently have to provide increasing proportions of the money over the next two years.

In several boroughs, neither the police nor the local authority reported that they had fully understood that these incremental increases in local financial support would be required. The consensus was that the process had not been made clear at the outset. Alternative sources of new finance have been discussed, and agreement reached in some cases. However, most CDRPs were felt not to have any spare money – unless something else was sacrificed or

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<sup>16</sup> Bullock, G. (2003). "Community Support Officers in West Yorkshire". Presentation at conference – *Towards safer communities: reviewing the roles of CSOs and wardens*. London. April 9<sup>th</sup> 2003.

restricted. Most were glad that they had ended up with fewer PCSOs than they had originally requested from the Chief Constable, since the increased financial burden would have meant they were in some cases unable to retain PCSOs in employment.

Misunderstandings were also reported about what issues PCSOs would be expected to address. In fact, some Council Community Safety Co-ordinators expressed several criticisms of the manner in which PCSOs were introduced. Arrangements for ensuring that local staff in partner agencies were apprised of the new role varied across the county. In some districts and boroughs, council staff were kept closely informed of ideas, and met PCSOs shortly after their initial training ended. In others, council representatives were promised involvement in the initial training which did not materialise. Information given by police in the initial bid to the Chief Constable about proposed activities for PCSOs was sometimes considered by council staff to be misleading. For example, it was believed that, because they came under police jurisdiction, PCSOs would issue parking tickets and address dog fouling. Neither was it satisfactorily explained to all how the PCSO role would link in with that of Community Safety Warden (CSW). The notion that PCSOs were chiefly intended to ‘observe and report’ did not square with some council staff’s understanding of the role. They were under the impression that ‘observe and report’ was the CSW’s remit.

Whilst it is important to make clear at the outset what an initiative is intended to achieve, effort must also be invested in making clear what powers are available in order to meet these intentions. Lack of clarity can lead to misinterpretation at a local level and, in consequence, a lack of uniformity in implementation. In Surrey, most respondents felt that at the time PCSOs came into post, the extent of their powers had not been adequately explained to them. Police officers and supervisors were sometimes reluctant to task PCSOs with certain jobs through lack of certainty that these tasks fell within their remit. Haziness existed not just among police officers, but also PCSOs themselves. Despite the issue of powers being covered as part of the initial training, some PCSOs were for several weeks unclear as to which they actually held. In some areas PCSOs were provided with cards listing the powers; colleagues in other areas however did not receive these. Under these circumstances, it is open to possibility that PCSOs were either hesitant to use powers that were legitimately open to them, or moved to exercise authority for which their powers provided no basis.

This lack of standardisation also existed in relation to the practical resources at PCSOs' disposal. Provision for PCSOs in Surrey to make use of their own motor vehicle is a recurrent example. Some PCSOs were allocated to areas which were several miles from the police station at which they were based. Public transport links were not well-developed in some areas. Some therefore felt that use of a vehicle in order to reach their site would have made PCSOs more efficient, as it would maximise the time they were able to spend in their area. In some areas PCSOs have been informed that they cannot drive their own vehicles to their site. In others they have been told the opposite.

### *Management*

Two strands of management issue are relevant to the implementation of PCSOs. The first relates to the overall project managers within Surrey Police. The second concerns local operational managers in each of the eleven boroughs and districts. Experience shows that the presence of an energetic, imaginative, consultative and knowledgeable manager is a key ingredient of success. Probably the greatest prerequisite of all, however, is time. Key considerations to be made at the outset are:

- consistency of managers in the role
- ring-fencing of managers' time
- open channels to management support

Admittedly regular management can be very time-consuming. A common cause of implementation failure is that those who are nominally in charge of a project have no time to actively steer implementation forward or take action when problems arise.

Since January 2003, the PCSO initiative has seen three changes of project manager. By the time recruits were undergoing their initial three week training, the first change in manager had already occurred. Further, the change was made in the knowledge that the incoming manager, though enthusiastic and committed to the role, would be taking maternity leave within a short period of time. She duly left in May 2003. Her replacement was more senior, and had a grasp of the issues involved in developing localised policing initiatives through her role as part of Surrey Police's Reassurance Project Team, which at that time was separately involved in developing work in two other pilot study sites. She was expected to discharge these responsibilities at the same time as performing her new PCSO managerial duties. This

situation continued until the return of the previous project manager in November 2003 – nine months after PCSOs first began work..

Local staff might not appreciate project management trying to steer them towards certain types of working arrangements. Given the differences in areas, this localised autonomy was believed by some to be appropriate. Other areas, however, saw disadvantages to the fact that they were essentially making things up as they went along. Regular consultation and advice would have met some of the needs of areas whose willingness to use PCSOs might not be matched by their appreciation of how to use them. This regularity was made more difficult to achieve due to the lack of a single full-time project manager throughout the first year of the initiative. Previous research on police-led community safety initiatives<sup>17</sup> suggests that delivery rests as much on capacity to fulfil a role as it does on knowledge and commitment.

Lack of supervisory continuity at a local level is also a problem. Like all police personnel, supervisors may be promoted, retire, or redeployed elsewhere in the county. Even if they do not physically move location, shifts in line management responsibilities can create uncertainty for staff – all the more so if the role is entirely new and these shifts take place early on. An example is the restructuring that saw PCSO supervision switch from the Community Safety Sergeant to the NSO Sergeant. The latter role was in fact created after PCSOs were introduced, but in most cases the job title was simply applied to a uniformed Sergeant who had hitherto had de facto responsibility for PCSOs anyway. In some boroughs, however, the change resulted in a new line manager. In such circumstances there is a need for documented decision-making to facilitate this switch and, ideally, generous handover times. Respondents' comments suggest that this was by no means guaranteed.

Local supervisors faced the added problem that there appeared to be no training available for them in the management of civilian staff, yet this was a skill that supervision of PCSOs demanded. The procedure for gaining this knowledge was unsystematic, consisting mainly of questions to other individuals who were believed to have acquired it. An example is the case of an NSO Sergeant who reported how restrictions on the dissemination of intelligence reports had threatened his capability to judge the value of information gathered by PCSOs. No other supervisors reported this problem, but its existence in even one area warrants

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Jacobson, J. (2003) 'Planning for Partnership'. Development and Practice Report no.4, London: Home Office.

attention. If supervisors cannot, or think they cannot routinely have sight of information obtained by those whose objectives they are setting, either the terms of NIM, or the managerial expectations placed on supervisors need to be unambiguously spelled out.

Linked to this, many supervising Sergeants reported receiving no guidance on the appraisal process for PCSOs. If standardised forms for the appraisal of civilian staff do exist in Surrey, the vast majority of supervisors said they were unaware of them. Consequently appraisal of PCSOs relied on Sergeants' best guess on what was appropriate, leading to a non-standardised approach across the force. Some PCSOs had not been appraised at all. Such a situation is unfair on both supervisors and PCSOs. It is likely to be counterproductive for the overall initiative. Given the likely continuation in recruitment of auxiliary staff, it is also inefficient.

#### *Monitoring inputs and outputs*

- In any large-scale initiative, management should ensure that routine monitoring exists to check whether initiatives are being implemented as intended. As a minimum, this means measuring resources deployed and specific tasks carried out using these resources to determine whether this is in line with the original intention. However, this approach was not uniformly adhered to across the force.

Sufficiency of initial training provides a good example of how monitoring can highlight gaps or processes which are impacting upon implementation. Most PCSOs considered that the external training consultant who delivered the initial three-week training package did so in a manner that made the information understandable and accessible. This was not easily achieved, given the variation in PCSOs' level of familiarity with police procedure and recent experience of a classroom learning environment. However, from early in this training schedule, some PCSOs believed that, since the precise demands from area to area could be very different, training could not fully prepare a recruit for the job. For others, three weeks was believed insufficient to equip someone for the role, especially as elements of it overlapped with police officer training, which was considerably lengthier.



As a result, there was a need to monitor and document gaps in training, so that the results of implementation continually fed back into the staggered training schedule. The second project manager was keen to learn from PCSOs and police officers throughout Surrey where they believed these gaps lay. The need to allow PCSOs access to the Crime Information System (CIS), and to provide them with conflict management training, was noted relatively quickly. However, in both cases, it took some time for actual training to be delivered. In the case of CIS, there remains no uniformity across the force, with PCSOs in some boroughs and districts still not authorised to access the system. PCSOs are intended to play a part in contributing to the National Intelligence Model. Some respondents believed that this could be done without CIS access - but if PCSOs are to be allowed this access, it must be provided to all.

Conflict management training, took place in November 2003, which in the view of many respondents had left PCSOs vulnerable for a dangerously long time. The message is that the value of monitoring is diminished if the gaps revealed are not attended to speedily and uniformly across the entire area in which the initiative is taking place.

Monitoring could have alleviated the difficulties experienced in one particular borough, where both PCSOs and their supervisors agreed there was an almost complete lack of integration of PCSOs within the neighbourhood specialist team. Several misunderstandings arose about the role and its management, which might well have been picked up on sooner if monitoring at a higher level of the organisation had been regular rather than periodic.

The above were issues deserving of rapid attention. Other issues may raise longer-term implications. In the case of conflict management training, those who supported the idea stressed that it would only be valuable if an individual retained the knowledge gained. Since it was, hopefully, not a skill PCSOs would have cause to use routinely in public, this would require regular refreshment training.

### *Inter-agency relations*

Any initiative dependent upon the co-operation of other agencies for delivery must make sure that partner agencies are informed and on-side. Agreement to plans forms part of this, but it

also relies on revision of plans based on feedback. Setting up these arrangements can be time-consuming. Failure to do so is a false economy which can actually lead to delays.

Once implementation begins a project plan or strategy document can form a useful reminder for those who have been involved from the outset about what they have agreed to do. It is also a useful vehicle for providing new staff with an explanation of what they need to do and why. This document can also be used to check implementation progress. Such a document was never developed for this initiative.

It was made clear at the outset<sup>18</sup> that Surrey Police considered

“the reciprocal activity of partner agencies is an essential corollary in view of all the evidence on the precursors for success if we are to be truly successful in our ambition to problem solve in neighbourhoods.”

One of the main things partnership working is expected to do is to move away from the idea that the agency that spots the problem has to provide the solution. PCSOs’ brief to “observe and report” encapsulates this notion. The beneficiaries of this reporting were expected to be not just police officers, who could then use information gathered by PCSOs for enforcement-related activity, but also council employees whose job it was to act on notifications of, for example, abandoned vehicles or graffiti.

Documentation provided by Surrey Police outlined the basis for assessment on which areas’ bids to the Chief Constable for PCSOs. These were:

1. *Supporting Evidence* – the background information used to justify the targeting of PCSOs at particular locations or problems.
2. *Local Initiatives* – the investment by partners in other local initiatives that would complement the deployment of PCSOs.
3. *Proposed Use* – the detail of the plan and/or any innovation in the proposed deployment.

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<sup>18</sup> Surrey Police strategy document, *A vision for Neighbourhood Policing: Neighbourhood Specialist Officers and Police Community Support Officers*.

Table 1 shows the resultant allocation of Surrey's first intake of PCSOs.

**Table 1 Number of PCSOs requested in areas' initial bids and number received**

<b>Borough/district</b>	<b>Requested</b>	<b>Received</b>
Elmbridge	10	7
Epsom and Ewell	6	3
Spelthorne	10	6
Mole Valley	5	2
Reigate and Banstead	10	6
Tandridge	6	3
Guildford	18	9
Waverley	5	3
Runnymede	10	5
Surrey Heath	6	2
Woking	7	6
<i>All areas</i>	93	52

Perceptions about likely impact based on partner agencies' track record were deemed by Surrey Police particularly important :

“...deployment shall be targeted on the basis of [PCSOs'] potential for impact...They will be allocated on the basis of expected outcomes that they contribute to rather than their individual input in a particular environment...We know that impact is heavily dependent upon reciprocal activity of partner agencies<sup>19</sup>.”

This study has assessed PCSO work in Surrey in the context of the state of current and pre-existing attitudes and contributions towards community safety from borough and district councils. The intention is to see whether PCSOs are better able to engage in productive activity with demonstrable outputs in areas where the council is more committed and supportive to activities for which the PCSO might depend upon local authority assistance.

Following discussions with project management, borough and district councils were grouped by the research team into three categories, shown below. Assignment of boroughs and districts to categories was based on comments made in interviews with police officers, PCSOs, council staff and residents and traders interviewed. Representatives of the first two groups were interviewed in all eleven areas. Direct feedback was gained from council representatives in nine areas, and from residents and traders in six areas.

*Category A Regular participation in community safety issues. Evidence of willingness to seek involvement rather than simply accept it as a statutory requirement.*

*Category B Participation in community safety issues. Willing to be involved, but frustration from police at the speed or extent of response to some issues.*

*Category C Low level of participation in community safety issues. Reluctant involvement, with police feeling organisational structure not felt geared towards joint work.*

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<sup>19</sup> Surrey Police Position Paper, *Neighbourhood policing – the future*. October 15<sup>th</sup> 2002.

In most boroughs, joint relations were well-developed. Councils were regarded as very supportive when it came to the removal of abandoned vehicles and graffiti. The value of knowing which individual to speak to assisted in this, as did an appreciation that describing problems in a certain way was more likely to inspire a speedy response. The CSW/PCSO/NSO relationship was believed to have produced some effective examples of joint working. Ingredients for success were believed to be coverage of the same area, and coverage of a small area, both of which increased the likelihood that residents would see the team and be able to raise issues which could be attended to relatively promptly.

In a minority of boroughs, despite the protocols drafted following the introduction of The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, encouraging the council to contribute to community safety issues was seen as more problematic. Removal of abandoned vehicles and graffiti (whether or not offensive) was slow, and there was a perceived reluctance to invest in facilities in areas where amenities were scarce and young people regularly congregated in public.

However, there is ample evidence in Appendix A that PCSOs have been well-received by police officers and members of the public and, indeed, by employees of the local authority. This is so even in areas where the weight of opinion is that the council's record on community safety partnership work is poor.

### *Intra-agency arrangements*

The successful implementation of any initiative that has elements of political sensitivity is likely to hinge on the quality of its integration into pre-existing organisational structures. Although distinct from police work, the PCSO role was characterised from the outset as knitting closely with that of the Neighbourhood Specialist Officer (NSO). One respondent who was involved in the rollout of PCSOs referred to the "NSO as the local sheriff, with the PCSO as the deputy". This section therefore considers intra-agency matters as those concerning not just PCSOs alone, but PCSOs' dealings with police officers.

With any large-scale initiative, difficulties are likely to arise rapidly. These can be internal to the organisation as well as involve outside partners. Anticipating all problems before they occur is unrealistic, but it is vital to develop clear, regular and open reporting arrangements so that problems can be recognised and raised speedily. In this respect, Surrey PCSOs' experience of integration with police officers has been mixed.

In terms of working relationships with local police officers, PCSOs felt confident that they could approach them with problems and grievances that they might have. In most cases, they were also reported to have been warmly received by members of the Neighbourhood Specialist teams. It was acknowledged that integration was facilitated if police officers knew what they should and should not expect from PCSOs, and that this relied on a clear understanding of their powers. Thus, in order to deflect suspicion that police officers' jobs might be under threat, it was necessary to spell out the extent to which PCSOs powers differed from, or more accurately, fell short of those invested in police officers. Most police officers in both community- and response-oriented units did appreciate that the roles of police officer and PCSO differed. However, the precise nature of the powers held by PCSOs was not widely understood.

In fact, the consultant delivering the initial training was satisfied that in most respects ownership of PCSOs had begun before completion of the three-week course. In some boroughs, members of the Neighbourhood Specialist Team met with PCSOs during the course, and in one, local sergeants were involved on a day-to-day basis at this stage, and even during the recruitment process. However, personnel departments also have a part to play. Some of the contributions to the initial training package by these departments were described as poor and, by some respondents as seriously misleading<sup>20</sup>.

Opportunities for PCSOs to exchange ideas and information amongst themselves have improved after uncertain beginnings. Early on, there was no agreed facility for PCSOs to meet amongst themselves in order to discuss matters. Attempts to organise such a meeting in one division were not encouraged. By December 2003, however, PCSOs on the division had gained permission for 90-minute sessions, the first hour of which would also involve an NSO Sergeant. These meetings were believed especially useful for those geographically isolated or

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<sup>20</sup> See comments in Appendix A from respondents in Tandridge, Elmbridge and Waverley.

who did not share an office with other PCSOs. Progress on this was felt to owe much to the approach taken by the returning project manager.

Another problem at the outset was the lack of a forum for PCSOs across Surrey to assemble together to exchange ideas and represent their views. One three-day training course was arranged for PCSOs on C Division, part of which was designed to share experiences, but this was not replicated throughout the county. Consequently the situation was not made any easier for those recruited in the last of the four divisions to be trained, who might otherwise have learned from the experiences of those trained sooner. This was addressed in late 2003 by the election of five PCSO representatives - one from each division, and a fifth for the YPCSOs. These meet with the project manager one half day a month, and also every three months with the in-force trainer.

The picture was less rosy when the extent of integration with other, non-community oriented police units was examined. Interviews with TPT officers in one district indicated a lesser degree of knowledge about the PCSO role than that shown by the Neighbourhood Specialist Officers who worked with PCSOs on a daily basis. One result is a lack of knowledge about the PCSO role on the part of response-oriented officers. Ongoing research<sup>21</sup> into Reassurance Policing Pilot Projects in Surrey and elsewhere suggests that this finding is unsurprising, a view expressed by PCSOs, police and borough council representatives alike.

Some took a philosophical approach to this situation, reasoning that police officers in specialist roles would not be expected to familiarise themselves with another role if they did not feel (and had not been particularly encouraged to feel) it was something they would often encounter. Others worried that response officers might encounter PCSOs and, unfamiliar with the role, expect PCSOs to intervene in situations which their remit and training do not permit. One TPT officer recounted having a violent altercation with a member of the public while a PCSO was present nearby. The TPT officer had admitted to knowing virtually nothing about the PCSO role. However, his fundamental difficulty was not lack of awareness of the PCSOs' powers beforehand. Rather, he could not understand how the role could benefit him. Neither did non-police interviewees expect attitudes throughout the police

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<sup>21</sup> See Bourne, D. and Irving, B. (2003) "*Mentoring report*", in The Police Foundation (eds) *The Reassurance Policing Pilot Project – An interim report on independent monitoring and mentoring activity*. Internal project document. London: The Police Foundation.

service to change overnight. The situation has been allowed to develop due to a lack of formally-provided information on the role. Forums do exist for communication of this information, in the form of, for example, divisional training days. They may not be foolproof, but neither have they been adequately used.

### *Public perception*

When rolling out any community safety initiative, it is important that the public comprehend and welcome the intentions underpinning it. Findings from the Fear of Crime surveys carried out by each CDRP supported the notion that PCSOs, implemented as envisaged, would be providing a service which members of the public wanted. Once introduced, however, care should be taken to ensure that the public appreciates the boundaries of a role.

### Public attitudes survey

Findings from the only systematic public attitudes survey addressing PCSOs that was conducted during the assessment period suggested that, eight months after PCSOs began work in the area, respondents' awareness and understanding of the PCSO role was low. There is little evidence to suggest that those who appreciated the difference will be more likely to approach PCSOs than police officers with information, despite the increased opportunities expected by project organisers for PCSOs to be recipients of intelligence. Residents who declared more knowledge of the role were also more likely to feel powers needed broadening.

### Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in six boroughs, but concentrated in three drawn from each of the categories described in the preceding section on inter-agency relations. These interviews revealed that awareness of PCSOs had tended to be acquired through the PCSOs' own efforts to introduce themselves to members of the community. Some members of the public had gained prior knowledge of the role at PCPG or other meetings, although this did not necessarily equate with an accurate understanding of the purpose of the role. None mentioned seeing any prior coverage in the press, or having the role explained to them beforehand in any formal way.



Comments on PCSOs' impact were mixed. Views rested partly on members of the public appreciating - or being told - what fell inside or outside PCSOs' remit. Most either declared that they had thought the role was synonymous with that of a police officer, or that they were aware there was a difference but could not articulate it. Few knew the PCSOs' correct job title - one differentiated between "community policing" and "proper policing". However, this misperception need not mean that some of the tasks carried out by PCSOs that might fall into the category of traditional police work should be discarded. PCSOs were typically prized because, in terms of visibility if nothing else, something was felt to be better than nothing. As one village resident remarked of the local PCSO "he's the next best thing to a policeman because he's all we've got".

Part of the public's confusion about how PCSO and sworn officer work differed seemed to stem from people's perceptions of what police work should address. In the words of one trader, "what [PCSOs] do is real policing - it's what policing is all about."

There was some evidence that the public would be more likely to provide a PCSO than a police officer with information, on the grounds that PCSOs were more approachable. Questioned further, however, this preference rested more upon the greater likelihood of seeing a PCSO than an imputed sense that a police officer would treat information less sympathetically. If a PCSO came to them, interviewees might strike up a conversation which could reveal useful information. If the interviewee was in possession of the PCSO's mobile number, the element of spontaneity would not exist, but the means to communicate information to a known officer could still be exploited. If the interviewee had to journey to a police station to speak to an officer they did not know in order to have the same conversation, it was unlikely to take place at all.

Unlike some of the police officers, PCSOs and council employees interviewed, no residents made negative comments about the close resemblance of PCSOs' uniform to that of police officers. It was seen by virtually all as a possible deterrent to anti-social or criminal activity, and by some as a consequent mechanism for increasing their own feelings of safety. For them the strength of the role rested primarily on the perceived deterrent value of having visible patrols carried out by uniformed officers.

Taken together, the implication is that, to address the main need expressed by members of the public, PCSOs may not in fact need extensive powers. Instead, the enthusiasm with which PCSOs are received may depend simply on being seen in the right places and, to a lesser extent, on being available to receive and communicate information.

The role had been in place for under a year at the time views were sought. Indeed, some areas had only had a PCSO presence for a few months, while others were a tiny fraction of the patch their PCSO covered. The majority of residents and traders interviewed said they would not notice if the role were withdrawn. However, the suspicion was that, if this were to happen, those responsible for anti-social behaviour would soon be aware of the PCSO's absence and would find it easier to misbehave with impunity. Members of the public felt the presence of PCSOs had deterred youths from anti-social activity, or displaced it to other areas. Direct feedback from youths in this study suggests this has not happened. It should be noted, however, that youths' views were gathered in an *ad hoc* manner, allowing little time to explore notions of bravado and exaggerated disinterest. Any future representative survey should therefore pay special attention to young people's views on PCSOs' deterrent effect.

#### Providing information and managing public expectations

In conclusion, one year after PCSOs' introduction, it is open to question whether members of the public in Surrey are aware of the capabilities and limitations of the role. Those who are especially motivated and active in community safety affairs appear reasonably clear on what to expect from a PCSO, as opposed to a police officer. Youths whose anti-social behaviour has historically caused problems are also believed to understand the distinction. However, these groups represent the minority.

Most police officers, PCSOs and council employees who were interviewed believed that since PCSOs were now dealing with matters about which the public had hitherto approached police officers, the public were less able to tell the two roles apart. Some of these interviewees regarded the public's inability to distinguish between the PCSO and police officer role as a good thing, since it led to uncertainty in the minds of people, especially youths, who might be tempted to take advantage of PCSOs if they believed this could be done with relative impunity. Indeed, some deliberately blurred the boundaries in order to create this uncertainty. Others regarded it as more important to educate the public, and

considered wilful obfuscation of the roles as dishonest and ultimately damaging. A decision must be reached on how the role is to be presented. Once this is done, there is a need for a county-wide effort to communicate this to the public.

### *Assessing impact*

A mixed picture has emerged from the eleven boroughs in terms of strategies developed for measuring impact. Overall, areas appear to have been left to reach their own determinations of how to measure PCSO activities, with minimal input from project management. Although there has not been a means to assess them, the following measures have either been suggested or adopted:

- *Fear of Crime surveys and Citizens' Panels*: this was generally regarded as the most appropriate means of measurement. With one exception, no areas have yet distributed a survey that has asked direct questions about PCSOs, although the opportunity has been there in some boroughs.
- *Number of intelligence reports submitted*: being carried out in (but not throughout) some boroughs. Seen as flawed even by some of those who have instigated it, as it takes no account of the usefulness of information.
- *Number of statements taken*
- *Objective setting in line with divisional priorities for both crime and reassurance*. As this system applies to both NSOs and PCSOs, it has the benefit of integrating the latter into Neighbourhood Specialist Teams.
- *Feedback received from the public through emails, letters of appreciation, or direct comments*: relatively simple but anecdotal. In some areas feedback is being logged methodically in the PCSO's personal file.
- *Recorded crime figures for certain offences*: impact has proved difficult to assess because first, even if detailed diaries are kept of PCSOs' whereabouts and activities, it is not at all straightforward to know what is being prevented, displaced or deterred. Second, it was reported that some crimes such as graffiti will not necessarily appear in the crime figures, because they do not tend to get reported as a crime. No attempts to examine the plausibility of a link between PCSO work and falling crime levels.

Once again, the point to be made here concerns standardisation. The content of what PCSOs are involved in may vary, the need to ensure that they are delivering a service which is required, valued and impactful will not. As long as no routinised mechanisms exist for recording and assessing PCSO activity, the role will not be properly incorporated into Surrey Police force-wide strategy.

### *Career development*

PCSOs, police officers, council employees and members of the public have all advanced the view that PCSO work to date in Surrey, with the limited powers they have, is identical to what they recall or understand the traditional role of a community beat officer to be. On the other hand, some interviewees could not discern the worth in providing the public with a visible point of contact, encouraging them to make use of this contact, but equipping the contact with limited powers. This group includes PCSOs who have described situations where enthusiasm and willingness to be involved left them feeling restricted and unable to see a job through to its conclusion. As a result, some felt there was little developmental latitude in the role. Others saw becoming a police officer, an ambition they had not harboured when taking the role, as the most promising option available in order to increase job satisfaction,.

This raises the question of how to develop the PCSO role in a way that will not just attract recruits but also encourage them to stay. An HM inspection<sup>22</sup> is due for publication in the spring of 2004. Focusing on the use of civilian staff, this will look at the use of PCSOs to strengthen the patrol function. Suggestions in Surrey have included creation of a new tier of Senior PCSO, or the broadening of responsibilities in such a way that the role is more varied without being close to that of a police officer. Increased specialism is another option. Some have argued that since the areas in which PCSOs are based vary greatly in terms of geography, demography, and other agency presence, diversification is inevitable. The introduction of Youth PCSOs in each borough and district in October 2003 represents one specialist option. Others are keen to maintain the generalist PCSO role, on the grounds that

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<sup>22</sup> Reported in Police Review: vol 111, no. 5728, p13. 13 June 2003.

local knowledge can be applied most effectively if it relates to all aspects of an area rather than a subset of the population. Complete rebranding of the role has also been suggested, on the grounds that it should be linked more closely to community and council concerns and less so to police work.

Whichever option is chosen, the basis for doing so must be fully communicated to those whose work might overlap with them. Several respondents in this evaluation expressed ambivalence about the YPCSO, born not from ideological opposition but a lack of information from Surrey Police about how the role was expected to work. A lack of standardisation was also reported in terms of YPCSOs' induction. Both of these views mirror the experience reported in this assessment, begging the question: what has experience changed? These factors must be attended to if the misunderstandings encountered during the rollout of the first batch of PCSOs are not to be repeated.

## **APPENDIX A: DIVISIONS AND BOROUGHES**

### **A DIVISION, NORTH SURREY: ELMBRIDGE**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	7
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	5
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	7
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	2

#### *Documentation supplied*

- *Elmbridge Community Safety Partnership leaflet – 2003 update.*

Elmbridge is in the northeast of Surrey, and covers just under 10,000 hectares. It is mainly residential though the southern part is more rural with over 500 hectares of common land in the district. There are a number of shopping centres and light industrial estates in addition to many high-class properties.

The draft Community Safety Strategy for 2002-5 reported that only two of the ten other areas in the county had a lower crime rate. There had been a fall of 4.4% in the rate of recorded crime in 2000/01 compared with the previous year.

Elmbridge was below the county average for all the main crime categories other than residential burglary, for which it recorded the second highest figures in the county, and criminal damage, for which it was slightly above the County average. In terms of all recorded crime, only one ward was among the top 10% in Surrey, although four wards were in the worst 10% for disorder incidents.

Young people(38%) emerged as one of the biggest causes of nuisance and antisocial behaviour in Elmbridge, along with litter (38%), abandoned vehicles (32%) and speeding, noisy, or illegally parked vehicles (30%).

Over 90% of respondents, whether victims of crime or not, felt safe in their own homes and neighbourhoods. However, 29% felt unsafe and tried to avoid various parts of the borough – including parks and open spaces (38%), public transport (25%) and town centres (14%).

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

Before taking up the role, two Elmbridge PCSOs viewed it as an opportunity to test the water before applying to join the regulars. There was an expectation that the PCSO role would be community-oriented, varied and, as a consequence of this variety, fast-moving. Dealing with anti-social behaviour, regular contact with the public, and the issuing of FPNs were all mentioned as work the PCSOs believed they would tackle. PCSOs welcomed the opportunity to make a virtue of the novelty of the post and shape their own workload; however, one had expected that daily activities would be as much of a joint exercise with the NSO.

Among regulars, the value of such joint work was also appreciated – one remarked that “without [my PCSO] here I’d be totally lost”. Some admitted to scepticism, however. One officer perceived use of PCSOs as “policing on the cheap”, although he added that these views were held prior to meeting his PCSO towards the end of the initial three-week training, and had been based on a sketchy understanding of the role. Others who felt better acquainted with the role were better disposed towards it, but one nevertheless felt the job description “rather wishy-washy” – a situation he believed not helped by Surrey Police not having followed the Metropolitan Police in producing a leaflet explaining precisely how the PCSO function differed from that of a regular officer.

On the whole, regulars and council staff could see the benefit of employing extra bodies purely in terms of the kinds of concerns that regularly surfaced at PCPG meetings. There the public would regularly complain that they never saw a police officer on foot. One regular even viewed joint patrols with a PCSO as reassuring not just to the public but also to herself, especially on dark evenings.

## **Knowledge of area beforehand**

PCSOs were unhappy at the length of time taken before a decision was reached on which area they would be working in. Most were initially given an indication they would be working in one area, only to end up in another – sometimes outside the borough. One respondent was particularly vehement, describing it as “a complete and utter disaster...right from the word go”. Surrey Police’s Personnel Department came in for particularly severe criticism, and were labelled “absolutely atrocious” for having twice failed to keep appointments with PCSOs during the initial three-week training. For some the inconvenience and lack of preparedness was softened by the fact that they were in any case familiar with their area. In one case, Surrey Police made good use of the fact that the PCSO had worked part of Elmbridge as a CSW, by ensuring that she would be employed as a PCSO in the same area.

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

Regulars and PCSOs alike felt that, at the outset, the designated powers could have been explained more fully. One PCSO was of the opinion that colleagues elsewhere in Surrey had been exercising powers that she was not confident she had – for example, confiscating mopeds from youths riding erratically. The course literature was regarded as some help, and PCSOs appreciated the provision of a small card listing the powers, which they could carry around with them and refer to when explaining the role to others, but this was not available when they first began work. Of NSOs interviewed, most, along with PCSOs and supervisors, attended a workshop on PCSOs held across the whole division. There was an opportunity to

raise questions, but, as one put it, “I wanted some black and white, clear guidelines about what I should expect from these officers, in order, most crucially, to make sure they’re safe.”

### **Initial training**

PCSOs tended to make a distinction between the manner in which the training was delivered and, with hindsight, the usefulness of its content. All regarded the former as excellent, largely because the trainer adopted a consultative approach and invited recruits at the outset to suggest the learning style that appealed to them.

Problems with the content were fourfold. First, some of the training had never (or not yet) been put into practice – for example, too much time was felt to have been spent on human rights and social inclusion theory. Second, topics that had been slated for training, and which PCSOs had subsequently been tasked with (such as directing traffic), had not in fact been covered during the first three weeks. Third, some issues were included, but not in enough depth – namely statement-taking, scene management, and use of radios. Fourth, the initial package did not include skills that PCSOs could routinely utilise.

CIS training was the most obvious example of this last problem. PCSOs still did not have access to this at the time of the fieldwork visits. In order to familiarise themselves with developments in their area, they would therefore usually ask either their NSO or someone else to look at CIS for them. While for most NSOs this was something they would have had to do anyway, it did create difficulties – for instance, if a PCSO was not CIS trained, an NSO would be unable to log a PCSO as a witness as the system would not recognise the PCSO.

Some saw the breadth of variety of the PCSO role as making comprehensive initial training within three weeks almost impossible. One PCSO had suggested to his NSO Sergeant that on occasion the public were asking questions of him which made him feel like a counsellor, a role for which he had had no training. On the other hand, as one regular put it, this type of work might equally be something that police officers were not trained in either, but which could prove its worth not simply in terms of reassuring someone but also as a means of gathering useful information

“I appreciate there’s no training in that – but speaking to victims – say an elderly person whose suffered a deception burglary – going in and putting the kettle on, and the old-style policing sort of thing where the local bobby would do that. And not just as a one-off. And you never know what’s round the corner – someone you might be speaking to, passing the time of day with today...”

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

Feelings of vulnerability were raised by most PCSOs, and understood by most regulars. Many felt uncomfortable patrol alone later in the evening, as that was when they were more likely to come across intimidating situations. The issue of personal safety carried extra weight in Elmbridge because, due to having to miss most of the initial course at short notice, one of the PCSOs was to all intents and purposes, not trained. This would have repercussions for the deployment of other officers as, pending completion of the training, this PCSO was not permitted to patrol alone.



Some interviewees argued that, since there were no large town centres in the borough, and PCSOs were not being deployed at pub closing time, the level of protection they had was probably sufficient. However, most respondents contended that some situations were less easy to avoid than others; as one pointed out, “just by being in uniform they will come across conflict, and onlookers or those involved may expect them to deal with it”. It was felt that the initial training should have included something more than advice on how to de-escalate situations verbally. The fact that PCSOs are not police officers was considered by most to be irrelevant, as they did not think an aggressor would make any distinction. Most saw lack of conflict training as a huge deficit. However, there was little enthusiasm among interviewees for carrying more equipment or weaponry. Handcuffs were suggested by two PCSO – otherwise there was a belief that additional equipment meant additional training, therefore merging the role with police officers. It was also suggested by another PCSO that although a weapon might make her feel more secure, its visibility was unlikely to provide reassurance to the public.

### **Arrival and integration**

Views on integration of PCSOs with regulars were mixed. There was a sense from some PCSOs that when they arrived, many regulars did not know how the PCSOs should be used. The responsibility for this was seen as lying with “senior management – they’ve made the decisions”. From that point, it appears that NSOs and PCSOs essentially devised their own system for tasking. One NSO described how he had found it useful early on to sit down with his PCSO so that each could explain what they expected from the other. This NSO now regarded his PCSO as a “godsend”.

The perception from council staff was that PCSOs were treated “like equals” by the members of the regulars with whom they had regular contact. This is supported by the fact that one NSO devoted space on his Surrey Police webpage for first-hand comments from his PCSO, a practice so far adopted only sporadically.

However, another PCSO’s relationship with her NSO could best be described as uncomfortable. Her experience was that

“...some [police officers] are brilliant. Others don’t see why they should share information with us, and we don’t see them from one week to the next. [My NSO and I] went out together to start with – but as far as I’m concerned I’m not being told things that I should know, or introduced to people<sup>23</sup>.”

Upon PCSOs’ arrival, NSOs tended to spend the first few weeks with them, introducing them to people in their area, pointing out known trouble spots, and acquainting them with ongoing issues. This appeared to be undertaken willingly by most, though one expressed concerns, namely that he was not a tutor constable and that there was no financial acknowledgement of the extra work this involved. While accepting that the PCSO role created extra pressures on NSOs, PCSOs did not always feel their role was being maximised:

“I can see from the police’s point of view that if we are out patrolling sometimes it would be more beneficial to have a few more police officers on the street. We are an extra burden, but I’d like to think they feel obliged to help us if we get into a situation.

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<sup>23</sup> The NSO was not on duty at the time of the fieldwork visit a second perspective on these events could not be gained.

But I don't think they use us enough. Think we should have surgery on site. I tend to walk around on my own a lot, and that can get boring. More work with NSO would be a bit of excitement. Maybe having an operation with other NSO and PCSO involved."

There was little expectation that police officers outside of the Neighbourhood Specialist Team would have much knowledge of the PCSO role. That said, only one reported any adverse comments from a TPT officer – "it felt like being a second-class citizen – 'you can't do anything' " – and this was offset by encouragement from others.

An aspect of integration that was felt to be in need of improvement was feedback following submission of intelligence reports. One interviewee was unhappy that PCSOs (and NSOs) were not provided with information on progress, which he regarded as useful in order to know if the submissions were of an acceptable standard.

### **Activities and deployment**

Activities and issues in the areas covered by interviewed PCSOs, and which they had become involved in, included: residents' meetings; establishment of a designated Youth Shelter; notification of graffiti; notification of flytipping in alleyways; provision of a visible presence to youths congregating, drinking alcohol and using drugs; leafleting parked cars advising owners not to leave valuable possessions inside;

Other main concerns at the time of the fieldwork were speeding bikes, mopeds and cars, parking issues, and neighbourhood disputes. The PCSOs concerned pointed out that they had no power to tackle any of these – but had begun to develop ways of dealing with these situations so that any onlooking members of the public were reportedly happy enough that they were acting on the matter.

One NSO summed up the multiple facets of the PCSO role thus:

"[My PCSO] is gathering quite a bit of intelligence by doing the old 'act dumb' tactic, then instead of acting on it she'll walk away. I get her to visit the elderly, if they've been victims – make sure all's well – which may look like a lazy role but it's a very important role. It's reassurance, which is what I now see their role as – and I could give you quality and quantified examples of where Surrey Police have let themselves down because police officers are not there because there's not enough of us. I find that now, if a call goes out on the radio which would've been attended to in 5 or 10 minutes, an hour later you still hear nobody available to attend – and in the end it comes to the NSO in the morning 'For Information'. Having the PCSO there makes my workload less and allows me to do other things."

### **Sufficiency of powers**

There was dissatisfaction from most respondents with the range of powers at PCSOs' disposal. This stemmed from various instances: frustration at coming across youths believed to be in possession of illicit substances and not being able to search them; calling for back-up could not be relied upon to produce a swift response from short-staffed regulars; inability to stop vehicles;

It was pointed out that PCSOs' brief was step back and avoid confrontation, but some regulars understood that this made the job very difficult, both in terms of their personal safety and their credibility with the public. One PCSO regarded non-confrontation as wholly impractical:

“On my second day I walked into a 24-person disturbance and had people screaming and swearing at me. I wouldn't run away – what image am I setting myself. They can't tell us we have the option to walk away, because we can't. There are some times when you are going to have to intervene – and we should be prepared for that.”

This PCSO also refuted the suggestion that boosting the powers would mean moving the role closer to that of a regular officer. Given the situations she and others had already found themselves in, she argued that this was happening anyway. Countering this, more emphasis on enforcement was seen as negative, for two reasons. First, it might sour relationships with youths who might have seen the PCSO as more of a benevolent figure. Second, giving PCSOs the power to detain, for example, would mean a lot of extra training – in which case why not pay for a fully-trained officer?

### *Parking powers*

Some considered parking a less pressing issue in Elmbridge than in other boroughs because use of many of the council car parks was free. However, the issue was described by other interviewees as “huge”, “a big concern at PCPG meetings”, and “an everyday occurrence”. A tension was identified between wanting to address the problem, not least because failure to do so could confuse or upset members of the public, and not wanting it to take up the whole day. There was a sensitivity to the suspicion that the role could, as initially feared by detractors nationally, become that of ‘glorified traffic warden.’

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

Elmbridge Borough Council was well thought of by PCSOs and regulars. PCSOs had the benefit of meeting relevant council staff over one morning of the initial three-week training, which explained Council functions, the community safety partnership, LSP, CIAGs, funding, councillors' roles. Most PCSOs had also had regular dealings with them since. Council officers were described as active in the removal of abandoned cars and graffiti, although disposal of cars could on occasion take longer than desired due to discussion about whether a vehicle was the responsibility of one of the local housing trusts or the Council's Highways Department, which sometimes resulted in the need for the PCSO to send an urgent email to speed up matters.

Involvement in more long-term joint work has included: the setting up a football team, and an off-road motorbike project for local youths; nomination by one PCSO of a family in her area to the local CIAG; erection of a bench outside a cinema following suggestions from local youths; and discussions, again with local youngsters, about the siting of a new Youth Shelter.

### **Community Safety Wardens**

Two CSWs operate within Elmbridge. One of the PCSOs was herself a CSW previously, and reported that she shares a good relationship with them, which was in evidence when

researchers encountered one of the CSWs while accompanying the PCSO on foot patrol in the area.

Few interviewees perceived much difference between the PCSO and CSW roles. This included one of the council employees, who observed:

“I’ve been out with one of the CSWs and she isn’t only dealing with the crime aspects, it’s also dumped goods in alleyways, or just talking to people, old people who just want someone to talk to, be reassured, and I think the PCSOs probably do something along the same lines as that.”

Where differences did exist, they were felt to reside in the PCSOs having a force-wide role (and hence more of a presence) and greater powers (by nature of the uniform identifying them more closely with Surrey Police).

## **Transport**

PCSOs in Elmbridge have been told they cannot use their own vehicles in order to travel to their areas. Most had been provided with a bicycle, but no helmet or other equipment was supplied with it.

## **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public’s views**

The response to PCSOs from the public in Elmbridge was felt by PCSOs and regulars to be a combination of pleasure, surprise and concern. Pleasure stemmed simply from seeing an officer out on the street. Surprise was a result of seeing a person in uniform out patrolling the streets on foot. Concern was based on the assumption that this foot patrolling must be due to a crime or incident of some sort. As one PCSO remarked, “If people see you they ask you if you’re lost. If they see you with an NSO they say ‘What’s wrong, what’s going on?’” No formal system was mentioned for logging instances of positive feedback from the public in the form of letters or emails.

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

PCSOs and police in the borough appeared to have had a hard time explaining to the public how the two roles differ. Youths were reckoned to have made it their business to know that the roles were different – or more precisely, to know that PCSOs possessed fewer powers. Regular attendees at PCPG meetings were believed to have grasped the distinction, as leaflets had been distributed there outlining the roles of police officers, Specials, PCSOs and CSWs. Even there, though, the NSO Sergeant reported that some would ask whether or not the PCSO was a “fully-fledged” police officer. PCSOs had also been mistaken for traffic wardens and, on one occasion, an RSPCA Inspector.

In some situations, members of the public, believing that the PCSO held the same powers as a police officer, tended to anticipate that PCSOs would act as they would expect a police officer to do. The confusion with police officers created difficulties, then - but blurring of the boundaries was seen as useful if, for example, a PCSO attended a fight. If those involved were not aware of the limits of PCSO powers, it was argued, the PCSO could break the fight up, effectively, on a bluff. On the whole, however, it was also felt preferable to keep the role separate in the eyes of the public, for two reasons. First, it was important to clarify who was

tasked with what. Second, in the words of one regular, people would more readily become an informant to a PCSO than to a police officer.

## **Media**

The local bought newspaper was considered supportive. Despite what one interviewee termed “a natural reaction to go for the negative” it was believed to have covered the PCSO role accurately; one PCSO showed the research team a positive story that had appeared when she came into post. Council staff characterised the links with the local press as good, but added that it had only been within the last six months that the efforts had been made to promote the CDRP in the media. Unlike some other parts of Surrey, the free papers were reported to be less interested.

## **Measurement of impact**

It was felt by regulars that PCSO has made a massive impact on the community. The evidence for this was anecdotal – mainly through PCPGs, but also from comments officers had received from people whilst out on patrol. Two gaps emerged. First, of those PCSOs who had been in post long enough, at least one said she had not yet had an appraisal. Second, for one PCSO a formal survey of public attitudes to the role was already overdue. She felt the opportunity should have been taken to tailor this as far as possible to survey work carried out before PCSOs’ arrival.

Intelligence reports were not being used as a measure. No targets were being set for number of submissions. It was not felt that this would be appropriate since as one PCSO put it, “a lot of what I do isn’t really to with gathering intelligence”. The NSO Sergeant agreed – “otherwise they’d just be going out and fishing for it”.

## **Career development**

The PCSO role was regarded by regulars interviewed as a sensible way of testing the water in terms of seeing whether they would want to apply to join the police. Most of the PCSOs interviewed had ambitions to join the become a police officer, although in one case the downside of this was that the desire to apply had been strengthened because of a lack job satisfaction as a PCSO. One, however, had been put off joining up, commenting:

“I have applied and been turned down. Would like to but I find Surrey Police are not accommodating about integrating PCSOs into the regular police force. The Met has already fast-tracked their PCSOs who want to become PCs.”

## **Funding and the future**

Doubts were expressed about how long the PCSO role would exist. This was based on the short-term and decreasing financial input from central government, coupled with a reluctance and an inability of other agencies to pay. The need for further PCSOs was voiced – along with the introduction of a senior PCSO role to increase incentives – but the opportunity was also taken to voice the need for more police officers. As one regular remarked:

“The role has filled a hole, but it’s still gaping. At the end of the day we need more police officers – and the money should be put into having people on the streets with

powers...If we have to pay for PCSOs I reckon you'll see a lot less. The Council will have the same problem."

Council staff's perspective was that Chief Executive is very supportive of PCSOs. The CDRP would be likely to contribute to further funding – though as the borough has seven PCSOs that could prove expensive, especially bearing in mind the CDRP's total funding was £121,000. The hope was that the police would pick up their share. The overall feeling was that it would not be well received by the public if the role was discontinued.

## **A DIVISION, NORTH SURREY: EPSOM AND EWELL**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	3
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	2
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	8
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	0

Epsom and Ewell marks the border between outer London and the north Downs. It includes a number of open green spaces, the largest an area of 300 acres. The inhabitants are mainly owner-occupiers and there is little unemployment, with 70% of the workforce from the top three social classes.

In 2001/2002, the total crime rate in Epsom & Ewell fell to 52.8 crimes per thousand population. The previous year, the borough showed a 2.3% reduction in crime. This was a steeper reduction than the county average. Epsom and Ewell had the second lowest Surrey burglary rate in 2000/2001 but the highest rate for criminal damage. Concerns over safety were high, however, with 40% saying that there were places in the borough that they would avoid because of feeling unsafe. Women aged between 18 and 24 were especially fearful. Almost two-thirds of young people said they were worried about their family and friends being attacked

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

The expectation of both PCSOs interviewed was to put something back into the community. One had previously worked as a Special for 2 ½ years for another force. Some regulars had no expectations as they did not feel the role had been very well defined. One, who did not share his area with an NSO, admitted to being sceptical at the outset at the wisdom of importing a new role to carry out elements of what the police were currently doing. Two of the other regulars, one of whom had assisted with role playing during the PCSOs' recruitment, thought the role to be "very useful" and "vital". One of these viewed their presence as necessary in terms of its benefits to both communities and police officers:

"They can do a great deal which makes them extensions of police officers, because there aren't enough of us to go round. They can do a lot of the less technical work for police officers – making phone calls, going to see people, being seen out and about in the community, statements, visits to victims following crimes that have been matrixed out because there is no time to investigate them - freeing police officers up for the things that require their specialist training. I wouldn't pretend to say that just having a uniformed person out there means criminals scurry for the hills, but it does actually offer reassurance to people and they feel there's somebody out there they can go to."

Some regulars added that, ideally, it would be valuable to have two police officers on an area. However, most were philosophical about the likelihood of this happening, and regarded a PCSO, in the words of one respondent, as "the best I could hope for". One declared that, though he saw the PCSO role as a good idea,

"I also think it's the Government and police forces trying to get a cut-price police officer. That's how I think they're treating PCSOs, but I don't think they have a role as that. Their job title is a PCSO."

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

Regulars interviewed seemed ill-prepared for the PCSOs' arrival. They seemed unclear as to what they should expect from PCSOs, and who should provide them with this information. The NSO Sergeant described the difficulties in this way:

"I am a police officer supervisor, and there's rules and regulations that you work to, and now I have two civilians to supervise who work different hours and have different regulations, whose aims are not really defined, and whose job profile is wishy-washy. What does "reassure" mean to me? How do I write my appraisals on the fact that they're reassuring? I've never been shown what a civilian duty sheet looks like, for example. There's been a lack of training in how you're supposed to supervise them. NSOs did meet them during their training, which I missed. There was also a Reassurance Day which project management held, and I missed the majority of that as well - this is probably part of my ignorance. But more can be done, because it's such a new role, and not a traditional policing role."



The main problem seems to have been lack of discussion from the outset about PCSOs capabilities. As the NSO put it:

“Nobody sat us down and told us what they can and can’t do. It’s only been bits and pieces that go round the office. Not sure who I’d’ve expected to tell us.”

Another NSO added that he recalled there being a meeting about a month before PCSOs arrived, but admitted he could remember little about the powers being outlined then. For the PCSOs themselves, the position was still unclear in relation to certain activities – for example, the issuing of CLE26s and the taking of statements from witnesses, which both were unconvinced they could carry out, but which they had been told they could proceed with.

### **Initial training**

Both PCSOs felt that the initial training should have spent longer on statement-taking, which only comprised one half day. The need for this was exacerbated as supervisors had set a target of a certain number of statements per week. Six months after completing training, neither PCSO had access to CIS, although one was able to rely on an NSO – not her own – in order to update herself with events in her area. Opinion was split on whether access was necessary. One NSO felt that PCSOs definitely needed CIS access, but the PCSO had never asked her to look anything up on it. The other PCSO did not feel he especially needed access, though he added that it would make things more efficient. The Community Safety Sergeant, meanwhile, believed PCSOs were handicapped without it, as the police would not get maximum use from them.

The NSO Sergeant took over the role after PCSOs came into post. He had not asked for any schedule from the PCSOs, and they may not have made him aware of its existence. The upshot was that the Sergeant had little idea of what the PCSOs’ initial training had comprised. This created problems:

“They had a statement input, but I’ve had hassle in the last two weeks because they feel they haven’t got the ability to do statements. The training also had a radio input, but until two weeks ago they haven’t used their radio so people don’t know who they are. No reason put forward as to why, other than saying the radio is busy.”

On the evidence of the output of the two PCSOs. The Borough Inspector questioned the effectiveness of the initial training. It had taken place at the police station at which the Inspector was based, but he advised that he had not initially known that was where it would take place – “we muscled our way in on it basically”.

### *Follow-up training*

PCSOs mentioned little in the way of follow-up training, other than on self-defence and the use of a PSP computer programme. The promise of imminent training on statement-taking was welcomed; however, one regular argued that while at training school, he was required to take up to six statements a week, and questioned whether this would be sufficient. The

Community Safety Sergeant who had helped organise, though not deliver the initial three-week training, regarded follow-up training as critical:

“I know there’s no formal follow-up training, and I feel there should be. I can only speak for this borough, but I think they’ll need follow-up training on statement-taking. I think we should be asking them how they’re getting on and what they need, and we should be aware of follow-up training they might need. If you don’t do something routinely, every time you do it it’s a bit scary because you’re not really sure what you’re doing, and you try and avoid doing it if you can. I think they need nurturing.”

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

Subsequent to the first visit to the borough, conflict training was delivered to PCSOs throughout Surrey. One of the regulars felt there was little need for it given the relatively safe nature of the borough. Most welcomed it, however: as one put it, simply walking around with the word “Police” written on their uniform made PCSOs more of a target. Another believed conflict training, as opposed to learning how to restrain people, was an important skill, but added that

“In the first instance though, if they get into a situation which is becoming more than they can handle, then my view is they should step away and call a police officer and let them deal with it. They are the eyes and ears, and they can be good witnesses.”

Two commented that they did not support PCSOs carrying protective equipment because it would involve more training, which in turn meant it would be harder to distinguish between PCSOs and police officers. For one, the current situation meant that on occasion their presence could hinder him as much as provide help:

“As a result I’ve more to think about. I’ve done normal patrols with them and there was an incident where I had to struggle with someone. I felt I had to be more aware they had no PPE. So instead of only protecting myself, I also felt I had to protect them. Had I been with a police officer I would’ve been more relaxed, because I’d know they’d’ve been able to turn round and give me a hand.”

Two regulars also believed that while they might not be at risk physically, PCSOs had had to tolerate language from members of the public which was unacceptable and which, had it been directed at a police officer, would have led to an arrest.

On occasion (and during the fieldwork visit), the PCSOs, along with everyone else, spent Friday evenings working in the town centre as part of Operation Dredger, launched in February to target drink-related crime and youth disorder. For one of the PCSOs this involved working outside her dedicated area, and her feeling was that some form of protection, such as a baton, would be useful in such situations

## Arrival and integration

Integration of PCSOs in the borough has been poor. The plan was for the PCSOs to spend time with their NSOs for the first few weeks. This did not occur. Conflicting versions of the chronology were offered:

“On my first day here, my NSO knew I was coming , but was on annual leave. We did do about four weeks with our NSO. The problem’s been we’ve had two sergeants since we’ve been here. The first knew the job description from top to bottom – with the new one it’s been trial and error. He has said that our job role is a blank sheet of paper. But we’ve provided him with our job description. I think our first sergeant wrote the pro forma for the job county-wide. The new Sergeant has been out with us, but I get the feeling that he really doesn’t understand the job. We don’t arrest – it’s not our job. To be perfectly honest, he has singled us out. Some of them [NSOs] are integrating us, and have sent us emails thanking us when we do things and telling us we are valued – but a lot don’t really understand what we’re for, despite project management coming and giving them a talk. One NSO said ‘I don’t feel we need them – why don’t we utilise the money on regulars?’ Improving understanding is down to local management. Sergeant is not approachable, and mistakes being more a part of the team (eg by doing statements) for being more of a police officer.”

[PCSO]

“We were told they’d have to be puppy-walked. Idea was she’d work with me for five weeks, get to know the area. But normally by the time I’d come in in the morning they’d’ve gone [together]. Fair play, they’d be out. But to be quite honest my PCSO doesn’t come out with me an awful lot. I’ve brought this up before. The Sergeant brought out some guidance that the default role is to go out with me and the other NSO who has one. They’ve been doing their own shifts. I think she’d just rather go out with another PCSO, but she could learn a lot more from coming out with us.”

[NSO]

The Community Safety Sergeant, whose initial responsibility it had been to manage them, felt it unfortunate that at the time the PCSOs arrived, she was in effect carrying out three roles. She felt that as a result she had not been able to give them all the attention they needed, but added

“...they were set off on the right foot with what they should do routinely in the mornings, where their duty sheets were, a list of the type of work that I felt they should be doing. They were then put with NSOs to go out on patrol – then they had their NSO Sergeants.”

The Borough Inspector believed PCSOs had enjoyed a very good level of support with their development. His belief was that “they then chose to go off and do what they wanted to do”. This he regarded as dangerous since

“It affects our credibility not only with other agencies but with our public, who in this part of the world are quite demanding. The two PCSOs we’ve got I don’t think understand that, I don’t think they appreciate that, and I don’t think they’re committed to that. They don’t want to make themselves part of a team, they don’t want to understand where we’re going, irrespective of the fact that we’ve on numerous

occasions sat down with them... If you get confronted with [an] issue, and you can't actually get to find out what the problems are for the individual, I think we're really struggling. Should my management team have to spend so much time policing what [PCSOs] do? Is that actually assisting in crime reduction and reassurance in this borough? It also worries me about the representation they give on the street."

More seriously for the NSO sergeant, NSOs' perception of the PCSO role had led to awkward misunderstandings with members of the public. He offered this example:

"We have a problem with skateboarders in a car park. On one occasion a little old lady tried to get through and they threw beer over her. I advised NSOs to warn those they saw skateboarding, then if they saw them again, take the skateboard and get parents to come and collect it at the police station. This got translated down via the NSOs to the PCSOs to 'You can seize skateboards' – because NSOs see them as police. I don't think the NSOs can see the benefit – and if [PCSOs] weren't here, I don't think they'd be missed, bottom line. One of the kids' dads is a Met pc – he turned up and said 'Where's your power to do that?'"

The Borough Inspector felt the situation had been allowed to develop due to the poorly-defined nature of the role, and considered the job specification too loose. He did not regard turnover among regulars as a contributory factor, pointing out that the management team in the borough had been in place longer than any other in Surrey.

When the NSO Sergeant took the role, he described developments thus:

"My priority was what the NSOs were or weren't doing, so I left the PCSOs to work with the NSOs. So the NSOs were left to task them. I told them to help out their NSO then come back and let me know what they'd been up to. Up until now the incidence of the two PCSOs working with the NSOs is virtually nil. I've now explained to them I only expect them to work between 8am and 10pm; I want them to work Monday to Friday, which is what NSOs generally do – at the moment the PCSOs are picking and choosing their days. When they have gone out with an NSO, at least one of them has complained that the NSO thinks the PCSO role is there to do the same role. NSOs see them as – they're in the office, they wear a uniform, they have radios so they're the same as us... To me, they're members of the public who've spent some time in uniform and a couple of weeks in training. I don't see them as integrated. They're not part of my team at the moment. They come along and sit on the outside. I mean, they seem determined to keep absent from my team."

One of the PCSOs in particular shared this feeling of lack of integration, perceiving a lack of information about the role on the Surrey Police website relative to the separate webpages devoted to NSOs. In his opinion, this was because the role had not been adequately explained to local staff, and hence had not been properly comprehended.

"I don't feel integrated. The police here just seem to think reassurance is about someone walking up and down the high street, letting people see there are bodies on the street. If you're indoctrinated into being a policeman, you think and act in a certain way, and you treat people in a certain way. I think it becomes hard when

you've got civilian staff that are new to the post and you've got to involve them to work alongside officers that are trained to do things in an a-b-c way. I think a lot of people still don't understand our role. That goes for all officers. I don't think our role was adequately explained before we arrived. In the Met, they have set down guidelines for our role and you start from there. Here there is no baseline. I do get the opportunity to explain to police officers here what I think the role is about. But I basically get blanked. A lot of our shifts have been changed to hours that I think are totally unsuitable. About two weeks ago I did a couple of extra hours in the day. Following day I came in at seven in the morning, and had to meet someone at nine, because that was the time that was feasible for them. That afternoon I saw a couple who worked until six, so they weren't home until seven. You'd've thought I'd asked for the moon. I had to quantify it, justify it, prove to them that's what I was doing. We [he and other PCSO] are now getting followed in our own time, to see how long our lunches are, because seemingly, apparently, we took fifteen minutes longer than we should've done one day... I don't think I can work in this division or this station any more. If you're not happy in your job, you're not going to give it 100%. And I'm not giving it 100%. If your face fits, it fits. I think this isn't a place for me.

One of the NSOs, although he believed integration had taken place, described how on occasion the PCSOs did not explain why they were unable to carry out certain tasks:

"Every now and then we ask them to do something and they say 'Not our remit', and it almost becomes really cliquey. I know there's also been some confusion over their duty sheets and meal breaks... If they gave us a reason why they can't do some things, that'd be fair enough, because we could get someone to give them a hand with it. Likewise, the other day, one of the NSOs who shares an area with a PCSO was away on a course, and there was a problem in the town with some scooters - I come in and find some paperwork just dumped in my tray. So I look at it and think 'What's all this about - it's the town, and put it in the NSO's tray'. And the Sergeant stops me and says 'No, no, no, that's for you to deal with'. But the PCSO hasn't ticked one of the boxes, which is 'Liaise with an NSO about what the offences are and sort out an action plan'. No-one had spoken to me, so until they had, what could I do? Sometimes I think there could be better communication."

Another NSO, although not badly disposed towards the role, agreed that there had been room for improvement in the way the role was introduced to all sections of the police:

"I was on DCIT when they PCSOs came in, so didn't know much about them. If you weren't working directly with them you weren't told much about them. We didn't get very much feedback from the force itself. Given that they have a job scope that they can go and follow up on crimes and reassure victims, I think if you get a crime on your workload, as DCIT will do, you want to know if the PCSO's going to go and speak with them and maybe get information they can bring back to an investigating officer, but we weren't really told anything... I think Surrey [Police] are trying to make an effort to get this information out there, via monthly emails, but it would be nice to be asked our opinion... And I still don't think there's enough in [the Neighbourhood Specialist] departments on knowing what they can or can't do, or should or shouldn't be doing."

AS TPT were based outside the borough, at Esher, it was perhaps unsurprising that the NSO Sergeant felt integration with PCSOs was unlikely to be strong. One NSO felt that TPT needed to know the details of the PCSO role, but probably did not. He added though that if as a TPT officer he attended a job, and a PCSO was there, he would ask the extent of their powers before asking to do something.

One regular viewed PCSOs as one of a succession of roles which the police had been asked to work alongside and supervise in recent times. She suggested that increasing familiarity with this had not made the progress less painful for everyone, and that this was something for training to address:

“It’s been quite difficult for police officers to get their minds into working with other agencies in a community policing way. There are some people who will never be able to think like that. PCSOs have been out with the NSOs and they can learn by example and I think that’s the best way – to see someone else do things. But...it could be difficult if the NSO is more enforcement-minded. There’s a lot you can do to enforce without getting into a confrontation. I have never managed civilian staff, and I’m not aware of any training for police officers to do that. I think at the moment people find out by asking someone else who knows. We should’ve already had training for that, but if we haven’t, and I don’t think we have, then we certainly need to make it a chief consideration if we’re going down this route of more auxiliary people.”

## **Activities and deployment**

Activities in which the PCSOs have participated to date include: photographing graffiti at the railway station; visiting schools in the company, of an NSO, and discussing the identification of graffiti tags with the head teacher; patrolling at the station and at a nearby park, both places where youths have historically congregated; encouraging them not to harass people playing bowls on the green; and gathering information on the proprietor of a local wine bar, who is known to be involved in drugs and acquisitive crime. One also sat in on a police interview with an arrestee, reportedly at the request of the duty sergeant and the interviewing officer.

The nature of the activities to be undertaken by PCSOs has been a bone of contention between PCSOs and their supervisors. The Borough Inspector reported that the PCSOs were not keen to take part in Operation Dredger. The reluctance on the part of one of the PCSOs was also witnessed by the research team. The Borough Inspector stressed that he thought the personalities rather than the role were causing the problems:

“I live[elsewhere] in [Surrey], and I know the PCSOs there, and I’ve seen the level of interaction they have, the extent of their activities. One of the NSOs who shares an area with a PCSO thinks it would be much easier for him to manage the patch without the PCSO. It creates more work. If I ask my NSOs to be flexible, to do shifts, certain duties, they’ll comply. If I ask my PCSOs, they won’t comply.”

One of the PCSOs questioned why he had been deployed in a town centre when there were other areas of the borough where he believed he could be more appropriately deployed. He

felt that what was being required of him was often directly at odds with what the role ought to comprise.

“The role should be about working within the community. Looking at their issues and trying to sort them out. Instead I’m walking around, just meeting people generally... Why do we walk around in the street at ten o’clock at night?... After eight o’clock at night it doesn’t become reassurance, it becomes policing. In another borough - Guildford – they did a risk assessment and now PCSOs stop there at eight in the evening. And we can’t do anything if it’s a policing issue – we’re not police officers. If I met someone in the town who said “We’ve got a problem, we’d like you to come and have a chat with us in our community and get to know us”, we can’t do that because we’re based in the town – so we’re not forging a link with the community.”

One of the NSOs believed PCSOs could most properly offer reassurance by being involved in

“...crimes that have been solved straightaway by the crime desk – no real suspect, no CCTV, no witnesses – basically that gets filed straight away. Even if you investigated it you wouldn’t get anything from it. It would be good if PCSOs could go on a follow-up visit after the letter of apology has been sent out, to let the victim know the police are watching [the issue] and try[ing] to make sure it doesn’t happen again. And that way you get people’s trust and they start telling you stuff.”

### **Sufficiency of powers**

The Community Safety Sergeant described herself as “quite emphatic” that PCSOs did not need any powers. She believed there was a range of effective work that PCSOs could carry out without powers, and that the appropriate resting place for them was with police officers. One of the NSOs had mixed feelings: more powers might be useful, but would effectively recast PCSOs as underpaid police officers. He described it as “a hard balancing act”. There was unanimity that the powers, as they stood, were insufficient. The NSO Sergeant, however, felt that the narrow range of powers restricted the number of taskings he was able to offer PCSOs.

“There is a lack of anything tangible that they can achieve. Yes they can put stickers on cars telling the owners not to leave valuables inside, which is useful. The powers are sufficient to do what I’ve now set them to do - one PNC check per day, four statements a month, and four bits of intelligence per week. But they’ll come to me and ask me if they can do something and I’ll say ‘Well I don’t know really. Can you? You’ve had the training’. I won’t task them to do anything slightly policey - because I think they probably won’t be able to do it.”

### *Power to detain*

Neither PCSO had ever used this power, and had never been in a situation where they thought it appropriate; however, one was under the impression that, from the outset, PCSOs in Surrey held this power. One NSO regarded it as a useful power, if only to make it obvious that PCSOs could address problems. He argued that since PCSOs tended to follow similar shift patterns to NSOs, and therefore would not have to ring a response unit for assistance when

detaining, as an NSO was likely to be nearby. The Community Safety Sergeant, however, opposed the idea on the basis that

“Police officers spend two years on probation because of the nature of some of the incidents they deal with. I don’t think we can reasonably expect PCSOs to deal with violent situations and restrain somebody or detain them for half an hour. I would hope that wherever the power does exist they would have a lot more training.”

### *Parking powers*

Several respondents believed that enforcing parking regulations should form part of the PCSOs’ role, on the basis that this was a major requirement in their area. In one example, commuters using the nearby railway station would often leave their car all day in two-hour parking bays. In another, many roads in the area were painted with double yellow lines, and people had started to realise that if a PCSO walked past motorists sat in a car parked on a double yellow line and did not move them, the PCSO probably did not have the power to intervene. One NSO, who had a particular parking problem outside one of the schools in his area, argued that this need not move the role closer to that of a traffic warden (whose presence at the time of the fieldwork amounted to one covering the entire borough); rather, it constituted targeted problem-solving at certain times of the day. One NSO, however, was very much against the idea, on the basis that the role was primarily based on encouraging members of the public to provide information. He believed that PCSO enforcement of parking regulations would in fact lessen the link between communities and the police.

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

Both PCSOs said they had the names of contacts in the borough council; however, for one, joint work with these contacts was thin on the ground. He attributed this to the fact that he worked in a town centre. The other PCSO hoped for involvement in domestic surveys, which she reported would be done in conjunction with a council-contracted handyman. However, she had been told that this could not be done in the company of the other PCSO, which was her preference. Her NSO admitted that the PCSO knew council contacts better than she did. Despite this, the PCSOs’ supervisor did not believe that any Borough Council Housing Officers would know much about the PCSO role. He was unaware of any examples of PCSO work with the council on abandoned cars or graffiti, and felt the council would be “non-committal” about the PCSO role as they had not actually seen much work being conducted. No respondents spoke of any joint meetings or introductory sessions with counterparts in the council.

### **Transport**

One of the PCSOs had been provided with a bicycle, but no helmet. Both saw it as important that PCSOs (and NSOs) conduct foot patrols as opposed to travelling around in vehicles.

### **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public’s views**

Residents and traders had informed one of the PCSOs that they had seen more police officers when the area was policed by the Metropolitan Police. However, she also reported that she



was receiving positive feedback from members of the public through residents' meetings, and from people she met whilst walking in her area.

On the whole, though, no respondents had any real idea how well the role was being received. As the Community Safety Sergeant remarked, without inviting feedback, the police were unlikely to receive it. She had not heard any adverse comments, but was confident that some people were happier for seeing PCSOs around and about – however, they would not necessarily write in and say so.

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

There was uncertainty as to whether or not the public knew the difference between the PCSO and police role. The NSO Sergeant reported that at PCPGs, people had not even asked, and, although he thought PCSOs may have come along, the role had not been discussed. One NSO commented that on two occasions when she had patrolled with the PCSO, they had encountered members of the public who, apparently not distinguishing between the roles, had requested assistance from the PCSO. The NSO commented that the PCSO "...didn't really know what to say – I can imagine it would've been a bit more awkward if she'd been on her own".

One of the PCSOs admitted that few members of the public were clear on the division between the roles. He believed that the similarity in the two uniforms was a factor, suggesting that PCSOs could retain "a badge, a sweatshirt, a high-vis[ibility] jacket, but we need a more casual approach".

The elderly were not believed likely to know the difference. Youths had a better appreciation of the PCSO role. One NSO and one of the PCSOs believed this was because they wished to know how much licence the PCSO role gave them to be unco-operative. One NSO was especially keen that the difference be understood, commenting that

"...the whole point of them is that they are a link between police and public, and if people think they are the police that link won't be made. And if say an assault takes place the public might be looking to them to deal with it in a way that they can't."

### *Will the public more readily offer information to a PCSO than to a police officer?*

One PCSO believed that the public were more likely to talk to her than police officers; firstly because they felt more comfortable doing so, and secondly because they saw more of her than they did of any regulars. This was disputed by three of the regulars interviewed. One in fact felt the opposite was true, saying that much of the intelligence he obtained was gained after an arrest, divulged by detainees in the back of the police van on the way to the police station. He attributed this to the fact that arrestees would often associate with others against whom there was also good evidence to be gathered.

Another regular felt that the PCSO's view was skewed because, quite deliberately, she had not spent enough time with regular officers. He added that on the evidence of the intelligence reports submitted, the claim did not stand up to scrutiny, as most of the PCSO's inputs comprised of what she had seen, rather than anything members of the public had told her. The

third regular believed that public willingness to develop a dialogue had little to do with the type of uniform and depended more on individual characteristics and use of language – for which reason she believed that people were more likely to approach her and not the PCSO. One regular, however, offered unprompted support for the idea, saying that with no gas and no baton, PCSOs might sometimes be regarded as more approachable.

## **Media**

The NSO Sergeant was content that the local paper would print any good news stories the police supplied them with – though he was unaware of any articles relating to PCSOs. One of the PCSOs had seen little coverage – certainly nothing seemed to have been specifically arranged – and felt there should be more. However, one of the NSOs said he had seen “a fair amount of publicity” in the local press.

## **Measurement of impact**

No formal appraisal of the PCSOs had been carried out by the NSO Sergeant. He was unaware of the appraisal system for PCSOs. However, he had recently set them targets: one PNC check per day; four statements a month; and four items of intelligence submitted per week. Both PCSOs did not feel they were sufficiently trained at statement-taking to attempt this target. One of them was happy enough to do PNC checks, but did not think it practical to do this every day. The NSO Sergeant acknowledged that sheer numbers was not as important as usefulness of output, but believed that “I’m asking for quantity, and from that we can build on the quality, so we’ve got something of use”. However, he regarded the impact of the PCSOs as “marginal”. The Borough Inspector remarked that he expected a PCSO to be someone who could be trained and developed, who would know who to turn to for advice, but who could become self-sufficient. In his opinion, the PCSOs had not developed at all.

The PCSOs’ targets had been set a couple of weeks prior to the fieldwork visit, but had already proved problematic. First, one NSO described how, immediately following a meeting about targets, she and her PCSO had walked out of the police station and “there was a vehicle there that needed a check, and it was there on a plate and she didn’t do it”. Second, the NSO Sergeant reported that the previous day one of the PCSOs had spent five hours in the police station typing a statement, which he had to do because his handwriting was not good enough and owing to dyslexia his spelling was too poor. Aside from the implications of this incident in terms of time spent visible to the public, the NSO Sergeant was not at all confident that the PCSO would be able to competently fulfil the role of professional witness if called upon to do so at court.

The Community Safety Sergeant agreed that to her knowledge, no proper appraisal forms for PCSOs existed, and as a consequence, she did not feel the police in the borough were getting the best out of the PCSOs. She suggested there should be some kind of formal monitoring from headquarters as to how PCSOs were developing, as

“...for one reason or another, and this is not down to individuals, I don’t think they’ve had the support they needed. Perhaps ours needed more support than others. Perhaps they’ve not had that because it’s only become apparent later on that they weren’t able to do everything they should, because they didn’t have the skills or the courage or whatever. If you’ve never used a radio – it’s difficult. You feel a bit stupid

if you get it wrong. The job also requires [PCSOs] to ask for assistance, and I think, you know, some people find that more difficult than others, especially if you're an adult. We're just scratching the surface, and I think it requires a lot of supervision and a lot of help."

## **Career development**

Neither PCSO had ambitions to join the regulars. One in any case believed he was too old.

<sup>24</sup>Both commented that if they had wanted to apply, they would have been put off the idea by their experiences in the PCSO role. One added that he had now seen first-hand many of the problems the police face, and understood how exacting the job was. One NSO believed becoming a PCSO would provide a very good insight into what the police do. She added that PCSOs possessed the necessary skills in terms of going out and talking to members of the public, but would need much more input when it came to facing public order situations or providing advice on criminal matters. The NSO Sergeant was less convinced, adding that on the evidence of what he'd seen, PCSOs seeking to join up would need to be of a higher standard and show more commitment.

There was little enthusiasm among regulars for the creation of a new tier of PCSO. One believed that problems had occurred in the past when traffic warden managers existed, and drew parallels with similar bureaucratic moves in other areas of public life; for example, domestic supervisors in the health service. His preference was for PCSOs to be further integrated into the police service. Another regular foresaw possible conflict between a Senior PCSO and an NSO Sergeant, or an NSO, over what a PCSO should be tasked with. However, she added that

"...having something to aim for in terms of promotion...for PCSOs is quite nice. If you're in what you think is a dead end job with no prospects...I think maybe people won't give their best because you get bored, or they'll only do it for a short period of time."

## **Funding and the future**

The Borough Inspector explained that the local CDRP was keen to resource PCSOs because they wanted to make the role succeed. However, he went on to say that

"for that you'd expect to see the results, and currently I couldn't justify it. We would be better off with one police officer rather than our two PCSOs. I think it's down to personalities, but I wouldn't let that cloud my view. I think the Government's done a bit of a con trick by launching them and gradually reducing funding – but that's typical. I'm not personally against an additional tier of policing, as long as it gets more people focused on crime reduction and reassurance."

He added that he felt more value for money was likely to result from accrediting staff from partner agencies. He explained that the police in the borough were looking to accredit ten council staff from February 2004 onwards. Uniformed security staff in the town centre, and

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<sup>24</sup> At a PCSO workshop in January 2004, it was clarified that in Surrey the maximum age at which a recruit would be accepted into Surrey Police was forty-eight.

housing wardens were possibly going to be involved, and he believed that this would be a much more effective way of widening the partnership, if not the police family.

### **Role here to stay?**

Three of the NSOs believed the role was likely to continue, but needed developing, more training, and (in a reference to the two PCSOs that had been allocated to the borough a more selective recruitment process. One of these admitted that more education for the police on how to make best use of PCSOs would be useful. The Community Safety Sergeant stressed that continuation of the role rested largely on funding. If that was available, her belief that PCSOs would not only stay, but their numbers would increase. On a wider level, she added that more and more people would be working with the police and other agencies in this type of arrangement, irrespective of which political party was in government,

“ because I think if you go down that route far enough it’s impossible to go back again because you’d suddenly have to find huge sums of money to make up the numbers of police officers. If you suddenly got rid of the PCSOs, wardens, volunteers, you’d be so restricted in what you could do, and the general public would never wear it because they’ll have got used to it, and what would be left in terms of police officers could never possibly cope.”

## **A DIVISION, NORTH SURREY: SPELTHORNE**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	6
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	5
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	4
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	0

### *Documentation supplied*

- *Press releases and cuttings, some exclusively on PCSOs, some on PCSO/NSO link.*
- *Copies of objectives PCSOs and NSOs have all signed up to – includes Scan/Analysis, Response and Success Indicators*
- *Letters of appreciation from members of the public to the Chief Constable*

Spelthorne comprises 15 wards. Ethnic minority groups make up approximately 3.4% of the total population. There are approximately 37,000 households, around 6,600 of whom are in rented or social housing accommodation, with the remainder owner occupied. A quarter of the population live alone and two thirds are in families of two to four members.

Spelthorne is quite affluent and unemployment is low. However, in comparison to the rest of Surrey, Spelthorne has the highest level of households in need. Three wards are amongst the twenty most deprived in the county.

Spelthorne has the highest crime rate per head of population in Surrey, having until 1998 fallen within the remit of the Metropolitan Police, where its crime rate was the lowest. The borough's 2001 fear of crime survey identified 15 fear of crime hotspots, eight of which were concentrated in two wards.

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

Among regulars, initial reaction to PCSOs' imminent arrival was positive. Lack of Home Office funding, by virtue of being the safest county in England (although the borough with the highest crime rate per head of population in the county) meant PCSOs were a welcome addition to the Neighbourhood team. The expectation was that PCSOs could deal with graffiti, parking, abandoned vehicles, lost and stolen bicycles were all mentioned – leaving police officers to concentrate on crime matters.

Three types of reservation were recounted. The first revolved around the way the role was framed – as a police role which was, in the opinion of one NSO, strictly speaking not police-oriented, and could therefore more appropriately be managed by the Council in the same way that CSWs were. The second concerned ensuring that the right type of people were recruited – in the words of one NSO, “not power-mad police wannabies”. He did not think another police officer appropriate in his area, as this would simply mean two people dealing with crime – while the so-called “lower level stuff” fell by the wayside.

## **Knowledge of area beforehand**

Two of the PCSOs were unhappy at the time it took to be told where they would be working. This was not simply inconvenient - in practical terms it left little time to research the area, and, as one put it, would have meant one less thing to worry about at a time when she was having to absorb a lot of information in a very short period. It was, she felt, a failure that needed correcting for future intakes.

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

One of the regulars was satisfied that Surrey Police Headquarters had provided a lot of guidance to officers in the borough about PCSO powers and the purpose of the role. This does not appear to have filtered down to everyone, however. One went so far as to say that, even six months after PCSOs' arrival, “no police officers understand their role – none at all”. Another expressed concerns for the role based upon uncertainty about what PCSOs would be expected to accomplish and the means they would have at their disposal to do this. The issuing of CLE26s provides the best example of this lack of clarity. One PCSO explained that

“I cannot do CLE26s, but some people remember me as a traffic warden in this area and still think I can do that job. Obviously I don't tell them that I can't; instead I say I'm giving them the benefit of the doubt. But then I spoke to my NSO, who'll let me do them but only if he's there. Having said that, I went out with a Special Constable one day and we blitzed those parked illegally in the bays– the Special signed the lot for me.”

## **Initial training**

Though well-delivered, all PCSOs interviewed had, in retrospect, discerned gaps in the three-week training. Statement-taking and use of radios were not covered sufficiently, even for the PCSO who had previously written statements as a traffic warden. Another felt that a lot of the training had not been used, and that, since the job had, predictably, involved dealing with people every day, learning in a classroom for three weeks was simply not an authentic

grounding for the job. However, she acknowledged that she had been in the minority when it came to deciding upon a learning style that suited as many of the group as possible.

One regular felt the training had been useful, and had not had to explain to his PCSO what he regarded as basics such as reading ICADs. However, he reported that some misinformation had surfaced among colleagues – for example, a CID officer had reportedly instructed PCSOs not to divulge information they came across to their NSOs, which the interviewee regarded as “absolutely crazy” and which the Community Safety Sergeant advised him to ignore. Two other regulars, however, felt the training limited, and insufficient for the demands that PCSOs have subsequently had put on them. At the time of the site visits, PCSOs did not have access to CIS; one commented that for her this was less of a problem, as she spent the bulk of her time with her NSO, who looked everything up for her.

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

Conflict management training had not been delivered by the time of either site visit. This was seen as a big gap by all but one of the interviewees. Had it been delivered, argued one PCSO, it would have helped build up confidence. It was agreed by most that PCSOs were vulnerable, though the strategies for addressing this differed. One PCSO’s first rule before taking a decision was “I know my limitations”, whatever the interpretation on looking members of the public might put on her actions:

“I would never get myself in a dangerous situation without backup...I once followed a chap they were after, radioed that I’d seen him and where he was heading, and they virtually said to me ‘Keep away’. I make the decision – pass things on and let the police deal with it. I used to walk away as a traffic warden and on reflection there was more grief doing that job than this one. As for the public watching, I don’t think any member of the public would expect anybody to put themselves in danger.”

In terms of protection, one regular favoured body armour, ASPs and CS gas, on the basis that anyone who might assault a police officer, would be unlikely to differentiate between that role and a PCSO. Stab vests were also suggested by a PCSO, referring to the fact that the area, though now covered by Surrey Police, still had the feel of Greater London and incursions by offenders from within the Met area to go with it.

The PCSO uniform itself was regarded as a generator of vulnerability by one NSO simply because it contained the word ‘POLICE’. He maintained that it was unnecessary to align the role so with the police in order for the job to be done well, pointing to the impact CSWs had made on overlapping issues.

One of the PCSOs was unenthusiastic about conflict training, feeling it was unnecessary. She argued that it

“You never know what you can walk into round the corner, but the same would apply if you had a truncheon or handcuffs or whatever. The way the trainer taught us in first three weeks was ‘You’re better off trying to talk your way out of a situation’.”

She was also strongly of the opinion that she did not need more protection. She had no inclination to be in a situation where she would have to use any extra weaponry, believing it ran the risk of someone using it on her. She continued

“If I wanted batons or anything I’d join the police. I don’t want to carry anything that looks menacing because that’s not how I see the job - I see it as a bit more fluffy. Having all that equipment would make you more vulnerable – you’d be a target.”

### **Arrival and integration**

Integration of PCSOs within neighbourhood teams appears to have run smoothly. The NSO Sergeant commented that all PCSOs were approaching him with questions, and he was encouraged that they felt able to do this. One PCSO said she had encountered a little bit of scepticism from some officers to begin with, but felt the role had proved its worth - “now they realise we are an asset to them and not to be sniffed at”.

One of the PCSOs stressed how critical integration was to the success of her role. She remarked

“If I didn’t get on with my NSO I wouldn’t be able to do this job. I know there’s a few PCSOs who don’t have a good working relationship with their NSO – and I don’t know how they’ve stayed, because I couldn’t.”

She added that both the NSO Sergeants she had contact with were “brilliant”, and that she had no problem raising issues with them. She doubted that many regulars other than NSOs knew what her role comprised – but that even those who were unclear were friendly. She had called TPT on two occasions: once when some kids were smoking cannabis, and she did not have the power to search them, and on another occasion at a fair when she encountered a group of youths drinking alcohol and, although she had the power to seize the drink because it was open, there were, as she put it “twenty of them and one of me”.

Interviews with Spelthorne PCSOs showed a similar induction process for all – initial weeks spent with their NSO, who familiarised them with their area, nominals, historical hotspots, and influential members of the public. This process was informed by a visit from an NSO and PCSO from another Surrey Police division, where PCSOs had begun work six weeks sooner than in Spelthorne. By the time of the fieldwork visit, all PCSOs interviewed were routinely tasking themselves, although some were spending more time with their NSO than others.

### **Activities and deployment**

In addition to parking problems, issues that PCSOs in Spelthorne have become involved in so far include: criminal damage; abandoned vehicles; graffiti; people breaking into cars and stealing from shops; youths riding bikes, playing football outside residents’ houses, and congregating in large groups in parks and on main streets; vagrants gathering and sleeping in a park next to the river, causing complaints from workers in an overlooking office block;

Strategies for tackling these issues, apart from foot patrolling, have included:

- Foot patrolling



- Engaging youths in conversation and encouraging them to see that their behaviour can be intimidating
- Discussion about the provision of a youth shelter
- Establishment of a reassurance panel following selection of a Surrey Reassurance pilot site
- Explaining to residents and shopowners the logic behind their strategy for dealing with complaints about youths
- Attendance at NW meetings
- Assisting in the establishment of new NW schemes
- Joint organisation of a trip to Kent for some of the youths (aged 14-16)
- A disco planned for Valentine's Day 2004.
- Participation in mediation schemes
- Assisting in a two-day clear-up of overgrown land in one part of the borough - described as "a real win for the PCSOs" by one of the regulars.

The PCSO whose area had been selected as part of Surrey Police Reassurance Project said that this had had a bearing on deployment. She and her NSO were now more likely to patrol together, because they judged this to have a greater impact. As a result, she was more likely to work beyond 10pm. She stressed that Sergeants would not force PCSOs to work that late, it was a matter of choice. She and her NSO had been asked to produce a report on work done as part off the Reassurance Project, with a view to distribution of best practice.

### **Sufficiency of powers**

All but one of the PCSOs felt their powers needed bolstering. The following provides a good example of why:

"I was out with the NSO – he wanted to search two youths, one male, one female. He searched the male, but I couldn't go too deeply on the female. I have no powers to search, but since NSO was there and the female was comfortable with me doing it, it was ok. I tell kids that if they don't do something I'll call a unit out and it will be a lot harder for you. Often I'm in the shopping centre and they frequently have shoplifters. Good relationship with the CCTV operators, but when I'm with shoplifters in the holding bay...Nothing I can do except stand with them until a unit arrives, and think 'What am I doing here?' The shoplifting side of it hadn't entered my head during training – again because I didn't know where I was going. You're the mechanic without the tools."

One PCSO was worried, however, that more "tools" could add strength to the views of those who considered the role to be a cheaper form of policing. Her approach to the role was to exercise commonsense when deciding which situations (or areas) to venture into, and which to avoid.

Several PCSOs said they would often find themselves first on the scene at a situation where, because of understaffing, it would take a long time before a response team arrived. In August, one PCSO<sup>25</sup> made a citizens arrest of six youths who he encountered spraying graffiti on a

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<sup>25</sup> Not one of those interviewed for this study.

bus shelter. This was praised by a supervising officer as “an excellent example of the work PCSOs can do within the borough<sup>26</sup>”.

For some NSOs, however, a PCSOs’ decision to use ‘any person’ powers cannot be taken lightly. As one put it:

“They seem strong powers which more than likely will end up in a conflict situation if they tried to use them, with no training to back that up. The role has its limitations, and it’s not easy for us as police to back them up if they start arresting people and getting into conflict situations as we don’t have the officers to back them up within half an hour.”

This is not to say that regulars considered the powers insufficient. Rather, some that were seen as essential were missing, while some that had been granted were believed to be either too difficult to enforce, or worse, potentially damaging to due process.

“Surrey Police have given them a very obscure menu of powers. Seizing vehicles and taking alcohol off 17 year old kids on a dark winter’s night is too hard. But they’ve not given them training in statement taking. And in the case of shoplifting – in fact they could cock up the evidence. How are you going to explain that a PCSO’s been there for fifteen minutes rabbiting on to the person when they weren’t at the scene? Breach of PACE if they start answering any questions before caution, because they’re technically badged to the police.”

#### *Power to detain*

One of the PCSOs believed she and her colleagues held this power, though she regarded it as “a joke” because it was unlikely that a police officer would arrive within thirty minutes in any case. One of her colleagues believed PCSOs should be able to detain, again referring to the fact that the area was to all intents and purposes Greater London.

A note of caution was sounded by one of the NSOs, however. He contended that although Spelthorne might well have recently been a Met area, it was now being policed with a county force’s strength, and consequently, “if we did what the Met have done with PCSOs, we’d have a few injuries on our hands.”

#### *Parking powers*

Illegal parking was regarded as a big problem, and PCSOs’ inability to address it directly was seen as a major drawback. PCSOs had delivered verbal warnings, but reported that vehicle owners were becoming wise to the fact that these could not be supported by direct action. One NSO was particularly critical of the failure to invest PCSOs with this power:

“Because there are now no traffic wardens left in this borough at all, beat officers are the only people currently issuing parking tickets – and the general public do not want police officers stuck with their nose in a piece of carbon paper putting it on a car – they actually come along and say that to me. Of course, doing every car on every line in every bay would mean you’d do nothing else, which is why they have traffic

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in the Heathrow Villager, 30.08.03

wardens in every other borough bar here, because they make the council money. I know it's different pots of money – but the public are not bothered about budgets, all they want is to know why there are 25 cars parked on double yellow lines outside their house, and somebody in a uniform is walking past and doing nothing. But they won't do it because they think it's political – senior officers think if we start doing it the council won't take it over.”

The worry that if granted these powers, PCSOs would overuse them was quickly dismissed, as it was felt that the PCSOs all possessed the commonsense not to do this. One PCSO said that in her view what was needed were “back-pocket powers”, to be exercised with discretion and sparingly when, essentially, a motorist failed the “attitude test”:

“The other day I came across a car parked on the pavement. A man came out of the bank and said ‘Have you got a problem?’. I’d’ve loved to’ve given him a ticket, whereas if he’d said ‘Oh, I’m so sorry, I was being a bit of a dickhead’ then I’d’ve let him go.”

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

One regular gave an example of how joint work between council staff and the PCSO had led to swift and well-received action in one area:

“The PCSO and I came across a patch of overgrown land, opposite some houses, on which were six abandoned cars, an abandoned trailer tent, two old tyres and a fridge. Within 48 hours the Council had been tasked to cut the grass, to sort out the abandoned cars, the fridge had gone, and the trailer tent was taken away for destruction.”

There was however some difficulty in ensuring that the PCSOs were working in harmony with Council representatives rather than in opposition to them. This was especially true of the parks PCSOs, who were 49% Council-funded As one PCSO commented

“We have some problem with [the parks PCSOs]. We have so many kids hanging around on street corners, so we say ‘Go and sit in the parks’. They might be drinking cans of lager but they’re not off their heads, so I leave them there because they’re not in anyone’s way, whereas the parks PCSOs will tell them to get out, confiscate their beer, enforce bylaws.”

This was not down to any lack of willingness on the part of either party; rather, the terms of reference for each did not coincide as well as they might.

Spelthorne Council were generally believed to have recently become more responsive when it came to joint work with the police. As the Borough Inspector put it,

“...they were very quick off the mark with issues that they can task somebody else to do. Not so quick when they have an action to carry out. However, they are getting better - having been held to account by myself and the Divisional Commander.”

Council representatives had met PCSOs as part of the three weeks training, and were felt to have been more approachable since the beginning of the CSW scheme (see below). One PCSO said that the council recognised that historically they had spent a lot on needs for the elderly and, in line with her suggestions, were now prioritising youngsters. She felt that younger members of staff in the council's Leisure Services Department could see the benefits of this. However, it was proving difficult to encourage the Council to set up a skateboard park, or to attend to the state of a car park in the town centre, which had become a spot for chronic vandalism.

## **Community Safety Wardens**

Not all parts of the borough had a CSW, but this was seen as appropriate by a PCSO who did not share her area with one, on the basis that she covered a town centre and the need there was for more enforcement-oriented intervention. Some had difficulty explaining how the PCSO and CSW roles differ, as both got involved in community disorder issues. One felt there was

“...very little difference apart from the fact that the CSW had no uniform...The biggest difference was the way people spoke to us. A lot would only speak to the CSW because he didn't look to them like a police officer. Others would be glad to see a 'police officer' and tell me 'these people from the council don't do anything'.”

However, for most the CSW role was felt to work well because it was clearly distinguishable from that played by the police. As one regular put it,

“Because people don't see them as police officers, they don't feel as intimidated. At one crime surgery a woman came in and refused to talk to me; she would only talk to the CSW who was sitting next to me.”

Another regular agreed that the non-police branding of the CSW role was a definite advantage. He believed that the role offered the council an opportunity to make up for lost time by using it to deal with parking issues:

“More in favour of CSW role – because it's non-police, so people will chat. And the CSW has the direct link with the council, and people see them as such. Static parking could have been a council responsibility for many years, only this borough has been the slowest in Britain – in fact they currently have no plans in April to take over when the police will wash their hands of it. They've dropped a major clanger.”

## **Transport**

Some PCSOs in Spelthorne have been advised that they should not use their own car. For one this is not a problem as her area is within easy walking distance literally of the police station. One of the others, however, would have appreciated a car in order to reach her area. She said she would be willing to discuss with local dealerships the possibility of acquiring a sponsored car. The need for this was great, since the bicycle with which she had been provided was “a male bike too big for me to get on let alone ride, and I'm a long way from the police station – walking there takes a long time”. She stressed that if she had just wanted to drive around in a car all day she would not have taken the job.

Others have been using their own vehicle to get to their area – although one NSO felt that in his area this was unwise because the local youths had quickly recognised her vehicle. Neither did he think that using bicycles in the area was sensible because they were likely to soon be stolen.

### **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public's views**

Several interviewees stressed that Surrey Police have to contend with the fact that Spelthorne was until recently part of the Met. Regulars said that residents were very vocal about seeing a bobby [sic] on the beat, and knowing who they are. It was acknowledged by regulars that some residents believed that the presence had decreased since Surrey Police had assumed responsibility, and that there was some truth in that. One NSO pointed out that the situation was not helped by the fact that a chart has been delivered to each household with their council tax, showing among other things the number of police officers lost over the last year. In his view, people expected more than PCSOs – particularly when they saw them unable to do anything substantive when motorists parked all day in two-hour bays. This was supported by the fact that when one of the PCSOs did carry out this task in the company of a Special constable, she reported that “the cheers I got from the shopkeepers you wouldn’t believe. They were so elated.”

That said, other interviewees still expected and thought the public saw the arrival of PCSOs as welcome. They were reportedly very grateful for the clear-up of land (see above), having complained to the council on a daily basis about it beforehand. Feedback from residents meeting, and conversations with residents on the phone, and personal observation whilst on patrol had all indicated to regulars that residents and local traders knew their PCSO.

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

Opinion was split as to whether or not the public perceived the PCSO role correctly. In part this was felt to owe something to the uniform, which aligned PCSOs closely with police, although one PCSO said she had also been mistaken for a traffic warden, an RSPCA inspector, and a member of the RAC. It was also believed that the public may have had difficulty making the distinction early on because at that stage, whenever they would see a PCSO, a police officer would usually be accompanying them. In time, one PCSO felt that some people’s initial uncertainty had disappeared, especially in the case of those who attended residents’ meetings or the reassurance panel. Others, nine months after the role had begun, continued to refer to the NSO/PCSO relationship as “a couple of local officers”.

The confusion had its positive sides - some interviewees had found that youths, in particular, were aware of the distinction, and were more likely to approach a PCSO because of this. One had even found that “some [people] actually think it’s a more enhanced role than the police, because it has more letters in the title”. The most negative comment had been received by a PCSO, who reported that the public

“...don’t understand why you work for Surrey Police and you can’t do more. I’ve had a couple of comments along the lines of ‘You’d be better scrapping this idea’”.

This supports the idea that linking the role too closely with the police risks raising expectations that the public does not see being met.

Upon PCSOs' arrival, there had been a press launch which included an explanation of the role and the extent of the powers, but one of the regulars admitted that "this perhaps needs reinforcing". Alternatively, it may be that some members of the public simply did not have the opportunity to read about this – one regular commented that in his area "they won't have seen things in the local free paper - people are too scared to deliver it".

## **Media**

Due to recent efforts, one regular felt that the local press had become more supportive. He explained that the police in Spelthorne decide with their press relations officer upon three positive news stories per week for the local paper. These will often involve PCSOs. Researchers were provided with a selection of press clippings from a variety of local newspapers. Nine of these concerned PCSOs, seven of which described the role both positively and accurately. One of the other regulars, and one of the PCSOs, felt the picture was less rosy, however, saying that the roles were regularly confused.

## **Measurement of impact**

At present impact in terms of public feedback has been assessed purely anecdotally, via word of mouth at public forums and other events such as fairs and shows, and through receipt of letters of appreciation. The simple fact of observing first-hand that the PCSO and a member of the public are on first-name terms is regarded as proof that the PCSO has been active and visible.

The possibility was suggested of looking at crime levels in the areas in which PCSOs have patrolled – but this was considered more of a long-term measure, the fruits of which would not yet be apparent. No targets had been set for the number of 5x5s submitted, though one of the PCSOs felt that "in many ways it would be quite good to have to do a certain number of vehicle checks per week – we aren't on the radio a lot, and vehicle checks would make us better at using the radio".

Internally, the Borough Inspector has organised a system for objective-setting which aims to monitor the work of all members of the Neighbourhood Team. He explained:

"A 'performance wall' is set up in the NSO office. On it are copies of objectives all NSOs and PCSOs have signed up to, which they have set themselves after being asked by me. Which is important, as it's a totally bottom-up process – it's not me from on high. One Reassurance objective and one Crime objective requested. One, an NSO or PCSO walking into that office, it instantly reminds them, 'That's what I've signed up to'. Two, anyone else walking into that office can see immediately that this team is performance-focused on these objectives."

## **Career development**

Two of the PCSOs were keen to use the role as a way of seeing if they would like to join the regulars. One had no dissatisfactions with the PCSO role itself, but the other said that her keenness to become a police officer had increased partly because of the frustrations she felt in her present role – "at the moment I start a job but don't finish it off". Her application was being posted the following week. The third PCSO interviewed was due to leave to join the

regulars anyway, but this would not be in Surrey; she had applied there, but the application was mislaid and had taken too long to process.

One way in which the PCSO role has already started to develop is through the recruitment and deployment of YPCSOs. At the time of the second research visit to Spelthorne, the borough's YPCSO had been in post for just over a month. One of the PCSOs said she, and the parks PCSOs, had met the YPCSO,

“...but I don't think many people are all that happy with both those roles. The way it's been sold to us there's going to be such a big crossover. Where do I draw the line dealing with youths in my area? If she visits someone in my area, I'd want to know, because you use your discretion. It might be that I've said or done something with one youth, then the YPCSO comes along and does things differently. That'll undermine me. And I think every PCSO is quite precious about their area. I don't want someone coming in who's going to upset the applecart and who won't be there all the time.”

One of the regulars was hopeful that the PCSO role might be a way to recruit members of ethnic minorities who might not join the police. He reported that he had seen this before in relation to traffic wardens when working in the Met. He hoped that if the role continued to be a stepping stone for some PCSOs, this might be a method of bolstering the number of ethnic minority police officers.

One PCSO (the only one to whom the question was posed) felt the creation of a Senior PCSO role would be helpful. She believed that, at the time of the research visit, the only option when discussing strategic issues or potential problems was to speak to the NSO Sergeant. She suggested that another forum for PCSOs to discuss issues would be valuable, in the form of team meetings within the borough and possibly across the division<sup>27</sup>.

## **Funding and the future**

The Divisional Commander was reported to be in discussion with counterparts at the Council over future funding arrangements for PCSOs. The Borough Inspector firmly believed that, if money for PCSOs from central government were withdrawn, Surrey Police should continue to fund the role,

“because they have made such an impact here with the public, the councillors and the council, both in terms of day-to-day assistance for the NSOs and problem-solving.”

Financing the role by means of the Council Tax was seen as both obvious and politically awkward. As one PCSO commented, the previous year had seen a 40% Council Tax increase, and she predicted that if further hikes were introduced to fund her role there would be “absolute uproar”.

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<sup>27</sup> Shortly after this it was announced that regular meetings of a PCSO panel would begin, attended by nominated representatives from each of the divisions, and for the YPCSOs.

## **Role here to stay?**

One of the PCSOs was not convinced that the role would be around in any guise, purely because

“to be honest I don’t see anywhere for this role to go anyway. I think it’s going to be a plod-along, and I don’t really hold out much hope past two years.”

On the other hand, an NSO felt the role had virtues, but strongly believed that responsibility for it should be transferred to the borough council as a matter of some urgency:

“All of the things we’re talking about, including parking from next year, will be down to the Council – so why are they not employing them? Having it as a police role is counter to their effectiveness within a community such as this. If the six PCSOs became CSWs tomorrow alongside the two already there, you’d have a CSW for each area and it could take a tremendous amount off [the police]...In the areas where there is a CSW along with an NSO and a PCSO, it’s quite confusing for people. There needs to be closer working with the Local Authority. I see them as a community worker rather than a police community worker. Rebranding as a Community Support Officer is essential.”



## **B DIVISION, EAST SURREY: MOLE VALLEY**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	2
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	2
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	3
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	1

### *Documentation supplied*

- *Diaries of the two PCSOs' daily activities, provided for the NSO Sergeant, dating back to late March 2003*

Situated midway between London and the Sussex coast, Mole Valley is made up of several villages and two large towns, where the bulk of the population live. It has a higher percentage of residents over 60, and a greater proportion of retirees than any other Surrey borough or district.

The 2002-2005 Community Safety Strategy showed that, at 43.7 crimes per 1,000 population, Mole Valley had the lowest crime rate in Surrey. However, it also emerged that fear of crime was increasing. Successive Citizens Panels in 2000 and 2001 revealed a growing number of people feeling unsafe on their own after dark.

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

In Mole Valley, news of PCSOs' recruitment was greeted with a mixture of uncertainty and open-mindedness. The uncertainty stemmed from a lack of information passed down about the role. The result was that regulars reached conclusions that were either erroneous (believing the role would be similar to that of Specials), or negative (fearing it might represent policing by the back door). Alternatively, they had little time to form any preconceptions at all. As one put it:

“We weren't really told. One minute they weren't there – next minute they were. A rush job – could've been done a lot better. We should've had input from the training department about what their role is. We didn't want to shape them in the wrong way.”

Other interviewees were aware that the role had been described as involving public reassurance by people dedicated to an area. Consequently they felt PCSOs could be a godsend, as they were well used to the frustrations of having officers dragged away on abstractions for other matters. As one put it, “reassurance costs nothing, and the rebuilding of a community after a source event is more important than investigation of crime.”

One of the PCSOs appreciated how this confusion arose as, although she had applied for the job, she felt that

“The job description wasn't very clear. It gave me the impression they weren't 100% sure what the job was about.”

However, this PCSO anticipated that the job would involve community work, visiting schools, and working and dealing with the public. The other PCSO admitted to being “unsure how the role would pan out”, but was intending to join the regulars in any case.

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

Explanation of PCSOs' powers was not felt to be clear, as illustrated by the following comment from one of the PCSOs:

“I met the Sergeant and Inspector – still not knowing what to expect. We sat down in a meeting. They didn't know what to expect. Neither had much of an idea of my role. None of the NSOs knew my role. So no-one knew who I was, what I was doing, why I was there, and what my powers or role were...Only later did they come up with some targets and some objectives. There was nothing from HQ. I think they rushed it when they set it up.”

Information was eventually provided by force headquarters, but it was felt by one NSO to be rather too long in coming.

“Having seen the PCSO and worked with her, we suddenly got this thing shoved in our trays about what PCSOs' powers are, which we'd had to ask for because we didn't know. We only got a sheet explaining powers after they came. They should know what's expected of them from the word go – we are. It's very unfair on them.”

The repercussions of this were outlined by the second PCSO:

“It was not explained sufficiently what I could and couldn’t do. It wasn’t explained that I can search a person or vehicle in the company of a constable. It was basically ‘You don’t search’. I was told I’d get sent a blue card with powers – I never got it. I’ve just got a photocopied bit of paper which doesn’t go into very much detail really.”

Although he could not speak for the District Inspector, the NSO sergeant confirmed that he received no guidance at the outset from headquarters about how to deploy the PCSOs. However, he was not unhappy with this:

“The less involvement the better. The people who probably have the best idea are those that work in the area. They will be better at targeting the resources.”

### **Initial training**

After starting work, the two PCSOs identified gaps in the initial training they had received. One remarked:

“Having had no police background, it didn’t really prepare me for being out. Thought I’d be trained in ‘what do you do if a car alarm goes off, if there’s a burglary, radio work, conflict training’. What we got was classroom-based work on equality, diversity, lost property. It hasn’t really helped me working in a town. A lot of it wasn’t very good – it was very rushed – we had about five minutes on radios. Even now I’m still not confident using the radio – we weren’t told anything about state codes, things like that. Things were in the timetable – but...they were quick overviews – or we didn’t do some sessions at all. It wasn’t long enough or in-depth enough. We didn’t do directing traffic – and how many times have I been on the High Street helping an officer move traffic here and there – I haven’t been taught it, and yet I’m in the High Street doing it. Even now, I’m happy going out on my own patrolling, but when it comes to something that’s happening like a shoplifting...my first day on my own there was a shoplifting incident. I didn’t know what to do, what to say over the radio...with no conflict training. Had a feedback sheet – but at that time we didn’t really know what the role was going to be. But only now, in the role I’m doing, can I look back and say ‘Crikey, that has not prepared me at all’.”

The other PCSO had previous experience as a Special constable<sup>28</sup>, but felt he had learned a great deal, although computer training and access to CIS were not covered. He believed that the knowledge he had gained from two weeks patrolling his area with an NSO was ultimately more useful than the training, as it had given him local knowledge of what to do, and who to look out for.

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

Vulnerability and conflict training were matters of great concern in Mole Valley. There was an awareness that with self-defence training and PPE, PCSOs would become less distinguishable from police officers. But officer safety was felt to outweigh this, as the selection of comments below shows:

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<sup>28</sup> In fact, this PCSO was still working as a Special Constable (see below).

“We are expecting PCSOs to go into areas where there are problems – that’s the whole purpose. To build up a rapport with youths, you have to talk to them. Sometimes they’ll be drunk. I would say they need something more than they’ve been given so far. The question is how far you will go with self-defence for them.”

[NSO Sergeant]

“I want to stress the fact that I don’t think it’s necessarily a good idea to put people who haven’t been trained to a great extent out on the streets, in public, in uniform, when they’ve had little training or PPE. It just doesn’t work. Either put us in uniform and give us the training and the PPE that we need – or don’t put us in uniform... I’m in the front line, involved with the public on a day-to-day basis. If a fight broke out, or someone came running towards me, or attacked me – I need to be able to handle that. We made quite a big thing about it, but our trainer was adamant we wouldn’t need it – and we didn’t know any different. We had some bits of paper in the training, but the actual physical side of how to defend yourself – nothing. I’m out there in a uniform, patrolling a town centre. I’m doing an NSO’s job. Why should they have these things and not me?”

[PCSO]

“The interviewee from the council felt that it was grossly unfair to put people in a pseudo-police uniform on the streets with no confrontational training and no body armour. To the criminal, somebody who looks like a police officer will be treated as such. Until that’s resolved, later or night time patrolling would be a step in the wrong direction.”

[Council staff]

“If [PCSOs] are patrolling round, whether alone or with police officers, they need it. At the end of the day they’re carrying a uniform, as I am. That can almost make you a target. They need training not necessarily to the degree we do – but so they can read the signs of possible aggression. Need it in a gym, not on paper. To see how you react, because for a lot of people, when you start, the red mist comes down. It makes you take a step back and think<sup>29</sup>.”

[NSO]

## **Arrival and integration**

PCSOs reported that they were warmly welcomed by Neighbourhood Specialist staff when they arrived. All were very helpful, with no references heard to ‘policing on the cheap’. One regular believed the extra assistance was especially welcome given the size of the areas some NSOs covered, and welcomed the different perspective PCSOs could offer, citing the Charity Shopwatch scheme as an excellent example.

One PCSO found his NSO to be on a learning curve as well, as he had only just come into post. However, this NSO had previously worked in the area, so, along with other regulars, he still served as a useful source of information for the PCSO.

Integration with other police units was less straightforward, as both PCSOs noted:

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<sup>29</sup> As we are talking news comes over the police radio that one of the PCSOs has just found himself on his own facing eight people in a potentially confrontational situation. He backs off, which he is within his rights to do, but the NSO remarks that with a little bit of training he might have detained one or two of them.

“TPT don’t have a clue – I have turned up at incidents and taken details, given them to them and they’ve gone ‘Who are you? Have you got all the details?’ If they want to come up and ask what I do, I’m here.”

“When TPT and BST turn up at the police station they don’t know me and I don’t know them – unless I introduce myself. It’s a little bit awkward.”

### **Activities and deployment**

Issues which the two PCSOs in Mole Valley have become involved in include: purchasing and consumption of alcohol by under-age youths, mainly from a particular convenience store whose CCTV was not functioning; graffiti to various properties; arson to a local minibus; thefts from charity shops; and abandoned vehicles

Strategies to address these and other issues which PCSOs have either devised or contributed to have been:

- Encouraging the convenience store to upgrade CCTV and improve lighting and reminding them that if changes were not made, it might affect the likelihood of their licence being renewed.
- Listing the locations of graffiti sites, and building up profiles of who the various tags belonged to, partly (in the case of one PCSO) by liaising with local schools. This has been coupled with the setting up of a ‘graffiti wall’ at the rear of a youth club, and educational sessions four times a year with a London street artist.
- The relaunch of PubWatch with the NSO and a Development Officer, appointed by the CDRP in April 2003.
- The charging of one person with six offences of graffiti following details given to PCSO by a member of the public who had witnessed the offences being committed.
- Delivering nursery school talks on “How to say no to strangers/ what to do if you get lost”. These were arranged after a teacher met one of the PCSOs in the street and invited her to speak to the school assembly.
- Reassurance visits at school closing time.
- Visits to old people’s homes, with the CRO to advise residents about bogus callers.
- Involvement in the arrest of two well-known offenders for car theft.
- A one day operation to stop (or at least displace) cannabis smoking in a recreation ground.

Two aspects of PCSO work are especially noteworthy. First, one of the PCSOs had established a Charity Watch scheme enabling British Heart Foundation, Red Cross and other such shops to ring round each when suspicious customers were around. Such shops were especially vulnerable to theft as there was rarely an in-store camera system and staff were often old and worked alone. This was praised by regulars as the need for it had not come to their attention, staff being reluctant to report thefts and, indeed, not even having the telephone number of the local police station. In the two months since the scheme had been introduced, no incidents had been reported.

Second, PCSOs had begun working two days a week on the two CSVs. Introduced in mid-May, these vehicles were intended to create a ‘rural watch’ covering remote villages within the district and incorporating all local neighbourhood watch schemes and farms. The plan was to park the vehicle in various locations for a few hours at a time, thereby raising

reassurance and visibility by both patrol and surgeries in identified villages. Notification of future locations is posted on the Surrey Police website. Despite this, the diary of activities provided for researchers showed that while some areas have attracted a steady stream of visitors, others have not been used by any members of the public at all. In one location the only visitor was a local trader who called to complain about the position in which the vehicle was parked. One of the PCSOs commented:

“I wasn’t aware I’d be doing this. On paper it’s a good idea, and is a change from the town centre patrols which can be a little repetitive. But in practice it’s not working as well as I hoped it would be. This one covers 13 villages, and we’ve cut down on villages where we haven’t had any visitors. But it’s not very well publicised. NSOs have to meet with local parish councillors and get the timetable into parish magazines.”

There were also issues about staffing of the vehicles, which so far had been done exclusively by police and PCSOs, even though requests had been sent to the council to see if they could assist. The council representative, on the other hand, felt that publicity was good in the local press, and that in time, more people would know the vehicles were around know it’s visit them. But you could assume that with the low crime figures, if no-one’s coming to see you, they don’t have a problem.

### **Sufficiency of powers**

The Council representative stressed that though he considered the role to be an excellent one,

“PCSOs are using common law, not acts of Parliament. There are very few functions they can perform within statute law. They should have more teeth.”

For regulars, extension of PCSOs’ powers was seen as a double-edged sword. As one pointed out:

“It would be nice if they could deal with untaxed vehicles. He can note the vehicle down or wait until a traffic warden is out or I can deal with it. It’s just a case of writing a report out. Their primary role though should still be a point of contact with the public. And in some aspects it’s good that they can’t do untaxed vehicles because if you’re going to come into conflict in this job, it’s generally going to be when you issue a parking ticket.”

One PCSO had made use of his any-person powers by detaining a shoplifter with the assistance of an off-duty regular. He was clear that he would only have done this in the presence of another officer. However, the issue of powers was more problematic for this PCSO than for most because he was also a Special Constable. Moreover, he regularly carried out his duties as a Special in the same area of Mole Valley as where he performed his PCSO role. This is in line with Surrey Police force policy, but as his Sergeant commented:

“He doesn’t find it a problem, but for me it brings its own problems. I wouldn’t want to make him choose between one or the other – he works well at both – but if it were me and I faced an incident I’d have to make a very conscious decision as to which hat I was wearing.”

In fact, the PCSO in question had previously searched someone who had been chased and caught by security staff following a theft from a shop, and in doing so found a syringe in his pocket. Luckily he was unhurt. He said that he would not have carried out the search if other officers had not been present, but saw no conflict of roles as “I have any-person powers of arrest anyway.”

The other PCSO did not find the powers she held especially limiting, but reiterated that further training was needed if she were to use the powers efficiently, for instance, when seizing alcohol from under-age youths.

### *Power to detain*

PCSOs were not resistant to being given this power – as long as they were given full training. For the council representative, however, it would be in conflict with their core role:

“We’re all for catching criminals but, you’re given a role, you’re a PCSO, you’re there for support. If they get too many powers they’re almost a police officer.”

### *Parking powers*

Powers to address illegal parking were not thought appropriate in Mole Valley. As the NSO sergeant commented:

“Many PCSOs in Surrey wanted this. My perception is that this was mostly ex-traffic wardens who had jumped ship before April 2004 but are still traffic wardens at heart. I’m against it as I can see it being misused. I’m about to lose both two traffic wardens in this area, so until April 2004 there’ll be a big void. There will be pressure to ticket cars – and I can see PCSOs becoming glorified traffic wardens. I wouldn’t be against them putting a ticket on a car if there was a particular problem – a regular occurrence. The PCSO can still tell the public ‘I’m going to make sure the NSO is made aware of this’. If this time next year the council has taken up the parking issues and has their own system in place, then I might not be against extension of PCSO FPNs for parking, as it would be on the odd occasion. But by then they might remove the power from police officers anyway, in which case it won’t apply.”

One of the PCSOs was similarly unenthusiastic:

“I’m not interested in having parking powers. I could end up doing it full-time. The public don’t understand when I say I can’t do it – they see the Surrey Police uniform and think you can do everything. But, you can get away with saying ‘But I know a person who can’. If the same car is there day after day – I can do PNC checks on vehicles, and if it’s local, I’ll go and knock on their door.”

The council representative felt that in the short term, issuing parking tickets would have been useful since from September 2003 there would be no traffic wardens left in the borough. However, he regarded it as a backwards step if PCSOs were to spend too much time on this.

## **Information sharing and joint work with the district council**

Joint work in Mole Valley between the police and the District Council was very highly regarded, illustrated by the following two observations:

“This council is absolutely fantastic – I’ve never met a council that was so police-oriented. They’re very much into, if somebody causes a problem, taking out an eviction order. Usually they’re very good with abandoned vehicles too.”

[NSO]

“Based on 32 years in the police service in London, this is probably the best example of partnership working in the whole of Surrey, and probably very high up throughout the whole country. Our lines of communication don’t seem to be as stressed as some other areas. It’s about openness.”

[Council staff]

The Council were also reported to have loaned out cleaning equipment to NW and residents groups. However, it was acknowledged that sometimes they did not move abandoned vehicles swiftly, due to restrictions in the amount of storage space available. There was also some disquiet about the back seat they were perceived to be taking towards manning the CSVs.

## **Community Safety Wardens**

CSWs do not operate in Mole Valley. The possibility was explored, but the council interviewee explained that the area had not met the bid criteria. Those that had a view were unsure of the distinction between the CSW role and that of the PCSOs, and were therefore in fact quite grateful that there were none in the area as it was believed that this could complicate matters in terms of knowing what role each should play in dealing with certain community issues.

## **Transport**

No decision appeared to have been taken as to whether or not PCSOs in Mole Valley were entitled to use their own vehicle to travel to sites. Aside from the days when the PCSOs staff the CSV, transport in Mole Valley is a problem, given the distances and the terrain over which officers are required to travel. One of the PCSOs had been provided with a bicycle and was willing to use it, but had been informed that she should try and secure sponsorship for a helmet and other equipment, which she estimated would amount to around £400. One of the NSOs believed that Surrey Police

“...should be seen to be supporting [PCSOs]. If you’re going to start putting restrictions on people [using own vehicle]...I don’t agree with that.”

## **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public’s views**

Regulars reported that the public had responded positively to PCSOs. Sources for feedback included PCPG meetings, and ad hoc comments from residents, shoppers, shopkeepers, councillors, and staff at council libraries (previously the scene of earlier thefts and youth



gatherings). The context for this was important, as the NSO sergeant reported that prior to this, residents had continually bemoaned the lack of a police presence in the area. He could not say if this was a reflection of the calibre of the two PCSOs themselves as much as the structure of the role, but was simply pleased at the public's reaction. One of the NSOs added that he sensed the community thinking: "The police are doing their bit, the council are doing their bit, but they can only do so much, so perhaps we ought to put our little bit in as well."

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

No interviewees in Mole Valley were confident that the public fully appreciated what the PCSO role involved. Both had been mistaken for police officers and traffic wardens, and one had been asked if he was a security guard. Matters were generally not helped by the fact that some residents had to adjust to seeing the same individual in a PCSO uniform on some occasions, and Special Constable (or effectively a regular police officer) kit at other times. However, the NSO in the area felt that

“...with the youths, the ‘blue shirt/white shirt’ thing is working to his advantage – they’re not quite sure what powers he has and when. They know the least he’ll do if he sees them doing something is report it in.”

It was felt that the members of the public with whom PCSOs enjoyed frequent contact had started to make the distinction, but that the process had been slow.

### **Media**

The local press in Mole Valley were felt by most interviewees to be very supportive. One of the PCSOs felt the press had played an important role in educating the public as to the nature of the role. The NSO sergeant, supporting this perspective with a variety of press clippings displayed on a wall in the police station, was particularly fulsome:

“Mole Valley is generally recognised as leading the way in its relationship with the press. They’ve sponsored our Stop Graffiti campaign, and we encourage them to come out on patrol with officers, which they’ve done. We let them know what’s going on – if we play ball with them they won’t see a hidden agenda...we try and be as open as we can. That includes faults or public concerns – so we can get our view across about how we’re trying to tackle things.”

The one exception to this was coverage of the CSV, which one of the PCSOs felt had been scant.

### **Measurement of impact**

The NSO sergeant reported that project management were encouraging staff to think about strategies for measurement. However, no targets have yet been set in Mole Valley in terms of number of intelligence items submitted. In the opinion of one of the PCSOs, this was a good thing, as, given the breadth of the role, he could spend large portions of a week on necessary work which involved no intelligence submissions at all. He had been appraised, however, and given targets, for example, in relation to graffiti removal.

One of the NSOs reported that crime in his area had fallen by 50% in the first three months since he and the PCSO had arrived. He attributed that in large part to there now being regular officers on the beat that residents could therefore recognise and put a name to. This in turn encouraged them to divulge more intelligence, which had traditionally been a problem in that particular area.

Echoing this, the NSO sergeant felt that these two officers had “turned that place around”, but recognised the difficulty of demonstrating this:

“Graffiti is not something that will appear in the crime figures. It doesn’t tend to get reported as a crime. It might now with the graffiti website but chances are it won’t attract a crime number. In terms of intelligence reports, not a good measure. It would be like, as policemen we used to be assessed on the number of stop checks – and I’ve known policemen who’d sit on street corners and just clock index numbers of vehicles going past.”

The council representative explained that the issue of measurement had been discussed with the police. A public survey, part of a review of the current community safety strategy, was due in April 2004. This would include specific questions about PCSOs and NSOs.

### **Career development**

One of the two PCSOs had intentions to join the regulars. The NSO sergeant saw

“...no harm in that as long as it’s not too soon. You don’t want too much change of personnel – the community will get fed up.”

One of the NSOs, while happy that more PCSOs might mean more police officers, could see that this might devalue the PCSO role if it became too well-trodden a path:

“If you are becoming a PCSO purely to become a regular, that wouldn’t be great for the PCSO role, and you would have a PCSO becoming a regular in – you can guarantee – a different area. Continuity would be lost. I would hope there’d be PCSOs to fill the role. There’s still a bit of work to do on what they can do and what their role is – but it’s a good grounding.”

### **Funding and the future**

The Council representative felt strongly that the initial funding arrangements for PCSOs over the first three years had not been made sufficiently clear to partners:

“We weren’t told at day one that the cost would be passed back to the partnerships. Which is difficult, because the CDRP doesn’t have any money. So to make a case for PCSO funding actually precludes us from doing other things. I think not making this clear was disingenuous, grossly unfair and unprofessional.”

He explained that this lay behind the decision not to apply for any more PCSOs, despite the fact that the original bid, which had secured two recruits, had actually requested five. He added, however, that if backed into a corner, the partnership would endeavour to find the continued funding for the current two.

## **B DIVISION, EAST SURREY: REIGATE AND BANSTEAD**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	6
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	4
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	5
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	1
RESIDENTS/TRADERS INTERVIEWED	8

### *Documentation supplied*

- *Copies of objectives for two PCSOs*
- *A report of the weekly activities of one PCSO*
- *An Introductory Assessment Form for one PCSO spanning the first three assessments by the NSO Sergeant.*

The borough is the second most populous in Surrey, and the fifth largest. It ranks sixth in terms of population density. Until April 2000 its northern half came under Metropolitan Police jurisdiction. Two of its wards are within the top six in the county in terms of deprivation. Between April and October 2002 the borough accounted for 47% of all reported crime on the division. In autumn 2001, a survey of households in the borough found respondents to be most concerned about having “a clean and safe environment”. An additional survey by MORI at the end of that year showed that 23% felt that the reduction of crime and fear in the borough had not been successfully tackled.

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

Overall, PCSOs were welcomed by regulars in Reigate and Banstead. One of the NSO sergeants was optimistic that, along with existing NSOs and CSWs, an impact could be made in terms of “visible presence, reassurance, and infiltrating necessary areas”. The need was there, he argued, since the reorganisation of Surrey Police had meant that police officers were taken off the street, and the vacuum has been filled by anti-social behaviour. Another NSO echoed this, arguing that some of what he had been dealing with did not require him to be a police officer – in short “I don’t really need to be dealing with fetes when there are kids screaming around on motorcycles.”

Some officers were not satisfied that the role was properly defined, and in terms of role models drew upon their knowledge of PCSOs who had already begun working in the Met. One regular admitted to feeling that incoming PCSOs might represent ‘policing on the cheap’, but upon learning that no more police officers would be recruited, he and others were happy enough that more people would be on the streets. This same officer also admitted to some feelings of jealousy – as he put it “I was a little bit territorial – ‘this is my town, I’ve been the beat officer here for four years, and now someone’s coming in and sharing it’”. Even at this stage, however, there was some worry that the two roles had been pitched close enough to plant confusion in the minds of the public.

Based on the impact she perceived CSWs to have had, the Council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator welcomed the recruitment of PCSOs. She saw them as a way of increasing the number of dedicated, available authority figures who could communicate with local residents on a day-to-day basis. She also believed PCSOs would be there to respond to residents’ complaints, taking statements and gathering information, and acting as a reassuring presence simply by being seen. She felt that in boroughs and districts where no CSWs existed, some might have felt less prepared for PCSOs’ arrival.

Three of the PCSOs had taken the role as a stepping stone to joining the regulars. One was keen to stress however that he was not just marking time while his application was processed. He reported that he had the option of continuing as a Special, but did not think it appropriate to be using different powers at different times.

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

One of the NSO Sergeants admitted he knew nothing about their role until the end of the initial three week training, the last day of which he attended. There he was provided with a course handout by one of the PCSOs, which detailed their powers. The sergeant did not feel, however, that receipt of this information very much earlier would necessarily have been more helpful.

PCSOs arrived at the station with a list of their powers, which one said he had been given straight away. However, as the following account from one of the NSOs indicates, this does not appear to have prevented confusion.

“[My PCSO] was helping me do stop-searches at the start, not knowing he wasn’t supposed to. He’d be holding coats, for example, a bit like a probationer constable would. We only found out he couldn’t do it after about three months. Project management did talk to us about the powers at the start. But in the end it was the

Sergeant saying “You’re getting a PCSO. Go out with him today” – [I said] ‘What do I do with him, what can I do?’ – [My sergeant replied] ‘Well ask him, he’ll know’. He was quite clear about what he was allowed to do, but he didn’t know about not being able to stop/search.”

One of the PCSOs was even more critical of the situation:

“Organisation was poor –nobody knew what they were supposed to be doing, or what to do with us. They said that when we arrived. Only having a small piece of paper with powers on didn’t help.”

### **Initial training**

The down-to-earth quality of the initial training was valued very highly by PCSOs. One described it thus:

“It was superb...[there was] a good balance between teaching and bringing it to a level where you could understand it.”

PCSOs believed the trainer had succeeded in generating enthusiasm for the job – however, it was felt that the task of preparing recruits for the reality of the role was a lot harder. Therefore, with the exception of CIS training, no gaps were identified in the initial training. However, there was a belief that false expectations had been created, if not encouraged – as one PCSO put it, “you can’t teach anyone what this job is going to be like”. This was partly reflected by the fact that PCSOs had not had occasion to use much of what they were trained in.

Regulars seemed satisfied with the standard of training PCSOs had received. For the most part it was felt that PCSOs had shown themselves to be very competent at the tasks that fell within their remit – which was taken as an indicator that the training was up to standard. One NSO sergeant felt that, if anything, there was a danger of “too much front-loading, with three-, four- and five-letter acronyms – it’s mindboggling”. He suggested it might be better to phase training in and come back two or three weeks after one session for more following a spell out in the community doing the job.

The Council employee had no contact with the PCSOs during their three weeks’ training. She described how there had been discussion about the possibility of joint training with CSWs, but this did not materialise. This disappointed her, as she felt it would have created a greater understanding of each others’ roles at the outset, which would have prevented unrealistically high (or low) expectations of what each could do. The issue had still not been fully clarified eleven months later.

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

Self-defence was regarded as a must by all PCSOs. As things stood, it was argued, the role was not designed for conflict, but PCSOs could never be sure what they might walk into. One had even received a death threat, although he stated that he had not been in fear of his life. Consequently all felt vulnerable, particularly if patrolling alone on a late shift.

NSOs shared these views. One did so because he felt extra responsibility if he faced a conflict situation with a PCSO, which made him feel both uncomfortable and not completely focused on his own welfare. Another went so far as to suggest that PCSOs should carry CS gas, reasoning:

“Having kit would be a big reassurance for [a PCSO]. You can’t walk away from some things, and we’re putting PCSOs out there. It’s not important that [carrying CS gas] would make them more like a second level of police officer. What’s important is that they could get hurt.”

The Council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator agreed that, even with conflict management training, PCSOs were vulnerable. She suggested this was why they would often patrol in pairs with their NSO. The similarity of the PCSO uniform to that of the police added to this vulnerability

### **Arrival and integration**

Both NSO sergeants said that the decision of how to bed in PCSOs was very much left to them. Neither regarded that as a failing; one remarked, that since each area is different, it was reasonable to expect that inductions would vary also.

In practice much of the direct day-to-day tasking and induction was initially down to the NSOs. Again there was variation here, as the following two accounts show:

“First I checked what PCSOs could do. I saw Surrey [Police] had picked and chosen from what Home Office literature said – which was good, because otherwise they’d’ve been bombarded with training. I took [my PCSO] out – showed him the estate – old people’s homes, schools, post office, councillors - he met one or two youngsters with me. Gave him a list of problem youngsters. Spent three or four days out with him at most. I made a decision he was not going to have his hand held, but I didn’t want the public thinking he was a pc.” [NSO]

“Most of the time we’re separate now, but I shadowed my NSO for the first three months. We usually do briefings together in the mornings – I do ICADs and NSO does notifications, since I’m not on CIS.” [PCSO]

The amount of time spent in the company of an NSO before patrolling alone was flagged as important by PCSOs. One in particular felt this period of close work too short, a view shared by her NSO. This problem was exacerbated by difficulties with the original NSO she was paired with, and comments directed at her suggesting that the PCSO role was a ‘plastic policemen’ exercise. This appears to have been the exception, however. Another PCSO reported that references to ‘policing on the cheap’ though rumoured during the initial training, had been non-existent after he arrived at the station. Indeed, he believed that if tension did exist, it was between NSOs who worked with a PCSO, and those who did not but had seen the way the relationships were developing and who wanted one of their own. One of the NSOs stated his position clearly:

“The ‘policing on the cheap’ claim is absolute crap. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there are crimes that need to be investigated – and a uniformed bobby on the street being within

500 metres of a burglary taking place – it doesn't happen. In an ideal world all PCSOs should be police officers – but it isn't going to happen.”

The Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator believed that most police in the district were culturally ready for the arrival of PCSOs. She had not heard any direct references to policing on the cheap. Having pre-existing CSWs, she believed, had made acceptance of the PCSO idea easier. However, this is not to say that PCSOs were believed to have much of a profile within TPT or even BST. One PCSO's personal experience was that every TPT person he had encountered had been friendly and keen to learn about the role and the powers – he suspected that they had received some training about the role. Other than that, there was some doubt that TPT officers would know what a PCSO was, or even be interested. Ordinarily this was not seen as a difficulty because of the low likelihood of them coming across each other – although it was admitted that this could easily occur if a PCSO were to call for assistance.

### **Activities and deployment**

Issues facing PCSOs in Reigate and Banstead were: lack of affordable amenities for youths; consequent congregation and consumption of alcohol by youths in streets; minor criminal damage; dumped shopping trolleys and cars; an area near Gatwick Airport with a large proportion of guest houses and related crime – specifically non-payment of bills, and thefts of cars taken while people were on holiday.

Activities in which PCSOs had become involved included:

- A one-day series of activities in various parts of the district (entitled “Taking Pride in...” days, involving graffiti removal, tow-trucks taking away abandoned vehicles, demonstration talks, licence checks, and execution of warrants.
- Extra patrols, which the local NSO felt had reduced instances of problems with youths in groups, kicking balls against shop shutters and sitting on steps preventing residents' access to homes.
- Involvement in a local Shopwatch scheme.
- Statement-taking.
- Reassurance of the elderly.
- Setting up a local football project.

The area patrolled by one of the PCSOs ranks as the second most deprived in the county. The NSO and PCSO described some of the reasons why. Compared to other parts of the borough, the area is home to a large number of youths, one of whom, the Community Safety Co-ordinator advised, was the district's only recipient of an ASBO. Sports facilities do exist but these are too expensive for local youths to use. There is also a youth club though this had had trouble attracting and retaining staff. Recently large groups of youths had taken to riding up around on mopeds, making a lot of noise and causing a nuisance. Some youths had also been spending all night fishing but also behaving noisily at a pond on the estate, prompting complaints from residents whose properties are nearby.

The experience of the PCSO in this area was that many of the youths were not really interested in striking up a conversation with him. He was able to make progress with some of them, but “when you try and have a laugh with them they always take it too far”. They were, he added, well aware of the extent of his powers.

The Community Safety Co-ordinator commented that she had not found it easy to distinguish between the work of PCSOs and that of NSOs – partly because she found they often patrolled together. Her view was that greater breadth of coverage would be more beneficial than doubling up – not least because members of the public in some parts of the district often complained about not seeing any patrols at all.

### **Sufficiency of powers**

Whilst it was acknowledged that having more powers meant an increased likelihood of being seen as police officers, PCSOs did not believe their powers sufficient. Underlining the point that the training could only prepare them so far, this only became apparent to them once they started the job. One felt the role particularly limiting given the frequency with which he came across situations which required a person to be searched. He argued that if PCSOs could do this, it would free regulars up to attend to other issues. Another found himself regularly caught between not wanting to give a false impression, and wanting to please the public by taking action (most typically in relation to illegal parking).

Most regulars interviewed in Reigate and Banstead shared these concerns. One recounted a recent incident whereby

“...My PCSOs went to a burglary. He wouldn’t normally go, he’s not supposed to do frontline policing – but he was with me in the car when I got the call and it was impossible, more sensible for me to take him with me. Problem is, if he had the powers it would have been so much more useful for me if he was a PC. You’re thinking two things – can I do this now, am I allowed to – but he’s there, he’s willing. It’s difficult.”

In a similar vein, one of the NSO sergeants described how the practicalities of dealing with situations had already started to take precedence over the stated powers:

“I showed [the PCSOs] a CLE26 form and said ‘In your patrols you’re going to come across hundreds of these. Write out a statement – the DVLA don’t mind where they come from’. Then I found out they didn’t have the power. I declared UDI, and told them it’s ok so long as they don’t come into a conflict situation. If they do - walk away. Even if they were doing CLE26s a lot it wouldn’t bother me because it would mean they’d be out being seen and sorting things out. People complain about cars with no tax. It’s one of the big visible signs that there is lawlessness.”

The Council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator agreed the powers were limited, and less extensive than those held by CSWs. However, one NSO was resistant to the introduction of more powers. Stressing that the role was still in its infancy, he felt there was a danger that some PCSOs might be “trying to run before they can walk.”

### *Power to detain*

No enthusiasm for this was reported by any interviewees. As one NSO put it,

“This area is not like the Met where if you ask for back-up you’re guaranteed an absolute army of officers to help you. Even as a police officer I have to think about



where back-up is coming from – and they’ve only had three weeks training, no [protective] kit. It would be unfair on them.”

### *Parking powers*

Views were mixed on whether it would be appropriate for PCSOs to have powers to address illegal parking. The issue was described by one NSO as “the public’s number one bugbear” and it was regarded by another as “a joke” that PCSOs could not give out parking tickets – which “would really endear them to the public” – but were able to issue FPNs for cycling on a footpath, the culprits of which were usually children who were too young to receive an FPN anyway. Particular problems were caused in one area by commuters parking near a railway station on the main London to Brighton line – “the public complain to us bitterly” said the local NSO, “and expect us to do something about it. You don’t have to be Brain of Britain to issue a parking ticket. Why do we have to sit on our hands?”

The imminent phasing out and general scarcity of traffic wardens was seen by most as a further reason to equip PCSOs with parking powers. On the day of one of the fieldwork visits the only traffic warden in the borough was on desk duty at the police station due to staff shortage. However, one NSO was against the idea, on the basis that PCSOs could end up doing little else but give out parking tickets all day.

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

Partnership with the council was believed to work well in the borough. The Community Safety Co-ordinator who had been in post nine years, reported that there had been “a fair amount” of community safety work pre-dating the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – the legislation simply formalised a process that was going on anyway. For the police, the most prominent example of this was in relation to graffiti. A database exists of known graffiti tags, and visual audits conducted. Removal had been sped up following introduction of two so-called “Graffiti busters” - large mobile jetwash machines that can be deployed throughout the borough, and are funded by the borough’s community Safety Partnership. Although not regarded as a huge problem by all interviewees, most PCSOs and NSOs have had occasion to make use of this – as one NSO remarked, “I ring or email the CSW, send photos, and constantly whinge, nag, moan and give him grief.”

There was satisfaction with the speed of removal in cases where graffiti was offensive. Some criticisms were voiced, however. One PCSO questioned the lack of flexibility used by operatives, and reported having seen them arrive, manoeuvre the machine round, remove only the racist from a wall full of graffiti, and then drive off. In the opinion of one NSO,

“The removal attitude in the council at the top is great. What is not happening is on the ground. Operatives start at 5am, and finish at midday – the machine makes a lot of noise and you’re not going to start it at 5am. So until the terms of contract are changed, you’re only getting half a days’ work.”

Views on removal of cars were more mixed. Some interviewees felt they were moved swiftly, others were less happy, although it was accepted that the process could be slowed if an abandoned vehicle proved or was believed to also be a crime scene.

In addition, close relations were maintained with representatives of housing associations, one of which was considered particularly co-operative in dealing with troublesome tenants.

### **Community Safety Wardens**

Reigate and Banstead is one of the four Surrey boroughs where CSWs operate. The Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator stressed that PCSOs were introduced at a time when CSWs had already been at work in the borough for around three years. She felt their presence had made her role much easier as they were able to make contact with local people. This would have been difficult enough for her anyway, but was made harder because she was only employed part-time.

However, the three CSWs' potential impact from a reassurance perspective was felt to be less owing to the relatively low profile of their uniform. In addition, CSWs tended to cover a larger area than PCSOs, and were therefore likely to be seen by fewer people in a given day. However, it was reported by regulars and PCSOs that joint patrols with PCSOs have been carried out on occasion. Liaison also takes place over certain issues, typically abandoned vehicles and graffiti, although one PCSO commented that this only happened on average once a week, which was not regularly enough for her liking.

There was a belief that at the outset the CSW role had not been very well understood, either by the public or by members of community safety partnership agencies, although some felt the situation was improving. The picture was complicated, however, because one of the housing trusts had their own wardens, described by one of the NSO sergeants as "effectively hands-on caretakers in uniform". He understood their role to be clearing litter and graffiti themselves, and reporting back to the housing trust on troublesome tenants. He feared that the multiplicity of roles in some areas of the borough could be very confusing for the public. The Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator believed that the presence of so many locally-based points of contact was a strength in the district, but admitted that there could be need for a stock take of how the job descriptions and powers of the various roles overlapped fitted together. She understood that attempts had been made at Surrey Police headquarters to assess this county-wide.

### **Transport**

Transport, and equipment in general has been poorly organised in Reigate and Banstead. The responsibility for this lies outside the borough, however. As one of the NSO sergeants described it,

"Pedal cycles were ordered for us – but they all had large male frames. One of our PCSOs is female and not tall enough to ride one. Helmets we put in [an order] for at least six weeks ago. Stores couldn't locate them. In the end the other PCSO went out and bought his own. Health and Safety have since found out and queried whether PCSOs are proficient in cycling. As for using their own vehicles, one was doing that and claiming mileage – then it got too much because he was getting through a lot. So he agreed to pay his own costs to get to and from his site. Then we got told they weren't insured, and we heard of an incident where one PCSO on another division had an accident. But often there's nobody else who can drive them to their site to drop them off. It seems to me that money's spent without any thought at all as to who will

be the end user, and there's not a lot of thought gone into it without talking to the people who are doing the job."

### **Public feedback – local residents**

Direct feedback was gained from three traders with premises within the site of one of the PCSOs, and five residents who attended a monthly Residents' Meeting within the same area. Established in the 1970s, this group had functioned with various levels of activity, and had been re-energised since 1999 when a new Chair took over.

Main problems in the area were felt to be youth-related. Anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, vandalism, drug misuse and dealing, car crime, and misuse of cars were all issues that regularly cropped up, with some recent involvement over the previous year to house burglary by the same individuals. Specific examples mentioned by traders were:

- Youths congregating outside shops
- Youths messing about inside shops
- Windows smashed (on two occasions)
- Riding around on bikes on the premises
- Requests from underage children for members of the public to purchase cigarettes and alcohol.
- Intimidation of customers.
- Some dealing and use of drugs in a flat above one of the other nearby shops.

Residents at the committee meeting noted that often groups of youths would not actually be doing anything, but their presence alone was enough to intimidate people. However, problems were reported to have been around for years. Typically they occurred between 4pm and 8pm - the so-called "witching hour". It was reported that trade had not been directly affected, but that some customers had been visibly disturbed at what was happening. For this reason the PCSO had elected to work a rota that covered this time.

It was reported that the local Youth and Community Centre often did little to assist. If some activity was suggested, the feeling was that they would usually find a reason not to take it on, even if the youths were enthusiastic about it, therefore limiting youths' options. Residents felt there were few organised activities, other than a skateboard park, although one reported that when consulted about what they would like to take part in, "none of them would answer". Another added that the group had planned to establish a youth subgroup – but could get nobody involved. One of the traders agreed, believing the problem was as much apathy on the part of youths as lack of facilities or opportunities.

In the past, one trader reported that he or his colleagues would call the police if the crowd was getting too large, if only to move those involved along to somewhere else. He outlined the thinking behind this – tackling the crowd themselves was likely to prompt abuse, and retaliation created the possibility of coming into work the following morning to find a window broken. He and his colleague were both dismayed that some of the shops along the parade, having been the victim of damage, had for insurance reasons erected shutters at the front of their premises.

Historically, traders had not been pleased with the police response when they had been contacted about youth disturbance. One spoke of how unpredictable things could be – "they

might come after half an hour, or maybe after two days”. Another, who had lived in the area all his life, could recall a situation when the population had been around half its current size, but with far more police officers. This was coupled with a worsening attitude of youths in general compared to previous times (“at least we only scrumped”); the arrival of a particular youth from a larger town who had assumed a more prominent role in youth disorder than he had been able to in his former area; and greater consumption of alcohol and drugs. In combination, all these factors had created a problem.

Prior to the arrival of the PCSO three months earlier, and with the exception of the NSO, traders had never seen a uniformed patrol whilst working at the premises. The lack of dedicated local officers was seen as problematic rather than merely disappointing. One trader offered a recent example of when a police patrol car had pulled up in one of the nearby streets, and one of the officers had been seen looking at a map to try and work out how to reach their destination.

One of the traders also recounted an incident the previous week in which a person was seen wielding an axe in the area, at which five police cars were in attendance. He contrasted this with the youth-related incidents near the shop, when no police arrived for half an hour, by which time the youths would invariably have moved off to a nearby recreation ground.

He was also unhappy that, when there was a problem, he could not ring the nearest police station; instead, the call had to be made to the divisional headquarters elsewhere in the borough. He added that the situation had been eased somewhat by the establishment of a Shopwatch scheme in 2003. In terms of environmental improvement, some criticism was levelled at the borough council by one trader, who found them slow to respond to drainage problems in his area. He could not recall seeing any patrols by a CSW, and appeared unaware that the role existed. Attendees at the residents’ meeting knew the local CSW, and rated him highly. This owed much to his background as a former police officer, who “knows the police, knows the area and knows the villains”. The role itself was valued; there was reported to be talk of a local Housing Trust recruiting its own warden. Another resident remarked that in the past the council had used the area as a dumping ground for those it could not house elsewhere, although this had now changed, with more people finding their own properties. The council’s graffiti-buster team was believed effective, although there was disappointment among residents that the borough had not achieved its stated target in relation to removal of abandoned vehicles. Overall, the borough council was believed to respond positively to problems, although the view at the residents’ meeting was “sometimes the reaction is not as quick as we would like it to be”. However, the issue felt in need of most attention was the state of footpaths and roads. The Borough Council had taken this over from the County Council, employing a Streetcare team. Residents felt the Borough Council’s performance on this matter had improved upon the County Council’s earlier efforts, but the latter now wished to resume responsibility for this issue. The fear was that standards would fall again.

The Residents’ Group, through its involvement in a number of area committees, enjoyed more contact than the traders with the police and other local agencies. Many of the traders’ concerns were shared. One commented that, apart from the NSO presence, foot patrols had been non-existent prior to the PCSO’s arrival. Even mobile units had been rare, he added, recalling how at a PCPG he had “harangued” the Inspector about the impossibility of policing the area solely with two NSOs. Response rates were invariably too slow if a police unit had to come out from elsewhere in the borough. It was suggested that the police had appeared to have “withdrawn” and “lost control of the streets”, which had coincided with, and possibly

permitted, an escalation in anti-social behaviour by youths. Unlike the traders interviewed, however, all residents had noticed a change subsequent to these complaints, with an increase in local police strength over the summer of 2003 via the movement of the BST's base back into the area.

All three traders had become aware of the PCSO through her visits to their premises. None mentioned seeing any prior coverage in the press, or having the role explained to them beforehand in any formal way. Unprompted, two also mentioned that the NSO had visited their shop.

Residents at the committee meeting were aware of the role as a PCSO had for some months been operational in a nearby part of the borough prior to the second PCSO's arrival. Some met the PCSO while she was patrolling, and were introduced by the NSO. Others saw her for the first time when she began attending the meetings.

The patrols were welcomed by traders, though one did not think they would make much of an impact on the situation, "because [youths] are still going to gather there and there's still nothing you can do – there's no 'hands-on'". He did not rule out there would be an effect, but believed this would take time. He felt that parental control – or lack of it - was a more potent factor, adding that "the standards are not there". Even the imposition of ASBOs or curfews was not seen as effective, partly because (as in the case of two of the traders) they were not aware that certain individuals were subject to these orders. One had been authorised in the area, but this had now lapsed, and there was some suspicion that the police found the costs involved in preparing ASBOs prohibitive.

Residents could think of no negatives about the PCSO role. The fact that the PCSOs were in uniform was regarded as important, because their appearance alone might act as a discouragement to youths to behave anti-socially. By being deployed prominently on the street, the opportunity for intelligence-gathering was also seen as a positive aspect of the role.

One resident also felt that the PCSOs' effectiveness would depend to a great extent on how they were used by the NSO to whom they were attached, and on the perspective of their line manager. He had already noted that the PCSO in his own area often patrolled alone, whereas a PCSO in a nearby part of the borough was "joined at the hip" to his NSO. He and another resident added that this was not how they had been led to believe the PCSO role would work. Instead the impression they had been given was that greater coverage would be achieved by NSOs and PCSOs operating in different parts of an area at the same time.

If the PCSO role were to disappear, traders feared a return to previous levels of youth misbehaviour. One questioned why there were no visible patrols, either by PCSOs or police officers. He, and those at the residents' meeting, pointed out that the role had not been around in this particular area for a few months, which was not long enough to allow for a judgment of its effectiveness. One of the residents noted the difficulty of using crime rates to measure this, especially in the light of changes to the counting rules that made year-on-year comparisons less straightforward. The trader speculated that if it was around for five years and was then discontinued, this would be a better test.

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

One trader made no distinction between the job of a police officer and that of a regular. The fact that the two roles differed seemed to be understood by the other two traders – one referred to the NSO as “a proper pukka policeman” – although it was less clear whether there was a grasp of the subtler variations. One saw the PCSO as “within the community, dressed similar [to a regular] so that people are aware. People can relate to a uniform.”

Those at the residents’ meeting were aware of the distinction, but appreciated the fact that the PCSO could fulfil many of the functions of a police officer. For example, the NSO had missed the meeting attended by the research team due to illness. However, the PCSO had been able to represent Surrey Police to their collective satisfaction by providing information and ideas. One characterised the relationship of the two roles as “a sharing of responsibilities and duties to improve coverage”. The fact that PCSOs powers were fewer was seen a secondary to the fact that they could have an impact purely through *appearing* to have powers by virtue of the uniform they wore.

### *Will the public more readily offer information to a PCSO than to a police officer?*

No distinctions were made by any traders in terms of being more or less likely to pass information to a PCSO. One resident suggested that, although he had no preference, he could see that some people might find it easier to approach a PCSO. He believed such people would know the distinction, but would rationalise that they had not passed the information to the police per se, even though they knew and intended that the police would ultimately be the recipients. Here the personality and appearance of the individual PCSO was felt to be important – as one remarked, “for some, talking to [the local PCSO] is like talking to their mum”, which was less likely to provoke truculence from many of the youths.

### **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public’s views**

For the present, most interviewees felt the reaction to PCSOs from local people had been positive. One NSO sergeant commented:

“The public are very aware of them – there’s been some quite good publicity. PCSOs have introduced themselves. Shopkeepers and caretakers of relevant housing authorities are also aware. The headmaster of a local school stood up at public meeting to praise them. My perception is that they’re thrilled to bits with them.”

This was echoed by one of the PCSOs, who had not encountered any difficulties from members of the public expecting her to do more than she was able. For many, she had found the simple fact of her presence there was enough.

“As long as you explain you’ll pass it on to someone they’re quite happy. 90% of the public’s expectations are having a face to talk to. A lot of older people here – they like to touch you and say ‘Oh, you’re real!’”

The added value for the public of an extra person patrolling was highlighted by one of the Council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator, and by one of the NSOs. For him, the traditionally often-used comment from residents that they had never seen a police officer

walking around in their area was not the problem. Rather, he implied that they appeared to have become so used to seeing him around that the feelings of reassurance this might have produced appeared to have receded.

“I’ve not had any negative feedback at all. With two walking the area they seem to have really noticed – on my own I’d walk around too but it was almost like I’d become part of the wallpaper. Good things said on street, at meetings... For old people, with distraction burglaries – having someone around in uniform really reassures them – you don’t have to actually do anything, you just have to be there.”

Others, however, had started to come across situations where the public was confused by a PCSO’s action or, more accurately, lack of action. One PCSO had regularly been in a situation where residents would indicate to her that a nearby car was untaxed. She had developed a strategy – taking details – but they had begun to ask her why she could not do anything, especially if they had seen the vehicle still there, and still untaxed, for some time afterwards.

Were the role to disappear, the Council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator felt public opinion might be quite divided between those who saw it as further evidence of police [sic] lack of availability, and those who had never regarded the initiative as adding a great deal as it had not involved recruitment of police officers.

#### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

One PCSO reported that he had been mistaken for a security guard, an ambulanceman, and a salvation army worker. When a member of the public had a problem, however, he was viewed first and foremost as a police officer. Unless the two roles were explained in detail, most interviewees in Reigate and Banstead felt that the public did not distinguish between PCSOs and regulars. This is less surprising given that, for example one NSO admitted that he often found himself treating his PCSO like a probationer pc by accident, because he kept forgetting. However, it was noted that certain youths had quickly realised that the PCSO carried far less equipment. For some this was not a problem – as one NSO put it:

“They don’t know the difference, and I’ve tried not to tell them, because that’ll protect [my PCSO] and make him more effective, especially with kids. I think information is something you should hold onto – so if they don’t know I don’t tell them.”

Others perceived a problem with this, however, because if the public saw a PCSO as a police officer, it was felt they would expect the same service as a police officer could provide. One PCSO was not helped in this regard as she had been provided with a blue shirt that did not fit her and was instead having to wear a white shirt, making her look more like a police officer.

This had created a problem for PCSOs; on the one hand they were keen not to raise expectations, but as one put it, “I think if we went out and told people ‘I can’t do anything’ it’ll kill the job.” The Council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator regarded the visibility of PCSOs as a double-edged sword. Although it was useful from the point of view of reassurance, the risk was that the public would not simply want to see PCSOs, but would also want to ask them to attend to matters which they were not able or tasked to address.

One of the NSO sergeants had attempted to address this by ensuring that the PCSO was seen by the youths in the company of the NSO as often as possible. That way, although they may have differentiated between the two roles, they could still be in no doubt that they were closely linked. One NSO supported the idea, saying that his aim was to get the youths, and everybody else to treat the PCSO the same as him, whilst making it clear to approach the two of them about different matters.

One PCSO did not see confusion over roles as a problem. Her approach when asked about something she could not deal with was to call up on the radio and speak to someone who could. To date requests of this sort had been dealt with swiftly and adequately. Her prime concern was not to create the impression that she was capable of delivering something that she knew was not possible.

## **Media**

Local press coverage of the PCSO role has been secured. The emphasis has been on trying to get across the aims of reassurance, increased visibility and working complementary to the NSO, with a list of the powers, for one of the NSO sergeants at any rate, of less importance. One of the PCSOs said that he enjoyed a good relationship with one of the local reporters.

The role seems to have been portrayed accurately and, in line with the deliberately non-confrontational tone of the job, with a certain amount of irreverence. The Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator felt they had been supportive when events had been of a sufficiently high profile, such as the "Taking Pride in..." days. Something the police cannot legislate for, however, is the contents of letters pages. One PCSO had seen several letters to the local paper which seemed to her to focus largely on lack of powers, and which were questioning the value of the role. She added that she had yet to see a "good news story" in the paper.

## **Measurement of impact**

Different strategies are being adopted within the borough for monitoring the work of PCSOs. One NSO sergeant requests one intelligence report each week and stipulates a shift pattern that includes six late turns and one Saturday per month. In the words of one of the PCSOs under his supervision,

"Elsewhere in the borough [PCSOs] aren't doing that. They do as they please, are given taskings, jobs, enquiries...It's more laid back."

It was acknowledged by most interviewees that measurement of PCSOs' work was awkward. Appraisals had been carried out; however, one PCSO explained that the procedures for monitoring that did exist were essentially based on the sergeant and the NSO forming a perception of how often he had been out patrolling.

"Basically what they do is, obviously [my NSO] knows if people have seen me. If I'd not been doing my job and not going out meeting people, it'd be obvious because [the NSO] would be talking to people and they'd be like 'Who's that – I've never seen him before'. My sergeant said he could get me to keep a diary but he and the NSO would know if I hadn't been out. I think there's an element of trust there."



This PCSO went on to say that there was no attempt to measure the quality of each interaction with a member of the public, because it was understood that not every conversation he had would yield information that was measurable. Nevertheless, conversations with the public which did not result in an intelligence submission were an important bridging stage in the process whereby a person could feel confident or relaxed enough to provide information that might prove useful:

“I can spend an hour talking to an elderly person, preferably by the side of the road. One particular chap I meet quite a few mornings, who likes to talk to me, he’s got no-one at home,...and me talking to him – he knows a lot of the people, they then come over and start talking as well. Three times out of the five it could be ‘Oh, I saw these kids, these were the number plates’, the other two times I could be talking about his dog.”

One NSO pointed out the impossibility of knowing how often a PCSO’s presence had prevented a crime being committed, or what proportion of crimes might be delayed or displaced to other areas. Tracing the volume of foot patrols in the area over the years and comparing it to crime figures, this officer stated

“To me, that is hard evidence that having a police officer on foot in a particular area works. But setting targets for number of submissions isn’t appropriate. Wastes people’s time. And as for public reaction – I’ve seen such surveys, and they’re only a very rough guide. [PCSOs] should have an effect on bringing down crime – to a point. But their main function is to address anti-social behaviour – that’s what Mr and Mrs Average who want to live a decent normal life are very upset about.”

Since PCSOs’ arrival, the Council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator had not noticed a significant speeding up in the removal of abandoned vehicles or graffiti. However, she suspected that the district’s Fear of Crime Survey would reveal findings of greater reassurance on the part of residents, and that this could owe something to PCSOs’ visibility. This was not testable, however, as specific questions on PCSOs had not been included.

## **Career development**

Most of the PCSOs interviewed had ambitions to join the regulars before taking their current post. None had changed their minds; indeed, one said he was even more determined to do so. His preference was to be part of TPT.

In terms of job development, changes were felt necessary. One PCSO, who felt very unfulfilled by the role, commented:

“I’m on my own all day long, and I find myself walking around in circles. I’ve been tasked – but it’s things like ‘Find out what number house a nominal lives at’. That takes all of five minutes. ‘Go and have a cup of tea with the elderly gentleman across the road’. I rang him to make sure he was in and he didn’t know why the hell I was calling. The job is leading nowhere. To be honest this job is more for someone reaching retirement – it’s a leisurely job. You need variety in this job, you always need to be occupied. NSOs have a crime load. Here I have periods where I’m dead quiet, I’ve got nothing to do. A hell of a lot is down to what area you get.”

The age of most PCSOs in the district was believed very young by the Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator. Relating this back to the initial training, she noted that three weeks was a very short period in which to expect young people especially to assimilate the volume of information necessary in the PCSO role. She also regarded the concentration of young PCSOs as a potential threat to continuity in the district, believing some would harbour ambitions to join up, and noting the fact that some had already departed. However, she felt that the youth of the PCSOs in the district, and the good coverage given by detached youth workers, meant there was little need to recruit a specialist YPCSO. Four months after its introduction, she added, the YPCSO role had not been properly explained to her. She was against specialisms developing in place of the current PCSO brief, believing it more important for PCSOs to be generalists who knew the whole range of people on their patch.

### **Funding and the future**

There was disappointment from police and Council interviewees alike about prospective funding arrangements for PCSOs, based largely on the lack of transparency over the fact that the Government would be financing a smaller share of the funding. This was felt to be the reason why no further PCSOs had been recruited in the borough. It was also likely to mean that any PCSOs who left the job would not be replaced.

One NSO felt strongly that it was more appropriate for the council to provide the lion's share of future funding for PCSOs, unless the PCSOs were given police powers. He reasoned that

“We just do not have enough officers to do frontline police work. PCSOs can't, aren't meant to, and shouldn't. I believe if we have to fund PCSOs that'll take money that could've been destined for police officers.”

The Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator observed that some of the GOSE money distributed to the police would be used to meet the balance of the funding in 2004-5, but at the end of that year, “we'll panic...if the Council have to end up funding them all hell will let loose”. Resources were already spread thinly, with no money available to fund a detached youth worker in the forthcoming year. She felt that willingness to fund might be increased “if it can be proven that PCSOs are adding value”.

### **Role here to stay?**

One of the NSOs believed that there was a need to give PCSOs some more incentives. Although he implied that this might stem from increasing the powers available to PCSOs, he emphasised that

“the main thing is that they're not just wandering around aimlessly all day. Or we will lose them, there's no doubt about it.”

The Community Safety Co-ordinator at the district council reiterated that she felt there was lot of encouragement for PCSOs to move into the regulars, and observed that the role seemed to her almost to be sold in that fashion. She felt this, along with difficulties in retention for other reasons, could threaten recruitment. She did not see the job as a long-term career, and for that reason feared that recruiting several young people as PCSOs did not suggest that many of these individuals would provide the kind of continued presence in an area which residents appreciated.

## B DIVISION, EAST SURREY: TANDRIDGE

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	3
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	3
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	14
(includes 7 TPT officers)	
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	3
RESIDENTS/TRADERS INTERVIEWED	6
RESIDENTS SURVEYED	1,539

### *Documentation supplied*

- *Tandridge District Council – draft Fear of Crime Survey*
  - *Two copies of ‘Tandridge News’ – Tandridge District Council Magazine, Spring 2003 and Summer 2003*
  - *Three editions of Tandridge Community Safety Partnership’s Crime Prevention Advice and Information leaflet.*
  - *Tandridge Fear of Crime Survey instrument.*
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Tandridge covers almost 250 square kilometres and has a population of 79,000, approximately 70% of whom live in the north of the district in three commuter towns. The district is very rural, with over 90% of it green belt land, and little large scale industry or major name business. The district is largely affluent, although four wards are ranked within the lowest 20% across the county in terms of deprivation<sup>30</sup>. One ward is home to the largest percentage of elderly people in Surrey.

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<sup>30</sup> DETR (2000) Indices of multiple deprivation.

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

Most members of the Neighbourhood Specialist teams interviewed in Tandridge were positive about the role before PCSOs took up their posts. One described them as “manna from heaven”. In many cases this response stemmed from detailed knowledge of the role; for some it was simply based on the fact that Surrey had insufficient police officers and Tandridge had no CSWs – hence any extra presence was welcome. It was felt by one of the NSO sergeants that, from the police point of view, PCSOs were in fact preferable to CSWs because, because the police would be likely to have a greater influence over how PCSOs would operate.

Some concerns had been held about PCSOs’ safety, and about how well they would complement the existing team. But suggestions that the role represented ‘policing on the cheap’ were almost non-existent, with only regular voicing worries along these lines.

The response from TPT officers was less positive. Three had believed the role was designed to provide a close link with communities, one of whom felt they would have more opportunity to do that than a community-oriented police officer. Reactions of the remaining four ranged from ambivalence through to suspicion. Those who had not formed an opinion said this was through lack of knowledge of the role, either because they had received nothing from Surrey Police, or because they had only skimmed over any advance information they had received. Negative comments were based on the role being a cheap form of policing.

Staff in the district council’s housing department were aware PCSOs’ arrival through their attendance at local fortnightly. There, they understood their action to be “back-up for the police if they were not available”, and believed this would encompass complaints about nuisance and aggravation of members of the public, particularly the elderly.

## **Involvement in initial bid to Chief Constable**

Tandridge’s bid to the Chief Constable was for six PCSOs. This was described as optimistic by the interviewee from the district council, who was heavily involved in producing it, along with the former Tandridge District Inspector.

## **Knowledge of area beforehand**

PCSOs reported no dissatisfaction with the amount of notice they were given as to which area they would be working in.

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

One of the NSO sergeants was satisfied that he was au fait with PCSOs’ powers before they began work. He attributed this to the fact that the three-week training course for the divisional intake had been held at the same station at which he was based. In addition, and in his opinion somewhat by accident, he had been involved in the recruitment process. This meant that he had not only met the PCSOs who would be based in Tandridge, but had also developed links with the project management team. This meant that when he subsequently had a query about the role, he knew who to contact for an answer and had found them “very available” to answer.

The other NSO sergeant felt the picture a little more uncertain, partly because PCSO powers and responsibilities varied depending on where they worked.

“Not a huge amount was explained. There was nothing from the Chief Constable. There were cards, aide memoires floating around, but a lot more clarity would have been good. A lot of people did not really know what was going on. No advice was received via the other areas of Surrey that had PCSOs before us, apart from that [the idea] was fairly positive – which was reassuring – but that came from the informal grapevine. It didn’t help to have different forces using different PCSO powers.”

Most TPT officers agreed that the powers available to PCSOs had not been made clear. Most believed that the powers were limited, but as one put it, the situation was one of “truth, lies and rumours”. Most did not appear especially concerned, on the basis that the PCSO and TPT roles would not overlap often. However, one worried the dangers of this lack of awareness, remarking that

“...if they happen to assist us in a job, I need to know what kind of training they’ve had, if I say ‘Can you get pocket notebook details, a description, or can you grab a quick statement?’ I don’t know if that’s in their remit, or if they’ll get in trouble for doing it.”

Another TPT officer suggested that it would appear unprofessional if a member of the public approached him about the role of a PCSO and he was unable to describe it in any detail. He also questioned whether the PCSOs themselves, at least at the outset, were all particularly clear about their role.

### **Initial training**

PCSOs regarded their training very favourably. One described it as the best training she had ever received, not least because she had retained the knowledge, suggesting that what was delivered was both accessible and relevant. One admitted that having worked for the police in a variety of other capacities he was familiar with much of what was taught anyway. He did feel that the input from Surrey Police’s Personnel and Payroll departments was non-existent, however. This was disappointing, despite the fact that he knew from previous experience that their reputation was “atrocious”, since they had undertaken to attend sessions, but did not show up.

Aside from this, regulars appeared to feel the training was sufficient, and that PCSOs were knowledgeable. Indeed, some expected the training to alter for subsequent intakes as the role was new. Lack of CIS training was seen as a gap, although one NSO felt that the importance of access to the system, and to IT in general, could be overstated. Now that they were CIS trained, he had noticed that some seemed to be spending more time at their computers in the police station, largely sending and responding to emails. He felt that this should be discouraged, as he had thought the main purpose of PCSOs was to be outside and visible to the public.

One TPT officer was strongly opposed to CIS access for PCSOs as she believed

“...they’re leaving themselves open to the moral dilemma – somebody will contact them perhaps and say ‘You work at the police station, you couldn’t just find out this

for us?’ They have access to a situation where a little bit of pressure...Potentially someone could twist it and push it.”

She drew a clear distinction between how much harder it would be for PCSOs (and other civilian staff) to resist such requests as opposed to police officers, and regarded it “information overload” to be able expected to take this in during a three week initial training course.

One council representative said that she and her colleagues had played no part during the first three weeks training. She did not regard that as a drawback, as she presumed that this would have been very police-oriented in any case. Thereafter, she explained,

“...We’ve introduced local enhanced training as we’re very keen PCSOs have one-to-one contact with Housing, Environmental Health Officers...There have been some problems because the PCSOs started training at different times. We’ve held a formal awayday with Housing Officers for NSOs as well. It’s an ongoing mixture of formal and informal.”

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

All interviewees believed PCSOs were or could be vulnerable. Two of the council representatives expressed surprise that self-defence training had not formed part of the initial three weeks training. Both regarded this as absolutely essential, since PCSOs could become a target simply by virtue of being out in public in a uniform. One of the TPT officers went even further, describing the decision as

“ludicrous, barbaric, ridiculous and dangerous. Dangerous to the public and an absolutely, incredibly stupid idea to put people without skills, training, powers and back-up out on the streets. Knowing the type of people that I deal with on a daily basis, knowing what they are capable of...It’s like putting lambs out to the slaughter.”

She added that the similarity between PCSOs’ and police officers’ uniforms worsened the situation, as it would make PCSOs more of a target. As a result, she foresaw added vulnerability in her own role, concluding “I don’t want to have my life put in danger because I’m trying to assist somebody who shouldn’t be there in the first place.” Other TPT officers shared the view that PCSOs were vulnerable – one commented that he would “certainly be very reluctant to do what they’re doing, equipped as they are” - but some were reluctant for PCSOs to carry more equipment, fearing it might lead to their involvement in more serious situations.

One of the NSO sergeants was confident that the vulnerability could be minimised, but this relied on the fact that he believed the PCSOs he supervised to have sufficient common sense not to put themselves in a situation where they would be at risk. Whilst agreeing that self-defence training should have occurred in the first three weeks, one of the PCSOs believed that a combination of his own self-awareness and the maintenance of reasonable demands on him by regulars would be sufficient to ensure his safety. However, this same PCSO admitted that he had on one occasion made a conscious decision to take action which, on reflection, was potentially dangerous. One of the regulars described the incident thus:

“I had to speak to him because he was knocking on doors to try and deal with a problem – not knowing who’d open it. He hadn’t done any checks. There are two

levels of risk in policing – high risk and unknown risk. If you are going to give [PCSOs] the powers to seize items, you are going to get conflict situations. So you need self-defence training or some sort of awareness.”

### **Arrival and integration**

It was felt that integration of PCSOs within the Neighbourhood Specialist Team at Tandridge had gone smoothly. One of the NSO sergeant said that there had been apprehension before PCSOs’ arrival - with some NSOs wondering “Are they going to do away with me?” – but, five months in, it now felt as though PCSOs had always been part of the team. One PCSO commented that there was “still a hardcore minority who are very dismissive,” but had found that “the vast majority of all officers are accepting of me and grateful for me”. The council representative accepted that concerns about the role had been feared nationally, but she had seen little local evidence of this:

“You read that in the national media, and it’s what anyone thinks as a taxpayer really, regardless of your professional role. But I don’t think I was ever aware of any local mutterings about policing on the cheap. There may have been confusion – but then it all happened very quickly, so maybe that gave less opportunity for rumour-mongering, propaganda or ill-feeling.”

As one NSO sergeant explained, one key factor was that local police officers had the advantage of meeting the new recruits several times during the initial training period.

“Having the three weeks training at this station was useful. The other NSO Sergeant and I took the opportunity to speak to them – break down the wariness that might’ve been there – it was a completely new concept. Had them with NSOs for two weeks – area familiarisation, getting to know key players. By then they were itching to get out on their own and prove themselves. The areas we chose to put them in were partly down to politics – parish council and District council and physical geography.”

Although allotted to certain areas, Tandridge have approached the geographic deployment of PCSOs with some flexibility, as described by the other NSO sergeant:

“[PCSOs and ourselves] are happy they attach themselves to other beat officers for a day at a time – so all NSOs have had experience of working with PCSOs. There is some sense from at least one NSO who has no PCSO that he’d want one. That way they cover more area, more villages see them, and it gives them variety too.”

This process was decided upon locally, which the District Inspector felt appropriate:

“It was very much left to ourselves. There was good bedding-in from Sergeants. We did have guidance from HQ but they weren’t prescriptive – they were very prepared to let local needs dictate. It has been successful as a result – [the PCSOs] know who they’re working with extremely well, and enjoy it.”

Police in non-community-oriented teams, however, were felt to be a different matter. One NSO sergeant commented:

“They probably have no awareness – I feel most see the neighbourhood team as doing nothing and just walking around drinking cups of tea all day. Unless everyone’s working under one team you’ll always have that. Creating TPT, DCIT [investigation] and BST has put barriers back. TPT is worst - particularly in this borough as they aren’t based here<sup>31</sup> A way round this is to develop PCSO skills at the next training day – so they for example know what to do at the scene of an accident.”

Three NSO Sergeant’s suspicions were confirmed by TPT officers. Most had not had any direct dealings with a PCSO while on a job, and three said they had rarely or never heard a PCSO on the police radio, although the majority had seen PCSOs around on patrol. While some had heard that the PCSOs were knitting together well with NSOs, one who had come into contact with a PCSO had found the experience negative:

“I’ve been restraining a violent person on the ground with a PCSO standing over me watching – a violent drug addict that had assaulted me. I didn’t really know what he was...I saw a blue hat. He said ‘Are you ok’? I said, ‘Well, yeah, I’ve got him handcuffed now, but...’ I don’t know what [the PCSO] was doing there, to be honest, he was a spectator. In fact it’s embarrassing. It’s worse than a member of the public standing watching you.”

The suggestion that divisional training days might be a sensible forum at which to integrate PCSOs more with TPT officers was positively received by some. However, one remarked that both groups were present at a previous such event, and

“It doesn’t work like that because [PCSOs] end up in a little group and TPT or whoever ends up in a little group, and unless somebody orders them to intermingle...Last time I don’t think I spoke to them more than to say ‘Hello’.”

Drawing on their knowledge of the police officers they had come into contact with – who were exclusively those from community-oriented units - the perspective of council employees was that PCSOs appeared well-integrated with police officers. One, a member of the housing department, attributed this to the “rural, villagey feel” of much of the district. In terms of integration with council staff, he added that a meeting had been held with PCSOs at the council offices shortly after their appointment, for both parties to learn more about each others’ role. He added, though, that he was still unclear about PCSOs’ activities on a day-to-day basis, which was something he would appreciate. .

### **Activities and deployment**

Issues reported to be problematic in Tandridge and which it was felt PCSOs’ powers enabled them to address were: young people hanging around in groups – and it was stressed that “a group” in Tandridge could constitute as few as two or three; under-age drinking; anti-social behaviour of any type, whether or not involving youths; neighbourhood disputes; speeding

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<sup>31</sup> Tandridge’s TPT are based in the borough of Reigate and Banstead.



vehicles; graffiti; abandoned vehicles, thefts of fire extinguishers at two blocks of elderly residents' flats, and flytipping.

Ways in which these issues had been addressed included:

- Foot patrols
- Attendance at village fetes
- Developing a dialogue with members of the community, both formally and informally
- Information gathering to assist in identifying those responsible for crime and disorder.

TPT officers were able to give fewer first-hand examples of PCSOs' activities, although one described how on one occasion a PCSO had pointed her in the direction of an offender. The TPT officer was grateful for this and made an arrest as a result.

One of the council interviewees felt that those in the area associate it much more with Surrey than with London and the Metropolitan Police. She added that there were relatively few problems in Tandridge; CCTV, for example had only been introduced this year in the district, partly because the public had not particularly wanted it. However, when problems did occur residents tended to be very reactionary.

The initial bid to the Chief Constable from Tandridge in November 2002 suggested that PCSOs' arrival might lead to an increase in the number of domestic security surveys, as they would be trained for this role. Housing department staff at the council reported that they were not aware of this happening, but added that they themselves did not carry out many such surveys either. The bid also described the importance of "PCSOs develop[ing] a good working relationship with housing officers to do deal effectively with problem families". This reportedly has not occurred either – indeed one of the housing officers seemed surprised to see it in the bid. However, he welcomed the fact that the PCSO role meant a dedicated officer in one area for any issues that were appropriate. He lamented the wasted knowledge – and consequent inefficiency – of the previous system, whereby the same scene could be attended on several occasions, each time by a different police officer.

### **Sufficiency of powers**

At the time of the fieldwork visits PCSOs had been operational for several months. Despite this, a minority of interviewees, notably TPT officers and council housing staff, were still hazy on precisely what powers PCSOs had at their disposal. Some of these interviewees were dismayed that no list of powers had been provided by Surrey Police. Most of those who did have a grasp of the powers felt they were, for the moment, sufficient. One PCSO declared herself "happy to stand back and watch others and learn from that". Several interviewees, TPT included, argued that as long as they used their radio, and knew how to call for assistance, police officers, despite the commonly-held beliefs about slow response times and lack of staff, would normally turn up. The key things they needed to do, argued one NSO, were to be seen out in public, to develop a dialogue with people, and to talk with representatives from other agencies, and he was satisfied that these were all being done.

One of the NSO sergeants accepted, however, that at some point the range of roles should be broadened. After some debate, PCSOs in Tandridge have been told they can issue CLE26s, which has been welcomed by PCSOs and regulars alike. One of the NSO sergeants sensed that one PCSO in particular was becoming frustrated with the limits of the role – having been

fully aware of what he could and could not do when he applied for the job. The result was a willingness to become involved in activities for which he was not trained and which might lead to less time being spent on PCSOs' core tasks. The NSO sergeant was keen that PCSOs did not become involved in an arrest, for example, as this could take them off the street and thereby reduce their visibility for some length of time. This also ran the risk of making PCSOs less distinguishable from police officers. One TPT officer in particular felt this less important than populating the streets with officers equipped with full powers, arguing

“If you're going to have a paid officer dedicated to work within a specific community, surely it would be far better to have a police officer rather than somebody with any person powers.”

Given the nature of the Tandridge area, one of the council representatives argued that on a daily basis PCSOs probably did not need very many powers. She admitted that she had not asked for or been given a full list of the powers, saying that this was more important for other council staff who dealt with PCSOs more regularly. She added that the council had not yet devolved any local government powers down to PCSOs; however, “long-term they probably need some capability to do something other than just stand there.”

The recency of the role was also given by one TPT officer as a reason for not providing PCSOs with more powers, at least in the short term. He foresaw more powers as a way of confusing the public about what the role was aiming to achieve that police officers could not already tackle.

“I think as it's new they do need an introduction before they build in any more power. You start getting into sticky water if you don't have the training. The important thing is that PCSOs are for the community, and policemen are for the more serious... The community will look at them as the neighbourhood body, the familiar face for the long term, no abstractions, low turnover, therefore not seen as a threat. If you start diluting it, they could become the policemen.”

### *Power to detain*

There was satisfaction from both regulars and PCSOs themselves that Surrey Police had chosen not to equip PCSOs with this power. However, part of the justification for this was the belief that police officers would be unlikely to arrive within the thirty-minute detention period. This was at odds with others' confidence that the powers as a whole were sufficient because use of the radio by a PCSO would result in a prompt response from a police officer. For one council representative, these issues were secondary to the loss of public confidence that might result if a member of the public observed a PCSO apparently refuse to intervene in an incident by physically restraining a suspect.

### *Parking powers*

Views were divided about the need for PCSOs to be able to issue FPNs for parking matters. It was acknowledged that the public regularly complained about it, but it was also felt that the public would want to see PCSOs spend a lot of time attending to it, which neither they nor any of the regulars were enthusiastic about. One PCSO had made sure that when a member of the public pointed out a parking problem to him, he wrote down the details that he would then

refer on while they were still with him. That way they could see that the information they had provided was being documented.

Most TPT officers believed parking powers would be valuable. Some did so on the grounds that this was “usual neighbourhood stuff” and that without it, the notion of effecting improvements on the basis of what the public felt was important would be diminished. For others it was seen as simply a way in which the role could be given more variety as, in the words of one, “other than high visibility policing, there’s not a lot they can do”. One of the council’s housing officers agreed, saying enforcement of parking powers was one very obvious way in which PCSOs could reassure by being seen to solve a problem.

### **Information sharing and joint work with the district council**

Regulars described the relationship between themselves and the district council as very supportive, open and honest. One of the NSO sergeants felt that police in Tandridge were “the envy of the two other boroughs on the division”. Another regular suggested this might be because the centres of population in the district were relatively small, despite the fact that, at almost 250 sq. km, the district is fairly large. Council staff agreed with this. One remarked that with information protocols established, exchange of knowledge had got better and better over last few years, with the CIAG being the best example of this. Pooling knowledge was valuable, he continued, because previously police would be called to a domestic incident with unrealistic expectations about how soon (or whether or not) tenants could be moved out, for example, or with little understanding of how tenants were allocated to premises. This point was also made another council interviewee, who regarded the state of joint work as healthy:

“This post was the first of its kind in Surrey. We think [partnership] here is excellent, probably largely people-dependent rather than due to organisational culture. Less of the pressures and issues that those in the centre of the county may have. We are very good at tailoring what we need to suit our needs. This existed before the Crime and Disorder Act but that’s made it much more formal.”

Another regulars described the council as very supportive financially, citing as an example the purchase through the Community Safety Partnership of four vehicles for use by the Neighbourhood Specialist Teams. However, he added that

“...I do question sometimes the actual ownership of the problem. At the moment we have a particular problem with skateboard parks. Youths congregate there – we get complaints from residents – so it’s [the police] that ends up dealing with the problem. Council will put fencing and gates up to stop people getting in – but I’d like to see them take more responsibility – hiring a park keeper, creating a shift pattern so that person can visit all these skateboard sites.”

### **Community Safety Wardens**

No CSWs operate in Tandridge. The council representative explained that

“...We have tried for Home Office money for them in the past, but we never present a good enough case – it’s a low crime area in a low crime county. There is no private sector funding either because there are no big businesses here.”

Regulars added that the absence of CSWs had made the council very supportive of PCSOs; nevertheless, one of the NSO sergeants was keen that a situation did not develop whereby “the council decid[e] not to get CSWs because they can see us recruiting PCSOs.”

## **Transport**

Local facilities for ensuring Tandridge PCSO could get around what is a very large rural area have been well-planned. This has been done with it in mind that the emphasis should be on visible foot patrol, as one of the NSO sergeants explained:

“HQ a bit late in the day provided pushbikes – but we’d already sorted that, and got mountain bikes from a local business. The district council made a contribution. Also, the Chief Superintendent made an agreement with a local motor dealer to purchase four vehicles at a discount. Very much a visible partnership – not seen as a response vehicle. Only one of the PCSOs is Grade 5 qualified to drive these at present. HQ are a bit concerned by this – but you can’t have them covering these areas on a bike. They can drive, then park, then walk or use the bike – not do fishbowl policing.”

## **Public feedback – local residents**

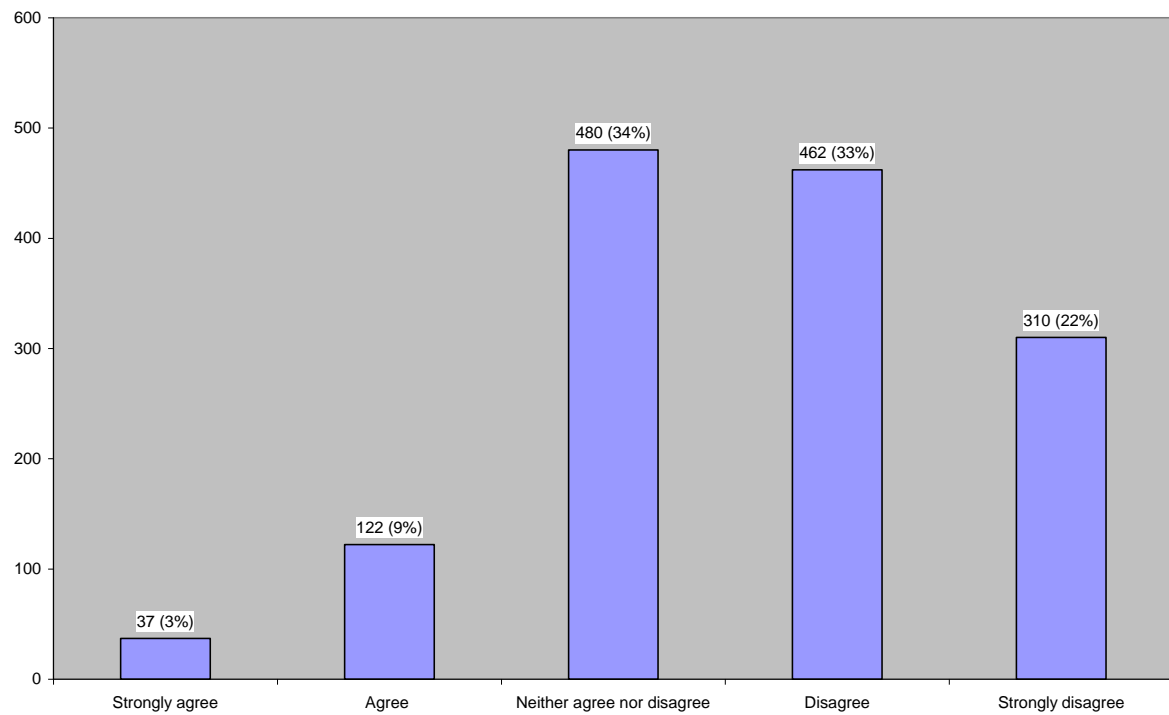
Two strategies were used in Tandridge to gauge reaction to PCSOs by those living and working in the district. The first was a public attitudes survey, the second involved in-depth interviews.

### *Public survey*

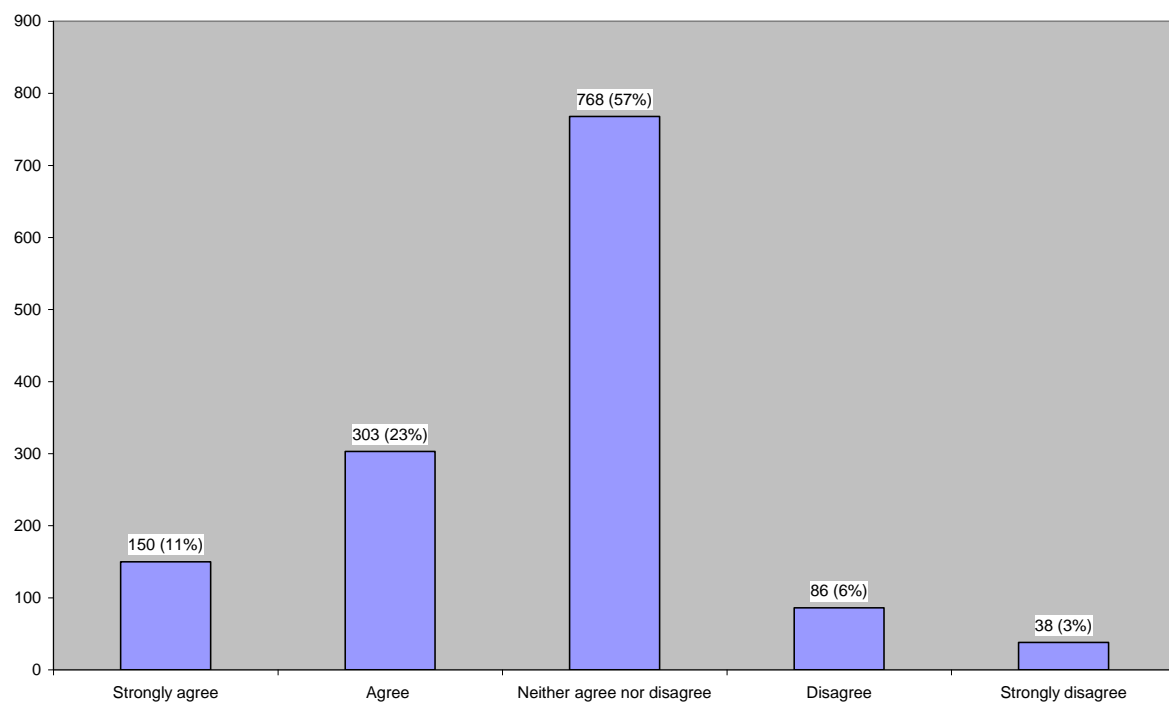
In December 2003 the Community Safety Co-ordinator at Tandridge District Council carried out a fear of crime survey throughout the district. This would inform the district’s next Community Safety Strategy, due in 2005. The survey (see Appendix B) included four questions on the PCSO role. In all, 3,116 questionnaires were distributed, with an impressive response rate of 50% (n = 1,539).

Results are shown in Figures A1 to A5. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

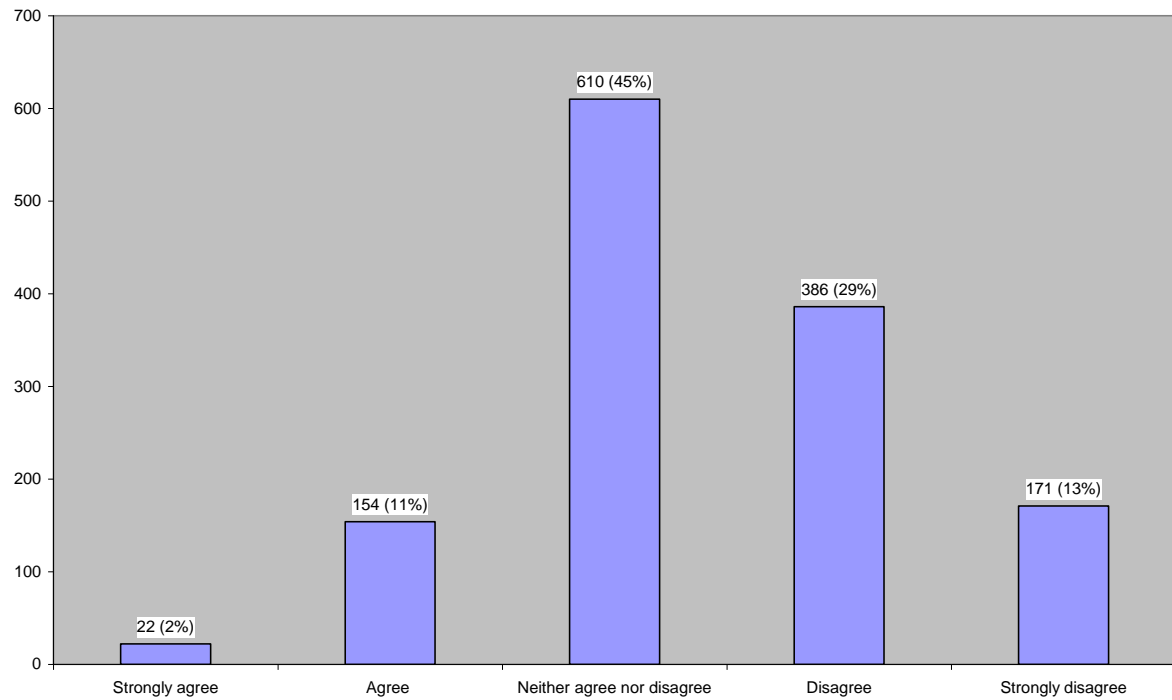
**Figure A1: “PCSOs are very visible and make me feel safer”**



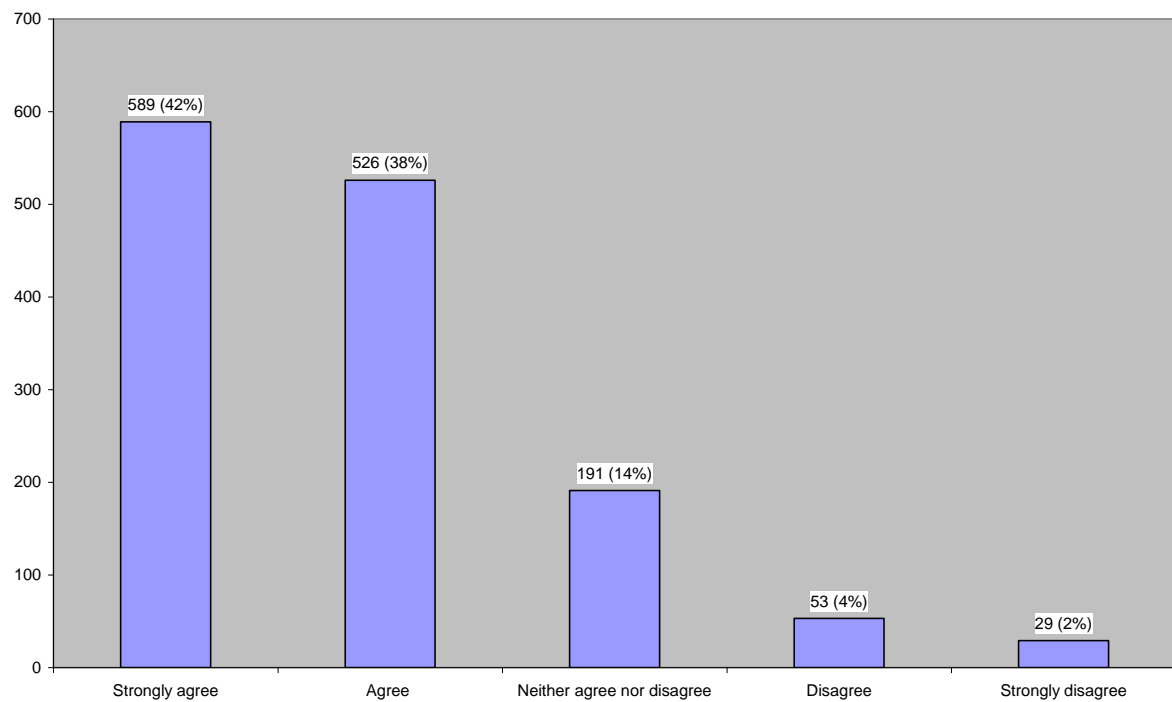
**Figure A2: “I find it easy to distinguish between PCSOs and police officers”**



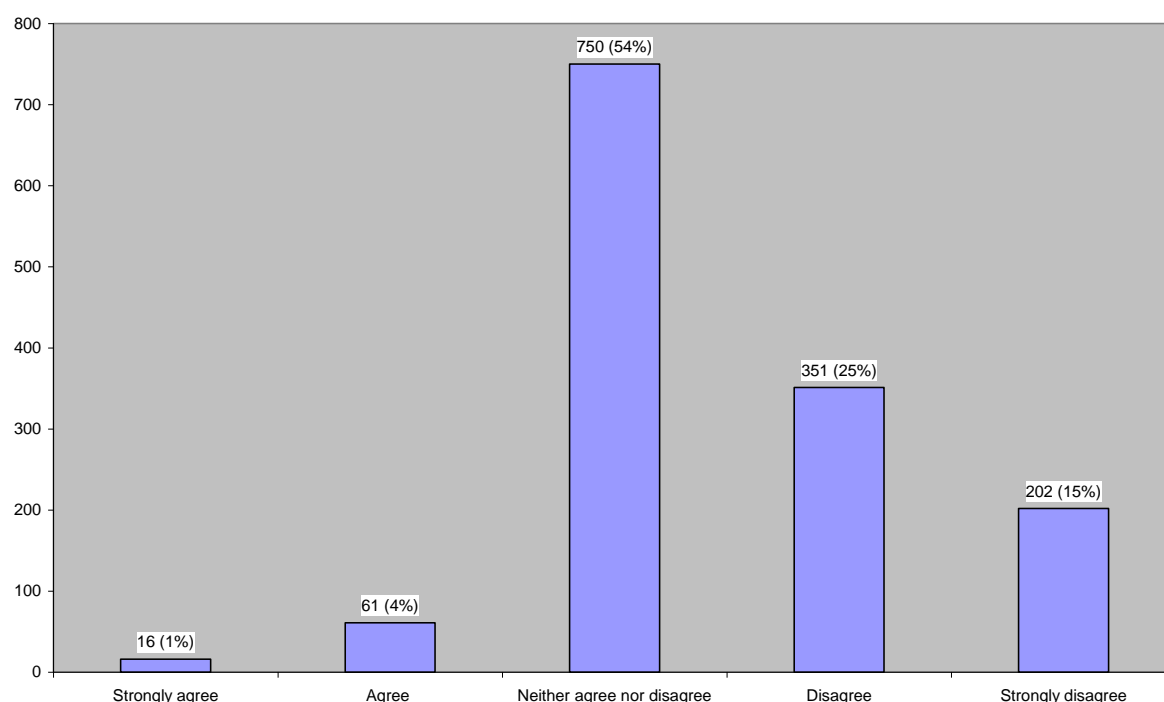
**Figure A3: “PCSOs are very visible and make me feel safer”**



**Figure A4: “I have never had any dealings with PCSOs”**



**Figure A5: “I would be more likely to provide information to a PCSOs than to a police officer”**



The Figures above show that only 6% of those who responded said they had had any dealings with PCSOs. However, 14% had no view on this, suggesting that they were unclear on the difference between the PCSO role and that of a police officer. In line with this, only 13% felt the two roles were easily distinguished. Given this uncertainty, it is unsurprising that over half were unable to say whether or not they would be more likely to supply information to a PCSO than to a police officer. Over a half did not feel PCSOs were visible and did not consider themselves any safer as a result. The majority had no view on whether their powers were sufficient, implying that they were largely ignorant of PCSOs’ remit. Of those that did have an opinion, over three quarters rated PCSOs powers as insufficient.

Neither were respondents generally fearful; the survey also noted fairly low levels of worry in a range of situations at different hours of the day, while residents were most likely to rate a range of fourteen possible neighbourhood problems as “not a problem”.

Taken together, these results suggest that, eight months after their introduction in the district, respondents’ awareness and understanding of the PCSO role is low. There is little evidence to suggest that those who appreciate the difference will be more likely to approach PCSOs than police officers with information, despite the increased opportunities expected by project organisers for PCSOs to be recipients of intelligence. Residents who declared more knowledge of the role are more likely to feel powers need to be broadened.

### *Interviews*

Direct first-hand feedback was obtained from six residents about their views of the PCSO role, although four of these were informal conversations rather than semi-structured

interviews. The role was welcomed by all as a necessary one. One, who a former Special Constable who had taken a keen role in community safety matters for several years, described how, along with a senior police officer, he had sought funding for a similar role around five years previously. Another stressed that, although he appreciated the two roles were different, the arrival of PCSOs compensated to large degree for the absence of any CSWs. Another welcomed PCSOs because she saw an urgent need for them, along with the police to develop a dialogue with youths in the area.

None of those interviewed felt the area they lived in suffered from what they termed serious crime; the majority of the problems were low level, and centred around graffiti and “yobbish” behaviour. They felt this was exacerbated by a lack of facilities for youths to use. A site had been earmarked for a new skateboard park, but there was also a need for evening activities, especially during winter.

Most regarded PCSOs’ impact favourably. One considered the sight of a patrolling officer in uniform as reassuring in itself, another suggested there had been a slight, but noticeable reduction in the number of abandoned cars in the area since the PCSOs’ arrival. One key activity, which had been well-received, was one of the PCSO’s patrols outside schools when pupils were leaving at the end of the day, as this had regularly led to parking disputes. Interviewees appreciated that there was little the PCSO could actually do in the event of parking violation, but, given the reduction in problems of this sort, they did not believe that those committing the offences were aware of this.

At the PCPG meeting from which four of the interviewees were drawn, some of the 23 attendees questioned the whereabouts of their local PCSO, whom they had not seen in their area for some while. It was explained by the NSO that she had spent the bulk of her time in an adjacent area, which was confirmed by other attendees at the meeting.

Work involving both the police and the district council was felt to have improved since the Crime and Disorder Act. However, one interviewee suggested that it was changes in policing that had been the most noticeable change in recent times. For him, the previous system, predominantly involving vehicle rather than foot patrols, had been most in need of updating.

Asked how they would react if the role were taken away, all interviewees saw this as a backwards step, likely to deprive local communities of a much-needed service – a visible presence on the streets. Indeed more PCSOs, rather than fewer, was believed by one interviewee to be what was needed. It was accepted that there were advantages to the police and to individual PCSOs if they left to join the regulars; however, it was believed that the price to pay could be quite high if PCSOs moved on swiftly, as they would not have had time to make a tangible impact as a PCSO in their area. More important they have assistance from the police – NSO or otherwise. Incentives to stay in the form of a Senior PCSO role were seen as less important than enjoying supervision and assistance from knowledgeable police officers.

#### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

All interviewees were aware that the role of PCSO and police officer were not synonymous – though two were particularly doubtful that members of the public less interested than themselves would have picked up on this. One saw PCSOs as “detectors” of problems, with the police as the “prosecutors”. One regarded it as the duty of the District Inspector to avoid



deploying them as police officers, especially if resources were stretched, if the distinction was to be maintained. Another felt that part of the problem was that the role had not been highlighted or explained as proactively as it should have been. She suggested meetings at public libraries as one way to address this.

### **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public's views**

PCSOs were believed to have been well-received by the public in Tandridge. Evidence was not solely anecdotal; the work of one PCSO, who had only been in post for around three months at the time of the fieldwork visit, had already generated three letters of appreciation from local residents to the Chief Constable, declaring that “she had won the support of young and old”. One of the NSO sergeants said he and other members of the team had attended several meetings at parish councils and PCPG meetings, and had yet to hear a single negative comment. Few TPT officers had elicited or heard any public comments on PCSOs. However, one speculated that the role was likely to be well-received, since the sorts of issues he understood them to be addressing were the very concerns he remembered the public voicing for some time:

“When I first started here seven years ago, the Council commissioned a survey on fear of crime. The main venom of the people was litter, noisy youths, noisy cars and dog-fouling – a daily chore for people to endure.”

One of the council interviewees felt that positive public responses reflected the fact that partnership work in general was very much driven by the desires of residents. Their main complaint was not seeing a bobby on the beat – which she felt the NSO structure has addressed, and PCSOs were complementing. Feedback, most of it anecdotal, had come from PCPGs, Fear of Crime Surveys, and a fortnightly district CIAG, which had been introduced in 2003, and was underpinned with a monthly drug CIAG sub-group. The reaction, she concluded, had been brilliant. Another council employee had heard little in the way of feedback, but took this as a good sign, on the basis that council employees and police officers tended to hear from the public when there was a problem, and she had no reason to think the situation would be different for PCSOs.

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

Most interviewees felt that the public were not clear on the difference between PCSOs and police officers. One PCSO was content with this; he deliberately did not go into much detail about what he could do, on the basis that “if you keep putting yourself down people just ignore you”. One of the NSO sergeants reported that a lack of awareness of the powers also had its advantages; for example, if a member of the public was asked to move their car, and they were unsure of the limits of what a PCSO could address, they tended not to question the PCSO's authority.

One of the council representatives agreed that it was unlikely that most members of the public appreciated the lack of powers. She continued:

“I don't think we've ever tried to make out that they're police officers. In fairness the public probably think they are police officers, with associated powers. From their

point of view I don't know if that matters. It may matter if something happens when they approach that person.”

However, several regulars, including two NSOs, suggested that some residents had soon reached the conclusion that PCSOs represented ‘policing on the cheap’. Again, the similarities between the police uniform and that worn by PCSOs were felt to be largely responsible, especially if a member of the public’s only exposure to PCSOs was seeing them on the street. One TPT officer felt that deliberately blurring the boundaries between the roles

“would almost be conning the public because if you think you’re speaking to a police officer and you’re not, then that’s wrong – that’s why it’s unlawful to impersonate a police officer.”

One of his TPT colleagues also believed there could be repercussions for public confidence in the police if PCSOs were unable to deal with issues which the public, believing them to be police officers, felt justified in drawing to their attention.

One PCSO was reported to have voiced concerns at getting abuse from members of the public who had realised the position was not equivalent to a police officer. Some dissatisfaction was also reported from one Residents’ Committee when a departing NSO was replaced with a PCSO. However, the calibre and output of PCSOs’ work since then encouraged residents to regard the role more favourably.

*Will the public more readily offer information to a PCSO than to a police officer?*

No respondents who were asked believed that PCSOs were more likely than police officers to obtain information from members of the public by virtue of them being more approachable. One of the council interviewees felt however that there could be more opportunities for PCSOs to gather information, believing that they would be likely to spend more time than a police officer on the street and hence be available to approach more often. Though not convinced that the PCSO role lent itself to more approachability, one TPT officer described a situation where she thought it more sensible to deploy a PCSO than a regular from the point of view of yielding information.

“If an NSO goes to [a PCSO] and says ‘Keep an eye on this house for me, just jot down who’s going in and out, what cars are parked outside’, that could be good, because the presence of a police officer and a police vehicle would give it away that we’re doing that.”

## **Media**

The print media in Tandridge were felt by all groups interviewed to have produced reasonably positive coverage of the PCSO role. Researchers were shown several examples of stories that had been published, displayed on a wall at the police station. One of the NSO sergeants commented:

“It’s been good – one PCSO had a full page in local paper – journalist and photographer spent a day with them – accurate and good photos. Always looking for

the angle and the negative, but we work at keeping them on board, without kowtowing to them.”

The PCSO in question added that this coverage was

“...not 100% accurate and there was an attempt for ‘the angle’ – in this case about sexism in the force – which didn’t make it into the article. But job title was correct and [it] mention[ed] graffiti etc.”

One of the interviewees from the council described several other strategies for publicising PCSOs and other community safety initiatives. She accepted that there was an onus on the partnership to ensure that the public got to hear about positive developments.

“We try to raise the profile through our own magazine and an insert we do on community safety...The local media are very open to any story we give them – it’s not hostile press. If you give them something it’ll usually be published. If you give them nothing they’ll put in something negative. We’re perhaps guilty of not publicising good news – from a partnership point of view we try to be productive, but we’re always missing tricks, all the time.”

### **Measurement of impact**

There was a feeling that if the impact of the role could be measured at all, this was best done by collating feedback rather than setting quantitative targets. As one NSO sergeant declared,

“If the local councillors don’t keep ringing me up with problems, then the people out on the street are being effective...I’d rather have one quality piece of information in a month than three pieces of rubbish in a week – because it takes somebody time to sift through it. Public perception surveys are the best way.”

One PCSO was particularly resistant to the idea that he be judged on meeting any kind of target.

“You could count how many CLE26s I’ve dished out. But no, there are no tick sheets of how far I’ve walked - and I hope I don’t get any. You can’t measure it. I could keep a list of how many people came out, shook my hand every day and said ‘Lovely to see you’, but if it was being written down I’d find it very sad and pathetic and it would actually really irritate me.”

One of his colleagues had included the letters of appreciation for her work, sent by residents to the Chief Constable, in her personal file, but it was unclear if other PCSOs within the borough were also doing this. In the meantime, as the council interviewee commented,

“There’s been no formal means of measurement at the moment. It’ll be anecdotal. We’ve looked at it by the frequency of complaints and the positive comments you do get – and it’s easier for someone to phone up and make a complaint than to praise. It’s a general feeling you get, from my own officers, most of whom live locally and see PCSOs locally, from the public, and of course from councillors.”

She added that a Fear of Crime survey was due to take place throughout the district within the next couple of months.

### **Career development**

Two PCSOs commented that they had intended to join the regulars before taking the PCSO role. Neither had changed their mind. One added that this was not a reflection on the job satisfaction he currently had, but

“...this job is limited – there are some things you can’t deal with. It’s not frustration – but if something’s happening and I’m just standing around, it makes the police look bad. If we could do parking tickets, it would look better.”

The third PCSO had not intended to apply to the regulars – but how now changed his mind, since

“I didn’t realise I’d enjoy this job so much, but I would now like to be able to disrupt anti-social and criminal people to a greater extent than I can at the moment. Half the attraction is the relative freedom and trust I’ve been given, and for that reason I’d prefer NSO work.”

None of the TPT officers opposed PCSOs applying to join the regulars, though two concerns were voiced. First, that in their current role, PCSOs were only gaining a detailed insight into certain areas of activity within the police. Notwithstanding Surrey Police’s plans to accelerate specialisms, this would not occur immediately; therefore breadth of knowledge was as important as depth. Second, the leap from PCSO work to police work was considered larger than, for example, a Special Constable joining the regulars, and one interviewee cautioned against overlooking this.

One council employee welcomed the recent arrival of a YPCSO as a necessary support for detached youth work in the district. However, he added that given the wide areas to be covered, transport was required if the role was to succeed.

### **Funding and the future**

Council and police interviewees had both been under the initial impression that the Government would be funding the PCSOs for the entirety of the first three years. As one put it

“I’m not saying we were misled, but I don’t think it had been spelled out.”

Another added that in a sense, there was relief that the partnership had not succeeded in obtaining all six of the PCSOs that they had originally bid for to the Chief Constable, as it would have been impossible to fund all of them. The council interviewee went on to explain future options:

“For next year we’re considering using GOSE/HO funding, or paying for it centrally. The alternative is that I’ve put a bid in to our own budgets here. It will have to go through our committee and budget process – should know around December... What we tend to do is pool my operating budget, local police money, and GOSE money and

then divvy it out – so there are shared budgets....What concerns me is we create ideas on short-term funding and then nobody can afford to pick it up when this dries up. If it becomes paid for by one of the existing agencies then that gives it stability. If you're only going to wait to see what the government gives you year-on-year, then you're heading for a hiding..”

These latter concerns were shared by one of the NSO sergeants, who saw continued central government funding as crucial:

“I see no threat to the role unless the decision is made that local government or the police must find their own funding completely. If it's a flash in the pan it'll be a waste and lead to cynicism.”

### **Role here to stay?**

Assuming the finances were available, interviewees were asked if the PCSO role should be retained. Council staff believed the role would continue, if only because of the benefits in terms of visibility, which they believed would not be increased by the recruitment of more police officers. The damage that would be done by withdrawing the role, particularly given the absence of CSWs, was believed to be considerable.

Among police officers reaction can be divided into

- those who thought the role would stay and welcomed the prospect
- those who expected it to continue but doubted the wisdom of this
- those who believed the role would be discontinued.

Among most NSO staff and some TPT officers there was enthusiasm for the role, particularly because it increased visible presence. As long as the role was strongly defined and clear expectations of its purpose were set out, it was believed likely to continue – although some did not feel this had yet occurred.

Several TPT officers were not convinced that the PCSO role had made their own job any easier – although among this group, some acknowledged that the benefits within Surrey Police were more likely to be felt by those in Neighbourhood Specialist teams. Although they expected the role to stay, they were not enthusiastic at the prospect, as they saw this as being at the expense of recruiting policing officers.

One TPT officer felt the role would be short-lived, firstly because PCSO would become discouraged by the toothlessness of the role, and secondly because they would encounter too much abuse and negativity from members of the public. The only value he could see in the role was as a professional witness, but believed this was outweighed by the restrictions PCSOs' non-participatory role placed on the wider demands of policing. Another rejected the idea that the role would continue because much of what the public had tended to draw to the police's attention was not in fact a police matter. She continued:

“generally, when I've walked the street, you will get the odd question about parking; but then you'll get somebody saying ‘Look, I've been walking my dog in this area lately, and we've seen this old bloke and he quite scared me and the other day he

followed me back to my car – what should I do about that?’ As a police officer I know what powers are available, and I can give direct advice to somebody. A PCSO can’t.”

## **C DIVISION, WEST SURREY: GUILDFORD**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	9
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	7
NUMBER OF YPCSOs INTERVIEWED	1
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	10
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	7
RESIDENTS/TRADERS INTERVIEWED	17

### *Documentation supplied*

- *Review of the three-day training course*
- *Copy of Guildford town NSO and PCSO weekly priorities*

Guildford borough has a population of 129,717 (2001 Census), higher than any other borough in Surrey. The proportion of 10-19 year olds (12%) was also highest. The borough is affluent - the home ownership figure is 76% - and unemployment is low, although three areas in the borough do not share these characteristics.

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

Guildford borough was one of the first two in Surrey to receive PCSOs. As a result, initial expectations among police officers were typically either vague or low. On the positive side, there was a belief that PCSOs would act as a visible presence. The downside was a suspicion that PCSOs might create work for NSOs, who would then have to clear up after something the PCSO had not been able to deal with. There were, as one put it, “lots of questions, but not really any answers”. Any expectations she may have had that Surrey Police should have provided more information were tempered by the realisation that they were not in a much better position to judge how PCSOs would fit in.

That said, one respondent, at that time Borough Inspector, had seen the vision paper prepared by the force, which outlined how PCSOs could work together with NSOs and CSWs to offer more visible policing and act as a problem-solving resource. One NSO, meanwhile, saw the role from the outset as a way of freeing up his own time so that he could attend to more appropriate work:

“Expected they’d alleviate pressure. Forty hours a week, to police an area which needs more than that, was getting well on top of me. If I was to arrest someone for drug possession, which happens quite regularly, on a good day it’ll take four or five hours to deal with. So that’s basically a day that [this estate] doesn’t see me. Certain jobs I just don’t get round to. I look at Class A drugs supply, then I look at a parking problem, I decide which one I’m going to deal with, and I upset a lot of people with parking problems. So I was looking to PCSOs to take the minor jobs away from me. They do not have the workload, they do not have pressure from an Inspector to get things done, and they do not have the paperwork.”

From the council perspective, interviewees were a little confused as it was not obvious to them how the PCSO role differed from that of the CSWs, who were already working in the borough. One therefore assumed that the PCSOs would

“...do the things that CSWs couldn’t do - parking issues, dog-fouling, and be purely police-led, slotting into work police couldn’t manage, [eg] if the NSO hadn’t the time to collect statements. I wouldn’t say we were misled, but those were the things that were listed with targets in the draft, and it turns out they’re not doing them.”

## **Knowledge of area beforehand**

Two PCSOs were asked how much notice they had received about which area they would be posted to. Both regarded notice given as sufficient. One commented that the recruitment advertisement in the local press had been slightly misleading, as it had suggested that local knowledge would be important, yet she was based some distance from home. On the other hand, once in post, she was grateful that she was not working in the same area in which she lived.



## **Involvement in initial bid to Chief Constable**

Guildford originally bid to the Chief Constable for 18 PCSOs, and received nine. It was explained by one of the regulars that the borough had a history of “bidding big”, on the basis that they’ve a better chance of getting what they want, so there was satisfaction with the number secured. The bid was written within one week. Another regular, who was involved in its production, explained that the bid was influenced by the fact that the borough had the largest number of NSOs and CSWs in the county. These were in very specific areas. Consequently the intention was for PCSOs to cover the gaps, but also to have an involvement in the wards where neighbourhood teams were already established. The main aim, which had been achieved, was for every ward in the borough to be covered by at least one PCSO.

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

Some NSOs were familiar with what PCSOs were able to do before their arrival; however, this seems to have been more through their own efforts than as a result of provision of direct information. One PCSO, for example, reported that NSOs did not have a profile of the job role. One of the regulars stressed that the difficulties were

“...not the trainer’s fault, but HQ’s. They hadn’t got their act together quickly enough – PCSOs landed quickly so it wasn’t sorted out before Guildford’s arrived.”

Most PCSOs reported that they too were confused. One remarked

“We did get a lot [of training] on the powers we were supposed to be having – but we still don’t know whether they have actually been given to us. We were to get cards with the powers on, which we are to carry. We don’t have them.”

However, it was accepted that, as the first PCSOs to start work in Surrey, teething problems were inevitable.

Housing staff at the borough council could not recall the powers being explained to them at the outset in any formal manner. Information they had picked up had tended to be during conversations with NSOs, for whom, as said, the PCSO role initially was not fully clear. One recalled being told that PCSOs would not have the power of arrest, and was unsure how the role differed from that of CSW. Ten months after PCSOs’ introduction, one housing officer commented that uncertainty over the powers continued, and concluded

“I think we’ve just developed our own way of dealing with PCSOs as opposed to CSWs – but not through any kind of guidance.”

## **Initial training**

Opinion was divided on whether the initial training was an adequate preparation for the role. One regular felt the inputs were practical and relevant. Race relations training and de-escalation skills were cited by one PCSO as having been particularly valuable. Gaps were identified by both regulars and PCSOs, however. CIS training, more time spent learning how to use radios, statement taking, more background information on the police hierarchy, and

greater input on procedures to be followed upon discovery of burnt out or stolen cars were all mentioned. Training on providing crime prevention hints for members of the public was also felt by one PCSO to be a useful addition. It might not be practical, she observed, to carry lots of leaflets around, but she sensed it would be useful to leave members of the public with advice of some sort. This could also provide the role with an added focus beyond being a visible approachable presence.

The trainer accepted that gaps would be identified; indeed, voicing ideas about how to improve or restructure the course was encouraged<sup>32</sup>. It was pointed out by several interviewees, however, that it was not possible to predict every outcome. As one NSO remarked,

“As a police officer you get 30 odd weeks [training], and two years as a probationer. Yes, PCSOs don’t need to learn the whole of the law, but if you’re sending out a 21 year-old on a rough estate, maybe doing a late shift, by themselves – some take a year to get used to talking into a radio. I think what they’re being asked to do is demanding.”

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

A one-day training course on conflict management was delivered for all Surrey PCSOs in November 2003, around ten months after PCSOs arrived in Guildford. This had been described as the main training shortfall by one PCSO. As he put it,

“We learned about de-escalation skills etc, but a lot thought we could do with some self-defence training. We have no equipment to protect us whatsoever – that’s great because that’s the idea of the role, and I don’t particularly want to get into that side of it – but if someone starts having a go it would be nice to have a bit of confidence-building back-up.”

Another had favoured self-defence training in the light of the potential difficulties that could be encountered working until 10pm in a busy town centre on certain nights of the week.

“We have a radio, and CCTV, but it isn’t everywhere... We’re taught to seize alcohol, and you don’t know what you might come up against. Some would say self-defence training might go to your head... We’ve taken it upon ourselves to patrol together, as one of us is newer. If an NSO is about we can double up with them. There have been days when the only cover for the town centre has been PCSOs, as NSOs were either in court, on annual leave, or on an operation.”

The NSO Sergeant agreed that vulnerability, and PPE, was much more of an issue in the town centre than other areas. She suggested that early risk assessment would be useful, because PCSOs needed to be able to examine situations, judge the potential end result and, if it could involve conflict, decide how best to avoid this<sup>33</sup>. As another NSO remarked, “There’s no

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<sup>32</sup> Interviewed after training in the first of the four divisions had been completed, the trainer received feedback that there was room to improve witness skills, and more use of video, coupled with testing and retesting to confirm that the information had been retained.

<sup>33</sup> Shortly after they were introduced, two town centre Guildford PCSOs were assaulted in separate incidents. One of these arose after a police officer had been assaulted by the same member of the public. This illustrated the difficult balancing act between preventing PCSOs from being in situations where conflict could occur, and

point putting them into vulnerable situations because if they end up feeling they can't do the job they'll leave". Several NSOs acknowledged they had a part to play in advising PCSOs which taskings were appropriate. As one commented,

"He's not knocking on doors, he's not stopping vehicles, and I've said to him 'If you get a tasking like that, you don't do it, it's not your job'...If I'm going out to do a warrant, I wouldn't take him."

One PCSO, while unsure if self-defence training was necessary, felt that the initial training could have provided tips on routine precautionary measures – for example, how or where to park a car in case there was a need to move it in a hurry.

The Borough Inspector at the time of PCSOs' arrival was not opposed to conflict management training, but shared the initial trainer's view about how often or successfully the training might be put into practice:

"I tried to point out that somebody could show you some jujitsu moves or whatever, but when it comes to dealing with a conflict situation, unless you're well practised at it and you do it every week, it won't work – you won't use it."

He was in no doubt about the choice to be made between not intervening in a situation and not wishing to look ineffective in front of the public:

"Events may happen, and the public may expect them to get involved. If someone wants to complain, we can deal with that as it happens. If you give them kit you're effectively saying 'You're now equipped, and you will now have to be trained'. I think that will encourage them to get involved in more conflict than they do now."

One of the council interviewees felt that PCSOs would be more vulnerable than CSWs, as the latter were there to "observe and report" while the PCSOs role, by virtue of their uniform, created the impression that they would be more interventionist. This was supported by one of the NSOs, who went on to speak of the knock-on effects for her own role of the PCSO's lack of ability to actually intervene.

"Recently in one incident [my PCSO] came across a woman screaming she was being assaulted by a man. [The PCSO] called for backup, and I came, but I couldn't ask him to help me, and I didn't want to put him at risk. When you've got a volatile person you can't reason with at all, you know you're at imminent risk, and you've got nothing to protect yourself, and you're not quite sure what you should do."

She stressed that this incident was isolated, but believed that if it occurred more regularly a case could be made for PCSOs to carry more protection than at present.

### *Further training*

The consultant who delivered the initial training had hoped that, in line with its competency-based format, some form of accredited training for PCSOs could be developed. PCSOs had received a range of training after coming into post. CIS use; instruction from the LIO on submission of intelligence reports; a seminar on domestic violence; a half-day session on

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asking them to observe and report in situations where they felt morally obligated (and physically able) to intervene.

‘Community Strengthening’, which involved developing links with professionals from other agencies – all were rated as useful.

After PCSOs in the borough had been in post for just under three months, they and those elsewhere on the division took part in a three-day training course – actually entitled a Learning Community – with an independent consultant who had previously delivered training for Surrey NSOs.

Researchers attended on the first of the three days, which was largely concerned with giving participants the opportunity to air concerns. There were many of these. One of the PCSOs had collated a list of issues, as follows

- FPNs for parking offences
- CLE26s
- CIS training
- Late night patrols with borough team
- Self-defence training
- Bank holiday/weekend rotas
- Uniform
- PCSO profile among Targeted Patrol Team and others
- Crossover to other areas/known offenders
- Requirement for special events – eg Epsom Derby
- Elaboration of powers relating to confiscation of tobacco
- Petrol allowance
- Details of appraisal following initial training [which had been mislaid]
- Delivery of badges
- Ratification of collar numbers
- PCSO forum on SPIKE training
- Size of some areas (ie too big to patrol adequately)
- Media coverage.

The Project manager said that she was already familiar with a lot of what was said on this day, and had attempted to reassure PCSOs that many of these were being looked at, but that they should bear in mind that “in the police things [did] not move very fast”. She was disappointed that these issues were raised to the extent that they were. Opinion was split among Guildford PCSOs on how worthwhile the event had been. One described it as “a bit of a letdown – I personally did not enjoy it very much”. Feedback sessions had been included, but she did not feel attention had been paid to the responses. Two others, however, praised the course. One found it interesting, enjoyable, and timely, as it had taken place “at a stage where I wasn’t sure if I was doing the right thing”. The other commented

“I thought it was blinding, brilliant. It was all about what communities are – made us look at it in terms of groups of people rather than geographic areas. . If I had a broken leg I’d get the bed wheeled in to one of her training sessions – I wouldn’t miss it for the world.

This PCSO had also received more localised training with the same instructor in the form of a two-day course for police, police support staff and council employees, which he had found similarly rewarding – “cynics have become converts”.

### **Arrival and integration**

One of the regulars described how, as the borough was one of the first to receive PCSOs, the bedding-in process was very much a ‘suck-it-and-see’ approach:

“Things were left to us. I produced a folder for each PCSO on their area - nominals, contacts, photos, maps. It included a set of tasks – this is what we see your role as - places to be at certain times; get to know NW co-ordinators. It also included a list of actions they should follow up on specific to their areas, which I drew up with the area Inspector – eg problems with youths in a certain street. We didn’t give them timetables though. The pack went to HQ and was circulated as best practice, probably to Borough Inspectors. For the first five or six weeks I had a lot of questions – ‘is this the sort of thing I should be doing?’ In just about all cases the answer was – ‘Crack on’. They were told ‘It’s your area, this has never been done before, you have got a blank canvas. Everyone who subsequently follows you will be looking at you’.”

In terms of gelling with NSOs, another regular explained how this was found to be necessary but potentially problematic, depending on the degree to which the NSO harboured predilections for the more enforcement-based aspects of policing:

“We decided to give them five weeks on the job training with a neighbourhood specialist. Without that it’d take them six months to get to know everyone they’d need to know locally. In this way they are getting to know their communities, which they wouldn’t get from core training. So it gave a lifelike capacity to their job. But we have different styles of NSO. Some think it’s their job only to go out and arrest. Some do softer type of engagement work with the community. So the PCSOs were getting confused what their priorities were. So we all met together and said ‘This is the distinctive difference between the roles, so this sort of work can be done by this person, another sort of work by a different person, and you can both have a go at a third type of work’.”

Most PCSOs rated the reaction from the majority of NSOs as very helpful, although for one the early days in post were made more difficult because her NSO was absent on other duties. It was clear, one remarked, that a lot of PR work had been done with them, and when one PCSO’s battery died in the middle of a call-up, he reported that there had been no shortage of police officers willing to help.

Interviewees from the council felt that some effective joint work had been achieved at an early stage. One believed that because NSOs were doing some of the work PCSOs were to take on, they would “know and appreciate PCSOs because it’s making their job easier, as long as [the PCSOs] aren’t treading on their toes.” Another felt the role was already going from strength to strength. However, the experience of bringing in CSWs had shown that any new role would need time to build up links and confidence. Most importantly for another council interviewee, this meant links and confidence within the police structure

“I think PCSOs are getting confused because they’re not sure who to report to when, for example, they want a day off. I hear this directly from them, or via the CSWs. A couple of PCSOs have had a bit of a whinge to me about the size of their area, or inappropriate shifts. I tell them they need to feed it back. It’s harder for them than it was for CSWs. CSWs shaped their role – because there was nothing before it. PCSOs have had to fit in.”

There was also scepticism from one council employee about how much respect PCSOs would be granted throughout the police service:

“I think the Chief is ready, hq is ready, NSOs are – but not your everyday copper. That’s where problems occur. When reports of particular crimes come in they don’t even get filtered down to NSOs. The information is there, but if you’re not interested in finding out then you’re not going to bother are you?”

Several interviewees admitted this was a possibility where TPT were concerned:

“Generally I’d say yes – I haven’t heard anything back that they don’t. They definitely all know they’re there because here, before they arrived, everybody got a briefing sheet on what they could do, who they were going to be, where they were going and why. I’m not saying that would’ve cleared up all of the questions and all of the cynicism. But then TPT quite often have a problem with NSOs let alone PCSOs – ‘big boys’ stuff versus pink and fluffy’.”

Indeed, on one occasion when the researcher patrolled with a PCSO, a DCIT officer was encountered. Although the PCSO knew him to be only recently in post, he appeared unaware of the limits of her powers, requesting that she not ticket the unmarked car he had just parked.

On the other hand one PCSO described how he had

“met two, maybe three police officers that don’t appear to be particularly keen on PCSOs. That includes TPT. Most will chat to you, and some will even say ‘Tell us what’s going on’.”

Two regulars were particularly clear that the need for TPT to familiarise themselves with the PCSO role was not open to debate. They were anxious that TPT officers did not put PCSOs at risk by asking them to become involved in activities for which they were not trained.

In December 2003, two PCSOs outlined how, although divisional meetings among PCSOs had not initially been encouraged, permission had subsequently been granted for 90-minute meetings, the first hour of which would also involve an NSO Sergeant. The meetings were believed especially useful for those geographically isolated or who do not share an office with other PCSOs. One elaborated in December 2003:

“These are going really well. We’ve had three meetings so far. It is getting better, I think because people have been surprised how effective we’ve been. I think it’s because people didn’t know at first what we were really about. If your line managers don’t know what you’re about you can be tasked with situations that aren’t what we’re about.”

After ten months, the PCSO believed that there had been something of a turnaround. Initially there had seemed to be both a proscription from taking part in some activities, and a failure to clarify whether or not it was appropriate to become involved in others. Now, she and her colleagues now enjoyed constructive relations with project management. The opportunity was there to discuss honestly issues that had arisen throughout the division and, in her capacity as Unison representative, throughout the force area.

### **Activities and deployment**

The Borough Inspector at the time of PCSOs' arrival explained the procedure for deciding where they should be deployed.

“Once NSOs and CSWs were in place, around 14 of the then 21 wards were covered. There were gaps where areas didn't have a high crime rate, certainly no social deprivation, but there were some fear of crime issues.”

Concerns upon which it was felt PCSOs in Guildford could make an impact were: reassuring residents; provision of crime prevention advice; shop theft; and consumption of alcohol in public in Guildford town centre.

Work done to address these issues had included:

- High visibility patrolling
- Establishment of new NW schemes
- Attendance at NW meetings, residents' group meetings, and charity-raising events
- Involvement in proposals to set up a youth shelter
- Making contact with toddlers' groups
- Targeted patrols outside schools when pupils are leaving at the end of the day
- Involvement in environmental improvements and clear-up days
- Plans to purchase a bus and turn it into a drop-in centre for young people
- Distribution of car alarms as part of Operation Gallant, a three-month West Surrey operation to reduce thefts from cars.

The Borough Inspector described a set of activities in one part of the borough which he felt illustrated one way in which PCSOs could make a successful impact:

“On one ward... we had complaints about youths, people were being abused in the street, frightened to go out of their houses. Due to the integrated work of the NSO, the PCSO and [the CSW], two things have happened. A residents' association was set up. One of the most regular complainants has ended up chairing it, and helping to run NW – this in an area where we'd failed for years to set up NW. This engaged the community with the kids, who then didn't want to start abusing and being horrible to people they know. Every Saturday they run a youth activities day. A lot of the problems there have stopped. It sounds utopian, and it hasn't solved all the problems – there are still one or two difficult characters causing trouble. But the work has given residents enough confidence in the system, and in themselves, to think that if they stand up and come forward, they can deal with it. And it's not just about visibility. Knowledge of the person, knowing it's your local officer is actually very important.”

Some PCSOs had managed to secure a base within their site, for example at a local school. This allowed them to maximise time spent in the area. Others had varied their schedules so that they could patrol each other's area together. As one explained, this was not solely about reducing feelings of vulnerability after dark – it also enabled them to get to know a different area, and maintain motivation, which could sometimes flag if there were no residents to meet or functions to attend. It also led to more immediate joining-up of information, as some nominals tended to frequent neighbouring areas.

On the whole most of the activities PCSOs had become involved in were felt to be appropriate, although on occasion town centre work had led them to encounter public order situations, typically in relation to drunks. One PCSO also felt that a shortage of women police officers created a danger that female PCSOs would be asked to search female detainees. Statement taking was also something she felt PCSOs, without further tuition, should not be involved in. One NSO also cautioned against PCSOs confusing their role with that of welfare agencies.

“They’ve wanted to organise day trips for people at Age Concern. I’ve told them ‘We are not social services, we are the police force’. Organising an even for [the elderly] to have an input about crime prevention – not a problem.”

The biggest problem for one PCSO had found greatest difficulty in being visible at frequent intervals throughout his area. At one point he had felt the situation was starting to become unmanageable, and was therefore grateful that two Council-funded PCSOs had been recruited to cover some of his original patch.

### **Sufficiency of powers**

Initially few interviewees in Guildford considered PCSOs' powers sufficient. The feeling was best expressed by one PCSO who, interviewed one month after taking up her post, commented:

“The role can be quite frustrating because you’re seeing all these things, you can’t act on them, and you’re getting complaints, you’re in the firing line from residents. You can pass things on to the right people, but I’m not seeing anything being done. In terms of satisfaction – being recognised on the street is the only satisfaction so far.”

Among regulars and PCSOs, opinion seemed more mixed during subsequent research visits to the borough. Some felt that the power to stop vehicles, or direct traffic, would be beneficial, and not at odds with an approachable image in the way that enforcement of parking regulations might be. However, it was now understood that notifications of untaxed vehicles, which had been a point of discussion at the outset, could be dealt with by means of an email to the DVLA. Since this facility was publicly accessible, this circumvented the debate about whether PCSOs should be able to issue CLE26 forms. Most PCSOs working outside the town centre had decided that, most of the time, further powers in their area were not critical. One NSO was firmly of the view that the fewer powers PCSOs held, the less harm could be done to their image.

Interviewed in December 2003, housing officers at the borough council also felt hampered by PCSOs' apparent lack of ability to provide information. One questioned the need for PCSOs if they did not hold some sort of enforcement power, although another believed that PCSOs



“might be perceived as more of a threat by criminals if they had more powers, and that might backfire on them”. Another compared the role unfavourably to that of CSWs:

“There’s lots of information that PCSOs can’t get for you, because they’re not authorised to – you have to wait until the NSO gets it – for example, if someone’s been arrested or charged, or any details about an incident that’s happened at a property. PCSOs can’t do as much as [the CSW], who has no enforcement powers but still gets involved in projects. We have more contact with the wardens. For instance today I asked one of our wardens to visit an elderly tenant who has been harassed, to reassure her, and to see what information the tenant can give. If you’ve got problems you can ask community safety wardens if they’re aware of things, have they seen anything whilst they’re out on their patrols. Also in dealing with anti-social behaviour – drugs, fighting in the street, cars being wrecked, gardens made untidy. The wardens will bring that to our attention, and they will also become involved in projects.”

The Borough Inspector at the time of PCSOs’ introduction agreed there had been disappointment when PCSOs didn’t come with all the powers with which the Chief Constables could have equipped them. He added that he hoped the situation would be reviewed, although he did not want the problem-solving dimension of the role to become diluted. As an example, he suggested that

“if a police officer attends a scene, I don’t see why a PCSO shouldn’t get involved – hold down a leg, or put an arm up a back. I would perhaps like to see their brief changed to be a bit more supportive.”

The issuing of yellow cards as part of the Surrey Street Standards initiative was seen by some PCSOs as one way of increasing the powers without inviting confrontation. The initiative targets low level anti-social behaviour via a card system. Members of the public who use obscene language, throw litter or urinate in the street are warned about their conduct and their details are recorded on a Surrey Street Standards card of which they are given a copy. Any similar offence within six months makes them liable for immediately prosecution for both offences.

### *Power to detain*

Two PCSOs felt that the power to detain could prove useful depending on the nature of the area in which they were working<sup>34</sup>. Most regulars, though, regarded Surrey Police’s disinclination to take up this power as sensible.

### *Parking powers*

It was argued by several regulars that there was a need for PCSOs to be able to exercise powers in relation to parking problems. At the time of the fieldwork visits, only one traffic warden remained within the entire borough. PCSOs and regulars alike were alive to the fact that the public expected this to be addressed. As the following comments from a regular demonstrate, this was not seen as incompatible with reassurance policing, but as a central plank of it.

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<sup>34</sup> One of these has since been assaulted twice while on duty and forced to take sick leave as a result. There was some suspicion from other interviewees that both incidents could have been avoided.

“Since Day One I’ve argued and argued for traffic warden powers, because, though I don’t want them to *be* traffic wardens, I want them to have the powers to use should they need them. A lot are in communities as the only visible police presence. Some have made up their own forms which they put on windscreens advising the driver that an offence has been committed parking in that space. And the same car’s there the following day, and the following day...their notices are worthless because the public, the shops that they’re parked outside, or houses, just see the same notices going on the same cars. I think it’s making them a laughing stock. Our biggest problem is [the public saying] ‘Well what’s the point of you being here if you can’t deal with that?’ We have NSOs who don’t use their powers – but at least they’ve got them. I’ve had arguments thrown back from HQ that they’ll alienate their community. Rubbish...The person that is parking there time after time a) may be a member of the community - but still shouldn’t be parking there, but b) is probably a commuter that drives from somewhere, leaves his car there and then clears off to London. It wouldn’t mean a different type of person wanting to be a PCSO. Even with the addition of a couple of small powers...they’d still be police representatives in the community. And they wouldn’t be toothless if push came to shove.”

Housing officers also felt there was a need for PCSOs to deal with parking, on the grounds that the public often complained about this issue.

One regular, however, described issuing parking tickets as a “lose-lose situation, and among PCSOs themselves there was also less enthusiasm. Some felt there was a danger that they could end up spending the bulk of their time enforcing parking transgressions. Others believed that it was sufficient to put unofficial stickers on illegally parked vehicles. One maintained that if he ticketed a local resident for parking badly, the recipient would be less likely to assist him if there was a subsequent need to ask for information from the community. His solution, he said, was to “very nicely ask an NSO to issue tickets”.

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

Joint work with the council was regarded positively, particularly when dealing with the removal of abandoned vehicles. One regular stressed that this hinged to a large extent on knowing who to go to.

“I have a good relationship with a particular person. If you know how to ask you can get things moved a little bit quicker because you can use certain phrases. For example – ‘It’s obviously been nicked, we’ve got no previous keeper, it’s been screwed [parts/contents have been removed], it’s going to get screwed again tonight, and I’ve had reports going round of it being driven tonight, like a complete lunatic. Can we get it off the road?’ That gets it moved that day. If a member of the public rings up they probably won’t be able to get those trigger words in to put that across.”

Contact with Housing Officers from the council reported mixed levels of information sharing with PCSOs, stemming from varying amounts of contact. For one, discussions had been mainly via email, and were infrequent. He did not regard this as a problem, however, since he was unclear about the role PCSOs were fulfilling other than being a visible presence on the street.

Another described how she had been in more frequent contact with one of the PCSOs. While not dissatisfied with the results, she did not feel that the presence of the PCSO always made matters run more efficiently:

“[The PCSO] will come on visits with me to houses where it might not be safe for me to go on my own, when the CSW isn’t available. The PCSO will report abandoned cars. But it’s similar to wardens in many ways – and it’s one more person to inform, to remember to keep in the loop. And it’s difficult to get the information from the PCSO if the NSO isn’t there.”

She went on to remark that she herself was provided with more information from the police than the PCSO appeared to received. She believed this was a source of some annoyance to the PCSO.

One Housing Officer described the process by which she would decide whether or not to involve a PCSO. Her decision, she said, would be influenced if there were other professionals to turn to in the area:

“I’d think...what things are not serious enough that I’d need to speak to the NSO about, but do involve a crime, which would mean I wouldn’t put it to the CSW. An example would be someone who was having problems with youths but who I couldn’t help because I didn’t know who the youths were, but needed a bit of reassurance on what they could do about being a victim of crime. I would put that, and did put that to the PCSOs. I’ve found it’s different on each patch – I deal with two PCSOs, and one of them has an area where there’s no CSW. So I’d probably put more to the PCSO who has no CSW.”

One of her colleagues agreed that PCSOs, for him, had not yet developed a role which meant he automatically relied on them for certain pieces of information.

“If there was a CSW I’d talk to them first. If it was just a PCSO and an NSO I’d be just as likely to talk to the NSO.”

All Housing Officers agreed that information sharing with police in the borough, if not further afield, had improved. As the two comments below illustrate, protocols signed under the Crime and Disorder Act were felt to be only partly responsible for this.

“I’ve only been doing this job for three and a half years. When I first came [information exchange] was a nightmare. As soon as we got the NSOs...you can actually get your job done now, and even if you can’t actually do anything about something you can have a damn good discussion about it. But if you get an officer other than an NSO, they haven’t got a clue about...It’s ‘No, no, no, I can’t tell you anything’. The local level is fine, but go outside that and it’s...no.”

“We’ve put a lot of work into [exchanging information] in this area. There is an official channel which we can use, partnership officer at the police station. But increasingly at a local level the NSOs and the Housing Officers will exchange information, on the basis that they’ve worked with each other for a little while, they understand each other, and they know that if they pass a bit of information on it’s

going to be used properly. If you want to exchange information the Crime and Disorder Act makes it a whole lot easier. If you don't want to exchange information the Crime and Disorder Act isn't going to make you."

Police and PCSOs also felt that information sharing worked well in the borough. The NSO Sergeant believed the situation was "excellent", adding

"Generally [the Council] do what they say they're going to do... I think a lot of other areas are jealous. Before the Crime and Disorder Act you could get information, and sometimes you only had to go to one person, but sometimes it would depend on whether you'd built up a rapport with Mrs Bloggs working in the Housing Department or whatever. Cleansing was particularly hit-and-miss. I think people feel more comfortable knowing they've got an information-sharing protocol."

One of the PCSOs felt there had been a marked improvement in the speed with which abandoned vehicles and graffiti were removed, and outlined a practical way in which PCSOs and council officers had worked together to problem-solve:

"We do a hell of a lot of street trading license issues in the town – people come along with a street peddler's license and set up a stall. With that you need to be on the move. So we're... working as an agent for the Council because we're seeing it. We've got a list from the Council so we know who's meant to be out there and who's not. I've gone out on Saturdays with the Council Officer responsible for this."

From regulars there was unqualified praise for the council's attitude and contribution towards crime and disorder issues. The situation was variously characterised as "superb", "absolutely excellent", "a breeze" and "I couldn't sing their praises high enough". The key was felt to be ongoing efforts to nurture and maintain relationships, organisational structures that were geared up to activity rather than simple discussion, and an atmosphere of trust. One interviewee, who was Borough Inspector at the time of PCSOs' arrival, believed that

"Guildford has always worked well with the police. This Council's communication with the police and other partners is pretty good. Officially police and council signed up to partnership in, I think 1996. There's the CIAG - free-for-all exchange of information. There's a Housing Nuisance Team – multi-agency meetings to address problems between tenants. The structure's got to be there, but you've got to have with it the culture where you can do these things. It's got better and better. PCSOs have helped because the biggest exchange of information has been between the neighbourhood team, and with them there, there's been more exchange going on."

His six-month secondment to the Safer Guildford Partnership reflects this high level of co-operation.

### **Community Safety Wardens**

CSWs were working in the borough before PCSOs arrived. The differences between the roles were summarised thus by the Borough Inspector at the time of PCSOs' arrival:

“NSOs focus on crime, PCSOs fear of crime, CSWs social deprivation. In some areas there’s also a Community Development Worker, employed by the Primary Care Trust, who work with individual families rather than the wider community.”

Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that the presence of the new role had created some uncertainty. As one regular commented:

“You could have people feeling someone else has come to step on their toes and take their job.”

One of his colleagues, however, felt that these difficulties had been overcome, and that the two roles, along with his own NSO duties, were dovetailing well.

“CSWs initially felt they were going to be replaced. There was fear – a natural fear when on a two-year renewable contract. Since the PCSOs started, where I am, the 3 of us are working extremely closely together. We have overlapping but distinct jobs. I enforce the law. The PCSO is the high visibility police part. The CSW is the council representative. For example, litter: when it’s dropped, that’s my job. When it needs picking up, that’s the CSW. When it becomes a problem for people, the PCSO can bring it to our attention. As long as we keep talking to each other it’s never going to be a problem.”

However, in the opinion of one of the Housing Officers, employing PCSOs and CSWs meant

“You’ve got two people doing what amounts to the same job. It’s a waste of resources. I can’t see the difference between a PCSO role and a CSW. I think it’s overkill to be honest.”

Similarly, one of the regulars acknowledged that the three roles worked more efficiently together in some areas rather than others. She attributed difficulties to the fact that sometimes a PCSO’s patch could be very large, making it hard to spend as much time spend as much time with the NSO and the CSW – which was even less straightforward when the three individuals’ areas the areas did not overlap perfectly.

One of the council interviewees, who had been heavily involved in writing the bid, appreciated that drawing a distinction between the CSW and PCSO roles had not been straightforward. She described what had been done to accentuate the differences and the compatibilities of the two roles.

“I was unclear for the first four months – then we had a day with the CSWs focusing on why the roles enhanced each other. We concluded that CSWs are council link to the environment, PCSOs are police link to reassurance and patrolling, and NSOs deal with the enforcement. CSWs who didn’t have all three in their area to begin with were quite jealous once these boundaries were established. Improvement especially in west of borough, where there’s a national reassurance site – quite a lot of investment in people. Recently had a two-day session there...involving NSOs, PCSOs, someone from the youth service, CSWs, representatives from Housing and Cleansing departments. It looked at how to solve local issues and strengthen relationships. It was useful – previously some representatives had thought that they were just being bashed, as they were getting more calls as a result of PCSOs being in place, while at the same time they didn’t really know much about PCSOs. As a result of getting on

well and establishing relationships at the two-day event, Cleansing reps went along to a young people's project launch in the area...Distinguishing these roles should have been done sooner – leaflets including photos have now been distributed, and it's taken a while, especially for in the case of NSOs because they work different shifts."

She added that the strong relationships within Neighbourhood Teams had helped Guildford proceed to the next round in its application for Beacon Tenancy Status (along with applications from 18 other areas of the country, from an original pool of 72).

## **Transport**

According to one of the regulars, it had been impressed upon PCSOs that they were allowed to drive their own vehicles. She explained that

"...They were all checked before they arrived to make sure they could use their own vehicles, that they had the correct insurance, were covered for business use. All were told they could claim mileage if necessary. I don't see why that's an issue in other areas. It was cleared by HQ when they first arrived, and was in their training package. They're no different to police officers – I use my own vehicle every day for work."

However, one of the PCSOs was under the impression that he was unable to use his own vehicle to travel to his site (which was some distance from the police station). Since at the time of the fieldwork visit he had yet to receive a bicycle, he had been making his way to his area on public transport.

This was regarded as a way of remaining visible to the public; however, it highlights the fact that transport arrangements for PCSOs were badly organised and poorly thought through. As one of the regulars put it

"No thought had been given to transportation, but here was suddenly money available for bicycles. The majority of Guildford PCSOs were keen, so I went out and ordered bikes, but had to do it for the whole force. It wasn't my job, but if I hadn't done it, it wouldn't've got done."

The consequence of this was that the bicycles that had arrived were all the same size, and hence impossible for a number of PCSOs to ride. The same interviewee reported that a similar situation occurred with other items:

"A lot of early time was taken up dealing with stupid things like equipment and uniform complaints – which again is not my job. And we're still struggling even now with a couple of uniform issues – like having lightweight fluorescent jackets with 'POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER' written on."

By the end of 2003, funding for Grade 5 driving courses had been secured for all PCSOs in the borough.

## **Public feedback – local residents**

Seventeen residents and traders were interviewed in Guildford about local crime and disorder problems and the role of PCSOs in addressing these. All were interviewed in the centre of Guildford, although some lived elsewhere in the town, or in other parts of the county.

Problems associated with youths, drunkenness and the homeless were listed as the major concerns by interviewees. Several had experienced difficulties with children from a nearby Pupil Referral Unit who, either through absconding or with the school's blessing, had been venturing into the town centre during lunchtimes. Some congregated outside shops or stalls, two of which were situated along a narrow passageway which was poorly lit and not equipped with a CCTV camera. Many of the youths would sit on a nearby bench, drinking and littering the area. Disruption had also been caused inside one of these shops, which had suffered petty thefts, vandalism and one attempted break-in. Requests for those involved to leave the store were met with abuse, and had resulted in the same people returning in the evening to cause vandalism. Trade, it was felt had been affected; one worker commented that "you see other customers stiffening and worrying about it", while another felt that the youths

"Can be intimidating even if they aren't causing trouble because of the way they look, and might deter customers."

Other concerns raised included: unhygienic alleyways on the estate in which interviewees lived; the riding of bicycles on the pavement; busking; spitting; burglaries; strangers knocking on doors, and the "out of control" nature of the town centre at night-time, which was felt to stem from the number of drinking outlets and their policy of encouraging consumption of alcohol through "two-for-one" or "drink-all-you-can" promotions.

Most traders had gained an awareness of PCSOs through seeing them on the streets of the town centre. PCSOs had approached them, introduced themselves, and provided direct contact details. Nine of the interviewees were spoken to at an Age Concern drop-in centre, and had first met PCSOs there. However, those who lived in an area where a PCSO worked appeared to have little awareness of seeing them there. For three traders, their first direct dealings came after they had called the police in relation to an incident at their premises, and the PCSOs attended. One had been aware of PCSOs prior to that but "I didn't realise what they were doing before then; I'd just seen them vaguely in the high street."

PCSOs were believed by all respondents to be a positive measure, and to have had a noticeable effect on levels of disorder and feelings of safety. PCSOs were praised for being:

- regularly available;
- quick to respond when contacted;
- helpful;
- skilled at speaking to all sections of the public (youths included); and
- discreet in not making it obvious to disruptive youths which member of the public had alerted the PCSOs to an incident.

As the following examples make clear, this situation was often compared to the way things were before PCSOs' arrival:

“It’s good to have people actually walking the streets. Before PCSOs started, [I] never saw police officers around here at all – well, now and again. It’s been handy against the busking. PCSOs ask them nicely to move on. The police wouldn’t. [PCSOs] have added a sense of community – all traders being assisted. Where I live – PCSOs were involved in clean-up day – a huge success, which should be extended. The local children enjoyed cleaning up their own estate.”

“I very rarely see police officers. So having [PCSOs] is a good thing. I’m sure police officers are very busy, but driving around in cars is not the answer. The walking about is reassuring.”

“They have made things safer. They’ve set up a NW which we’ve joined. We’re beginning to get our life back in the last six months. I put in for a transfer to another area but recently withdrew it, things have improved so much. Here [at Age Concern] police used to come in occasionally, but not so much as the PCSOs do now.”

“There are things we can do, like changing shop layout, but video cameras in-store cost money, and will it cover the cost of what’s stolen? The PCSOs make a point of coming up here in the day – the police have already told us this isn’t the sort of alleyway that would be patrolled at night – and the daytime visits are really helpful, fantastic, they’ve made themselves known - they have worked. We never used to see anyone patrol outside here before.”

Respondents were also asked about the supportiveness and effectiveness of the borough Council. Two were positive, and had seen the CSW patrolling in their area. However, some criticism emerged from both traders and residents. Two traders bemoaned the fact that the council did not work on a Saturday<sup>35</sup>, which, particularly in the case of busking, was when problems were likely to occur. Another recounted how the council had refused to remove the bench outside the store, on the grounds that it was an amenity, even though it was, in her words “used for trouble more often than pleasure”. Both traders and residents also mentioned the frustrations of telephoning the council, which typically consisted of being passed around from person to person, being unable to speak to the same individual about an ongoing issue on more than one occasion.

None of the interviewees believed local police were not carrying out their duties properly. Rather, lack of police visibility was felt to reflect police workloads; as one trader remarked, “police are busy dealing with top-priority stuff, so we need people like [PCSOs] to deal with issues before they get serious.”

There was a high level of enthusiasm for the role to stay. Many feared this would see a resurfacing of some of the problems that had existed before. Only one interviewee suggested that he would not be especially bothered if it was withdrawn. This was not because he did not value PCSOs’ input. Instead, as he explained,

“This location is well covered by CCTV, there’s a lot of people around, so that nine times out of ten, if something did kick off, someone would assist.”

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<sup>35</sup> PCSOs in Guildford town centre work one Saturday in three.



However, some interviewees were considerably disappointed at the prospect of an impending hike in the Council Tax – with not everyone appearing to connect the possible impact on this of PCSO funding arrangements.

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

Despite the generally positive reaction PCSOs received in Guildford, it is doubtful that many members of the public fully appreciated the finer details of the role. An example of this was provided when one of the PCSOs was on patrol in the town centre. She was approached by a shopper who asked the PCSO what she was. She commented that she could see that the PCSO's uniform differed to that of a police officer by virtue of the hat. However, she was unsure whether this signified an entirely separate role, or simply a new uniform for the police.

This incident occurred in January 2004, almost a year after PCSOs had arrived in the borough. The PCSO advised the researcher afterwards that this was a regular occurrence in the town, as many of those who shopped there had never seen a PCSO in the area where they lived. The PCSO added that identification was even more of an issue during the summer, as she and her colleagues had been patrolling with no jackets on owing to the hot temperatures, and consequently resembled the council parking attendants who patrolled the same area.

Most interviewees surmised, but were not sure, that there was a difference. They presumed that PCSOs had fewer powers, and would therefore not get involved in some of the work that police officers would do. One noted the lack of PPE, adding that this was appropriate as it helped to make PCSOs more approachable. Others who had seen PCSOs around commented that, before they had direct dealings with them, they had assumed they were normal police officers on special duties – reflecting the previous low visibility of actual police officers in the area.

### *Will the public more readily offer information to a PCSO than to a police officer?*

Of those who had made the distinction between the two roles, four interviewees said they would feel comfortable providing information to either a PCSO or a police officer. One stressed it would depend on the nature of the problem – anything “serious” and he would approach the police.

Most interviewees said they would be more likely to provide information to PCSOs than to police officers. Some had been put off by the time taken to respond to previous 999 calls they had made. Perceptions that the police would not treat information sensitively were not a factor. The increased likelihood arose from the greater regularity with which interviewees had encountered PCSOs – or more specifically, with which PCSOs patrolled in their area. PCSOs were also seen as having more time to talk, and (although this may reflect individual characteristics) possessing a less formal role than police officers. In short, if a PCSO came to them, interviewees might strike up a conversation which could reveal useful information. If the interviewee was in possession of the PCSO's mobile number, the element of spontaneity would not exist, but the means to communicate information to a known officer could still be exploited. If the interviewee had to journey to a police station to speak to an officer they did not know in order to have the same conversation, it was unlikely to take place at all.

## **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public's views**

Comments at public meetings and whilst out patrolling suggested that PCSOs were popular with the public. No housing officers had reported hearing anything negative, and one of the CSWs reported that the PCSO in her area had been receiving favourable feedback within a matter of a fortnight. It was accepted however that this was based largely on the simple fact that PCSOs were known to exist (ie they were visible) and one housing officer pointed out that he was not sure how much of a difference any other activities might have made to members of the public. He noted that PCSOs did not carry out regular night-time patrols, "and that's when a lot of people would like to see someone patrolling out and about on an estate."

One NSO felt that the difficulty of regaining and retaining public confidence could not be overestimated, but believed PCSOs' very visibility was part of the solution.

"Getting the confidence of local people is very difficult, because all they've seen of us in the last five years is dashing about in police vehicles, nobody stopping, and when they do get an officer he comes out, takes their details and then they never see him."

For one regular, the primary advantage of PCSOs was that they provided the public with what they wanted, even if the public tended to apply the wrong term to what they felt was needed.

"The feedback I get, in the town centre or in the villages, is that they are worth their weight in gold. When people do say, yes we like the PCSO but he's not a real police officer, when you actually probe deeper and say 'What is it that you would like to be done that Phil can't do?' and they can't actually answer the question. What people want is the presence, the link into fast-time policing, somebody there. They want control of the streets, and the PCSOs do that."

One NSO offered an example of a situation where her PCSO's relationship with one community in his area was not satisfactory:

"He was once surrounded by some gypsy kids, and felt intimidated because he was unable to do anything about it. In some respects that hasn't done him any harm, but it hasn't moved him any further in that fraternity. They like to be a bit derogatory to him."

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

The extent of public awareness of the precise details of the PCSO role had yet to be formally elicited. However, regulars and council representatives both felt PCSOs were liable to be confused with police officers (because of their uniform) or CSWs (because of what they did). Interviewees from the council had had difficulty in their own minds satisfying themselves as to the differences, and therefore felt the public could hardly be blamed for having the same problem.

The dangers of public expectations being higher than a PCSO could meet were noted by PCSOs, regulars and council staff alike. One PCSO described how, in training, recruits were told of the need to get across what the role was about, but dependent on the situation, because

with children the belief that PCSOs were no different to police officers could be capitalised upon. Her conclusion was that “you have to keep explaining and explaining, and it gradually sets in.” Delivering leaflets and distributing flyers was also thought to go some way towards making distinctions clearer. The NSO Sergeant noted that this was more difficult in a town centre, which was likely to receive visitors who would not know local PCSOs by name and might not be used to seeing them in their own neighbourhood.

The belief that visibility of the police was prized highly by the public was used by one regular as a justification for not necessarily making it clear that PCSOs are not police officers.

“By delivering the PCSOs, the majority of the public I’d suggest think they’re police officers. The public don’t really differentiate between PCSOs and police officers. Some obviously will have been to talks, but Joe Public will think [PCSOs] are a police officer, and I can give you a number of examples where that’s happened. I don’t necessarily think that’s a bad thing if the public wants visible policing on the streets, and they think they’re getting it, we’re giving it to them. I guess the issues arise when there’s an expectation on PCSOs to do things that they aren’t trained to do or haven’t got the powers to do.”

One NSO drew a balance between the need to tell the public exactly what the role comprised, and the risk that as a result, the PCSOs might not be supplied with information which would not otherwise be communicated to anyone else. This was a particular threat in her area as she herself worked part-time.

“People do assume [the PCSO] is a police officer, and expect him to do what a police officer would do, arrest people, so sometimes they tell him things he would have to pass on to someone else, which he does quite effectively, but it makes it difficult for him, and it’s not really educating the public... We got round this by saying he’s not a police officer but he has got general powers of arrest, which is good for reassurance.”

One council interviewee felt that the issue of who was responsible for certain tasks was of less importance to the public than the fact that they were actually carried out.

“The Council have done Comprehensive Performance Assessment – lots of focus groups and planning meetings. People were asked if they cared who did what in terms of community intervention. The majority said they didn’t, as long as work was done, be it removing abandoned cars, catching criminals, stopping burglaries. Important, because we spend a lot of time telling the public who does what, and this suggested the public aren’t bothered about this.”

*Will the public more readily offer information to a PCSO than to a police officer?*

Unprompted, one NSO believed that PCSOs were more likely to receive information than police officers. This was because, unlike NSOs (and in common with CSWs), they had no enforcement role; therefore the opportunity to approach them was greater. Another agreed, but stressed that he thought this only applied when comparing PCSOs with TPT officers. This was because PCSOs, like NSOs, were a locally-known resource in an area. He did not think PCSOs were any more likely than NSOs to receive information, and pointed to the fact that targets for intelligence submissions were the same for both roles.

## Media

One of the fieldwork visits took place on a day when an independent television company were filming on one of the borough's estates. The purpose was to produce a promotional video of the neighbourhood team in action, with an emphasis on the partnership component of the work. The aim was to use the video at presentations and conferences as an awareness-raising tool.

A communications team exists in the borough, actively publicising community safety initiatives. During 2003, the partnership also appointed its own Communications Officer, whose role is to encourage better understanding among the public of what resources are available and where role boundaries lie. Difficulties still existed, however, as one council employee observed:

“Otherwise we have no-one to do PR for us, so everything's been reasonably reactive – like coverage of clean-up days. We have a really good communications team from different partners, but we needed someone to sort it all out ourselves. We have newsgroups, which NSOs are meant to lead on, but this might overlap with [the work of the new PR officer] – I was disappointed that I wasn't aware of these until after they were set up.”

One NSO felt that media publicity of improvements was a double-edged sword.

“In a way, I don't want to publicise too much that things are done well here, because people from other areas and other counties will start dumping cars in our area. We'll make a rod for our own back..”

## Measurement of impact

One regular stressed that measuring PCSOs' impact was difficult, not least because of the range in types of area they worked in and activities they undertook.

“No two PCSOs' jobs are alike - and rightly so – as each ward is different, with different community needs. In terms of pure measurement, there is very little in place. They weren't told ‘You need to attend five public meetings every month’. It's anecdotal evidence: NSOs' and CSWs' take, and public's take. I attend loads of public meetings, and the feedback has been unbelievable.”

She was sceptical that there was profit in attempting to judge impact by setting quantitative targets for the submission of intelligence reports.

“That is *a* measurement, because they either achieve it or they don't. Police officers have similar targets – here it's five pieces a week. PCSOs have just had their personal objectives set, but I don't know whether they all have their 5x5 target. I think it's flawed. It just meets a number-crunching exercise. It says nothing about quality.”

Another regular agreed that measurement of the number of intelligence items submitted, even taking account of quality checks, was simplistic. He also accepted that using the amount of

time spent visible to the public as a measuring tool was problematic, since returns were done on trust.. He suggested that the most that could be done was to measure outputs:

“Take ‘Minder’ alarms. These go on the wall, and you can record your voice on this [typically for an elderly relative] so that when they pass it to go to the front door the infrared beam sets it off and immediately the voice comes on to remind them to put the chain on and not let the caller in if they are unsure about them. We can say an output is that a PCSO or warden has got 20, 30, 40 of these things installed. But what’s an outcome? We don’t know. How many burglaries have been prevented? Don’t know.”

One regular argued that from his own perspective, impact could be measured by whether or not representatives of Surrey police were visible in an area, and

“PCSOs have allowed us to take back what we’ve lost. For various reasons, we’ve restructured, withdrawn from public space. Ten years ago we policed by sections, we were very local. When we changed from that we lost public confidence. PCSOs have put faces and names back in the community. There’s vast added value in having PCSOs as well as NSOs, even if only in the simplistic way of the amount of hours. They can also take on the tasks of NSOs that don’t require police powers.”

A council representative also felt that impact could be judged on the basis of how much more visible uniformed patrols were in an area. She remarked that she now saw PCSOs all the time, whereas she had never met two of the three NSOs based in the area, “because I now realise that they’re out nicking people.” She added that letters of appreciation of PCSOs’ work might be one tangible measurement of impact. A record had been kept of those received by CSWs, which totalled 135 in around 11 months.

The impression of council interviewees was that impact had varied by location. One believed that the geographic boundaries of others was also a factor.

“For those covering just one ward, where a small neighbourhood team already exists – ie CSW, NSO, and a community development worker or youth worker, they are doing extremely well. A lot of youth groups and community events have been set up. Workload is shared, and some quick wins have been made. Where there is a small neighbourhood team, there is a steering group – a good cross-section of community, young and old. They are asked key concerns, where they want efforts focused over the next month. That works well. This applies in two areas. It seems less effective where the PCSO is covering a larger area, because some members of the community are saying ‘We never see them’. We are saying to the public ‘Wherever you live in the borough we have a person you can contact who will do this for you’ – but in actual fact a lot of the areas aren’t really being patrolled.”

She added that it was planned to carry out a fear of crime survey among visitors to one of the borough’s town centres. This would ask about police presence, facilities and crime. It could also be used to gain some feedback on PCSOs.

## Career development

Some PCSOs had intended to use the role as a way of assessing whether or not they would like to join the regulars. Others had already made the decision to do so before they took the job. In the opinion of one regular, there would be a third group who would also join the regulars, having had no inclination to do so upon taking up their PCSO duties. This he felt was not so much a conscious choice as a natural progression, which stemmed from PCSOs' high exposure to the professional and social structure of the policing environment.

Views among PCSOs were divided as to what more the role in its current form has to offer. Two PCSOs, interviewed ten months into the job, and who had both taken the role with it in mind to join the regulars, expressed the two schools of thought:

"I had ambitions to join the regulars at the start. There's nowhere else to go in this job, no progression – I know we're looking into it, have discussed it in our monthly meetings but...I mean, I still enjoy this job. I don't think, depending on what you do, I don't think I'd get people saying 'It's really nice to see you' as a police officer, unless it was an NSO. But I want to do more."

"I had become interested in police work. I thought I could do it, thought this would give me an insight rather than enrolling on police course. [PCSO work] seems to be closer to policing than what police officers are doing. I still intend to join, but I'll put off applying for another year now. I wouldn't want to stop doing this just yet, because so much more can be done."

One PCSO explained that the divisional meetings had become a forum for discussion how the PCSO role could be developed. One suggestion had been for a PCSO supervisory role to be created. This would involve working alongside the NSO Sergeant to tutor new PCSOs, shadowing them at the start of the job, and accompanying them on patrol.

She felt that this had already happened with the creation of the YPCSO role. Although line-managed differently and with a more specialised brief than PCSOs, Guildford's YPCSO was interviewed approximately one month after starting work. The role is not under evaluation here. However, the interview offered the opportunity to gauge whether lessons learned during the PCSO rollout can be applied to YPCSOs.

The YPCSO felt the initial training she had received was very thorough on police powers, but felt child protection, which was not covered at all, should have been included. She was given plenty of notice on which borough she would be working in. She did not feel that most police officers or PCSOs knew a great deal about her role when she first arrived, but was not particularly surprised as the role was still in its infancy and unspecific.

She had spent time on patrol with several PCSOs and NSOs, covering as much of their areas as possible. She also attended two youth clubs, had visited several schools in the borough to introduce herself, and in the process had got to know a number of youths in and around one particular area. To date, she had approached the role by doing what she thought she should be doing. This had its strengths and weaknesses – she had freedom, but lacked guidance. She was aware that in some other parts of the county YPCSOs routinely had one individual (usually a YAO) inducted them. She added that some structure would be useful – "just so,

when the money runs out, and they go ‘Well, what did you do; well, we didn’t want you to do that’.”

She admitted to feeling slightly vulnerable, but attributed this partly to having to acclimatise to a new role, and partly to the uniform. She explained that she had to have a justification not to wear my uniform, and could not just wear something else on a whim. She had not patrolled alone, and had been told that this would not occur in the first three months. although she knew of other YPCSOs who were doing this. already. Half a day’s tuition on breakaway techniques had been given in initial training. The YPCSO could not yet judge if this would be sufficient, but felt it more important to know when to walk away from potential confrontation. She did not favour carrying any PPE.

Public awareness of the role was minimal, but the YPCSO had explained it to those with whom she had dealt directly. She added that she had taken the post as an end in itself, not as a stepping stone to something else.

Few other interviewees knew a great deal about the role. One housing officer questioned how effective one person could be covering such a populous borough. Most others, however, welcomed the role – as PCSOs’ areas varied, not all had the opportunity to develop links with youths, so the YPCSO was envisaged as a useful borough-wide referral point.

One of the council representatives advised that the CSW role had also appeared attractive to PCSOs. She added that this was not a reflection of poor professional relationships, or lack of career progression, because there was no scope for this as a CSW either. Instead,

“CSWs hours are more sociable, they are strictly observe and report, and, the major factor, they earn more.”

## **Funding and the future**

Future funding arrangements for PCSOs in Guildford had been discussed. One of the regulars reported that the police feeling was that it would make more sense to approach the county council or local businesses rather than the borough council or the CDRP.

“Next financial year we have to find about £2,500 per PCSO, then about £4,500 the year after. It’s most likely we’ll go to Surrey County Council – in particular individual councillors, as they have £18,000 a year to spend on community projects. Also businesses, parish councils,... Guildford Borough Council have always been good at community safety funding, but they’re less likely as they have a future commitment to wardens. We are not keen on CDRP as divisional commander thinks we’re already part-funding the PCSOs, and the CDRP is only a collection of Surrey Police funding along with others, so why should Surrey Police fund it again? CDRP could find the money next year, ok, but more of an issue in the following years.”

She added, however, that the borough council did have concerns over the way in which enforcement of parking regulations would be funded after April 2004.

“One suggestion [has been] putting money into PCSOs if they could fulfil some of the parking powers. We are waiting for a paper from the [borough] council on this. But

we wouldn't be happy if they felt they had control over the PCSOs, and dictated how many hours a day will be spent on parking.”

One of the borough council interviewees agreed that funding for CSWs was a main consideration for the council, and offered this perspective:

“At the moment I'm looking for mainstream local government funding for CSWs, which means the partnership puts in other 50%. We also have a substance misuse officer, 2 drugs workers. Probation link worker. Hopefully soon a Domestic Violence Outreach Worker. We currently fund out of Communities Against Drugs, Safer Communities Initiative, Partnership Development Fund, and various one-off bids. Police though are looking to the partnership for the remainder of the PCSO funding in year two.”

The borough inspector, on secondment to the CDRP, acknowledged that the funding of PCSOs was a thorny issue. He outlined the options available as

- parish councils;
- businesses;
- registered social landlords;
- s.106 planning orders – under which approval is given to build a housing estate, on condition that environmental improvements, which could include funding of PCSOs, are made; and
- PCSOs (and CSWs) absorbed as partnership resources, but with GOSE rather than CDRP money financing them.

However, he added that none of them could guarantee that the current crop of PCSOs could all be retained, and regarded the start-up programme for introducing PCSOs and decreasing centralised funding as unfair. One council employee however was more optimistic that the council would foot the bill, explaining that

“...the Conservatives have recently taken control here and put community safety high on their agenda. Their manifesto said they'd pay for a police officer. We suggested the need was for a visible presence which could provide two PCSOs for the same money, so they went with that.”

### **Role here to stay?**

Among housing officers there was little enthusiasm for maintaining the role. One said that other roles - such as the NSO, the CSW, and in some areas Estate Supervisors – provided enough of a service to make PCSOs superfluous. Another felt PCSOs should remain, but only in areas where no CSW operated.

Regulars, however, were very much in favour of keeping the role, on the grounds that

- 1) The public would be unhappy if it was withdrawn
- 2) Regulars' workloads had been reduced
- 3) Environmental improvements had been effected more speedily.





## **C DIVISION, WEST SURREY: WAVERLEY**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	3
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	3
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	5
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	1
RESIDENTS/TRADERS INTERVIEWED	16

### *Documentation supplied*

- *Review of the three-day training course*

Waverley is situated in the southwest of Surrey, bordering Hampshire and West Sussex. It is a rural district, with 61% designated Green Belt, and the largest by geographic area in the county. The cost of living and employing staff is high with housing costs overall more than twice the national average.

The borough is the safest in Surrey, and the fourth most populous. However, the 1999 fear of crime survey in the borough identified a need to improve the perception of safety as a priority. Five wards were earmarked for attention due to especially high levels of concern.

### **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

One of the PCSOs interviewed had formerly been a traffic warden with Surrey Police, and had applied for the PCSO role because his was due to be phased out by April 2004. His expectations were not well-formed, however, because upon ringing to enquire about the job, he reported that they could tell him nothing about the hours, the money or the role. He was keen to stay with Surrey Police, however, describing it as a “brilliant place to work.” For another, the job appealed for several reasons: “it offered physical exercise, diversity, and contact with people, plus it was a challenge.”

Regulars welcomed the new role as “another pair of hands”, who were “there to build bridges. We had so many overlapping commitments, we couldn’t meet them all.” Some admitted to scepticism, however. One recalled that he had not like the idea at all, fearing that time and money would be spent training people who would not stay long. Another had reservations about the lack of training for police officers in supervising civilian staff.

The council representative added that he saw the role as a way to enable more direct communication with the police, saying

“That slightly was a problem before because the community beat officer [sic] can’t be there 24 hours a day, so it’s nice to be able to get a fast response. I see them as helping us to resolve some of the issues which may be low-level to me or the police in general, but which to the general public living with them are high priority – cars, graffiti, petty vandalism.”

He underlined that he felt it was appropriate to decide what the community wanted by asking them directly, and that his expectation was that the role would provide the public with more opportunity to say what it wanted.

### **Knowledge of area beforehand**

One of the PCSOs had extensive knowledge of part of the borough through his work as a Special Constable and then, over seven years as a traffic warden. He explained:

“...There, I felt 100% comfortable – I knew everybody, and I had the geographic knowledge the job ad requested. Towards the end of the three weeks [training] I found I’d ended up in a different area, where I didn’t know who I was looking for, what was round the next corner, and my distance to travel to work [was] also greater.”

### **Explanation of powers beforehand**

One of the NSO Sergeants said no briefing pack was made available in advance of PCSOs’ arrival, so the only source of explanation was discussion with the PCSOs themselves. Another NSO admitted that he had little idea of PCSOs’ job description when they arrived, but reasoned that

“It was a new concept, a suck-it-and-see in my view. It was a good idea to have someone – gives us more coverage. Some people would like to see a police officer on every corner 24 hours a day, which never has happened and never will.”

### **Initial training**

One of the NSO Sergeants said he was not involved in the initial training, and on believed this would have been beneficial, even though at that time it was the Community Safety Sergeant who would be managing them. He felt that a process of evolution was as much a part of knowing the role as formal instruction, and that the initial training could only really offer a basic overview.

Among PCSOs the training was highly rated. One described it outstanding, and viewed the communication of so much information to a group from varied backgrounds in the time available as “an exceptional achievement”. Training on racial prejudice and health and safety were rated as especially informative by one of the PCSOs. The style of the training was also appreciated – it was felt to be relaxed, not pressurised, and delivered in a way that appealed to as many of the trainees as possible.

However, he also identified gaps in the initial three-week training once they had taken up their post. Accepting that the timescale for delivery was tight, one PCSO believed

“We should’ve concentrated more on giving evidence. Police probationers’ll get a week or more. We had a couple of hours – not enough to get across the experience of actually being there. It’s likely we will have to go to court. We could’ve gone to a magistrates’ court on an empty day and role-played there. The original training didn’t show us how to do 5x5s either. Otherwise – racial prejudice good, health and safety good. Liked his style – very relaxed, no pressure – let us choose how we wanted to be taught.”

Lack of access to SPIKE training, statement taking, and CIS training were also recognised to be a problem quite early on. One regular felt NSOs were better placed than PCSOs to realise just how important CIS access was.

“[My PCSO] has no experience of CIS so she doesn’t know what benefits she can get from it. I think it’s absolutely vital. I’ve emailed [the borough Community Safety Sergeant] about it. You need to know who these people are, who they associate with, what their habits are – it’s intelligence.”

One of the PCSOs felt that more communication was also required to ensure external contributors to the training delivered timely and useful input,

“the worst example being the contribution from personnel, who told us that as we didn’t have the correct equipment, we would have to sit behind a desk and do paperwork until it arrived before we could go out on the street, while all I was short of was a utility belt.”

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

Not all PCSOs were convinced that conflict management training was necessary given the nature of their area. One of the NSO Sergeants agreed, though she and her fellow supervisor felt PCSOs were, or could be vulnerable. One NSO Sergeant had asked Surrey Police early on if training would be available, arguing that in parts of the borough radio reception was poor, which compounded the problem.

One PCSO felt that, while the conflict management training had been important, his approach to the job was underpinned by the belief that he was there to engage rather than confront.

“I do carry my torch as a bit of a comfort blanket, but I’ve never used it to try and persuade someone to behave...I use conflict avoidance. If I’m walking outside a pub that has a reputation, and there’s three or four characters who have a reputation outside, I don’t walk up to them and say ‘Hello chaps, I know you usually say “I fucking hate police officers”, but how are you today? Oh, my nose is broken, I wonder why?’ I’m not there to engage in dealing with these things; I’m there to get myself out in one piece, go back and [report].”

One of the NSOs believed that conflict management training was the best solution because, although PCSOs’ job title suggested the link to the police, the provision of CS gas, ASPs or anything else “would make them a target – it’s almost like a challenge.”

#### *Further training*

After PCSOs in the borough had been in post for just under three months, they and those elsewhere on the division took part in a three-day training course – actually entitled a Learning Community – with an independent consultant who had previously delivered training for Surrey NSOs.

Researchers attended on the first of the three days, which was largely concerned with giving participants the opportunity to air concerns. There were many of these. One of the PCSOs had collated a list of issues, as follows

- FPNs for parking offences
- CLE26s
- CIS training
- Late night patrols with borough team
- Self-defence training
- Bank holiday/weekend rotas
- Uniform
- PCSO profile among Targeted Patrol Team and others
- Crossover to other areas/known offenders
- Requirement for special events – eg Epsom Derby
- Elaboration of powers relating to confiscation of tobacco
- Petrol allowance
- Details of appraisal following initial training [which had been mislaid]
- Delivery of badges
- Ratification of collar numbers
- PCSO forum on SPIKE training
- Size of some areas (ie too big to patrol adequately)

- Media coverage.

The Project manager said that she was already familiar with a lot of what was said on this day, and had attempted to reassure PCSOs that many of these were being looked at, but that they should bear in mind that “in the police things [did] not move very fast”. She was disappointed that these issues were raised to the extent that they were.

Two of the Waverley PCSOs did not feel the three-day course had been very productive, One felt this was due to the unconventional approach used by the trainer.

“[It was] not too positive. I was unhappy at being described on the second day as a ringleader by the trainer. I felt it could have been delivered a lot more directly, and I didn’t see the value in it being dressed up in a new age style.”

The other felt that, although elements of the course were useful, the supposed focus on broken windows theory and on community identity became diluted as the course unfolded.

The third PCSO interviewed also questioned the accessibility of the training due to its offbeat nature, but ultimately felt it had conveyed some useful messages.

“I’m still not sure what I got out of it. It was close to ‘kiss the trees’, and I felt uncomfortable to begin with because I don’t like having somebody’s religion or belief sort of put onto me by saying ‘This is the right thing to think about’. I was also uncomfortable about the tutor’s language. I presume the gist of the training was that nobody’s right and nobody’s wrong – have a constructive or non-constructive argument, accept differences of opinion – I’ve always believed this anyway. If I’m walking around my area I’m going to get a lot of different people who have to get along together. That’s an ideal. It won’t happen. Once I took on board there’ll be elements of conflict, I relaxed and thought ‘three days of this is alright’. So it was, yeah, different. Possibly it’s too early to say what I got out of it.”

It was hoped by the trainer that, in line with the competency-based format of the initial three weeks training delivered by the other provider, some form of accredited training for PCSOs could be developed.

### **Arrival and integration**

One of the NSO described how, although the plan had been for him to spend five weeks with his PCSO, he was out on his own before then anyway, since he was “quite a capable guy, and was aware of police procedures from previous role as traffic warden.”

Another NSO was similarly complimentary about the self-sufficiency of his PCSO.

“We spent three weeks together, and after that she’s very loosely been tasked by me. I’ve given her certain areas to take responsibility for – but the means she employs are up to her. Already she’s making contact with people I’ve never even met before.”

One of the PCSOs agreed that being trusted to be self-sufficient, along with useful guidance, had been important to him:

“I’ve had excellent support and instruction from my NSOs, [but] also, the NSOs I work with are very tolerant and have allowed me to develop the role in the way that I would like to do it. I was encouraged to get on with it.”

However, one NSO felt that the rushed nature of the introduction had done PCSOs no favours. He recalled how at the outset, operators in the control room were unsure which jobs to assign to PCSOs. Some seemed to regard PCSOs as police officers, while others viewed them as completely immaterial. He added that this was not for want of trying on the part of the PCSO with whom he had worked most closely.

One of the NSO Sergeants agreed that integration was in his own team was good. However, he doubted that the same could be said of PCSOs’ profile with non-community oriented units. He felt that difficulties in gelling response units with community-oriented officers predated PCSOs’ arrival.

“Integration with NSOs is good enough – but not with BST. I don’t think the majority of TPT would know what a PCSO does, but that also applies to TPT’s knowledge of NSOs – and it’s a problem within this policing model. There is a bit of a ‘them and us’, and it’s there when you’re trying to get them to do things. If I want a vehicle to go to [isolated part of the area] to deal with yobs who are congregating, I’ve got to go through this bidding process, and [TPT] don’t understand where they fit in, as support for NSOs and PCSOs. We had an incident where there was a poster up of the PCSO who has since left, and someone had written “Sacked” across her face, which caused quite a lot of distress to one of the divisional PCSOs, and I know that it was nobody based at that station who did that, it was a visiting unit. That’s probably down to not knowing what [PCSOs] are, but it’s an illustration of the attitude.”

He added that things had improved - TPT were now venturing out to some of the more remote parts of the borough and the liaison was being built up. TPT officers that had met PCSOs and NSOs in this way were, he said, quite supportive. He felt there was a responsibility on Surrey Police to deliver training to introduce the roles. PCSOs had gone to divisional training, he added, “but I think they felt a bit out of place.”

Two PCSOs had no difficulty speaking to their NSO Sergeant, saying if they confident raised any concerns they were confident these would be dealt with as best as could be by their line manager. In the case of the third PCSO, this was initially the case, but the position later altered, culminating in the eventual resignation of the PCSO.

The supervising NSO Sergeant said the experience had shown her that “you can’t expect PCSOs will be immersed within the police culture.” Another NSO Sergeant felt that this stemmed from the fact that, as PCSOs were managed early on in the borough by the Community Safety Sergeant, NSO supervisors received no real training about the role:

“Six months into their posting we were getting told we should have done some sort of appraisal system – reports, feedback, god knows what. Police officers have a yearly appraisal. PCSOs are supposed to have a three- and six-month appraisal. I didn’t know. The same applies to the couple of civilian staff at the front counter here. I just do a yearly appraisal on them. I wasn’t aware they had to have three-monthly appraisals. And the problem is knowing who should have told us that.”

A PCSO from another borough was aware of the departure of this PCSO in her capacity as Unison rep. She saw it as evidence that there was still work to be done in integrating PCSOs within Neighbourhood Specialist teams. She felt the answer lay in providing line managers with more knowledge so that there was less room to interpret the role incorrectly.

### **Activities and deployment**

Ongoing issues in Waverley which it was felt appropriate for PCSOs to be involved in addressing were: untaxed vehicles, problems associated with illegal street trading and a range of anti-social behaviour by youths – specifically riding quadbikes close to residents' houses; smoking cannabis in a skateboard park; starting fires; throwing eggs at front doors; criminal damage at a local cemetery; using foul language and urinating on footpaths.

Work done by PCSOs to address these issues included:

- Drawing up a list of index numbers for untaxed vehicles which could then be passed to the NSO
- High visibility, targeted foot and public transport patrols
- Reassurance visits to victims' and other residents' homes
- Assistance with house-to-house enquiries
- Issuing Yellow Surrey Street Standards cards
- Encouraging the council to bring in street trading laws in relation to kebab vans trading at pub kick-out time underneath a resident's bedroom window
- Developing a dialogue with both unruly youths, their parents and concerned residents

One of the NSOs reported that graffiti had become less of a problem in his area just before the PCSO's arrival. However, photographs had been taken of various tags and, with the co-operation of the local schools, one pupil was identified as being responsible and his parents asked to pay for the cost of removing the graffiti.

One issue which the local NSO specifically did not think was appropriate for PCSO involvement was dealing with people from a large traveller site in the borough. He argued that

“Travellers present particular policing issues —they know me but aren't happy at police or PCSOs they don't know coming onto the site, though they will tolerate it. It will take literally years to get to know them.”

One of the NSO Sergeants viewed deployment as more a process of evolution than a series of prospective directions. He described how this owed much to the diversity of the areas, and the skills and preferences of the individual.

“One [PCSO] has a small, tightly-defined area, but he's come to me because I think he's pretty bored – his presence has knocked a substantial amount of the problems we've had there on the head. So I've negotiated that he can work in another area too. Whereas my other one basically goes where he likes. He covers a big area, also partially covered by three NSOs...this is part of the problem, and it's the same with the NSOs – his workload is different to the two other PCSOs we have. He's been involved in organising public meetings to which all sections of the local community have come along. He's done a lot of work with youths in part of the area, setting up a



youth club again. There have been thefts from individual rooms at an old people's complex. We'd never solve that crime, as many of the residents have alzheimer's, or no memory, but there are issues around security at the complex, so the PCSO's gone in there to liaise with the staff and reassure. Both remaining PCSOs [one has left] have graffiti problems. One has organised for the YOT to come down, got funding from local people to buy materials for the local jobs to paint [defaced] bus shelters and railings. The other will patrol, and the jobs hate him because he keeps popping up all over the place. And he has got a phenomenal amount of intelligence. Also has CCTV in some of his area."

The other NSO Sergeant agreed that a lot depended on the individual officer and their abilities. She felt a PCSO's attitude could be shaped by their NSO, but possibly only because of the nature of what NSOs would usually come across.

### **Sufficiency of powers**

For the most part there was realism from interviewees about the extent of the powers PCSOs held. One PCSO, who had been provided with a card listing the powers, read through them in the company of the researcher. He concluded

"I have the power to get someone's name and address when reasonably believing they've acted anti-socially. The issues that are problematic are being looked at – like seizure of vehicles used to cause alarm. Some are irrelevant to me - confiscating alcohol in a designated public place, for example, as there are no designated areas where I am. Others are irrelevant as they've been copied directly from the Met's version. But once you've been doing the job for a while, you realise everything doesn't have to be perfect. You think of the consequences of what you're going to do, then do what you think is right. If you look confident, people won't question your authority – not to say you should misuse it."

The council interviewee did not regard lack of powers as a concern because he saw the role as

"...more like a conduit, you can actually feed information through and get it back. A typical example - a forum meeting at [name of local estate] – typical meeting, being harangued – there was an abandoned car which I'd actually taken details of and done the DVLA search via computer, but for some reason I wasn't getting a response...and with [the PCSO] there, a quick call – boom boom boom – brilliant - sorted. Once I've got the information I can act on it. Not having the full powers is possibly good actually. I get the feeling their role is to integrate into the community more. If the police tried to put someone in there as an enforcer, going in with a big stick, especially in some of the areas they're working – which are a bit clannish – I don't think that would work."

In Waverley interviewees were under the impression that PCSOs could not issue CLE26s, which, as one NSO put it, was quite a basic operation that he thought PCSOs should be able to carry out.

Interviewed in December 2003, one considered it ironic that it had taken a while before PCSOs were able to issue (as part of a pilot project) yellow Surrey Street Standards cards, as

“It comes under s.25 of PACE, which PCSOs are not to deal with...but s.25 deals with anti-social behaviour and part of our deterrence role is to prevent people behaving anti-socially.”

He added, though, that he approached his job “with the ‘c’ of ‘community’ being far more important than the ‘p’ of ‘police’”. For example, he chose not to carry the FPNs for cycling on a footpath around with him, preferring to speak to anyone he came across doing this. Neither had he ever used his power to seize a vehicle: as it could involve conflict, he regarded this as a task better suited to a police officer. The only extra power he would welcome would be to issue FPNs for dog-fouling, on the grounds that

“...some alleyways are a dogs’ toilet, some near a nursery school. I believe the borough council have a Dog Warden, but he may be part-time, so the chances of him dishing these out...it’s not going to happen.”

### *Parking powers*

One of the PCSOs in Waverley (formerly a traffic warden) was keen on issuing tickets. The other considered the task “tedious” and had no desire to carry it out. Among regulars, views were mixed. One was surprised the power had not been granted, but felt it could prove counter-productive by “distract(ing) them from what’s really important, which is being seen by and talking to shopkeepers and members of the public”. Another could see why the power did not exist, but would have welcomed its inclusion, despite the fact that the council were due to assume responsibility in April 2004. It was added that the issue of what the council would do had become politically sensitive.

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

Joint work between the police and the council was felt by PCSOs and regulars to be in need of improvement. Two interviewees used the term “appalling” to describe the council’s input and speed of response on various aspects of community safety and environmental improvement, particularly in relation to abandoned cars, which according to one PCSO, “can sit there for months”. The comments of one NSO and, first, a PCSO, illustrate these frustrations:

“I’ll give you a straight comparison. A Guildford PCSO spots a piece of graffiti in Guildford town centre. They ring the Borough Council graffiti hotline. They will be immensely surprised if it hasn’t been removed within 24 hours. There is no graffiti hotline in Waverley. Guildford’s culture is more can-do. Waverley’s is far more an accountancy-style culture where they justify every expensive. In consequence Waverley’s response tends to be not ‘how we can help’, it’s more like ‘how we can tell you why we can’t help’. They’ll name every rule and every bylaw that prevents them doing anything. Should they actually have to do something, they will then tell you round about how close you are to the bottom of the priority list.” [PCSO]

“We went to the council offices for a whole day to meet officers and to see what their system was for graffiti removal, which was nil, what their system was for moving abandoned vehicles, which was flawed, and what their system was for dealing with

problem tenants, which was ‘Too busy to deal with all that paperwork’. I do have contacts, but they don’t return calls, they don’t respond to emails, they always have their answer machines on...Nobody gets anything done because they spend too much time telling you what they can’t do. Members of the public I think get worse treatment. They are exasperated with Waverley Council.” [NSO]

He added that this had not prevented the PCSO from carrying out valuable work, but that this had effectively allowed the council to avoid discharging their responsibilities. He felt that environmentally there had been an improvement in the previous six months, but felt this owed much to the PCSOs’ persistence rather than anything else.

“The PCSO has worked tirelessly with the YOT, they came in to clean road signs, bus shelters, individual walls and other things, things that should’ve been done by the borough council, but their excuse was: bus shelters are parish councils’ problem, signs are Surrey County Council’s problem, individual walls and buildings are private tenants’ problem. We’ve now got a private contractor in to clean away all the graffiti, but that was at Surrey Police’s expense. It’s not our responsibility and we’re not prepared to put up with it.”

One of the NSO Sergeants took up this theme, commenting that traditionally the police had been seen by many as the first port of call when a problem arose, irrespective of whether they were the appropriate agency to deal with it.

“Things have changed since I’ve been here – we were always the one-stop shop; everyone came to us for anything, whereas now you just think ‘well, no, actually, no’. This is happening now with ASBOs; we have several up-and-coming; it’s a case of trying to get the CPS and the courts to understand them.”

Another NSO also felt that things were now being addressed more swiftly, and that the responsibility was not always the council’s.

“If you go to those of your own level... Cars also are moved a lot quicker now as council have PNC access. Some have been there a while but they are under Housing Association criteria – which makes it slower as they’ve fewer staff over a wider area.”

The council interviewee’s perspective was that

“...We’d like to deal with abandoned cars quickly – the problem is, priorities jump on top of us, therefore it becomes a lesser issue at times. To have an extra pair of eyes out there bringing things to our attention hopefully should help speed things up.”

One PCSO suggested that if PCSOs were permitted to effect certain improvements without relying on the council, more efficiency would result:

“We asked whether [PCSOs] could carry graffiti remover. The ruling from the top is that PCSOs are not to be seen cleaning graffiti themselves, on the grounds that it’s a council responsibility. But when you’ve got a bus stop with five or six tags on it and you could spray them there and then, it does seem somewhat painful having to deal with the borough council.”

## Community Safety Wardens

There are no CSWs in Waverley. However, the council representative believed that, since he covered a large area and had other duties to attend to, a more local and dedicated presence was necessary. On a separate occasion, an interview was held with another resident who was also a local borough and parish councillor.

### Public feedback – local residents

Public feedback in Waverley was gained from:

- a residents' meeting in one part of the borough
- several *ad hoc* interviews and discussions with residents and traders in two other areas of the borough and, in one of these areas
- one prearranged interview with a member of the public who was also an elected councillor.

The residents' meeting was held approximately every three months. Attendance totalled around fifteen, of whom two were spoken to in some detail. Matters discussed included crime prevention advice, current problems and concerns, and a summary of improvements and progress since the previous meeting. The *ad hoc* interviews were held in two separate areas. One was a small village with no NSO coverage, and in which the PCSO aimed to spend at least one day of an average working week. The other was a larger village, home to the police station at which the PCSO was based. This area had one dedicated NSO.

### *Local problems*

Most felt that the main problems in their areas had historically been vandalism and gangs of youths. One of those at the residents' meeting remarked that

“if you see one child on their own, they're alright. But [if there are] more than about four [of them], and they're each trying to stay in the gang.”

One resident in the smaller village did not feel there were any pressing issues in the area to do with crime, disorder, or the environment. All other respondents drawn from this village disagreed, however. Two traders characterised the problems as “petty things”. One described an attempted break-in at their general store which had taken place the previous summer. His wife had called the police, but he recounted that they had not been very happy at the police response, as they had requested that she ring at a later time as there was currently no-one available to deal with the matter. This they could tolerate, but they were disappointed that, three months later, they had still not been visited. Youths regularly congregated outside their store, as it was the only one of its type in the area, but disorder was rare. They had not imposed a maximum limit on the number of young people allowed inside the premises at any one time, although one of the traders admitted that when the youths formed a group, he was “not overkeen”.

Two other interviewees, who worked at a car dealership opposite the general store, described similar problems with the same group of youths. They were seen as “generally disruptive,

arrogant [and]rude". Damage had been caused to some vehicles, costing "a few hundred pounds". One suggested misbehaviour was born out of boredom and frustration, but speculated that lack of parental supervision was a contributory factor. The area was also poorly lit, making misbehaviour a less risky exercise. He had also noticed that theft of plant and industrial equipment from garages and barns was a low-level but year-round issue. As manager of the largest business in the village, this interviewee had become involved with the parish council through events at the local school, and as a result had also been made aware of some "smallish" drug use and acts of minor vandalism, such as the placing of objects in roads.

Another two interviewees who worked at a nursing home in the same village had experienced problems in the previous few months which had caused staff to feel scared. One described how

"...they were making their way here in the dark, some come on bicycles, or in cars, they had to stop to remove barriers on that had been built by these lads, who were also hiding in bushes and jumping out in front of people."

Another at the nursing home observed the implications this had for security, as it increased the need to lock doors to prevent those involved gaining access to the premises – a measure which rather went against the ethos of a nursing home. They also commented that there had been some disruption in the nearby churchyard, where those responsible had been climbing trees and shouting abuse at passing members of the public. The warden had reported this to the police.

In the larger of the two villages, views were sought from five youths who were part of a larger group who had congregated outside a supermarket in a pedestrianised shopping area, and from two traders in a wine merchants on the main street. The five were part of a larger group, one of whom had been shown a yellow Surrey Street Standards card ten minutes earlier. Most of those in the larger group were known to the PCSO, and lived either in the village or in a nearby area which was home to a travellers' site. None of the five felt that crime, disorder or environmental concerns existed in the village.

Staff said that the problems they had experienced were not huge, but tended to occur on a Friday night, when youngsters entered and attempted to buy alcohol. Employees would refuse, but then the youths would ask adults to make the purchase for them. This was less easy to prevent, as the store was busy at that time, and there were few opportunities for staff to venture outside and confirm that this was occurring. The problem also surfaced during school holidays. Predating the PCSO's introduction, a 'ring-round' system had been set up with two similar establishments in the area, enabling staff at one store to alert those at the others if known individuals were attempting to do this. The store also had video cameras installed, and a uv scanner to detect fake identification documents.

#### *Activity to address problems*

Those at the residents' meeting felt that within the last few months the problems in their area had receded. The two interviewees attributed this to the increased patrols that had been carried out in the area. Prior to this, one recalled,

“...you never saw anybody. Sometimes there used to be a police car come down here, pulled round in the car park and turn round and go back. But I couldn’t see it from here – would only know about it if someone told me.”

As a result of the increased number of foot patrols, both these residents had noticed that the youths had been forced to move from one place to another. They speculated that the youths had simply got fed up with being hassled and had subsequently disappeared. In addition, some action had been taken by the police and the council as a result of issues raised at earlier meetings – specifically, a gate had been closed, so that youths could no longer use part of the residential complex as a cut-through, and anti-climb paint had been applied to a wall to discourage youths from scaling it.

A resident in the smaller of the two villages knew the PCSO, as he had returned to him an item of property which he had lost. This was the only actual contact, although the resident had seen him on patrol both before and since. He had no knowledge of any other activities the PCSO might have been engaged in. Prior to the PCSO’s arrival, the resident had not seen any other foot patrols in the area, although he did not think that there was anything going on in the village that would have justified a police presence.

Two traders who had been in the area for twenty years recalled there had been a village policeman who patrolled on foot, but in more recent times they had seen no-one, until the PCSO came in, introduced himself, and provided them with contact details. Routine vehicle patrols were rare. One trader commented that telephone calls in relation to specific incidents were of little use either – “every time I ring [the local police station] nobody answers because it’s always shut” – while the other observed that 999 calls went through to a town over 20 miles away. These traders knew of the PCSO’s tendency to travel on the bus as a way of maximising visibility and, on the so-called “zoo journey”, preventing potential unruly behaviour by pupils returning home from school. They estimated they had seen the PCSO around once a week since he had first appeared, and appeared philosophical about this. The PCSO had also introduced himself to those at the car dealership, who had known nothing of the role beforehand (although one of the two interviewees there did not live within the county). Both these interviewees considered the police profile in the area before the PCSO’s arrival to be very low. One speculated that “feedback from the hamlets and the parish councils made the police think they had got to do something”. They were also aware that the PCSO functioned as a contact point for information, and understood that the PCSO was planning to visit the parents of a group of youths who had recently been involved in anti-social behaviour which had made the front page of the local weekly newspaper.

The two interviewees who worked at a residential home for the elderly knew the PCSO was in the area through reading the local newsletter. Word of mouth also played a part; one member of staff had spoken of seeing the PCSO on the local bus – although she had felt that the youths on the bus “were behaving badly, swearing and running around the bus”, and had not thought the PCSO was doing a great deal to prevent this. The two interviewees themselves knew little about his role, and were unclear on his job title. They had been provided with his name, but had not met him. They were somewhat disappointed about this, although the PCSO later added that he had on more than one occasion called at the premises without reply. Both said there had not been a police presence in the village for many years. They had suggested that the police might, on occasion, turn off the main road through the village and detour up to the main entrance of the home on the circular driveway, but they had never seen this happen. They had called a police car on one occasion some time before. This

had arrived “quite quickly”; however, on another occasion when goods had been stolen from an adjacent barn on the site, they did not alert the police. This, they explained, was largely because they had decided that the presence of police officers at the home would upset many of the residents.

It was believed by most in the smaller village that the PCSO had made some difference. The manager at the car dealership felt “lots had been resolved” because the PCSO had successfully identified those responsible for the anti-social activities, and had engaged them in dialogue – a useful tactic, he felt, because “children do divulge information”. In the words of another, however, the PCSO “has his work cut out”, because polite requests to behave more politely on the occasions when youths had been anti-social had been met with rude remarks.

All five youths spoken to in the larger village had seen the PCSO around on several occasions, often outside this supermarket, where they often congregated. Staff at the wine merchants first became aware of the role when the local PCSO came into the store. The main benefit, as far as they were concerned, was that he kept them informed of developments in the area, be they to do with anti-social behaviour or efforts to address it. They in turn valued having the opportunity to pass on information to him. Another interviewee, who had worked in the wine merchants for over fifteen years, said that the police presence over the years had diminished, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays. Previously there had been regular patrols up and down the high street. This still happened, he said, but not very often – although his colleague commented that the occasional police vehicle went by, and that he had recently seen a police “riot van” parked outside the pub across the road.

This interviewee felt that although there were benefits in having the PCSO in terms of information exchange,

“the trouble is that no-one’s here at the time of night when things happen. Things happen here after midnight, usually when [the culprits] know there’s nobody around.”

One of the residents’ meeting attendees appreciated the difference between the NSO and the PCSO who had together been responsible for the increased patrols. The PCSO had been introduced at the local CIAG, and also at a local senior citizens’ group which she helped to organise.

The councillor praised the work the PCSOs had done in his area. Mobilising youths, via the local YOT, to carry out environmental improvements was hailed as a particular achievement. The PCSO’s efforts were especially necessary, he felt, since the facilities for young people in many areas of the borough were scarce. The PCSO had played a part in approaching schools, to offer pupils the opportunity to say what they felt was missing and what changes they would like to see. He believed the PCSO “exudes confidence, [and] is good at talking to groups of people. [I’m] impressed by his enthusiasm. He picks up plenty of useful knowledge”.

The councillor was less critical of the state of information-sharing than many others had been. He believed that joint work had “always been there to one extent or another. But there’s no doubt in my mind that there’s a much stronger drive lately”. Two other residents were, to varying degrees, critical of the amount of time the council took to attend to problems,

although one praised the work done in replacing a lamp in the residents' area which, unlike its predecessor, was far enough off the ground to prevent graffiti damage.

As a result of his involvement in community affairs, the councillor was aware of the differences between the PCSO and police officer roles, but resisted any moves that would bring them closer to the role of a police officer. This might include alterations to their hours, which at present he felt helped ensure that PCSOs were not vulnerable. He felt that a sensible gauge of impact was the extent to which people felt PCSOs listened to the beliefs and needs of local people. He also assumed that the police would set objectives which could be revisited.

The councillor added that the public might well assume that if there was a parking problem in their area, the PCSO would have the ability to step in where a traffic warden might. His own preference was for PCSOs to have this power, but to use it sparingly.

“If a PCSO is patrolling and he sees a parking problem arising and he has an opportunity to wag his finger, I think he should do, because it would be daft to lose people's respect. Someone has to take the responsibility for dealing with something the community is concerned about. A lot of money has been spent on traffic calming, for example. But I don't think it's appropriate for them to feel they've got a responsibility to monitor parking behaviour.”

*Would the role be missed?*

The councillor regarded retention of PCSOs as necessary, largely because, like regulars, they had already come to be seen as a dedicated resource for areas.

“Stability and continuity is what people expect and look forward to. The Chief Constable has given us a promise on more than one occasion that our NSOs are not going to be moved from their manor for three years at least.”

For both the other two residents, loss of the role would not be welcome. One said she would feel “more on the alert”, while the other said she would “not feel so secure...When you see someone like that walking around and you know there's been trouble you just call them over and you tell them.”

One of the residents in the smaller village said withdrawal of the role would make no difference to him personally. Neither did he believe there would be a marked increase in vandalism, although he conceded that it would be “a pity” to lose the role. Others in the area remarked that they would not want the role to be withdrawn, as it was a deterrent to youth misbehaviour. Withdrawal, it was said, would probably not go unnoticed. It was appreciated that there was more scope for the PCSO to be able to devote time to the area than it would be for police officers. A distinction was drawn by one trader between whether the PCSO's would be missed by the wider community (which was felt likely) and whether the business itself would miss it (which the trader was less sure about). The alarm link to the local police partly explained this.

The need for stability underpinned the councillor's belief that PCSOs moving into the regulars was not necessarily a good thing. However, he added that some restructuring of the PCSO role was required,



“because just to join a force as a PCSO without any development opportunities is not good. It’s an employer’s responsibility to sustain motivation, and if someone’s been given a job some might find dull because they are stuck in a position, it’s the responsibility of the bosses to make sure that guy’s kept motivated and generating his own enthusiasm.”

The five youths in the larger village did not feel that their behaviour would alter if the PCSO were no longer around. This was not because they were unaware of his presence; rather, his presence was not seen to be a deterrent.

#### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

The councillor was not convinced that the differences between police officers and PCSOs were widely understood.

“I’m doubtful that generally speaking people would have an understanding of their role. The community are fickle at the end of the day, they don’t read everything that’s put in front of them, they don’t take on board all the issues and all the detail.”

This assertion was supported by remarks from the two interviewees drawn from the resident’s meeting. Asked to outline how they felt the roles diverged, one suggested that PCSOs could not make arrests. The other did not know, having never spoken directly with the PCSO, and referred to the uniformed officers in her area as “these two coppers on the beat”. Importantly, however, both regarded it as sufficient, and comforting, that the PCSO provided a presence, that residents could see him, and that he knew the names of the youths who had caused problems.

In the smaller of the two villages, most admitted that they had believed the PCSO to be a police officer – even though he had distributed his card – because “he looks like one, dresses like one, and does the normal things that they do in everyday life”. The manager of the car dealership said he was unclear about the extent of the PCSO’s enforcement powers; the important thing, however, was that he could report information back to those who *could* enforce. Another, who was better placed than most to appreciate the difference as she worked in the general store – and she admitted to “in my ignorance, thinking he’s a policeman”. She therefore felt others in the community, whose contact with the PCSO was less regular, were likely to have reached the same conclusion. One of those at the nursing home took the view that the PCSO “look[ed] a bit official”, and felt this might be all that was required to discourage youths from misbehaviour irrespective of whether his powers were on a par with police officers. He concluded:

“Yes we would prefer a policeman, but if we can’t get a policeman he’s better than nothing”. The attitude towards the PCSO in this village was summed up by one interviewee who said that “he’s the next best thing to a policeman because he’s all we’ve got”.

One of the five youths in the larger village believed the PCSO to be a police officer – the others saw the role as different. This was supported by comments from employees at the wine merchants, who felt “a lot of the kids seem to know he is different [to the police]”. This was seen as an advantage, as the PCSO “lets us get away with stuff”. This was contrasted with

their relationship with the local NSO, who had served the area for several years, and who had a reputation for combining a strong enforcement component with the more community-oriented aspects of his role.

*Will the public more readily offer information to a PCSO than to a police officer?*

The two respondents who were aware of the distinction between the two roles said they would be just as likely to pass information to either a regular or a PCSO. Both had supplied details to their PCSO in the past. The third said that if the PCSO was around and the NSO was not, she would offer information to the PCSO.

Traders in the smaller village also declared that the fact that the PCSO was not a police officer made it no more or less likely that they would pass him information.

### **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public's views**

Members of the Neighbourhood Specialist Team all felt that the public had shown a willingness to talk to PCSOs – a sign that within three and a half months, they had started to win residents' trust and acceptance. Parish council meetings, CIAGs and council meetings were all listed as good sources of feedback. The council interviewee reported similar impressions:

“It's been largely encouraging. They like seeing people about – it's always one of the big bugbears, you never see a policeman.”

One of the NSO Sergeants declared that if the role were to be withdrawn, there would be “uproar” from the public.

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

Certain sections of the community – such as the traveller population – were believed to have a good grasp of the differences between the two roles. However, one of the NSOs reported that the public appeared to have confused his PCSO's role with that of a police officer. He added, though, that at the same time, they had underestimated the true extent of the role.

“Some think he's the new police officer and I've been moved. But I don't think they realise that his powers are intelligence gathering as opposed to giving out tickets. And he has put loads of intelligence through on 5x5s.”

The two PCSOs themselves also believed that the public did not have a clear notion of the purpose of the role. One remarked

“A lot of people know what we can't do now, but a lot still say to me ‘What are you?’ – they are genuinely interested. And I tell them – ‘I gather intelligence; I make sure that you're safe, that there's no unruly behaviour’. If things aren't being done, explain to them why. If someone gives me a try-out I tell them I support the police, but I have the facility to go up stages, to talk to them in a different way.”

The other noted described his attitude towards educating the public in the following terms:

“I don’t pretend I’m a policeman, but it does come in handy if people think you are a policeman, or a traffic warden. We look very police-y. The public understand you’re not a policeman but realise you do a very police-y type job, because you’re walking around in a uniform. If people want to know the difference they find out, those that don’t are just happy to see you. There are some dangers of blurring role boundaries but the good far outweighs the bad. If you box things down it will weaken things, and restricts your latitude.”

One of the NSO Sergeants recounted how one of the PCSOs had experienced difficulties in relation to a long-running situation that was already problematic due to public misconceptions of his role. He added that he himself often found that he treated PCSOs as police officers.

The other NSO Sergeant also recalled some unrealistically high public expectations in relation to the PCSO who had now departed.

“There’s a town radio link for the shops, but the PCSO, although meaning well, created expectations among shopkeepers that action could be taken where the power didn’t exist.

*Will the public more readily offer information to a PCSO than to a police officer?*

The likelihood of PCSOs receiving more information from the public than a police officer would was entertained by one of the NSO Sergeants. However, she felt this stemmed from the greater opportunity the public had to make contact with PCSOs than any particular quality of approachability.

“Some do talk to them and tell them more than they would tell a police officer – but some of that’s because the PCSO has more time than a police officer to get out and meet people on the street.”

## **Media**

Only one interviewee, one of the PCSOs, was asked about media coverage of the role. He was unhappy that the focus had seemed to be primarily on PCSOs’ inability to arrest – even though they could exercise any-person powers to do this – and on the implication that they represented ‘policing on the cheap’.

## **Measurement of impact**

No measures to gauge impact were known to be in place at the time of the fieldwork visits to Waverley. Interviewed in December 2003, the NSOs and their Sergeants were pleased with the input their two PCSOs were having. The council interviewee was also convinced that PCSOs were making a difference.

“They’ve got to be a positive thing because hopefully if they’re befriending people, and people are starting to talk to them, information will come through to them. I’ve only been here fifteen months, and it really hit me when I started dealing with people up here – their reticence to actually talk to you. That really surprised me how they

didn't want to talk to you. It's only now they're starting to talk and trust...Again someone else on the ground has got to improve that."

The PCSOs who subsequently departed, however, was less confident about how much influence the powers allowed her to bring to bear on problems.

"You can think – 'I'm not able to do much about cars, I don't have any conflict training, I don't have access to CIS', and you start to think 'I'm feeling a bit awkward here, morale is a little bit low, and of course it shows out on the streets'."

One of the NSO Sergeants commented that little was in place to measure the effectiveness of the role.

"I set a target of the 5x5s a month I set - but there's nothing I can measure. I can point to positive comments at public meetings. I think the appraisal set up, certainly in our division, is appalling. Civilian staff have a bi-monthly sheet, with very little space, which I initially wasn't made aware needed to be done. I don't think it was very well thought out. I developed my own action plans for them, off my own back."

The other Sergeant commented that if impact were measured in terms of the 5x5s that had been submitted, CIS training had been a great benefit in increasing impact. PCSOs were putting in more information than NSOs, the quality had improved, and there was a much better idea of what intelligence consisted comprised.

### **Career development**

One of the fieldwork visits was conducted in December 2003, just over a month after the YPCSO role was introduced. This was welcomed by one PCSO, who saw specialisation as one way in which the PCSO role was likely to develop.

"You can use the same techniques you'd use with regular officers, give them specialism badges, and then you can give them a career incentive. Examples are: running the PCSO project, administering PCSO training, dealing specifically with one council, or one health trust. If you try to produce a nice flowing line now, it would be pointless, because you don't know how the role will grow."

Whilst acknowledging that career structure needed consideration, he was reluctant to start narrowing down what the role should or should not consist of, "because if we're not careful we'll start preventing ourselves from doing what we actually want to do."

One of the NSOs however stressed that if new variations on the PCSO role were to be brought in, lessons from the first batch needed to be taken on board.

"...In some respects [the confusion over PCSOs] is still going on because I've got the YPCSO with me for six weeks' training, and I don't really know what the role is supposed to do. All I know is, she turned up one day. She's based at [one station] but travels to [another] every day in her own car. No-one had thought to get her to a duty sheet, that she can claim mileage – none of those things are actually told to us."

Along with an NSO, this interviewee added that PCSOs were necessary, and that while they should not be discouraged from applying to the regulars, options needed to be examined as an alternative to joining up.

“They’ve got no-one looking out for their interests at the moment, no professional manager. All very well joining the regulars, but if we’ve invested money in this, [and] training...yes they can take it with them, but if they join TPT – it’s gone.”

### **Funding and the future**

The council representative speculated on possible future sources of funding:

“Possibly general fund money if it seems a very useful provision – but then again you’d be fighting for that along with various other people. Possibly lottery funding<sup>36</sup>. You’d have to prove the case for it, but I’ve been involved in lottery funding and you can get money if you can show that it’s innovative and forward-thinking. Could be Neighbourhood Renewal money - but I think it comes down to who has control over them. It could come into a general fund remit as part of council responsibility as a sort of glorified warden scheme.”

One of the NSOs added that in one area the public had seen the work of PCSOs in nearby districts and had discussed funding their own PCSO. He advised that they had previously wanted a police officer, but there was insufficient work to justify this.

### **Role here to stay?**

Police officers interviewed felt that the role should continue. One regular, stressing that he had changed his views on this having seen the work they had undertaken, commented that there had been

“...lots of talk about demands on the police that police can’t or should not meet. With PCSOs [under the current funding arrangement] the police can maintain some control – arranging for public’s requests to be attended to, but not by the police themselves.”

He believed, though, that PCSOs’ work now essentially equated to dedicated beat officers’ activities twenty years ago – “it’s almost like we’re reinventing the wheel”. He added that if the NSO role was “forced...to work, [you] had an NSO in place for a long time, did it properly, and you didn’t get loads of crime to deal with, you could probably achieve what you’d achieve with the PCSOs. But I don’t think we’ll ever get that back, unless there’s a massive injection of police officers.”

One of The PCSOs was in no doubt that the role should be retained, on the basis that it was providing the public with a service they needed. He suggested, however, that the uncompetitive wages and the possibility of specialisation elsewhere might threaten the role.

“What people want is visible presence. What they don’t want is a whacking great tax bill which says ‘Policing ‘ on it, when they’re perpetually ringing 999, getting no

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<sup>36</sup> In fact, lottery funding is not an option for further PCSO funding.

service...I think it would be political suicide to withdraw us. Natural wastage, people leaving, will be quite high-risk in this role, because what you'll have in two years will be a lot of highly-trained people who will probably have gained a lot of respect in local government circles and council circles. You may find they'll leave to join these organisations or any kind of ad hoc quango-type thing, which will allow them to pursue their specialism. For example – YPCSOs. They suddenly became a better-paid council youth specialist worker. [Other PCSOs could find work that allows them to develop specialisms around graffiti, the elderly, sport.] Then you're left in a position where the public have got used to something, want it to continue, but it's gone...Also if the industries some of us have previously worked in are back on the move again in two years' time...If one of my ex-colleagues rang up and offered me a similar role to what I had, and I stayed here on half the salary, I would be certified insane."

## **D DIVISION, NORTH-WEST SURREY: RUNNYMEDE**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	5
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	2
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	3
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	1

Compared to the Surrey average, Runnymede has a relatively low average household income, but affluence varies widely between wards. The age distribution is skewed towards the upper groups and residents of non-white ethnicity are relatively under-represented. There are stark variations in the pattern of socio-economic indicators across the borough, and distinct pockets of social housing and privately rented accommodation.

A survey of residents and businesses in five of the borough's wards in 2002 found that eight of the ten highest concerns by residents were "quality of life" issues such as dog fouling and litter. Levels of concern regarding crime were significantly lower than in an earlier baseline exercise. The proportion of respondents expressing fear of crime had fallen from 37% in the baseline to 29%. Of these, 28% said that fear of crime made them wary of going out after dark (39% in the baseline). A further 12% (16% in the baseline) said that it made them very careful about locking and securing their home if they left it at any time. Respondents in two wards registered levels of fear of crime in excess of 30 per cent. Three businesses felt that fear of crime was having an impact on trade.

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

The two PCSOs interviewed were both expecting and hoping that the role would involve problem-solving for the community and with the aid of the community. One added that in order to achieve this he expected that he would be dedicated to an area and not work elsewhere in the borough, and that he would be expected to get around the area on foot.

One of the regulars said there had been discussion about the fact that the new role might reduce police effectiveness. He however welcomed the new role. He based this attitude on the belief that Special Constables he had worked with tended to have

“...a lot of skills in terms of communication that regulars don’t have – more street language, less need for formal language as police officers have with PACE.”

One of the other regulars was less sure about the impact PCSOs could have, based on the fact that he understood them to have few powers. The interviewee from the council meanwhile, had supposed that, since the role was being introduced under police jurisdiction, PCSOs would have some powers (for example, issuing parking tickets) which they did not in fact hold. In her words, she “didn’t realise they would be quite as powerless as they are.”

## **Involvement in initial bid to Chief Constable**

The council interviewee reported that the initial bid to the Chief Constable took around two or three weeks to complete, and seemed to regard the timescale for producing it as fair. The bid was for ten (of whom five were secured) as the PCSOs were seen as a useful substitute for CSWs, none of whom were employed in Runnymede. She accepted that they were not anticipating to receive all ten.

## **Knowledge of area beforehand**

Asked if he had sufficient notice about which area he would be working in, one of the PCSOs said he was given this information on the first day of training. He was satisfied with this, though he found it surprising that he was not given an area with which he was familiar, especially as the application form for the post had specifically asked candidates to indicate local geographic knowledge they might have.

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

Understanding of powers prior to PCSOs’ arrival was felt to have been compromised by the fact that their introduction was very rushed. One regular commented

“They came in in a tremendous hurry. There was some prior warning, but I felt we were almost making it up as we went along. If there was any particular documentation, I didn’t see it. [PCSOs] were clear on what they’d been told their powers were – all were carrying their blue card – but hadn’t been trained in a fair chunk of it, like seizure of alcohol. There was a total lack of clarity.”

Another, who became an NSO Sergeant after PCSOs arrived and therefore began managing them, said that



“It was then that I realised I needed to find out their powers and objectives. I soon realised that I was managing civilians – and you can’t impose directions on them that you’d normally give a police officer.”

One of the NSOs, however, was pleased at the amount of information given in advance. He felt it had been useful to meet his PCSO during the initial three week training period.

### **Initial training**

The two PCSOs had found their initial training instructive. One particularly appreciated the way in which the trainer encouraged recruits to feel comfortable and undaunted by the volume of learning. CIS training would have been valued, but on the whole it was not believed that there had been any gaps. If anything, one argued, it covered more issues than were strictly necessary

“If anything it fired me up to do more things than I’ve had the opportunity to do. Like threatening behaviour training – I’ve not yet had to assess someone’s body language.”

He suggested that the relative use of certain aspects of training varied depending upon the type of area in which a PCSO ended up working.

One of the regulars, however, suggested that, purely in terms of its duration, the training could never prepare PCSOs for all the situations they were likely to encounter.

“They’ve been expected to run before they can walk. You wouldn’t expect a probationer pc to be able to assimilate within three weeks the technology and information and intelligence the PCSOs have been exposed to.”

The council representative said she and her colleagues had been told that they would be involved in two days of their three-week training period. This though did not materialise:

“In actual fact all we were invited to was the publicity photos and the press launch. Apart from meeting the PCSOs themselves, which was very valuable, that was a complete waste of our time – because the press only wanted pictures of PCSOs – they didn’t want any Borough Council welcome coverage.”

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

Some strong objections were voiced from PCSOs and regulars alike about the current lack of protection for PCSOs. One of the PCSOs remarked that this was a particular problem later in the day.

“They want to make the role distinct from police officers, but if they want us to work late at night, they’d have to equip us as such, and train us as such. I patrolled at a recent funfair more or less alone – sometimes after 10pm. Some boys there had turned up the night before with metal bars.”

The NSO Sergeant was even more critical of the present situation:

“On both the occasions I’ve been out with [PCSOs] I’ve realised we’ve come across a member of the public who I could see would most likely resent being stopped, might try to escape, and could be violent. So assessing risk I had to separate the PCSO from the actions I then carried out. So I asked the PCSO to not get involved. Because of that I feel they are vulnerable. I’m really very, very concerned about that. They haven’t got enough protection. Conflict training won’t alleviate the problem – but I’d prefer them to have it so they can protect themselves. The main things are body language, positioning to be able to organise a safe escape – before they consider arrest and restraint techniques. We [he and other NSO Sgt] have been quite adamant that due to the vulnerability they’re not to get involved.”

To illustrate the point that the nature of PCSOs’ areas creates different levels of risk, one of the NSOs added that the need for protection might depend on where they work. A town centre on a Saturday night might justify more protection – although he acknowledged that this would make PCSOs and police officers harder to tell apart.

### ***Further training***

Although not required to make a contribution during the initial three weeks training, PCSOs did meet council representatives soon afterwards, as the interviewee from the council explained:

“Once they started they came to me for a whole day, during their first week or two. We showed them the CCTV [very sophisticated], introduced them to key people – housing department, [those dealing with] abandoned vehicles. Did a little piece on vehicles – having to put seven-day notice on before calling out a contractor, that sort of thing. We had worked to speed that up before PCSOs arrived. The only thing we’ve brought in since PCSOs [came in] is the graffiti removal team.”

One of the regulars added that subsequent to the initial training, the divisional training team had been in touch with everyone involved in their supervision – including the NSOs – asking what further training it was felt PCSOs would benefit from.

### **Arrival and integration**

The NSO Sergeant stressed that in Runnymede

“...we don’t treat them as a separate body. The NSOs here have treated them as a resource, which provides more options.”

As far as one NSO was concerned, however, PCSOs were not: the most urgent need for Surrey Police:

“Ultimately if it was up to the police, we’d have more police. Given the choice I’d sooner have more police than PCSOs – I think everybody would.”

Upon PCSOs’ arrival, NSOs accompanied them out on patrol, and the NSO Sergeant reported that he too made a point of going out on their areas with them. It was not felt, however, that non-community-oriented police would be very familiar with the role – and this was regarded as a potential problem

“Other than NSOs, other regulars haven’t a clue what their powers are. Danger is that TPT for eg may turn up and think ‘Why didn’t you do it yourself?’ – not realising they can’t. There has input on PCSOs at divisional training days, but very limited.”

The interviewee from the council agreed, adding that historically, any new initiative introduced to work with the police needed time to bed in:

“Besides NSOs, I wouldn’t’ve thought other roles would have an idea of what PCSOs are about. It takes the police a long time to adapt to changes – I don’t think PCSOs will get accepted by the police apart from the ones they’re working closely with. It’s only in the last two years that most of them will speak to me. Until then they’d say hello, but they wouldn’t discuss anything as, though I’m a partner, I’m an outsider.”

She added that she had been surprised by the relative lack of input that the council had had into PCSO deployment<sup>37</sup>, and that the level of consultation had not been as great as previous arrangements had led her to expect:

“[There’s] not [been] a lot of day to day input – I thought there would’ve been more, but it’s not that important. We gave a lot of thought to where we wanted them to go. We were then very unhappy. Things went totally quiet, completely dead – no feedback, and then we were told by the Borough Inspector where they were going to go. We were very unhappy as we’d always worked so closely with the NSOs.”

## **Activities and deployment**

Issues reported by interviewees in Runnymede which PCSOs could potentially address include: youth problems, specifically congregation in parks, underage drinking, stone throwing at elderly residents’ homes, and destruction of fences and trespass on residents’ land; some friction between local youths and students at two local universities; abandoned cars; and graffiti.

Activities in which PCSOs have become involved in order to address these are:

- Foot patrolling
- Introducing themselves to local people
- Attendance at residents’ meetings
- Delivering leaflets
- Setting up and running a football scheme
- Visiting a local school to explain the role to pupils

## **Sufficiency of powers**

With the exception of one of the PCSOs, none of those interviewed felt that the powers that came with the role were sufficient. For one of the regulars the current situation created a

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<sup>37</sup> This was covered in the initial bid to the Chief Constable, but this was for ten PCSOs, of whom five were secured.

problem because, when he had patrolled with one of the PCSO, it had made him feel as though his own role was more difficult, rather than easier to carry out:

“I’m not satisfied they’ve enough. They have any person powers of arrest but they can’t detain, and I felt that I had an extra issue to manage working alongside them. Plus we have a staffing issue where we don’t have enough mobile officers when they call for back-up, but PCSOs are not being identified properly when they use the radio. I’ve kept records of instances when control haven’t responded to them. It’s happened about four or five times.”

He added that he had raised the problem with project management, but it was not addressed as fully as he wanted, so he had had to raise it again. He was left with the impression that any PCSO issues flagged would be glossed over quickly.

Two other regulars suggested that the lack of powers might have an effect on PCSOs’ feeling that they could make a difference:

“Walking around looking quite pretty does cover a need but doesn’t really do much... Their powers aren’t enough. They come across youths who are causing problems, and some of the youths tend to play them up because they know the PCSOs haven’t got many powers to deal with them. It’s like a barking dog with no teeth. I think it’s very frustrating for them.”

“They are in an invidious position. Those who want to get stuck in... are very frustrated making do with just common law powers... In some ways they’re better off with minimum powers – have to use verbal skills more. But the bottom line is, they have Surrey Police written all over them but the youngsters know they can take the piss out of them with a fair amount of immunity, albeit we’ll follow up, issue summons if necessary.”

The following example, given by one of the PCSOs suggests that this frustration and eagerness to become and, just as importantly, remain involved.

“Because of the limits to what I can do, I’m not so sure I’m a deterrent. I can’t stop anyone. The other day I had an incident with a stolen car. The radio had told me to keep an eye on it and wait for the recovery vehicle, and then someone tried to get in it. I yanked him out. He then ran off. The recovery vehicle came along and took the car. I felt I needed to put this in to the meeting we have with the Sergeants. They said ‘Well, you did it and that’s good but you were lucky it didn’t all go bent on you’. Which is true, because we have no protection and nothing else – but I just felt like, well, I have to do something, because otherwise all I have is the description of this guy. The big thing was that, if we were going to get into that sort of thing, there’d always be back-up. In real terms there isn’t always. A member of the public was watching. I didn’t think about anything other than ‘I’m here, wearing a uniform representing Surrey police, and I want to do something to stop this bloke from going off with this car which I’ve been told is stolen’.”

The interviewee from the council was also of the opinion that the powers were insufficient.

“Recently I was at a national conference on instant penalties for dropping litter. The first thing I thought was ‘Well the PCSOs won’t be able to do it because they can’t do anything confrontational’. That’s all minor stuff I’d’ve thought they could’ve dealt with.”

### *Parking powers*

Parking powers were thought necessary by one of the regulars on the basis that there were not enough other people to enforce them.

“To me, parking tickets would be a useful role for them. Decriminalisation of it is coming. Many traffic wardens have left. We don’t feel we should be tasking police officers with it, though we are now having to do this.”

The council representative was aware that there was a danger that PCSOs could become sucked into issuing tickets all day, but felt that the power was necessary. She also refuted the argument that issuing parking tickets would be at odds with the aim of reassurance.

“I understand people the public get upset [if told to move their car] but no more so than if they were a traffic warden. I wouldn’t see being a traffic warden as their key role but I do think that if they’re walking down the street they should be able to issue a ticket. It won’t alienate the public. And you can’t be everybody’s friend. In my role I have a lot of things I deal with the public on but there are things where I have to say ‘I’m sorry – that’s unacceptable’.”

One of the PCSOs described his current approach when asked by a member of the public to attend to a parking problem:

“One local keeps wanting me to give out tickets to cars that park on the pavement outside his house. I can’t. We have a note we put on – it doesn’t amount to a lot, but we do what we can within what we can do.”

At a one-day workshop for Surrey PCSOs and NSO Sergeants in January 2004, one PCSO outlined a strategy for addressing the problem of badly-parked cars. He described how a residential street suffered from this problem as it led from another road which formed a no through road which gave access to a large industrial estate. He had responded to residents’ concerns by issuing car-owners with semi-official notes impressing upon them that they had committed an offence and warning that to do so again could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued. These notes were fixed to the windscreen inside the small yellow-and-black polythene in which a genuine FPN would be distributed. The purpose of this was twofold. First, to the resident it would appear that the owner of the vehicle had been punished for the incident. Second, the owner would be relieved (and consequently better disposed towards Surrey Police) to discover that what had at first appeared to be a punishment was in fact a warning.

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

The state of joint between the police and the council was regarded by regulars as very healthy. The council were seen as very supportive, and for one, were “one of the best councils in Surrey for the police to work with”. Part of this was attributed to the borough’s

equipment and initiatives – an extensive CCTV system was in place, and a graffiti removal squad had recently been set up. Just as important, however, was reportedly both agencies' appreciation of where their responsibilities began and ended. The council interviewee added that historically she had worked very closely with the Borough Inspector.

### **Community Safety Wardens**

There were no CSWs in Runnymede. The council interviewee had a clear view of how useful the role would have been, and also of how the role differed to that of PCSOs.

“We didn't get them because we knew the funding would only be short-term. From what I know of them – I've seen them on a number of occasions at various meetings – they seem to get very very involved in the community. I think they have a much stronger community role than perhaps the PCSOs. They'll go round and visit old folks if they know there's nobody else visiting them. Whether PCSOs do it or not I don't know, but I don't think PCSOs should do that. We have a large percentage of the population over 65 – my experience of carrying out surveys with that group suggests it would take up too much of their time.”

### **Transport**

The council interviewee explained that her line manager had originally intended to obtain vehicles (Ford Kas) for the PCSOs and badge them up. This was then dropped after the perceived lack of consultation over the areas in which PCSOs were to work. She added that there was an obvious need for PCSOs to be on foot patrol, but also a need for transport, since walking to and from the police station could take some while.

### **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public's views**

One of the NSOs reported that the feedback he'd received anecdotally from members of the public was that they thought their PCSO was doing “a really good job”. This did not surprise the interviewee from the council, as she observed

“We knew that once we put people in the community, the community would love it. Every time we do a fear of crime survey – ‘More policemen on the beat!’”

This however conflates the role of PCSO with that of police officer, whereas, if a PCSO is perceived as different, this may in fact lead to even more positive feedback. One of the fieldwork visits provided an example of this, when researchers spoke with one of the volunteers at a local youth club. The volunteer knew the PCSO and felt that his involvement in the club's activities was better received than his NSO. This may have reflected less willingness to talk to a police officer than a civilian, albeit one in uniform; alternatively, it might have been because the youths were aware of the limits of the PCSO's powers.

One of the PCSOs, however, added that he had been taken aback by the negative reception he had received from some of the youths.

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

One regular was of the view that, although PCSOs were informing the public that they were not police officers, this was not always sinking in. He described a visit that a PCSO had made to his son's school, which was covered in the end-of-week school newsletter by an article on how the children had "met their local policeman". However, it was felt by others that most youths, in particular, were well aware of the distinction.

"Older members of the public think of them just as police officers. Putting them in a uniform so close to a police uniform, the public expect them to be so. No matter how you name them or badge them they see them as policemen. They expect them to be able to do things about anti-social behaviour. They don't expect them to walk past a car that's causing an obstruction or something and just ignore it. Youngsters have made it their business to know what PCSOs can and can't do because they want to know how far they can push them."

One of the PCSOs agreed with this comment. It was also supported during one of the fieldwork visits when, whilst out patrolling, the PCSO came across a youth of about 13 years old who reeled off the full job title without even being asked.

### **Media**

Regulars reported that they had seen little media coverage of the PCSO role. One recent front-page article in one part of the borough had been accurate and reported the job title correctly. Elsewhere, one of the NSOs said he enjoyed a good working relationship with the reporters and the editor on the local paper. He added:

"Historically the paper has been anti-police, but looking at it philosophically, their job is to report the unusual. I think they did do a bit of an underhand job when PCSOs started – 'They're brilliant – but they can't do much'."

### **Measurement of impact**

The NSO Sergeant explained that PCSOs' objectives focused on the number of intelligence reports filed. Three to five were expected each week. These could involve two broad categories of work: identifying community involvement and contacts, and dealing with diversity – reflecting the fact that some members of the community might have specialist needs or issues. He stressed this was based on objectives derived from headquarters, and done with risk assessment in mind. He had carried out two- and four-monthly reports with them.

One of the PCSOs added that he and his colleagues had spent time with the LIO who sifted the information submitted:

"We found out what is prioritised, what is counted. It's not so much every last bit of graffiti, every last street lamp that's out - it's about bits of information, who is suspected of what and who they are hanging around with. "

The council representative said that based on her involvement with the community and attendance at PCPG meetings, there was no question that the PCSOs had been effective in

terms of being visible and known to the public. This however was purely anecdotal. She added

“We...currently have a Fear of Crime survey out...went out at the start of July, response due back August. I gave the Divisional Superintendent a copy, asking him if he wanted any changes. He didn't put in one question about PCSOs. So I don't know how they're planning to measure them.”

### **Career development**

One of the PCSOs had no ambition to join the regulars either before or since starting as a PCSO. The other, however, had changed his views, and was now enthusiastic about applying.

“The more I've done this, the more I've thought 'yes'. Watching them, and the level at which they operate, I think I could achieve that.”

### **Funding and the future**

One of the regulars suggested that it would be appropriate and make matters simpler if the PCSO role were a council responsibility

“We've made PCSOs high vis[ibility, with a] jacket, police hat – but we could just as easy get the borough to pay the bill and they could do the same role perfectly adequately. If they were seen as borough wardens, there'd be more clarity.”

As stated, however, the council representative did not feel that all aspects of the CSW role should be undertaken by PCSOs. She added that the arrangements for future funding should be discussed in a consultative rather than prescriptive manner:

“We are annoyed...It wasn't 'The Government's cutting back the funding – can you offer any support?' It was 'You will be expected in 2004 to pay such and such an amount' – and my Chief Exec[utive] doesn't like to be told what he's doing with his budget. Relations with the police here are very good other than that, but there's always a little bit of conflict between borough and police when the police start saying 'You will do that'. We never would have bid for ten as we did originally, if we'd thought we would have to end up funding them.”



## **D DIVISION, NORTH-WEST SURREY: SURREY HEATH**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	2
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	2
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	3
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	1
RESIDENTS/TRADERS INTERVIEWED	3

*Documentation supplied (both produced by one of the PCSOs)*

- *Guide to dealing with bogus callers*
- *Advice on security for places of worship*

Surrey Heath borders both Hampshire and Berkshire. It has a mix of town centres, villages, industrial units and rural communities. It is home to a large hospital, several army barracks and the Royal Military Academy, creating unique policing issues. Two arterial roads and a motorway also run through the borough, contributing to these issues.

Surrey Heath is the fourth safest borough in the county. However, a Community Safety Study in 2000 identified several parts of the borough in which dissatisfaction and avoidance of certain areas were high. Antisocial behaviour emerged as one of five key priority issues, with over 700 abandoned vehicles, and over 400 complaints about flytipping recorded in the year to March 2001.

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

The two PCSOs had differing expectations about what the role would involve. One envisaged spending time interacting with the community, and dealing with NW, and Residents' Associations. The other had anticipated that she would largely be patrolling in public and acting as a reassuring presence.

There was an appreciation from some regulars that PCSOs' work would supplement the role of NSOs rather than directly replicate it, and that the role would increase coverage and visibility of persons in uniform. However, others said they had no preconceived notion of what the role would involve, as the following two comments show:

"To be honest [I had no expectations] because I wasn't originally going to get one. When I did get to know them and found out what they could do I thought it a really good idea. A lot of what I deal with day to day is not crime. For this reason, and to be controversial, I think there should be more PCSOs than police officers. People respect a uniform. I could really do with the help, and it would make police officers a lot more efficient."

"I didn't really know. I knew they were there for reassurance in the community, talking to residents, liaising – and any police officer [*sic*] on the streets is a big plus. But I had no specific expectations – new, so would have to develop."

## **Involvement in initial bid to Chief Constable**

One of the council interviewees described how the original bid was for six, though ideally eight had been required. It had been based on surveys of public opinion such as a Community Safety Study carried out in July 2000. Two wards, she explained, "we just couldn't ignore."

## **Knowledge of area beforehand**

Neither PCSO regarded time taken to notify them of their allotted area as a problem. One said she had learned about her area after speaking to local staff when she arrived. The other had found out a fortnight before joining the course, but even had the news reached her weeks later, she said

"...it meant nothing to me. I wasn't bothered – I knew I'd have to get to know people."

## **Explanation of powers beforehand**

Headquarters, reported one regular, had sent out emails about the role in advance, but these were brief. He felt the role should have been explained more fully, and in such a way that it would have been hard for the information to be ignored. One of the PCSOs concurred, and felt that even local managers had not been prepared.

This same regular admitted that he had not researched the role fully, but when he had learned that there would be no power to detain, no self-defence training and no protective equipment, he feared that PCSOs might be on the receiving end of abuse and taunts from youngsters.

### **Initial training**

Both PCSOs felt they had learned a lot from the initial training. It was intensive, but delivered flexibly. One commented that it had also changed her perception of how many facets the job could potentially entail, so much so that, in retrospect,

“...I don’t think you could possibly train somebody for this job. You might come into the job and think ‘This is what I’m expected to do’ – but it doesn’t work like that. It’s not always easy to draw the line between my job and my NSO’s. You can be good at talking to people, reassurance, everything else – but every PCSO has got a different job. My area is large. There are thirteen schools on the area, four major shopping areas, a hospital. To be honest, there aren’t enough hours in the day, and some days, you struggle. Makes it very difficult to prioritise everything. The hardest part is reassurance, visibility, being seen.”

CIS training was felt by PCSOs and NSOs alike to have been an obvious gap in the initial training, not just because it left them without certain information, but, as one regular pointed out, it also lowered their standing among police officers. PCSOs in Surrey Heath now had read-only access to the system, which was deemed sufficient.

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

One of the PCSOs was asked about this. She had already received conflict training in a previous job. It is unclear whether the NSO Sergeant was aware of this; however, he regarded this training as essential:

“If they’re in uniform with a police officer, and the police officer gets involved in an arrest, they’re not just going to stand back – the type of people we’re recruiting are going to be more helpful than general members of the public. But there is the possibility of conflict during the winter months, if on their own, 10-11 o’clock at night, dark, group of youngsters – and that’s when I don’t want them to be on their own.”

### **Arrival and integration**

One of the PCSOs had initially spent time patrolling with her NSO. She described his strategy thus:

“The NSO made sure I knew all the relevant people in the area – but was careful not to tell me who he particularly didn’t like, or who didn’t like him – so that I approached things without prejudice. We could appreciate that with some people I might find it easier than he had to develop a rapport.”

She added that her perception of the preparedness of other regulars for the PCSO role was that shortfalls tended to be due to their lack of availability rather than lack of enthusiasm:

“Some were ready, some weren’t. I’m more integrated with some than others. Sometimes because of different shift patterns, working in a different area – not because of unfriendliness. I think most know who I am and what I can do. I go straight to the Sergeant if there is a problem.”

The other PCSO had initially begun work in one area, but soon moved elsewhere due to difficulties in her relationship with her first NSO. As a result one of the two areas described by one of the council interviewees as most needing coverage in fact had no PCSO input for around three months. She admitted to having problems airing grievances but did not attribute this to doubts that her views would be disregarded.

“...you get the odd feeling from officers until they find out what we’re doing....But, I find it a little bit difficult to voice problems. Possibly because the only other PCSO in this borough has a smaller area and has got on top of a lot of the issues, so I don’t want to look as though I’m struggling.”

Feedback from regulars interviewed was positive. One felt that his PCSO had “done a lot better than I have at getting in touch with Council officials.” It was felt by most regulars that PCSOs had shown the initiative and ability to task themselves relatively quickly. As a result more information was coming to the attention of the police. As one put it:

“Most [activity] is now down to themselves. They know what’s going on, and now they have CIS [they] are reading the crimes. The community are passing them information as one of the first things PCSOs did here was contact them. PCSOs are getting a much wider picture than police officers and are more involved with other agencies.”

The council interviewee was satisfied with the way joint work had developed between PCSOs and council officers. She described the process thus:

“The police arranged a meeting for PCSOs and NSOs to come and meet council officers. This was within a couple of months of them starting. I’m in contact on a daily basis really, by phone or email. They tend to report things through to me – then I put them through to the council officers. I’m quite happy for them to do that – it’s not always easy to get hold of the other officers, as they don’t give out their numbers.”

She believed that integration had been easier in the borough as only two PCSOs were working there. She felt that had focused the role; in fact it had meant

“...they’re so swamped in what they’re doing that they haven’t been pulled onto other matters.”

### **Activities and deployment**

Issues in Surrey Heath in which it was felt appropriate for PCSOs to become involved were: youths’ anti-social behaviour; congregation in gangs; underage drinking; drug-dealing; shoplifting; on one estate, the dumping of rubbish and household items on various compounds; vandalism; including extensive damage to a school and arson to a school minibus; and vandalism, racial abuse and stone-throwing at a doctors’ surgery;

Ways in which PCSOs were and could be impacting on this included:

- Foot patrol
- Liaising with retailers, especially to encourage them to use their cameras and other surveillance equipment
- Liaising with off-licence staff over the sale of alcohol to young people
- Organising discos for young people
- Forging links with residents' associations
- Production of a guide on how to deal with bogus callers
- Provision of advice on security in places of worship
- Running a local football team
- Erection of a 'Teen Shelter' on one of the estates for youths to meet at
- Setting up an on-site advance centre for the public
- Arranging more activities for youths during the school holidays, especially in summer
- Gathering information on drug-dealing

It was appreciated by the Borough Inspector that, in time, PCSOs would need to be problem-solving – otherwise the public would start to question what they were achieving. However, the council interviewees stressed that

“The most important thing is that they’re out there on the street and the residents can see them. At the moment they are covering the areas that the CDRP want them to cover. It’s quite obvious where those places are, but it’s very difficult for one of the PCSOs in particular to cover the whole area. I don’t know that they could do a lot more, because I know for a fact that they’re doing far more hours than they should be.”

She went on to describe an example of the involvement of the PCSO in addressing a problem that had been a long-running concern of residents.

“For some years we’ve had an issue about kids congregating at school lunchtime in an area which is part of our ‘Safe Routes to Schools’ scheme. They stand outside a particular house and make a noise, and also gather there in the evenings. Motorbikes go up and down there. We had tried to get the school to keep them in at lunchtime. The PCSO has resolved the issues by going up there, speaking to the kids on the motorbikes, has issued warnings to them about riding them, and taken their details so that if they continue to be a nuisance she can impound [the bikes]. She’s put up a sign saying that police are aware of these activities in the area and that they won’t be tolerated. She’s engaged some of them into joining a football club. We got the odd reoccurrence, but not to the extent we were.”

For the PCSOs, the tension between dealing fully with an issue and making sure they were seen all over the area was not easily resolved, as one put it,

“...I can get involved in something for a week, and that’s then a week when 90% of [the estate] hasn’t seen me.”

## **Sufficiency of powers**

One of the PCSOs sensed that the range of powers available to PCSOs was likely to be broadened. This had affected her views on the attractiveness of joining the regulars:

“I think in two or three years we will have to have powers of arrest. At the moment they’re adequate, but...I do sometimes get frustrated. [There has been] lots of recent trouble on estate...I put in 90% of the work – got the intelligence, took the statements, but...I’ve not been involved in any of the arrests. I know they don’t want us to be alienated from the community, and I feel privileged that people tell me as much as they do, and I know I must remember what the role limitations are – but having said that, I would like to see jobs through.”

Two interviewees however, did not believe the limited powers were a drawback. One, a regular, admitted to having changed his mind; he had previously viewed reassurance work as valuable, and had acknowledged that more needed to be done, but had firmly believed that this went “hand in glove” with enforcement aspects of policing.

### *Power to detain*

There was no enthusiasm for this power among interviewees. One PCSO felt this would detract from the main thrusts of the role, and remarked:

“Can’t see how they can give you powers to detain if you don’t have something to detain with. It would take away from the job we’re doing.”

Similarly, one regular opposed having this power on the grounds that it would encourage PCSOs to be more confrontational.

### *Parking powers*

One of the PCSOs, though alive to the pitfalls of spending too much time on such work, felt a need to be able to issue tickets for parking matters.

“I know we don’t want to go down the traffic warden road, as it takes us away from community-based work, but we should have at least one ticket offence. When residents complain to you about a vehicle causing an obstruction where they live, you could do something about it rather than tell them you’ll report it. This happens a lot on my area. I usually warn the person that if they do it again they’ll get a fixed penalty notice – but I can’t issue it to them. It would come across as a lot more professional if I could ticket.”

However, one of the NSOs reported that he had changed his thinking on this and, now that he had seen the other types of work PCSOs could accomplish, he regarded parking powers as possibly distracting.

“I was concerned that they have no ticketing powers, and could see they’d end up in several situations where this could be done. [It] was explained as not being seen as

traffic wardens. In fact, not giving them ticketing powers has enabled them to do the other bits – talking to community.”

The council employee opposed the addition of parking powers, and had from the outset. She reported that parking in Surrey Heath was an issue that residents regularly complained about.

“[With] the backup from NSOs, what they’re doing is sufficient for what we’re expecting of them. I would not support them having parking powers at all. I wouldn’t want them to be seen as traffic wardens in any shape or form. To me they should be out there in the community dealing with more serious issues than that – things that the residents see as issues. As we only have two PCSOs, I really wouldn’t want them spending their time doing things like that. I think it would be a shame to change their role. I think the reassurance, engaging with the youngsters, is working.”

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

In Surrey Heath, the Council only funds a Community Safety Officer part-time. She works for 20 hours per week, of which five hours are funded by the police. This may explain the views of other interviewees about joint work, which were on the whole negative. One of the PCSOs commented

“The council are slower than I’d like. Swastika graffiti appeared on the estate – I had to chase it up five times and it took about a month before it was removed.”

Her colleague added that some areas appeared to receive more attention from the council than others – and hers fell into the latter category. Her NSO, although of the opinion that the council were willing, agreed with this:

“The intention’s there. They will make positive noises about things to residents, shopkeepers ourselves – for example, on CCTV – then nothing happens for months – then we’re told there’s no funding. The council try and make out they’re doing a wonderful job by chucking money at areas that haven’t got anything, rather than areas like ours, where more people have money.”

The final two regulars were more buoyant about the prospects for effective joint work following PCSOs’ introduction:

“Getting [the council] on board is an education process. Now we have the co-ordination of NSO, PCSO and a Sergeant running an area, we are better placed to discuss with the Council what they can do and what targets they should have. Have had meetings now so know name of who to contact about cars etc.”

“Historically they have been slow off the mark, but we’re hoping that’s changing. They have arranged for the two PCSOs to meet and put faces to names, and to learn what those departments require to get something done.”

## **Community Safety Wardens**

No CSWs are employed in Surrey Heath. One of the PCSOs was unclear on their job description but, given that she had a very large area, was open to the idea that a greater presence could make for better coverage and a swifter response to issues.

One of the council interviewees added that although there were no CSWs, two areas of the borough had private warden schemes. These were

“...voluntary and they are retired people mainly. They have cards for contacts in the council, and have a radio and are in contact with the NSOs if they observe somebody suspicious. It’s reassurance but with no powers at all. One has been around at least four or five years. I choose to have no involvement with them, and they’re not supported by the borough council. The CDRP are supportive, but don’t want them to have all the powers they would like. I don’t want them confused with the [CSWs] in Guildford.”

## **Transport**

Both PCSOs had experienced difficulties with travel arrangements to and from their areas. Both had a long distance to travel from the police station to the site. One had an especially large area to cover when she arrived there. Both had received bicycles – though no equipment to go with them, and were therefore keen on making use of a car. As one put it,

“It depends what’s on. If I have no meetings, I’ll get the bus there – which is good as it reassures the driver and passengers. If I’m working with the NSO, I’ll use a works car. If there are meetings, or there’s stuff to carry, I’ll take my car and hide it on the estate, and claim the mileage. We should be trusted not to ride around in a car all day – it’s boring and it doesn’t serve any purpose... Some PCSOs are ex-Surrey Police traffic wardens. They are still using police vehicles to get to their patch. You can’t give it to one and deny the others. If no-one has it and they want us to take statements, regulars’ll have to drop us off and pick us up – which they’re not going to like.”

The other PCSO had in fact been approached by representatives of a local company with offices in her area, whom she had introduced herself to previously with an offer of a sponsored car. However, it was reported that this had happened subsequent to her having an accident in her own vehicle, which had been used for work purposes without the appropriate insurance. She was therefore unable to use her own vehicle for work, and was prompted to search for sponsorship as she did not wish to work out of the satellite police station on her area.

## **Public feedback – local residents**

The three local residents were interviewed three months after their local PCSO began work. They had welcomed the PCSOs’ introduction; as one described, it was hoped that the role would enable coverage of those matters the NSO had insufficient time to tackle:



“...the NSO is like the elusive butterfly – he gets called off to other places. So I see the PCSO as being there when the police can’t be. [It would] give the police a chance to do things they should be doing.”

All three were pleased with what they had seen. One believed that she and other members of the public she knew had found the presence of the PCSO on her area to have “been above all expectations”. She pointed to the fact she was now receiving fewer calls from residents and traders complaining about problems in the area.

However, there was disappointment on the part of one interviewee that

“...the government as with so many things, start[ed] funding this but from the outset plan[ned] to scale their contribution down.”

Her opinion was that the local council should take the lead in future funding, on the basis that

“...a lot of the problems on estates like this fall back on the council. How much is spent on renewing or replacing vandalised things?”

### ***Distinction between PCSOs and police officers***

The three residents interviewed were clear that the PCSO and police officer roles were not synonymous. They were not convinced less interested residents would appreciate the difference, but one suggested that it may be no bad thing if the PCSOs were believed to have more power at their disposal than was actually the case.

“A lot don’t know where role starts and ends. And it’s better that way, because it strips their authority away. Not telling public of limited powers is a psychological thing. There was a time when elderly and vulnerable people wouldn’t go shopping at certain times of the day because of the kids hanging around there, throwing eggs and flour at the shop windows. An old people’s complex in one part of the estate even opened up their own shop rather than go to the store on the estate. Now they’re not worried – because they know [the PCSO] will be out patrolling during the day.”

### **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public’s views**

Feedback from the public was believed to have been positive. Mechanisms for gauging this were satisfaction at the simple fact of having seen someone in a uniform patrolling in their area, or at direct comments and phone calls from residents at the response they received in relation to a particular problem. The NSO Sergeant also felt that the experiences so far had demonstrate how important it was to have someone in addition to (or even other than) a police officer developing a dialogue with local people:

“Everyone, not just youngsters causing trouble - seems more willing to talk to PCSOs, perhaps because they haven’t got an enforcement role. Personalities are also important.”

One of his colleagues agreed, adding that most of the known offenders in his area “love [the PCSO] to bits - because she’s not there to give them hassle.”

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

The view of one of the PCSOs was that the public could make the distinction between her role and that of her NSO, because she had explained it to them. Other interviewees were less sure that the difference had been grasped, but as the following comment from an NSO shows, this was not necessarily considered a bad thing.

“To some extent [my PCSO] is mistaken for a police officer even when she says what she is, but that in some ways is good - they won’t then try and take advantage of her. It is hard for the public, especially with us working together at first.”

### **Media**

One of the PCSOs felt that good news stories were appealing to the local press. However, the council interviewee was not so sure:

“They like the problems. Recent vandalism on [one of the estates] got a lot of coverage. I’m not aware of any positive feedback stories in the media about PCSOs. I’m in the process of organising a marketing campaign, involving the police, the county council and ourselves. I’m going to get the press officers for all three to come up with a marketing campaign not just for PCSOs but for all partnership projects, which we are not getting recognition for, which is really, really worrying. I find them very frustrating. If we had better media coverage I think we’d get an outcry from areas that don’t have [PCSOs].”

### **Measurement of impact**

No formal measures of impact were in place in Surrey Heath. While she did not necessarily expect this, one of the PCSOs felt that more feedback was needed:

“I now receive feedback about progress with cases, but that’s because I went to the Inspector. I need to know why I’m taking a statement, for example. We have to do reviews with our Sergeant and if he says ‘Well what results have you got?’ I can’t say ‘Well I don’t know because they haven’t been given back to us’.”

She added that letters of thanks from members of the public were not always a good indication of impact. A lot of people, she had found, would not write a letter – she would only receive positive feedback from them if she happened to meet them whilst in the area.

The other PCSO again suggested that her impact was compromised because of the size of the area she was covering.

“I am enjoying it. There’s a lot going on in the areas, and a lot to get involved in. But I could do a lot more if I had a smaller area. You need a day just to walk around one of the estates on the area.”

For the council interviewee, the volume of information was also an indicator of impact - she remarked that the information being presented at CIAGs was now including a lot more detail on issues in areas as well as particular individuals.

It was suggested by one regular, though, that the best measure of effectiveness would be through a fear of crime survey, though he also thought this was difficult to measure and that people's views were likely to be fuelled by short-term factors.

### **Career development**

The council representative sensed that the two PCSOs particularly enjoyed the aspects of the role that enabled them to engage with the community, and that there would be fewer opportunities to do this as a regular, even as a PCSO, on account of abstractions and arrests. However, one of the PCSOs, who had not entertained the idea of joining the regulars before becoming taking her current role, had begun to reconsider. This stemmed from a feeling of only being able to address a given issue up to a point, whereupon her involvement ended. The example of the investigation into a spate of criminal damage and arson attacks on her area was a case in point:

“Now I can see what I'm able to achieve that perhaps I hadn't before thought I could do. I sometimes feel I'm doing 90% of a police officer's job out there and not getting the pay for it. So I'm seriously considering [joining the police] - in which case I'd feel that this job has failed.”

### **Funding and the future**

The council interviewee advised that

“At one point the borough council were going to fund an NSO in one of our town centres, but due to changes in that area – it became more residential – that's no longer needed. So at the moment they are very supportive of funding a PCSO instead. But nothing has been agreed.”

## **D DIVISION, NORTH-WEST SURREY: WOKING**

NUMBER OF PCSOs INITIALLY ALLOCATED	6
NUMBER OF PCSOs INTERVIEWED	5
REGULARS INTERVIEWED	7
COUNCIL STAFF INTERVIEWED	8
RESIDENTS/TRADERS INTERVIEWED	1

### *Documentation supplied*

- *NSO Sergeant's summary of PCSOs' and NSOs' progress towards divisional and force objectives – May 2003.*
- *Copy of NSO 12-month Performance Contract*
- *NSO Sergeant summary of PCSO supervised patrol*
- *Recorded crime figures for Sheerwater, provided by local PCSO and NSO.*

Woking covers an area of 25 square miles. Population growth between the Census periods 1991-2000 was estimated at 7.7%, one of the fastest growth rates for the county. The borough is prosperous, with a healthy economy (the employment rate is 68%) and good transport links to London (the rail station is the busiest in Surrey). House prices are high, but pockets of deprivation exist. Two of the borough's wards are among the three most deprived in the county. The Jarman Index identifies these two wards as having the highest healthcare needs in Surrey. One of these wards also has the county's largest ethnic minority population.

## **Initial thoughts and expectations before PCSO arrival**

It seemed to be well understood by regulars in Woking that the incoming PCSOs would have limited powers. This was not seen as a drawback, largely because, as the comments below demonstrate, it was considered an opportunity to attend to matters that NSOs rarely had the time to attend to, or else did not require their involvement.

“I thought it would be a good thing, simply because a lot of the things the public approach me about aren’t police matters, but I thought it would be a good thing in a minor way. The difference between satisfied and unsatisfied customers is giving them what they want. This is a busy crime area and I have my own agenda [of things to do]. So I was giving a lot less satisfaction on the non-crime matters. Being seen, speaking at meetings, committees and schools – that was reassurance – but they are big jobs and it was difficult. So I felt if someone else could handle some of the other stuff...”

[NSO]

“I expected PCSOs to deal with low-level problems – graffiti, kids being anti-social, reporting abandoned vehicles. Taking some of that away from us so we could deal with the high level stuff.”

[NSO]

“I knew they’d have less powers, but would do a lot of reassurance, community-based work, and hopefully good liaison with ourselves. The usual suspects are abandoned vehicles, graffiti, nuisance, and young people hanging around on street corners.”

[Council staff]

From the point of view of deterrence, one NSO also suggested that another uniformed presence with the Surrey Police crest on could only represent an improvement.

Bearing in mind the expectation that the role would involve developing a dialogue with potential uncooperative people, one of the PCSOs had not expected that a uniform would be required. That apart, her expectations at the outset were in line with the subsequent reality.

Tenancy Support Officers (TSOs) at Woking Borough Council had different expectations, based on their recollection of how much information had been provided to them about the role beforehand. It was believed that PCSOs would take on some of the traditional ‘bobby on the beat’ tasks; befriend and work with youths; act as a visible presence; and share information with TSOs. Some saw the role as very close to that of the CSW.

## **Knowledge of area beforehand**

The two PCSOs who were asked were happy that they had been given sufficient notice about where they would be posted before the job began.

## **Involvement in initial bid to Chief Constable**

One of the council interviewees explained that the initial bid to the Chief Constable was for seven PCSOs. This was done by herself with the Borough Inspector. Decisions about where to locate PCSOs were based on available documentation, the community safety projects that

were already running or planned, and, for good working practices, alignment with NSOs. They did not overbid, she added, but applied for what was thought realistic.

### **Knowledge of area beforehand**

One of the PCSOs commented that she had no knowledge of the area she was assigned to, but was informed that she would be based there one week before initial training began, which was content with.

### **Explanation of powers beforehand**

There was a general belief among regulars and PCSOs that the powers had been explained adequately before PCSOs arrived in Woking. One of the PCSOs had found that NSOs, and those from TPT and other non-community-oriented units were aware of what he could and could not do. The only interviewee who did not feel the role had been explained to him was the NSO Sergeant, though he added that at the time when this might have been done, he had no expectation that he'd be in his current post. In any case, he had considered it clear from the point at which he started what PCSOs' role and powers were.

TSOs reported that there had been no group meeting to outline the powers available. Instead, TSOs had learned the powers in a more ad hoc manner after the PCSOs had begun work, often relying on pre-existing relations with an NSO as a source of knowledge. Most seemed philosophical about this, though one was more critical, saying that

“even though we met them, they were unclear. We didn't know what autonomy they have on their areas, whereas they'd know we'd manage cases from the cradle to the grave.”

### **Initial training**

PCSOs were, on the whole, satisfied with the initial three weeks training. One would have preferred more input at that stage on the workings of the local authority, as it soon became apparent to him that at least half his work would involve collaboration with them.

CIS access was available post-training on a read-only basis. The NSO Sergeant considered its initial absence to be a major drawback, for two reasons:

“I task them each month to provide me with a nominal target – someone who's committed crime or caused problems on their area. That requires research on activities, associates, vehicles used – the best way to do that is by CIS. Also I task all of them with follow-up work after a report of a burglary on their area. That involves contacting local Neighbourhood Watch, conducting crime prevention surveys, which the NSOs were trained to do by my predecessor. I'm considering getting PCSOs trained in this. They will contact websites relevant to the neighbourhood, can go to the crime report and on the investigation section record what they've done so the investigating officer can see who did what. If they can do the CIS they won't have to ask the NSO to update it for them.”

### *Conflict training and vulnerability*

Two regulars felt there was a need for PCSOs to receive training in self-defence. They both stressed that only a certain level of ability was required:

“Not to the degree that they’ll go haring down the street after people, but there have been a couple of occasions when PCSOs on patrol have been confronted by violent individuals. They only came away ok because of their gift of the gab. Needs some basic self-defence – ‘hands on, get back’. Can see why it was not addressed in three weeks – new role, there’s going to be trial and error, things we haven’t thought of. You’d spend all your time planning and less implementing.”

“There are two kinds of conflict. One – we impose it on a member of the public. Two – the member of the public starts it off. Because of the second case, they should have some kind of training on how to break someone’s hold on you long enough to use your radio or alarm.”

Two NSOs felt that the need for conflict management training was greater for PCSOs working in the town centre – one even considered it a “desperate” requirement. One remarked that even if back-up was quick to arrive, “being on your own even for two minutes is a long time.”

One of the PCSOs argued that although she had been happy enough to receive conflict management training, she was confident that using her radio would result in the timely arrival of back-up. She had never felt vulnerable, but one of her colleagues did not share these views. She believed that impracticalities of the uniform contributed to this.

“I absolutely hate going out after dark. I feel very intimidated. At night I feel threatened by people who aren’t a problem during the day. It might be that Surrey Police need to give us some gas (not an ASP). Our uniforms are not user-friendly. Big bulky three-quarter length fluoro – one size only – no good in summer and your belt with your radio on is underneath it. And we are told to get straight on radio if we’re in trouble - state zero. Police officers’ jackets have pockets at the side which you can reach through. Two seconds and you’re in.”

One council employee commented that feelings of vulnerability were understandable, although another felt that this was not inevitable. He pointed to the PCSO he had worked with as an example, saying that she had “a fantastic relationship even with the residents that you think are a bit dodgy.”

### ***Further training***

In addition to conflict management training and CIS use, PCSOs had received subsequent tuition in operating, and training, others to operate the mobile CCTV van; a five-day course on diversity at HQ; a course on behaviour in the workplace course; and SPIKE training. Training had also taken place on ASBOs, jointly for PCSOs, magistrates, the CPS and members of YOTs. TSOs did not report that they were involved in this, although one said he would not have expected joint training with PCSOs as a matter of course.

## Arrival and integration

PCSOs were content that they had been fully integrated into the Neighbourhood Specialist Team. Suspicion that the role represented ‘policing on the cheap’ had been kept to a minimum, reported the NSO Sergeant. One NSO reportedly had voiced concerns, but now saw the full benefits and “would not be without his PCSO”. Another said that he had felt no negativity, and heard none from anyone else, which he took as a good sign as “police officers are the first people to moan when they’ve got something to moan about”. He surmised that certain police officers would make an effort to understand and support the role, while others would not think they needed to know about it.

PCSOs were also happy that they had been allowed the chance to hold their own PCSO meetings every two months, in the presence of the NSO Sergeant. One felt the local set-up was “very forward-thinking”, which had made for a smooth accommodation of the new role.

One of the NSOs described her strategy for familiarising her PCSO with her area:

“She could’ve gone alone a lot sooner than she did. At first we were constantly together – then I’d do the same shift but different streets. To be fair they need at least a month. I had to be satisfied that [the PCSO] could recognise someone dangerous at sight. As civilians [PCSOs] are very trusting – so if someone smiles and is nice, they think they *are* nice. To keep safe they need to know that what you see in front of you isn’t necessarily what you’ve got in front of you. She’s very bubbly and lively and gets to know people very quickly. I’ve found she’s taken a lot of the strain off, and I find I’m happier in my job. She is more than capable and now I wouldn’t swap her for anything.”

The council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator explained the procedure for dovetailing PCSO work with that of the authority:

“When [PCSOs] first came in, training sessions were held here in February. We had one whole day multi-agency. I gave one of the presentations. Someone from Woking [borough council] environmental health also presented, mainly on licensing, Pubwatch, late night entertainment etc – but also general noise nuisance, bonfires. All NSOs and PCSOs were invited. I did the press and the PR on the same day too. They were also given information to take away on contacts. Since then, I’ve been to PCPG meetings – which they’ve attended. All information exchange is done under an information sharing protocol. The NSOs have developed good relationships with our local TSOs (ie Housing Officers). TSO patches don’t match NSOs’ exactly, but there is a good connection. Because of this they’ve been able to pass that onto PCSOs, who have really just piggy-backed on that. Therefore they have naturally come to know who their local TSO is. There are joint visits to tenants where problems have been reported.”

One TSO felt that the NSO and PCSO he had dealt with worked “fantastically well together”. Two others speculated that the NSO teams, if not other sections of the police, would welcome PCSOs’ assistance. One of these, however, added that although efforts had been made when PCSOs arrived, more could be done to integrate TSOs with police in a wider sense.

“I should imagine...a police officer who is saved doing a lot of dross by somebody else would be grateful. PCSOs came here, and there was a general introductory chat on



each others' role, soon after they were in post. There were no negatives. I think we appreciated being asked at the beginning. But we're hazy on how the police work – only a few of us are aware of that through working with them on certain issues. We do get lists of local officers, changes in personnel, but we've always argued, 'Where's the family tree?' We have had the same trouble with social services."

### **Activities and deployment**

Issues in Woking which it was felt appropriate for PCSOs to address included: graffiti; youths hanging around; underage drinking; litter; anti-social behaviour; inconsiderate riding of motor scooters; vandalism; dealing with victims in the aftermath of a crime; seasonal concerns, such as the throwing of eggs and flour at people's property by youths at Halloween; and offering crime prevention advice.

Initiatives in which PCSOs had been or would be involved in order to address these problems included:

- Foot patrol
- Liaison with representatives of other agencies
- Making the acquaintance of local residents
- Helping to establish and increase membership of NW schemes
- Implementation of a drinking ban in certain streets
- Participation in a sponsored walk to raise money for a community action group's summer fair
- Tree planting to increase the attractiveness of the environment
- Distribution of letters to shops and supermarkets advising against the sale to youths of food stuffs which might be used to cause criminal damage
- Obtaining a grant for the refurbishment of a vacant shop, and transforming this into a multi-purpose community facility
- Reassurance visits to victims and other residents offering advice on new lighting and increased privacy

Interviewed three months in, the NSO Sergeant was clear that a principal goal of PCSOs was to reassure by addressing anti-social behaviour, and that the job was not merely about visibility. One of the PCSOs agreed, saying that "a lot of this job is reassurance – talk, talk, talk". The NSO Sergeant was anxious that taskings be in line with divisional priorities. After nine months, however, he had started to feel that other personnel needed a greater appreciation of PCSOs' brief.

"Lately PCSOs and NSOs have been given a lot more jobs from our Tasking and Coordinating Unit. That needs to be addressed. The TCU have jobs outstanding, they don't know who to send them to. I've been intervening and saying these aren't within the team's remit, but a lot are still slipping through the net... We're still defining exactly what their responsibilities are."

Several TSOs had noticed differences since PCSOs had begun work, in terms of

- increased uniformed physical presence; resurrecting NW schemes;
- fewer youths congregating in public;

- greater environmental activity in the form of clean-up days – especially in the borough’s reassurance site;
- more on-street discussion with residents, resulting in a greater likelihood that tenants would be listened, given advice, and consequently report incidents;
- more efficiency around notification of abandoned vehicles;
- an increased possibility that evidence would be effectively gathered which the TSO could subsequently use if taking a tenant to court.

One TSO firmly believed that, in tandem with the police and with an increase in the number of security guards, PCSOs had played a large part in the improvements in the area for which he was responsible. One agreed that the impact had exceeded his expectations, partly his views at the outset had not been accurate. He had also been struck by the variety of work they had become involved in.

“I’ve been pleasantly surprised by the PCSOs’ ability to work in a more police-oriented role. I expected them to be like CSWs, and where I live [outside of Surrey] I’ve been a little bit disenchanted that wardens haven’t been able to have that impact. I know two PCSOs – have regular contact. One does a lot of community engagement – establishing residents’ association while I try to feed in tenancy participation initiatives. We are trying to get the residents’ group to also function as a NW group – sustains residents’ interest as crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour gives them something to get their teeth into. With the other PCSO we’ve done more practical stuff – lots of joint visits with the NSO also, to the two parties in an almost intractable neighbour dispute.”

Some TSOs had had less to do with PCSOs. One had had not contact at all, although this reflected the fact that her post was part-time and focused on a gypsy site where no PCSOs worked. She believed however that some presence would be useful, and that a PCSO would be just as appropriate a way of achieving this as a police officer. Prospective involvement in ASBOs was welcomed by TSOs, as “they’re as well-placed as anybody to know who the troublemakers are”.

### **Sufficiency of powers**

On the whole, PCSOs were happy with the powers they held. One felt that some grey areas had existed, but these had now been cleared up to his satisfaction. Another was broadly happy, but said she would like to be able to stop vehicles in more circumstances than she was currently able to.

The council’s Community Safety Co-ordinator felt that the powers were sufficient for what PCSOs were being asked to do. One NSO, however, felt that, although PCSOs would find it easier than NSOs to find the time to carry out this work, PCSOs were limited in what they were able to achieve,

“...and I think that needs to change. The main thing the public want is someone to turn up on the doorstep when they’ve a problem. Police haven’t always been able to turn up – PCSOs can.”

Many TSOs admitted they did not have a full grasp of exactly what a PCSO could do. Given the activities [listed above] that PCSOs had become involved in, TSOs generally felt their capabilities satisfactory. Indeed, one felt that

“In some ways it’s better that they don’t have any [powers]. They’re not there to enforce so you don’t get the same “anti-“ response. As long as they’re there to pick up the gossip that goes round.

Some frustration did exist, however. One TSO wished to see an easier system for the removal of abandoned vehicles, adding

“I asked one PCSO to do a background check on a vehicle I suspected to be abandoned. But he says he can only do that if he can see for himself evidence that the car has been abandoned, and he can’t just take my word for it.”

Another was keen that PCSOs’ powers be identical to those of the police.

### *Parking powers*

Opinion was split as to whether or not PCSOs should enforce parking issues. One NSO believed this was a function they should perform:

“I know they didn’t want them to be traffic wardens, but now they’re used to the role as a whole, they should have powers to deal with traffic problems, FPNs, etc. At the moment they’re getting asked and there’s not really a lot they can do. To an extent I think they might let the public down as a result – but I haven’t seen that happen too much.”

On the other hand, as the following two comments from regulars make clear, there was a reluctance for PCSOs to address parking problems as it was felt to be at odds with other, more important work.

“If PCSOs want to give out parking tickets – I don’t want that. It takes them away from their core business.”

“Some [PCSOs] are ex-traffic wardens and may miss those powers, but issuing parking tickets will make you more enemies than anything, and there are people who can do those things – no need for extra people to do them. The point is for the community to like the PCSO, to give information, and feel reassured by her presence.”

This interviewee added that the police received a number of complaints about parking, and that

“...if the control room knew [PCSOs] could issue them, they’d be out doing them all the time. Don’t know where local government are in terms of what will be done after April 2004. So at the moment we are getting NSOs [who do have the power] to give out tickets once or twice a week for a couple of hours. Some aren’t happy but it’s bite the bullet.”

He added that it was still unclear what local government would arrange in relation to parking after responsibility passed from the police in April 2004. The council's Community Safety Co-ordinator added that internal discussion was taking place, but she had not been involved in it. Another regular said he would have welcomed PCSO assistance with parking issues, but on balance felt it had been wise not to do this – and he did not feel the uncertainty surrounding the issue had done any lasting damage.

“...it'll soon be decriminalised anyway, and we've got away with it so far - a little bit longer isn't going to hurt. I do favour something unofficial to appease the public, but the day they give out a FPN for parking illegally is the day they lose all the goodwill they've made...FPNs means you're into the realms of court appearance.”

One PCSO, who had suffered verbal abuse from a member of the public (and in full view of other residents) for not taking action against parking, agreed that some form of unofficial warning would be welcome, although this was believed of little value by one NSO, who felt the public would soon realise how insupportable unofficial warnings were. The TSO who shared this PCSO's area agreed that the abuse had made her feel parking powers, especially outside schools, were required. Another TSO also suggested this would be a useful, although a third remarked that the need was greater in some areas than others, and felt there was a danger that PCSOs could devote a disproportionate amount of time to parking matters.

### **Information sharing and joint work with the borough council**

The state of joint work between the council was described positively by most interviewees. One of the NSOs saw it as an advantage that council staff had access to the PNC, enabling them to discover ownership of the vehicle in cases of abandoned cars – although he and a colleague had some reservations about how quickly vehicles were moved, particularly those parked dangerously. The following two comments, the first from another PCSO, the second by an NSO, stressed that joint work was essential and could make an impact even in areas where it had historically been hard to effect improvement.

“We need the council and others to help clear things up. In my first week here I saw racist graffiti in the high street. I noted where it was – on a road sign, on a bus shelter, in a phone box – then enquired of local shops and shoppers if they'd seen anything, I drew a blank but then took some photos, got in touch with the borough council, Adshel (who do the bus shelters) and BT via the county council. Within four days it'd all gone.”

“The area includes a large council estate where we've had problems for years. Together with the local housing officer we've come up with an action plan – to set up NW, allow input from public, arrange local events etc. A Community Action Group was set up. We intend to use the action plan as starting point for work on other estate. . The area never used to be somewhere where people would talk. Now we've managed to tap into that.”

It was acknowledged that familiarisation with appropriate contacts in each role was still developing, and for this reason a training day for NSOs, PCSOs, and borough council staff was planned for June 2003.

Interviewed in December 2003, one of the PCSOs remarked that

“...in last few months especially, [there has been] a hell of a lot of partnership work with the community environmental officer. We’ve walked around the area together once a month, identifying abandoned vehicles, graffiti, rubbish, the need for more litter bins. There aren’t as many environmental and social problems as there were since this community safety partnership work.”

He felt that problems had increased since joint work had been vigorously pursued.

One PCSO recounted how the council’s Tenancy Officers had “bent over backwards” to assist her. The information sharing protocol, set up after the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, was seen as important in this – as one TSO put it,

“With the protocol we are able to exchange information if we need to. It could be a stumbling block if it wasn’t in place – ‘what can or can’t I say to a PCSO?’”

Another TSO felt that, historically, relations between police and the council in the borough had been productive, with a high level of information exchange. He contrasted this with the London area, where, as a Housing Officer, he recalled feeling “as guilty as the tenants when the police came along”. One colleague agreed – he said he had worked in several areas of Woking borough and had enjoyed good relationships with the police in all of them. Three TSOs were less convinced, however: one felt the volume of communication had been especially high since PCSOs’ arrival, although in the past the willingness of the police to pass on information had varied. Another believed that the council tended to make the running on such matters:

“If we need to know anything we are the ones who make the first move, they’re not very forthcoming in contacting us, unless they want something, whereas for just general information, if we hear something we will let them know.”

### **Community Safety Wardens**

No CSWs operate in Woking. The council interviewee explained that an application had been made, using a previous successful bid by another borough as a basis. Woking’s bid was unsuccessful; few reasons were offered beyond the fact that it was too expensive. There was some dismay that another borough secured further CSWs in a second round of CSW bidding. It was reported that councillors in Woking were keen to see CSWs taken on.

### **Public feedback – local residents**

Some feedback was obtained from a resident on one of the estate visited by the research team. This was anecdotal, though the accompanying PCSO (and the resident himself) commented that he took a keen interest in community safety matters and was well-versed with the mood of the area. He felt that

“Personally I think they should’ve been sworn in with the same powers and privileges as a police officer. I don’t think they should be out on the streets without that power. It’s not fair on them. If they’re going to support the police they’ve got to be at least on a par with the police. We hear an enormous amount from the police themselves about lack of manpower, and inability to fully police certain areas. There is a perception that

they cannot have extra police officers, but suddenly they come up with this additional role of PCSO.“

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

The resident was interviewed in May 2003 - relatively soon after PCSOs had been introduced. In this context it is perhaps unsurprising that he believed public understanding of the differences between the two roles to be limited.

“What the PCSO role has done at the moment is cause an element of curiosity. People want to know who is this individual who is neither a police officer, nor a traffic warden, but looks like a police officer, but seems to be doing some of the work of a traffic warden. They can’t make up their mind what a PCSO is. The public need to identify what you are.”

### **Police, PCSO and Council staff accounts of the public’s views**

Most of the feedback reported from the residents in Woking was positive. Regulars said that letters, emails and thank-you notes had been received, and that use of a bicycle by one PCSO had been especially well received. The interviewee from the council stressed that feedback immediately before and since PCSOs’ arrival had been encouraging, given the difficulties that had existed historically between residents and the authorities in some areas of the borough.

“Anecdotally we’ve had good comments from residents. They are getting a message from a reassurance point of view that there is more visible policing. [One area]used to have a very angry Residents’ Group around 3 ½ years ago – angry with all agencies. We’ve come a long way since then, partly because NSOs were appointed, [council] officers were then appointed – we could show effective joint working, and demonstrate to residents we’d listened to them. Any agency needs continuity – the public can be very fickle. Every time you change staff you undo a lot of good. We could not have got NW running before these relationships were developed. Now it really is active. There’s only so much the NSO can do though. With the extras PCSO support so much more can be done.”

Most TSOs sensed that the public were well-disposed towards PCSOs, although they had not directly asked people, nor had they attended any CIAGs when PCSOs had also been present. One however suggested that most of the public were ambivalent about the effect PCSOs were having, and non-committal about community affairs in general.

“If you take a representative sample from those who attend meetings, you’re getting an unrepresentative sample of the wider community. It’s a fundamental mistake to think that people are interested in being, say, a council tenant. They’re not. They’ve signed the tenancy agreement – all they want is to shut their door and for us to go away.”

### *Distinction between PCSOs and police officers*

One PCSO described how, when he had encountered youths who had referred to him as “not a proper policeman”, he would show them his list of powers but at the same time make it

clear what he could demand of them. His colleague also thought the distinction was understood as there had been coverage in the local paper. Regulars was less sure; the similarity between the two uniforms was felt to be confusing, and one said this

“Worrie[d her] greatly, as [the PCSO] might get involved in something she wouldn’t necessarily want to, because a member of the public wonders why she isn’t dealing with it.”

More education was felt necessary by several regulars, otherwise the public could mistake PCSOs’ inability to address certain issues for unwillingness. One of the PCSOs outlined the number of meetings he attended – residents’ associations, CIAGs, NW Co-ordinators – which acted as forums for such education. However, some regulars acknowledged that uncertainty in the minds of some members of the public (specifically motorists and youths) was no bad thing.

One council interviewee felt the public were satisfied with PCSOs to date, but acknowledged that issues did exist:

“I’m not sure [the public] fully understand the difference between PCSOs and NSOs. If there’s an expectation that there’ll be an arrest – there might be a problem. That comes over time with education. A couple have said it’s policing on the cheap. But once you explain it was Government money not available for policing, and you explain what they can do, they seem quite happy as it’s still in addition to what they would normally have. But the more important message is reassurance at the moment – which I think is already happening. The public are more informed at PCPG meetings – partly because they’ve had a lot of contact with their PCSO. I felt the public were comfortable with what they were seeing being done – though if you question them strongly they might struggle.”

TSOs were divided on whether or not the public distinguished between the two roles. For most, unawareness of the distinction was not felt to be a serious problem. One, however, believed that residents would wonder why PCSOs held few powers and, as a result, would question why they existed at all.

*Will the public more readily offer information to a PCSO than to a police officer?*

Some distinction was drawn by interviewees on whether or not PCSOs were more likely to receive information from the public than Neighbourhood Specialists would be. One of the regulars felt that part of the reason for employing PCSOs in the first place was that the public would find them approachable, because “the public don’t always think we are”. One PCSO however did not feel this was related to status; instead, she said, it simply reflected personalities – and some members of the public would be more (or less) comfortable speaking to her because of her personality than they would to her NSO. This PCSO, and one of the TSOs, suggested that the public would also forget, or choose to ignore that the PCSO was a figure of authority, and thereby pass more information their way.

A greater distinction was drawn between PCSOs and non-community oriented roles such as TPT, largely because the public were believed to value the day-to-day contact with the same PCSO which would not exist with a TPT officer.

## Media

Historically, the local press in Woking were reported by both the NSO Sergeant and one of the council representatives to be positive when it came to reporting community safety issues. The former believed “we’ve got more from the media than they have from us”. Success stories had been focused upon, and PCSOs had received coverage which was both favourable and accurate.

## Measurement of impact

No formal mechanisms for assessing impact of PCSOs were in place in Woking. The council interviewee acknowledged that the importance of this, but felt it premature to be attempting to measure it. She explained that demonstrating the success of initiatives was also problematic when making a case for more funding. The borough, she continued, used a Citizen’s Panel around six times a year to gauge public attitudes to crime and disorder.

The NSO Sergeant provided copies researchers with a copy of his account of an afternoon spent with one PCSO as she conducted foot patrol. He was satisfied that she had established herself within the community and had built up a degree of trust from many residents. He explained that he had given NSOs and PCSOs a target of twenty pieces of intelligence to be submitted per month. He accepted that this was primarily quantitative, but added that they were also required to keep a descriptive account (effectively a diary) of their activities, which he felt also offered a measure of the standard of information being gathered.

Interviewed again ten months after the first PCSOs arrived, the NSO Sergeant went on to describe how recent developments had made measurement even less straightforward.

“It all changed about a month ago. With NIM, dissemination of 5x5s to other parties is totally restricted. That includes supervisors. Bizarre. Don’t agree with the guidelines. Any intelligence my staff have, I don’t get to see – it goes straight to the local intelligence unit. They can circulate this round the system, so I get to see it that way by email, though that too goes against the grain of NIM, and is disclosable in any court case”.

He added that locally a solution had been found

“...by not calling it intelligence. Instead the information goes on NSOs’ and PCSOs’ spreadsheets, like an electronic pocket notebook, accessible to me and any member of management”.

One NSO Sergeant reported how restrictions on the dissemination of intelligence reports had threatened his capability to judge the value of information gathered by PCSOs. Other supervisors reported this problem, but its existence in even one area requires clarification. If NSO Sergeants cannot, or think they cannot routinely have sight of information obtained by those whose objectives they are setting, either the terms of NIM, or the managerial expectations placed on supervisors need to be unambiguously spelled out.

Anecdotal judgments from NSOs on PCSOs’ impact were favourable. One said of a PCSO with whom she had worked temporarily that she “could not have done half the stuff without him”. Another described the experience as “positive”. One produced crime figures for the



area showing that in October 2003, some seven months after the PCSO's arrival, the crime rate was lower than in any month since 1999.

Most TSOs, especially those who had had more direct dealings with PCSOs, felt the role had made things easier for them. One, who admitted his contact had been less extensive, believed the role fell between more than one stool, and that impact would inevitably be diluted as a result.

“If you’ve got someone in limbo-land between being a community worker and a police officer, how can they integrate themselves into the community? They’re not seen as someone [the community] can trust. You deal with an outreach worker, say about drugs, they will not breach confidence. There’s a clarity of objectives, and I don’t think that exists with the PCSO job. So I’d say: why have this? It just seems spurious. It would be like having Housing Officers who collect rent and never go out.”

### **Career development**

Regulars were keen to encourage PCSOs who wanted to join the police to submit applications. PCSO responses illustrate the variety of choices open to them. One was intending to do join, having taken a good look at the police service through working as a civilian in other roles besides his current one. Another did not rule out the possibility, but felt she had so far only explored a fraction of the possibilities afforded by the PCSO role. A third had no desire to apply, finding the varied shift patterns and lengthy training offputting. One of the TSOs saw no problem with the PCSO role becoming a stepping stone into the police, as long as PCSOs were replaced

Interviewed around one month after the borough's YPCSO had come in to post, the Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator felt the role could be valuable given the difficulty the local Youth Service had experienced in recruiting and retaining staff. She saw the role as needing to address youth congregation, and look at ways to engage with and assist them. She had yet to meet the YPCSO, but understood that the intention was for her to be introduced at schools throughout the borough. She also anticipated that the YPCSO would be involved in some projects, such as the youth element of drugs and alcohol. Her expectation was that PCSOs would still be involved in the identification of youth problems, which they might then hand over to the YPCSO.

### **Funding and the future**

The NSO Sergeant was clear that PCSOs' jobs were not there at the expense of those of police officers, and felt more PCSOs would be a welcome addition.

One of the council interviewees felt that the initial concern had been that the role was introduced “quite sneakily”, with the Government's reduced funding not made clear. – reduced funding over subsequent years not made clear. She believed there was enthusiasm within the Council to fund the role, but underlined that “it’s not about what officers want, it’s whether the councillors will vote that.” The likely increase in the Council Tax, and the police precept portion of it – would not make this palatable. An added worry, voiced by one TSO, was that some members of the public would never see the value in paying for PCSOs through the Council Tax because no PCSO operated in their area.

## **Role here to stay?**

Most NSOs and PCSOs felt the role should continue. For some this was because the process of building up community contacts could be painstaking, making any decision to withdraw the role at this stage premature. Others spoke of the noticeable increase in information flow from the public, and the proof this offered that the public would not be pleased to see the role vanish.

The Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator believed the role needed to stay in order to develop more efficient intervention at a local level in which the public could have confidence. This meant not only the role staying, but those in post not being redeployed elsewhere – a point which also applied to NSOs:

“Teaming [PCSOs] up with NSOs has given strength to both roles... Good work is also beginning with our staff. We recently started borough Tasking and Co-ordinating Group meetings. But the only way to sustain this is by staff staying in post, otherwise 1) you lose residents' trust and 2) you don't have someone who really learns about their patch and knows whether it's changing. The police are now beginning to get that in Surrey in most areas, but they have had problems – they had to recruit at a rapid rate following expansion to include former Met areas, and it takes two years to train, so more experienced officers got moved around the county. It's a problem, especially for partnership work.”

TSOs were more divided on whether the role should stay. Some had already appreciated the way PCSOs had worked with them, and could see the possibilities of future joint work, especially around the collection of evidence towards ASBO applications. Two others felt the increased visibility alone was justification for retaining the role. The negative response of a so far enthusiastic public if the role was withdrawn was, again, flagged up. On the other hand, one could see no possibility of the role continuing unless the police funded it themselves. Another rejected the idea that the role was providing the public with what they wanted, and felt the sometimes deliberate blurring of the boundaries between NSO and PCSO to be disingenuous.

“They're saying it releases police officers' time to do other things, but if you're looking at what the community is asking for... I would say, my gut reaction is they'd rather see a blue light, or an actual officer with all the back-up and the powers and the status. The issue for me will be: why go to that effort, why go to that money, why go to that training if, at the end of the day, you can't do it? You do it by being a fully-fledged, fully-briefed, fully-signed up pc. We know as Housing Officers, you can't call bluff. If a Housing officer says “I'm going to refer you to court for non-payment of rent”, they do it. If you're trying to manage a community, social control, and be agents of the state, and then have no kick... Where's the worth?”

## **APPENDIX B: TANDRIDGE SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

Dear Resident

Your household is one of 3,000 randomly selected to complete the enclosed survey on community safety and the fear of crime. The Tandridge Community Safety Strategy 2002 – 2005 has four strategic aims:

To reduce crime and anti-social behaviour  
To lessen the fear of crime and disorder.  
To reduce drug and alcohol related crime and disorder  
To make travel safe

The audit of crime and disorder carried out in the District in 2001 identified that the fear of being a victim of crime is relatively high and this was confirmed in the subsequent consultation exercise. Therefore, we are carrying out a fear of crime survey to establish the views of local residents on issues of community safety, crime and victimisation.

While we are fortunate to live in a low crime area, we can all work together to make Tandridge even safer. This survey will give us information which can be used locally to tackle crime and the fear of crime and target our resources more effectively.

Please take the time to complete this survey. Your views are important to us and you will be helping the fight against crime in this area. The survey is anonymous and the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. A reply-paid envelope is included for your convenience.

We would be grateful for the return of your completed Survey as soon as possible.

**Tandridge Community Safety Partnership**

## **RESIDENTS SURVEY**

### **COMPLETING THE SURVEY**

Your household is one of 3,000 which has been randomly selected to take part in this survey. The survey should only take a few minutes to complete and the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Please complete the survey in ink and return as soon as possible in the reply-paid envelope provided.

Thank you for your time in completing the survey.

**TANDRIDGE COMMUNITY  
SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

**‘Working together to make Tandridge safer’**

## YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

The following questions relate to how you feel about your immediate neighbourhood and also your views on the wider area. Your answers should help us identify those parts of the District that would benefit from targeted initiatives.

1 How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?

Very satisfied ☐

Satisfied ☐

Dissatisfied ☐

Very dissatisfied ☐

2 Are any of the following a problem in your neighbourhood.

*Please tick one box on each line.*

	Not a problem	Small problem	Big problem	Not applicable
Street lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standard of housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rubbish/litter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young people hanging about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Empty, derelict or boarded up buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic/parking problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dogs (mess, noise, loose)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tramps/drunks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neighbours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drugs (dealers or users)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loud / fast cars or motorcycles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loud music or parties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Abandoned vehicles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graffiti	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**3** How safe/unsafe do you feel when you are in the following situations?

*Please tick one box on each line.*

	Very safe	Fairly safe	A bit unsafe	Very unsafe	Never in situation	Don't know
Walking outside in Tandridge after dark	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walking outside in Tandridge during daylight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alone in your home after dark	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alone in your home during daylight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driving your car alone during daylight in Tandridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driving your car alone after dark in Tandridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walking alone in the shopping area after dark when the shops are shut	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walking alone in the shopping area during daylight, when the shops are open	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4** Are there any places in Tandridge that you try to avoid? *If Yes please list below.*

Use an extra sheet if necessary. If you can, explain why and at what time of day or night

**PLACE 1**

Why?

Time of day or night avoided.

**PLACE 2**

Why?

Time of day or night avoided.

## LOCAL POLICING

This section is designed to gather your views on local enforcement officers generally and identify specific occasions when you may have come into contact with the Police.

**5** During the last year Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) have begun working in Tandridge.

Please say how strongly you agree with the following statements about them.

*Please tick one box on each line.*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
They are very visible and make me feel safer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not think they have enough powers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it easy to distinguish between PCSOs and police officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have never had any dealings with PCSOs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would be more likely to provide information to a PCSO than to a police officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6** If you have personally been the victim of crime in Tandridge, were there any times when you knew who did it?

Yes ☐ No ☐

**7** If there were any times when you knew who had committed a crime against you in Tandridge, did you always tell the police?

Yes ☐ No ☐

**8** If there were any times when you knew who had committed a crime against you in Tandridge and you did not report it, can you explain why you did not or could not tell the police?

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**9** Taking everything into account, would you say that the police do:

A very good job ☐

A fairly good job ☐

A poor job ☐

A very poor job ☐

Don't know ☐

### CRIME PREVENTION

**All of us have a role to play in keeping our community safe. It will be helpful to assess what precautions, if any, you routinely take.**

**11** These are things that people do to make them feel safe. How often do you take the following measures, if you can? *Please tick one box on each line.*

	Never	Some- times	Usually	Always	Not applicable
Lock up your home when you go out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lock yourself in when at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lock your car when leaving it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave your car in places you consider safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lock your car doors when driving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drive a short distance instead of walking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carry a personal alarm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check the identity of any caller to your home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid going out alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hide property in your home when you go out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set a burglar alarm when you go out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid using public transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## YOUR CONCERNS

Media coverage has an effect on the way we feel about our safety. Many people are concerned about crimes that are least likely to affect them. The following questions will help us address your concerns.

**12** How worried are you that any of the following might happen to you personally in the town or village where you live, during the next year? *Please tick one box on each line.*

	Not at all worried	Not very worried	Fairly worried	Very worried	Not applicable	Don't know
Your home broken into	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your home deliberately damaged by vandals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your car stolen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Property stolen from your car	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being mugged or robbed in public including pick pocketing and bag snatching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being sexually assaulted or molested	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A child of yours or close to you being abducted or attacked	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**13** Over the past year have there been any other improvements or changes locally that have made you feel safe?

Yes ☐ If Yes please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

No ☐

Don't know/Not sure ☐

**14** Can you suggest any improvements that would make you feel safer living in Tandridge?

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## ABOUT YOURSELF

It is important that we have an accurate profile of all those who respond to this survey.

You can be assured that no individual will be able to be identified in any published report.

15 Are you? Male ☐ Female ☐

16 What was your age last birthday?

17 How long have you lived a) at current address \_\_\_\_\_ b) in Tandridge \_\_\_\_\_

18 How many people in your home (including yourself) are in these age groups?

0-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-9 ☐ 10-15 ☐ 16-17 ☐ 18-24 ☐

25-44 ☐ 45-64 ☐ 65-74 ☐ 75-84 ☐ 85+ ☐

19 Are you employed? If so, what is your occupation?

20 If self employed, please state business:

21 How would you describe your ethnic origin?

White ☐

Black or Black British ☐

Asian or Asian British ☐

Mixed ☐

Chinese ☐

Other (please state) ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

22 Is your home:

owned outright ☐

buying on a mortgage ☐

rented from the council ☐

rented from a housing association ☐

rented from a private landlord ☐

**23** Newspapers – Which, if any, local newspapers do you read?

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**24** Radio – Which local radio station do you usually listen to, if any, to hear the news?

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**25** Other sources of information:

How do you usually find out about Community How would you prefer to find out about  
Safety/Crime Prevention issues? such matters?

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**26** Do you have a car?

Yes ☐ No ☐

**27** Are you a member of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme?

Yes ☐ No ☐

**28** Are you disabled in any way?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please enter your full postcode \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your help in completing this survey*

## APPENDIX C: THE SURREY CONTEXT

**Table C1 Population and economic activity in Surrey<sup>38</sup>**

Borough/District	Population	% Population under 16	% Population 60+	% Unemployed	% Retired
Elmbridge	121,936	20.6	21.0	2.0	12.7
Epsom and Ewell	67,059	19.2	21.8	1.8	14.1
Spelthorne	90,390	18.9	22.0	2.0	14.4
Mole Valley	80,287	19.0	24.5	1.6	15.7
Reigate and Banstead	126,523	19.9	20.9	1.7	13.0
Tandridge	79,267	20.3	21.8	1.7	13.9
Guildford	129,701	18.0	19.7	1.7	11.9
Waverley	115,665	19.3	22.8	1.6	13.3
Runnymede	78,033	17.7	20.7	1.6	12.4
Surrey Heath	80,314	20.6	18.7	1.6	12.6
Woking	89,840	20.6	19.0	1.8	12.0
<i>Surrey</i>	<i>1,059,015</i>	<i>19.5</i>	<i>21.1</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>13.2</i>
<i>England and Wales</i>		<i>20.2</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>13.6</i>

**Table C2 Allocation of first intake of PCSOs**

Borough/District	Division	PCSO allocated	Divisional total
Elmbridge	A	7	16
Epsom and Ewell	A	3	
Spelthorne	A	6	
Mole Valley	B	2	11
Reigate and Banstead	B	6	
Tandridge	B	3	
Guildford	C	9	12
Waverley	C	3	
Runnymede	D	5	13
Surrey Heath	D	2	
Woking	D	6	
<i>Total</i>		<i>52</i>	<i>52</i>

<sup>38</sup> Source: <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>. 2001 Census, Office of National Statistics.

## **GLOSSARY**

ABC	Acceptable Behaviour Contract
ASBO	Anti-social Behaviour Order
ASP	Extendable baton
BST	Borough Support Team
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CIAG	Community Incident Action Group
Cle26	Form for issuing notification that a vehicle is untaxed
CRO	Crime Reduction Officer
CS	Gas spray
CSV	Community Safety Vehicle
DAT	Drug Action Team
DCIT	Divisional Crime Investigation Team
FPN	Fixed Penalty Notice
GOSE	Government Office for the South East
LIO	Local Intelligence Officer
Nominal	An individual who has previously come to the attention of the police
NSO	Neighbourhood Specialist Officer
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984)
PCPG	Police and Community Partnership Group
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SPIKE	Surrey Police Information and Knowledge Environment training package
TSO	Tenancy Support Officer

YAO	Youth Affairs Officer
YOT	Youth Offending Team
YPCSO	Youth Police Community Support Officer