



Institute for
**Public Safety
Crime and Justice**

**Police Scotland Youth Volunteers
Evaluation: Interim Report**

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About the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice

Established in 2014, the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (IPSCJ) at the University of Northampton is a premier research, evaluation and consultancy organisation situated in the fields of public safety, crime, and justice. Positioned at the interface between practice, policy, and academia, the IPSCJ has delivered insight and innovation to enhance public service delivery models, organisational strategy, and service user outcomes. The IPSCJ collaborates with partner organisations at local, regional, national, and international scales to address key global challenges. The core mission of the IPSCJ is to support positive evidence-based policy and practice change for the benefit of society.

The IPSCJ has five research and evaluation portfolios:

Health and Justice: We explore intersections between health and justice, working with a wide range of partners and agencies in community and prison settings. Example projects include:

- Evaluation of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements in England across multiple sites, funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement and local CSTR Programme Boards
- Evaluation and progress review of Women's Health Services for Perinatal Female Offenders in HMP Peterborough, funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement

Children and Young People: We work with children and young people taking a child-centred and participatory approach to research and evaluation. Example projects include:

- Review of Police Scotland Youth Volunteer Programme, exploring volunteers' views and experiences, underpinned by a children's rights approach, and funded by Police Scotland
- National evaluations of the Mini Police and Volunteer Police Cadets, funded by the Home Office Police Transformation Fund
- Evaluating early intervention pilots in Northamptonshire with young people at risk of exclusion, funded by Northamptonshire Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Citizens in Policing: We investigate the roles, functions, and contributions of volunteers within public safety and policing. Example projects include:

- Exploring synergies within volunteering in law enforcement and public safety in the UK and Japan, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council
- National programme of research in partnership with the NPCC portfolio for Citizens in Policing, funded by the Home Office Police Transformation Fund

Organisational Development: We support organisations to understand practices, structures, and cultures to improve efficiency and lead change. Example projects include:

- Organisational development programme with the East Midlands Specialist Operations Unit (EMSOU), funded by EMSOU
- Place-based leadership development in Kenya and Uganda, funded by the Danish Institute Against Torture
- Workforce engagement in Leicestershire Police and Northamptonshire Police, funded by Leicestershire Police and Northamptonshire Police

Equality, Vulnerability and Inclusion: We empower individuals and communities whose voices are not often heard to take part in research and evaluation. Example projects include:

- Evaluation of the use of The Good Loaf as an Out of Court Disposal Option for women who have offended, funded by the Northampton Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
- Review of the healthcare services provided to those aged 55 and over in East of England Prisons, funded by NHS England
- Supporting Vulnerable People and Addressing Class A Drug Use in Kettering: An Evaluation of #Citadel, funded by the Home Office

Executive Summary

This report provides preliminary findings of the first ever evaluation of the Police Scotland Youth Volunteer (PSYV) Programme. The evaluation is commissioned by Police Scotland and has been undertaken to identify the impact taking part in the PSYV programme has for young people, their lives and on the wider community they are part of. Police Scotland wish to understand what positive outcomes, if any, the programme enables and where there could be changes or improvements to enhance PSYVs experiences through taking part. The evaluation is being conducted by the Institute for Public Safety, Crime & Justice (IPSCJ) at the University of Northampton and will run for approximately two and a half years, with a final report being produced in Autumn 2025.

This is a preliminary report, which provides findings from a survey of 248 PSYV's (approximately a third of all PSYVs), a survey of alumni PSYVs (to which there are currently 26 responses) and a survey of PSYV's Coordinators and Volunteers to which 61 responded. Summarised below are some of the key findings and recommendations.

Youth experience of the running of the programme, activities and events

- 9 in 10 young people agreed that the PSYV programme is run well (91%, with 60% strongly agreeing) and that PSYV leaders communicate plans well (88%, with 61% strongly agreeing). In addition, although half of PSYVs (51%) agreed that there is room for improvement in how it is run, the majority had no suggestions for improvements.
- A statement where there was a relatively lower level of agreement was 'I feel that I have a say and influence over the content and direction of PSYV' with 76% of young people agreeing (of which 40% strongly agreed).
- The favourite activities for group night events included team building exercises and group tasks, learning about the police and games. Most of the respondents stated there were no activities they did not enjoy however drill and talks were suggested by some to do less of.
- The most popular national event was the Edinburgh Tattoo and Braveheart, however there were suggestions that not enough responsibility is given to the volunteers at national events.
- It was raised by some PSYVs that the smaller groups do not get the same opportunities as the bigger ones and so do not get to attend the same national events. As a result, these smaller groups feel as though they are missing out. This was also raised as an issue by some Adult Volunteers and Coordinators.

Motivations for joining the PSYV programme

- PSYVs were asked why they joined the PSYV programme, and two of the most common themes were that they wanted to have a police career (63) and they wanted insight into the police (43). Wanting to join the police seems to be a key motivation for many PSYVs, with nearly half (45%) of PSYVs classing themselves as 'very interested' and 21% classing themselves as 'quite interested'.
- Despite many of the young people being motivated to participate due to an interest in a police career, it is important to note that this is not a motivation for all with a fifth (20%) of PSYVs 'not very' or 'not at all' interested in a policing career.
- Other key drivers for young people mentioned when asked why they joined were to help their community (53), gain more confidence (41), for life experience (22) and to learn new skills (20).

Young people's perceptions of confidence and skills and impact of the PSYV programme

- 7 in 10 (69%) PSYVs agreed that they had confidence in themselves. However, females were significantly less likely to agree than males, with 63% agreeing compared to 78% respectively.
- It is important to note that overall, just under a fifth of PSYVs (17%) disagreed that they had confidence in themselves. However, 8 in 10 (83%) PSYVs felt that being a PSYV had a positive impact on their confidence, with almost half saying a 'very' positive impact (47%). The proportion was similarly high for those completing the alumni survey with nearly all saying PSYV had a positive impact (96%) and over half selecting 'very positive' (58%).
- Approximately 6 in 10 PSYVs rated their team working skills, leadership skills, resilience, communication skills and problem-solving skills as 'strong'. With the highest proportion being for team working skills (65%) and the lowest for leadership skills (54%). Therefore, there were notable proportions that classed these skills as 'weak' ranging between 28% and 33%¹. However, over 8 in 10 PSYVs also rated being a PSYV as having a positive impact on each of these skills. Ranging from 81% for 'resilience' to 94% for 'teamworking skills'.

Assisting transition to adulthood

- The results from the surveys of alumni indicate positive results in the role of PSYV in transitioning into the adult world. 71% of respondents stated that to a 'great' or 'some extent' being in PSYV had influenced their decision making in terms of what they wanted to do in life. Reasons for these responses included that PSYV had helped them identify a career path, for some joining the police and others deciding that a police career was not for them through gaining a better understanding of policing. Additionally, some people explained the volunteering they did helped them understand they had a passion for helping others and broadened their understanding of opportunities.
- 8 in 10 Alumni (77%) indicated that the programme had helped them to a 'great extent' or to 'some extent' since they have left with the main reason given being that they had gained confidence through their experiences. Other themes included that they had gained social and communication skills in addition to overall transferable life skills.
- A high proportion of the alumni also stated that the programme had helped them with a job application (92%), an application for an education placement (87%), in an interview for an education placement (84%), in a job interview (80%), whilst in a job (79%) and whilst studying (75%).
- Although, numbers for the Alumni survey are currently low as it has only recently been launched, the survey will run throughout the evaluation and will be sent systematically to leavers at least 3 months after leaving. Therefore, the data on the impact for young people after the programme will build over time.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

- It is important to note that a third of PSYVs completed the survey and that there is currently limited data on the overall demographics of the overall PSYV population this makes it difficult to determine the representative of the sample and whether there is an over or under-representation of particular groups.

¹ Some rated these skills as 'neither weak nor strong'.

- Within the report there are comparisons of the demographics of the PSYV survey sample, as compared to wider Scottish population data, to try to provide some insight into inclusivity and as to whether some groups may be under-represented. However, caution must be exercised here as to truly understand this would require a more comprehensive census, or recording, of demographic data for the PSYV population as mentioned above the survey sample only provides demographic information for about a third of the PSYV population.
- 9 out of 10 (91%) PSYVs agreed that the PSYV programme encourages and values diversity, with three quarters (75%) strongly agreeing. There were no statistically significant differences found when looking at this statement by gender, ethnicity or disability. However, there was a significant difference sexual orientation, as 77% of those who classed themselves as not heterosexual agreed with the statement, compared to 94% who classed themselves as heterosexual.
- 15% (39) of PSYVs answered 'yes' to the question 'Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last for 12 months or more'. Some of this group (8) felt that their condition or illness did make it difficult for them to engage with PSYV.

Perceptions of the police

- PSYVs have a very positive perception of the police, with around 7 in 10 responding that they think Police Scotland upholds the values of integrity (65%), fairness (62%), respect (71%) and human rights (72%) to a 'great extent'. This is a much higher proportion than in the general population in which about 2 in 10 agree that Police Scotland uphold these values to a 'great extent'².
- Whilst there was a high proportion of agreement to statements such as the police are helpful and friendly to young people (86%), 4 in 10 (43%) agreed with the statement 'the police sometimes treat young people unfairly' with males (60%) significantly more likely to agree with this statement than females (36%).
- While overall 78% of PSYVs agreed that the "the police are dealing with things that matter to young people", 'White' respondents were significantly more likely to agree (82%) than 'non-White' respondents (64%). However, caution should be exercised due to the small number of 'non-White' respondents.
- Over 8 in 10 PSYVs agreed that they would feel comfortable approaching the police (89%) and confident reporting a crime (84%) and 9 in 10 (92%) felt they have a good understanding of all the different things the police do.
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of PSYVs responded that the programme made their perception of the police more positive. A further 32% stated that their perception of the police hadn't changed since becoming a PSYV, the majority of which indicated they had a positive view prior to joining.
- Although the PSYVs were very positive towards the police, they were more negative about their wider peers' perceptions of the police, with 45% of PSYVs believing that in the wider community their age group had a negative perception of the police. Those who did not class themselves as 'heterosexual' were significantly less likely to believe that the wider community had a positive perception of the police (4%) compared to 27% of those that classed themselves as 'heterosexual'. As with the difference between 'White' and 'non-White' respondents this finding should be treated with caution due to comparatively low numbers of those that did not class themselves as

² Strategy, Insight and Engagement: Research and Insight Team (October 2023) Police Scotland Trust Tracker: Waves 1-4 (FY 2022-23) and Waves 5-6 (FY 2023-24), Police Scotland.

'heterosexual'. However, such differences will be monitored in the next PSYV survey rounds in 2024 and 2025.

PSYV Coordinator and Volunteer's experiences and key areas for improvements

- Out of the sample, 95% stated that they enjoy their role in PSYV, 95% feel they are making a positive contribution to the community, 96% feel they are making a positive contribution to the lives of young people and that their role is rewarding.
- Positives of the role listed included gaining a range of skills, having a positive impact on young people's lives, self-worth and impact/interaction within the local community.
- Almost all Coordinators and Volunteers stated that they would recommend the role to others.
- One of the main challenges listed for PSYV Coordinators and Adult Volunteers is balancing their role in PSYV against other work and personal commitments.
- 88% of respondents believed the PSYV programme is run well.
- 62% agreed that they would like to see more national guidance and consistency in respect of safeguarding.
- Adult staff and volunteers would like to receive updated training for lesson plans, ideas, and teaching materials.
- Key strengths of the programme identified by Coordinators and volunteers included the skills, growth, confidence, knowledge, experiences, opportunities and community interaction that PSYVs gain.
- Key weaknesses suggested by the adult volunteers were varied but included comments about the regularity and currency of training and some people believed that the PSYV does not have enough interaction with the police and that some police officers are not aware of PSYV.
- In terms of threats, most commonly identified was finance and funding followed by a lack of interaction with the police.
- It is also worth noting that 78% of Coordinators and Volunteers agreed that PSYV had a say and influence over the PSYV programme, with only 26% 'strongly agreeing' which is relatively low compared to other statements.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, there has been extremely positive responses to the surveys. There were, however, several areas that were identified in the analysis that could be improved, and several recommendations have been made to support the development of the PSYV programme as well as to enhance the experience/benefit of participation for young people and facilitation for adult volunteers. These recommendations are discussed in detail in section 7. It is important to note that this is the first interim report of findings from the evaluation and further insight will be obtained as the evaluation progresses, this will include tracking PSYVs over time through yearly surveys, in-depth qualitative work with young people, a building sample of leaver and alumni surveys and consultation with key stakeholders (see section 3 for further detail). Further reports will be produced in the Autumn of 2024 and 2025.

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1. Introduction

Police Scotland Youth Volunteers (PSYVs) are groups of up to 24 young people based across Scotland. They are supported by adult volunteers and led by a police constable or other community leader. The PSYV programme aims to strengthen the relationship with the police and young people. They also aim to break down barriers and promote positive role models. The PSYV programme promotes a way for young people to understand policing in Scotland and to support their local area through volunteering. Young people are given a chance to be heard and are encouraged to promote good citizenship and participate positively within their communities. There has not previously been a national evaluation or evidence-base to underpin or develop the programme. The IPSCJ following an open-call tendering process were successful with a grant application to complete a national evaluation of the PSYV programme. The overarching objectives of this evaluation are:

1. To understand the views of youth and adult volunteers, including their experiences, views towards PSYV, development, and learning opportunities.
2. To explore whether PSYV enables positive transitions as young people grow up.
3. To explore the impact of PSYV over the longer term; understanding what happens when people leave PSYV and gaining an insight as to their destinations.
4. To assess the extent to which PSYV contributes towards Strategic Outcomes - Joint Strategy for Policing (2020) and the National Youth Work Outcomes for Scotland.

This interim report provides insight into initial activities that have been carried out since the evaluations launch in September 2023.

2. Context

The PSYV programme aims to contribute towards the Joint Strategy for Policing and National Youth Work Outcomes. The aim of the Joint Strategy for Policing 2020 is to improve the safety and wellbeing of people, places, and communities in Scotland through the delivery of five outcomes. These outcomes include that “the public, communities and partners are engaged, involved and have confidence in policing” and “our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to serve the public” (Police Scotland, 2020, p. 9). The National Youth Work Outcomes (Youth Link Scotland, 2020) aim to develop young people’s individual needs with seven outcomes. These include enabling young people to; 1) build their health and wellbeing, 2) develop and manage relationships effectively, 3) create and apply their learning and describe their skills and achievements, 4) participate safely and effectively in groups and teams, 5) consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control, 6) grow as active citizens, expressing their voice and enabling change and 7) broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking.

2.1 Benefits to the individual

Research by DeMarco and Bifulco (2020, p. 2105) has suggested volunteering can benefit young individuals by creating strengthened new friendships which are likely to be outside of their neighbourhood, family, and school. As a result, these bonds create a feeling of “belongingness and self-worth” for the young volunteers as they “develop a new internal set of norms, and values consistent with the structure of their unit and new social relationships”. Similarly, Pepper and Silvestri (2017, p.8), found youth volunteers reported an increased sense of belonging as they had control or a ‘voice’. Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that volunteering in programmes can result in young people feeling valued and heard in addition to creating strong relationships and a feeling of belongingness which corresponds with the National Youth Work Outcome aims 1 and 2 (Youth Link Scotland, 2020).

Pepper and Silvestri (2017, p. 13) also found that youth volunteering resulted in an increased stake in conformity. This is because the programme went beyond the development of social skills, “to more fundamental behavioural changes including stopping or reducing offending” for those volunteers with previous offending and behavioural issues, as the group had given them a sense of discipline which may have lacked in other areas of their lives. Similarly, Tidwell (2005, p. 451) suggests that as identification and belongingness develops, people start to see themselves as an integral part of the organisation which can lead to increased prosocial behaviours. Alternatively, this change may also be due to the notion that young people are strongly influenced by the behaviour of their peers. Research has found that high-status peers can have more influence on other adolescent’s prosocial behaviours (Choukas-Bradley *et al.*, 2015, p. 2209). Therefore, young people with higher social status (or a higher rank) may have more of a positive influence over their peer’s behaviour in a volunteering setting. The improved behaviour that is evident in research, as a result of volunteering, therefore supports the National Youth Work Outcome aims 4 and 5 (Youth Link Scotland, 2020).

Research has also suggested volunteering in programmes similar to PSYV can further young individuals’ education and improve their future prospects. DeMarco *et al.* (2018, p. 25) found the Volunteer Police Cadet programme enabled young people to learn in a setting outside of school, which informed them about the police career paths, diverse legislation and more. Additionally, an evaluation by Callender *et al.* (2019, p. 77) found the Volunteer Police Cadets offers “positive impact and value

to young people and their future” and it can impact the career aspirations of the volunteers. Therefore, this evidence suggests youth volunteering programmes with similar structures to PSYV can help aid the achievement of the National Youth Work Outcomes 3 and 7 (Youth Link Scotland, 2020).

2.2 Benefits to the community

Research also indicates programmes like PSYV can benefit the wider community. For example, recently the ‘Historic England Heritage Crime Challenge’ was conducted with the aim to increase the number of young people in the Volunteer Police Cadets having the “skills, knowledge, confidence and motivation to fight for, look after and make the most of their historic environment” (Callender *et al.*, 2022, p. 1). Not only were young people more educated on issues, but community members also benefited from the project through strengthened/fostered relationships between the community, youth and the police. Similarly, Pepper (2022, p. 1032) found that police volunteers have been recognised for “engaging and communicating with communities and a method to expand and innovate current policing forms”. These notions aid the Joint Strategy for Policing 2020 outcome for the public, communities, and partners to be engaged, involved and have confidence in policing.

The notion of civic engagement being improved through youth volunteering programmes is also present within the literature as volunteering at a young age is seen to foster active citizenship (Talbot, 2015, p. 209). For example, DeMarco *et al.* (2018, p. 7) found youth volunteering programme “activities and involvement can assist with promoting citizenship at the local level, while providing young people with a sense of public duty and care”. Civic engagement is important for young people to participate in as Southby *et al.* (2019, p. 912) found that in adulthood, parents who have not volunteered in the past are less likely to hold strong social justice values and are more likely to dissuade youth from volunteering. Therefore, if volunteering and civic engagement is embedded within a young person’s identity from a young age, they are more likely to grow up to continue volunteering and promoting it in the next generation. By volunteering, young people are able grow as active citizens and enable change; fulfilling the National Youth Work Outcome aim 6 (Youth Link Scotland, 2020).

2.3 Benefits to the police

There is extensive research in the literature surrounding youth-police relations. Research by Ilan (2018, p. 694) has suggested that “interactions between street-youth and street-based police officers are underpinned by structural, cultural and emotional processes which press both groups into an iterative cycle of interpretation, action and reaction that can ultimately support muscular policing practices, perceptions of injustice and mutual antipathy”. Opinions and views formed in childhood have been shown to have lasting influence on adult perceptions and so the “quality of the ‘personal encounter’ between the police and young people is imperative” (Pepper and Silvestri, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, it has been conjectured that when young people interact with the police in pro-social, amicable, and constructive ways their relationship is influenced positively and this view becomes more permanent (DeMarco and Bifulco, 2021, p. 2096).

Research by Leroux and McShane (2017, p. 818) supports this conjecture as they found community policing programmes aimed at young people can be effective in improving youth-police relationships. Programmes have been found to be effective at bridging the relationship between police and young people as it allows for a practical understanding of the policing which will support them into adult life (Sherry, 2019, p. 9). Callender *et al.* (2019, p.6) found similar findings based on youth police

relationships, finding that participation in the programme changed cadets' perspectives on the police. As such, for those who had negative views on the police, the programme was instrumental in changing attitudes by making young people aware of police efforts to engage with young people and strategies to help young people in need. This evidence therefore suggests the National Youth Work Outcome aim 7 is achievable through the PSYV programme (Youth Link Scotland, 2020).

2.4 Challenges and barriers

Although there are many positives to youth volunteering programmes evident in the literature, there is also documentation of some of the challenges and barriers that may come with such programmes. For example, Dean's (2013, p. 58) research suggests governments expect too much from volunteering programmes as young people cannot be commanded to take responsibility for their futures and communities. In addition to this, Hogg *et al.* (2016, p. 687) stated that some studies have shown there has been a decline in attractiveness in volunteering among young people, as it is being "perceived as expensive, time consuming, boring and outdated". Further research supports this statement as volunteering for young people can sometimes be draining, causing burnout and the feeling of their volunteering becoming 'work', which can be a result of a lack of recognition for volunteers' efforts (Talbot, 2015, p. 212).

Youth volunteering programmes have also been criticised for their lack of diversity. For example, research by Pepper and Rogers (2021, p. 278) into Volunteer Police Cadet leaders across England and Wales, highlighted the lack of diversity among adult cadet leaders. Most leaders were White British, and 54% held either an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. Supporting this, research has found that more needs to be done to engage lower class urban males in their early teenage years to volunteer (Bennet and Parameshwaran, 2013, p. 4). Although there are programmes in place to fast-track vulnerable people into the cadets (Callender, 2020), research by Dean (2016, p. 964) found that youth volunteering programmes often tend to recruit middle-class young people whose habitus allows them to fit instantly into volunteering projects. Moreover, research by Davies (2018, p. 255) into understanding barriers to volunteering among young people in the deprived urban areas in Glasgow found "participants were constrained from accessing volunteering due to: resource issues in youth organisations; a lack of support from schools; a lack of information; and restrictions on their special mobilities".

3. Approach

3.1 Method

The project consists of several research activities to achieve the objectives outlined in Chapter 1. These methods are outlined below:

National Online Surveys with the young volunteers (September/October 2023, 2024, 2025)

The IPSCJ has created an online survey to be distributed to PSYV groups across Scotland to obtain data on the young volunteer experiences as a PSYV, what they feel they have gained from the experience and what can be improved. The survey will capture several topics including:

- Motivations of young people for becoming a PSYV.
- The activities they have participated in and experience they have gained.
- Their perceptions of the police and whether they feel their perceptions have changed since becoming a volunteer.
- The impact they feel PSYVs have on their communities.
- The survey will also collect demographic information to understand the reach of the scheme particularly in terms of whether it is reaching a range of young people from a variety of backgrounds, as well as to explore whether there is a variation in experience across factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, and disability/neurodiversity.

This survey will be the first of three surveys which will track young people's journeys as PSYVs. Another survey will be conducted in September 2024 and September 2025. Young people will be provided an anonymised identifier to enable the responses to be tracked for those that have completed the previous surveys. This will allow monitoring of how being a PSYV may impact on young people's trust and confidence in the police, their own confidence, resilience, ability to cope with transition and their feelings of citizenship and inclusion.

The national online surveys with the young volunteers contribute to meeting evaluation objectives 1, 2 and 4.

National Online Surveys with adult staff and volunteers (November 2023, November 2024)

This survey will explore staff and adult volunteer views towards training, support, and operational issues. Participants will be asked about their views on the benefits of the volunteer scheme for young people, the police and the wider community. They will also be asked about their own experiences and the facilitators and barriers they experience in carrying out their role. They will also be asked about their overall views of the scheme from a strategic perspective in relation to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The survey will be conducted in November 2023 and repeated in November 2024 to assess change. The survey will also include the question as to whether they were PSYVs themselves, as some of the younger adult volunteers may have been, and what impact this may have had on their lives.

The National Online Surveys with adult staff and volunteers will contribute to meeting aims 1, 3, 4 and 5.

Interviews with key stakeholders (Autumn 2023, Autumn 2024)

Online/telephone interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders and personnel (c.10-15) to understand the strategic goals of the PSYV, how they are being delivered and perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with the scheme. The interviews will also assess the extent to which the PSYV contribute to wider strategic objectives including those within the Joint Strategy for Policing (2020) and the national Youth Work Outcomes for Scotland. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Interviews with key stakeholders will contribute to meeting objectives 4 and 5.

Leaver's/Alumni Surveys

Dedicated surveys will be developed to be shared with young people who exit the programme either unplanned or before a natural conclusion of their PSYV experience. The surveys will also be for those who reach the natural planned end of the programme.

The Leaver's survey will be shared at the point of exit to specifically capture how their PSYV experience has impacted them, as well as potentially contributing to their next steps in their life course. The Leaver's Survey will also provide an understanding of why cadets may leave before the natural conclusion of their PSYV experience. The Leaver's Survey will be available from September 2023 to July 2025. The Alumni Survey will be shared with young people who have previously been a PSYV to capture how/if their experiences in the programme have influenced their destinations, as well as any other impacts having been a PSYV may have influenced.

The Leaver's/Alumni Surveys will contribute to meeting objectives 3 and 4.

Case Study Sites (Summer 2024, Summer 2025)

The Case Studies will involve in-depth qualitative work with young people and adult staff/volunteers. There will be 3-4 sites identified, perhaps in each of the three geographical regions: North, East and West. However, the research team are flexible in which sites are identified for this aspect of the research. Qualitative case studies would be conducted involving focus groups and creative methods to engage young people in further defining strengths and weaknesses in the scheme and how the scheme can be improved. The selection of case study sites will be agreed with the Commissioner, with some being completed in person and others online. By doing some data collection online, it will maximise the volume of data collection, increasing the representation across Scotland. Adult staff and volunteers will complete short interviews about the context and cohort overall, allowing comparison between groups in terms of emergent and shared strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

Case Studies will contribute to meeting objectives 1, 2, 4 & 5.

3.2 Involvement of young people in the evaluation design and delivery

It is important young people are able participate in the design and delivery of the research as well as the interpretation of the results. To date, the PSYVs have participated in the evaluation in the following ways:

1. One of the PSYV groups have produced a short video to introduce the research to their fellow PSYVs.
2. A small number of PSYVs have reviewed and tested the annual survey, the Alumni survey and the leavers survey and provided feedback on them.
3. They have been asked if there were any questions, they would like to be asked to those that run the programme.

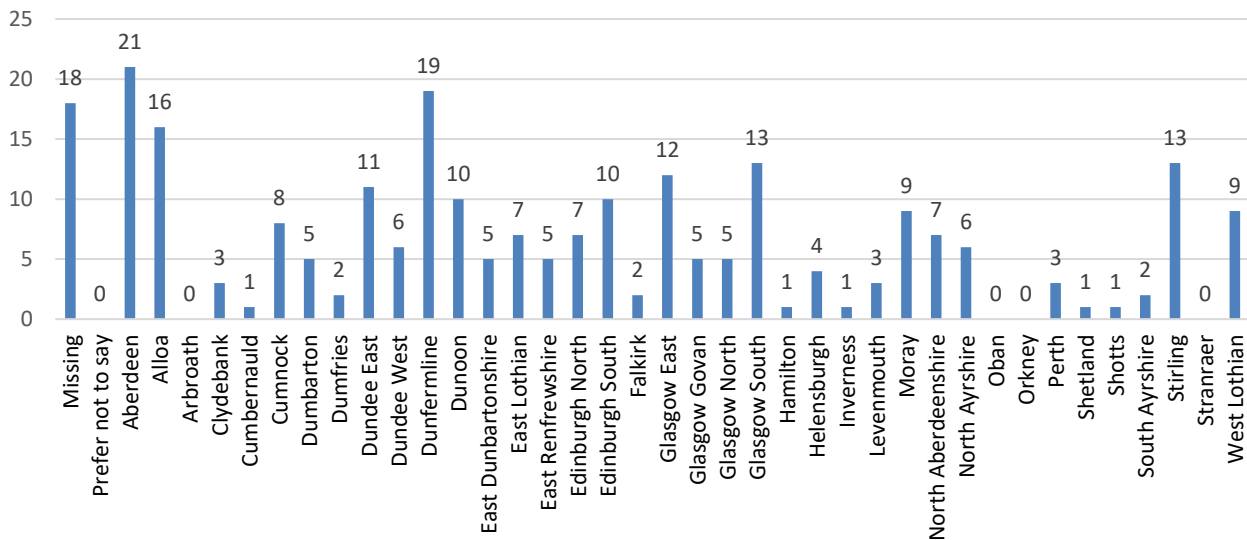
The research team and Police Scotland are committed to continuing to involve young people in the process and are currently working on recruiting some PSYVs to sit on the steering group. Members of the research team also visited the PSYVs in Scotland whilst they were volunteering at the Edinburgh Tattoo, their observations of the visit are contained in Appendix A.

4. National Online Youth Volunteer Survey Results

4.1 Response to the survey and demographics

248 PSYVs completed the first annual survey, which is approximately a 33% response rate. Out of 38 groups, 34 took part in the survey demonstrating representation from across Scotland. The graph below shows the PSYV groups that the survey respondents were part of and the number of respondents in each group. The ages of the youth volunteers who responded ranged from 13 to 17.

Fig. 4.1.1 Number of responses by unit



Most young people who responded to the survey had been part of the PSYVs for a year to less than 2 years, with 64 survey responders, and the least common amount of time as a PSYV was 4 years to less than 5 years, with only 8 survey responders. Most young people who responded were Youth Volunteers (199), 30 were Senior Youth Volunteers and 12 were Head Youth Volunteers.

Fig. 4.1.2 Time as a PSYV

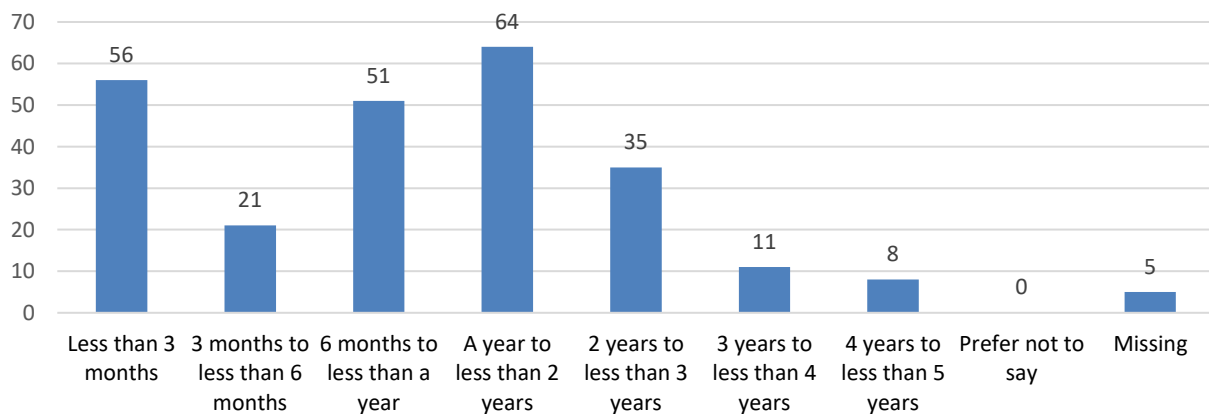
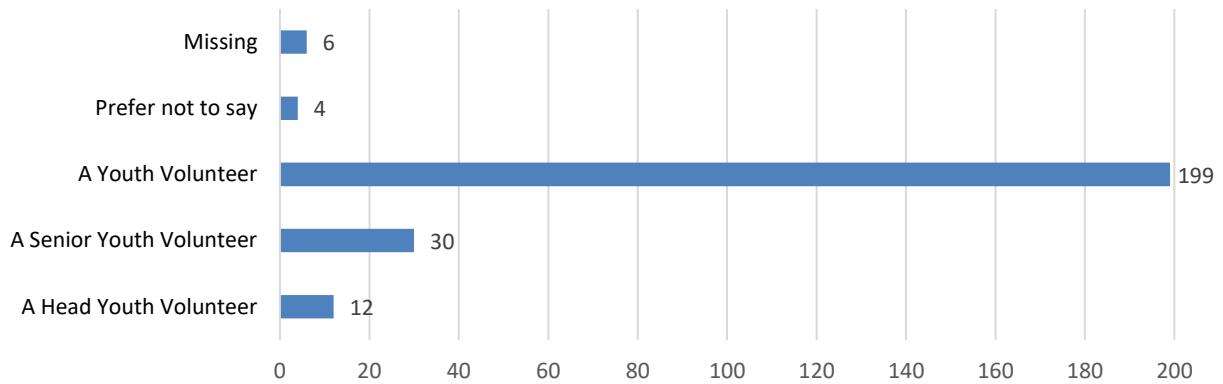
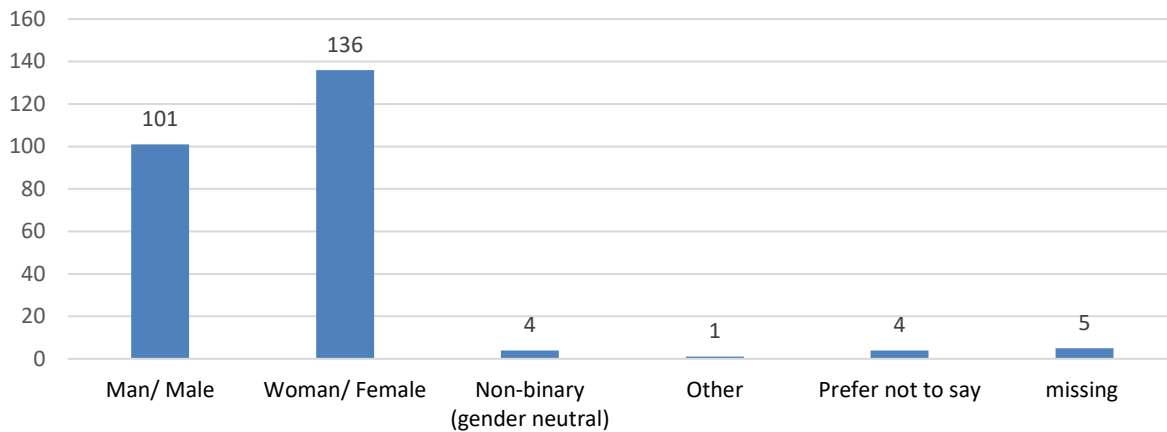


Fig. 4.1.3 Volunteer role



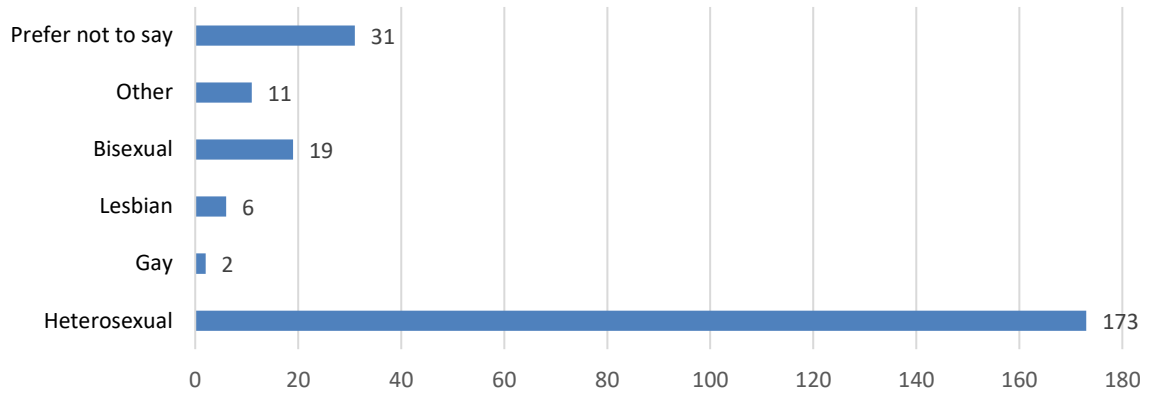
54% of respondents identify as female and only 40% identify as male, which is not representative of the wider demographic population of Scotland, as a recent study involving a nationally representative sample of 5217 14-year-olds reported 49.8% identified as man/boy, and 49.45% as women/girl (Scottish Government, 2022b). However, as we do not currently have the demographic data on the total PSYV population, this difference may be due to more female youth volunteers completing the survey than their male peers. When asked if they would consider themselves to be trans or have a trans history, 8 answered “yes” and 7 “preferred not to say”.

Fig. 4.1.5 Which of the following best describes your gender identity?



71% of the respondents identified as heterosexual, 13% preferred not to say, 8% identified as bisexual, 5% other, 2% lesbian and 1% gay. The data are representative in terms of sexual orientation, when comparing this demographic data with the findings from the Annual Population Survey (APS), reporting that in 2022 9.2% of people ages 16-24 years identified as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual compared to 11% within PSYV data (ONS, 2023). It should be noted that this age category is older than most the PSYV respondents but should be more representative than the entire adult population, as younger people are more likely to identify as LGBTQ. PSYV survey responses demonstrate similar findings to the APS, although a larger percentage of PSYVs selected that they ‘prefer not to say’ at 13% compared to 3.7% in the APS (ONS, 2023).

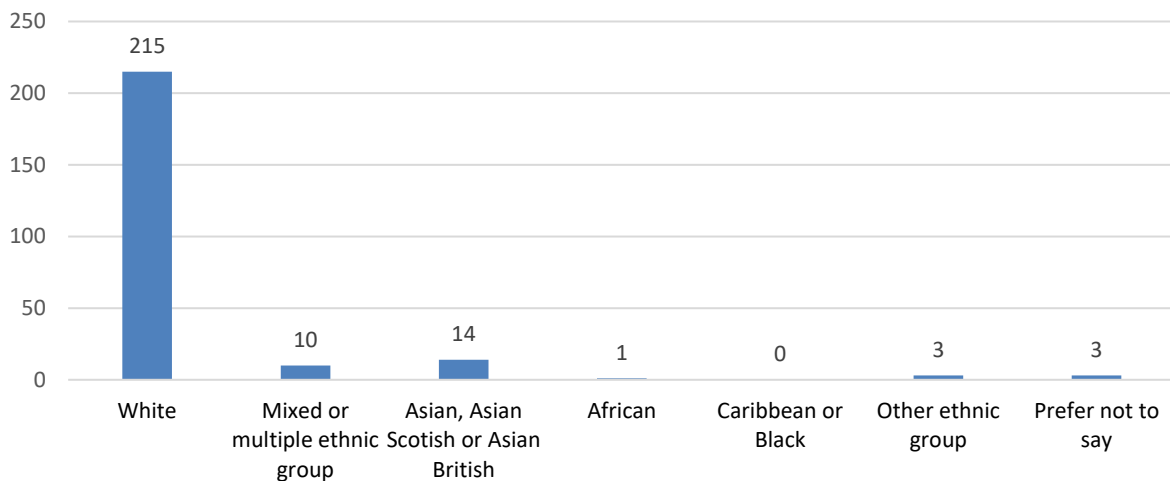
Fig. 4.1.6 Sexual orientation



For ethnicity, most respondents were “White” (86%), the next largest ethnicity was “Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British” (6%) followed by “Mixed or multiple ethnic group” (4%). Most volunteers had no religion (153), followed by Roman Catholic (31), Church of Scotland (19), other Christian (15), Muslim (8), any other religion (5), Sikh (2) and Hindu (1).

The Scottish annual census on pupils, teachers and early learning and childcare (2022) reported on the ethnicity of all secondary school pupils finding that 83.5% of pupils were recorded as being White-Scottish or White-other British, and 3.3% White-other, 2.3% White-Polish, totalling 87% (Scottish Government, 2022a). Whilst the total percentage of ‘White’ ethnicity within the PSYV survey data is representative at 86%, when broken down by category, it is less representative as only 3.5% of respondents categorised themselves under non- White-Scottish or White-other British compared to census data of 6% all other ‘White’. Also, the proportions within the survey data of ‘Asian’ ethnicity at 6% and ‘Mixed or multiple ethnic group’ at 4%, are greater than that of the census data which reported proportions of 4.6% Asian and only 1.5% Mixed ethnicity (Scottish Government, 2022a).

Fig. 4.1.7 Ethnicity

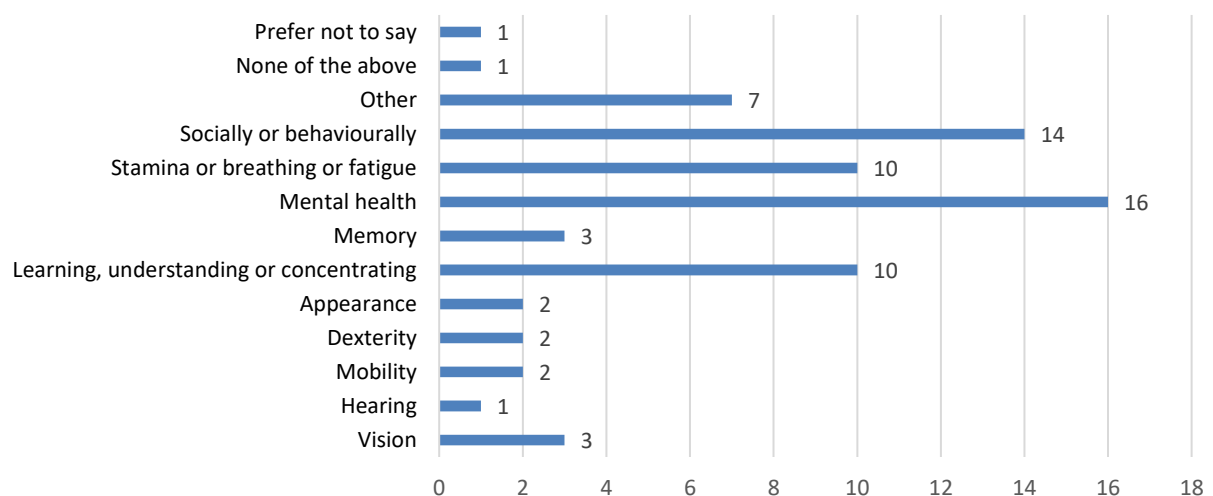


In total, 19 stated that they were part-time unpaid care providers and 8 stated they were full-time unpaid care providers. Additionally, 15 stated they are currently or had been formerly looked after by a local authority. Out of the sample, 39 (16%) stated that they had a physical or mental health condition lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. These conditions affected the areas of mental health (16), socially or behaviourally (14), appearance (10) and stamina or breathing fatigue (10) most commonly. When asked if their condition makes it difficult to engage in any PSYV activities or affects their PSYV experience, 8 out of the 39 stated ‘yes’ (20%), 24 selected ‘no’ (62%), 4 did not know (10%) and 3 preferred not to say (8%). In response to ‘is there anything that can be done to help you to engage in these activities or improve your experience of PSYVs?’, two PSYVs commented:

“To leave the room for a few mins, I know I can but sometimes feel awkward to”.

“Increased understanding that I may struggle in social situations and that I may feel overwhelmed”.

Fig. 4.1.8 Does this condition or illness affect any of the following areas?



In summary, a third of PSYVs completed the survey which is a healthy response rate to a survey of this kind. For example, a national survey conducted with cadets in England and Wales yielded a response rate of approximately 10% (Callender *et al.*, 2019). The extent to which the 33% of PSYV who did respond to the survey are representative of the whole PSYV population in terms of key demographics is not possible at this stage, due to a lack of demographic data available on this population as a whole.

It is possible to look at wider demographic data of the population of Scotland to provide insight as to whether the PSYV survey sample, is representative of the wider population. However, caveats to these comparisons are that they are not all specific to the PSYV age group and some of the data used are not up to date. It is likely that more recent data will be available in the near future with more detailed demographic information from the Scottish 2022 Census being imminent.

4.2 Experiences of being a PSYV

One of the main reasons for young people joining PSYV was for police career in the future (63). The next top answer was to help the community (53), followed by for police insight and experience (48). Other popular responses included to gain more confidence (41), for life experience (22) and to learn new skills (20). Additionally, 66% of the PSYV's who responded to the survey were either "very interested" or "quite interested" in joining the police when they are older and 14% "do not know yet".

Fig. 4.2.1 Are you interested in joining the police when you are older?

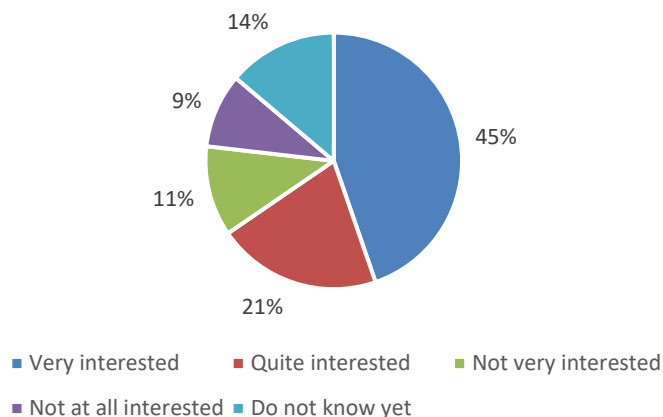
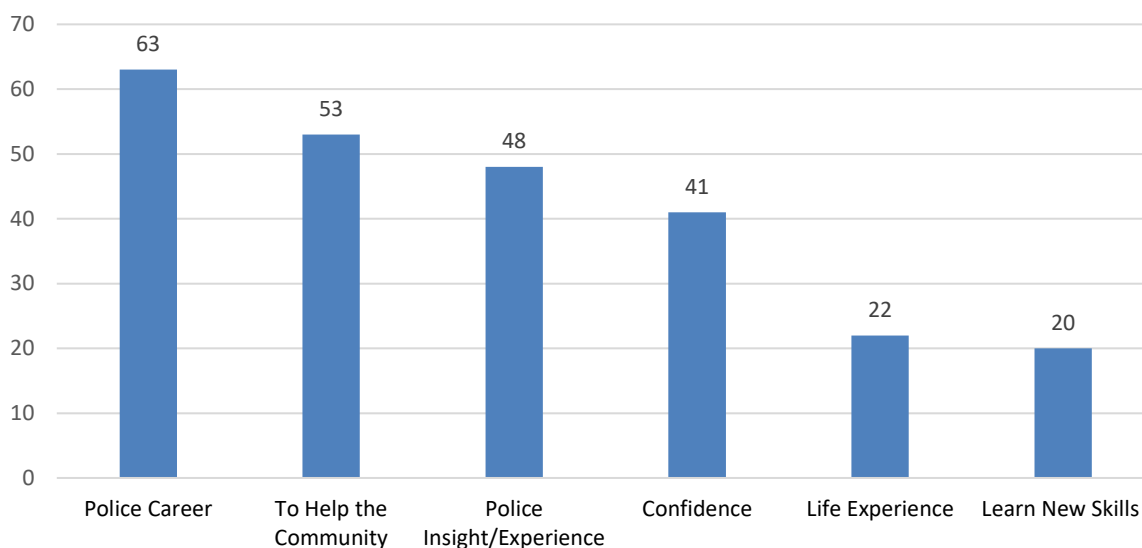


Fig. 4.2.2 What are the reasons you joined PSYV?



When asked about deciding to join PSYV, 68 responded that they did not have any worries or nerves. However, for those who did, the most prominent issues coming through was the fear of meeting new people (59), making friends (23), not knowing anyone (21) and fitting in (18). For example, one volunteer stated,

"I was nervous when I joined at first but now I've made friendships, and now I socialise more because of PSYV".

Most respondents (91%) believed that the PSYV programme encourages and values diversity. There were no statistically significant differences found when looking at this statement by gender, ethnicity or disability. However, there was a significant difference in sexual orientation, as 77% of those who classed themselves as not heterosexual (20 out of 26) agreed with the statement, compared to 94% who classed themselves as heterosexual. Most respondents also believed that PSYV leaders communicate plans well (88%) and that PSYV is run well (91%). However, 51% of respondents believed that there is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run, 19% disagreed, believing that there is no room for improvement, 27% responded with 'neither' and 3% preferred not to say.

Fig. 4.4.3 There is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run?

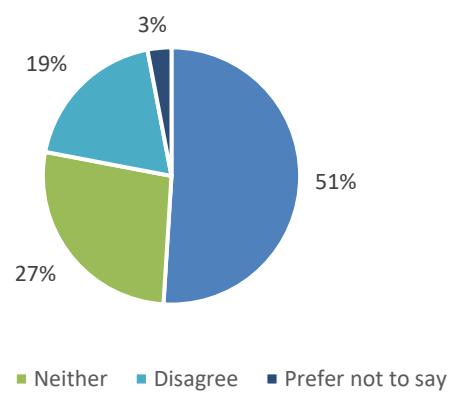
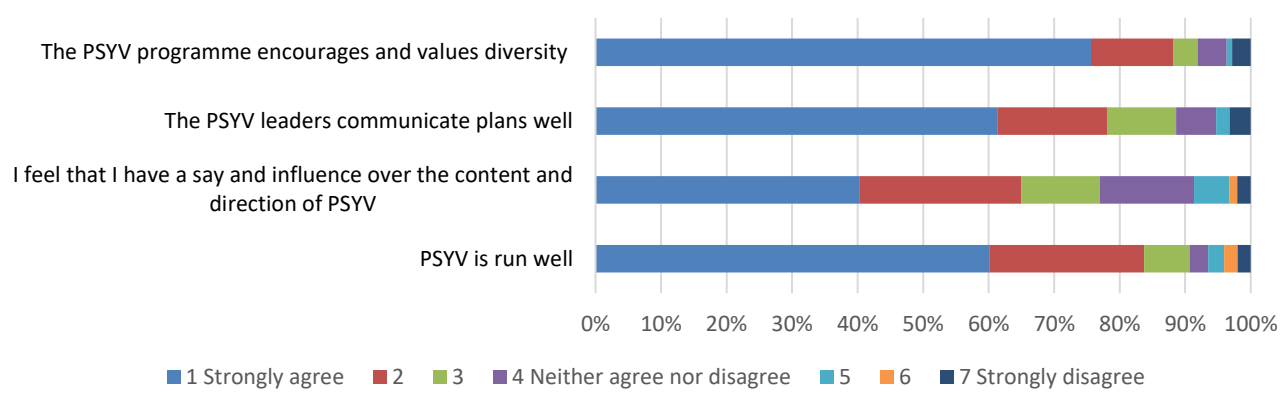
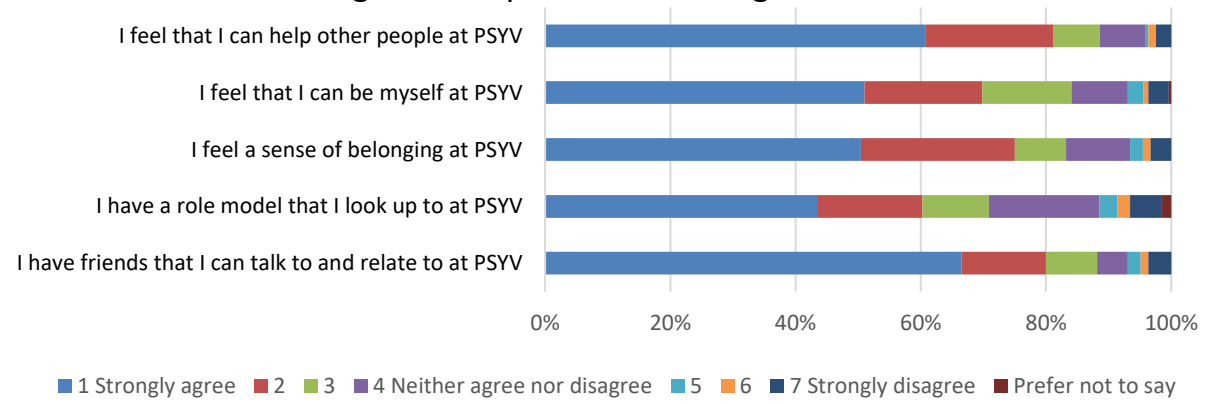


Fig. 4.2.4 Views on PSYV



There were further positive responses with most respondents stating they feel they can help people at PSYV (89%), they can be themselves (84%), they have a sense of belonging (83%), they have a role model to look up to (71%) and they have friends they can talk to and relate to at PSYV (88%).

Fig. 4.2.5 Experience of being in PSYV



Most volunteers had no suggestions for improvements to the PSYV experience, as 151 people did not respond to the question and 44 stated they “don’t know” or “nothing”.

“It is a great experience and I wouldn’t change anything”.

On the other hand, some volunteers suggested not all members of the group are treated equally (4), and a volunteer also commented on this topic saying there should be improvements on “*how problems are sorted out within PSYV*”. This respondent also implied that some of the adults have favourites:

“...there are some members of our group that are usually excluded by other YVs this is sometimes quite obvious but AVs don't seem to take action as far as I'm aware and they seem partial to the Seniors”.

When asked about any improvements that could be made on the ranking system, the majority of responses were extremely positive:

“I think the ranking is good as the older ones with the more senior roles can help and support welcoming new member while having the experience to help direct volunteers with more experience”.

In addition to this it was suggested that the interviews for the ranking positions provide good experience for the future. However, some volunteers did suggest the ranking system could be updated, adding in more roles for younger volunteers to help them distinguish themselves and making it easier to get to a higher rank.

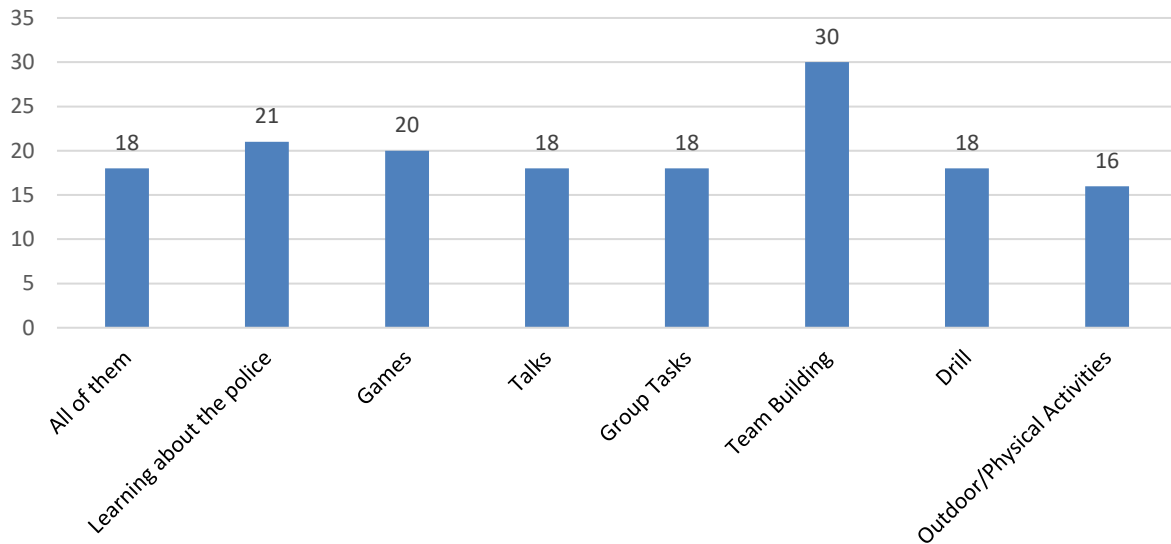
Overall, the programme is viewed positively by the volunteers, with high percentages of volunteers feeling a sense of belonging, that they can be themselves, and they have friends they can talk to at PSYV. Most of those who have joined PSYV are interested in a police career when they are older and so have joined PSYV to gain more insight into the police role and experience. This is therefore a unique and clearly valued aspect of PSYV in comparison to other youth organisations available in Scotland. Despite the general positive responses, 51% of the respondents still believed that there is room for improvement on how the programme is run, although, most respondents had no suggestions on how the PSYV experience can be improved, suggesting that there are no prominent issues within the organisation for the youths.

4.3 Youth opinions on activities and events

Group night events

The volunteers were asked “what group night activities do you enjoy doing at PSYV?”, 18 people responded “all of them”. One of the most common answers was group tasks (18) and team building exercises (30). The educational talks from police and external organisations providing information “*other practical skills we might use outside of PSYV*” were also popular (18), alongside learning more about the police (21).

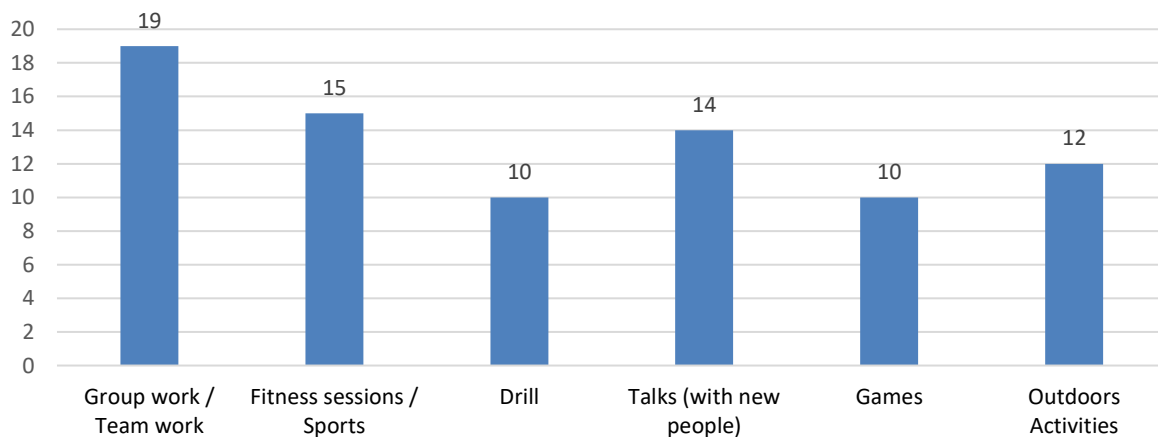
Fig. 4.3.1 What group night activities do you enjoy doing?



When asked “what group night activities would you like to do more of?”, the most popular answer was group work and team work (19). Some respondents also wanted to do more fitness sessions or sports (15) in addition to drill (10). It was also suggested that they would like more talks, preferably with new people, to learn more about the police and other organisations (14):

“I would like more people coming in to talk about a range of topics”.

Fig. 4.3.2 What activities would you like to do more of?



On the other hand when asked “what group night activities do you not enjoy at PSYV?”, of those who answered (180), 72 people answered “none”. After that, the two most popular answers were drill (29) and talks and presentations (14), one young volunteer explained why this was the case:

“you listen and don’t really do much but I still enjoy parts of it”.

When the volunteers were asked what activities they would like to do less of, 49 answered “none”, and 28 people responded with “don’t know”. However, drill (27) and talks (7) did come up again as popular answers.

Fig. 4.3.3 What group night activities do you not enjoy?

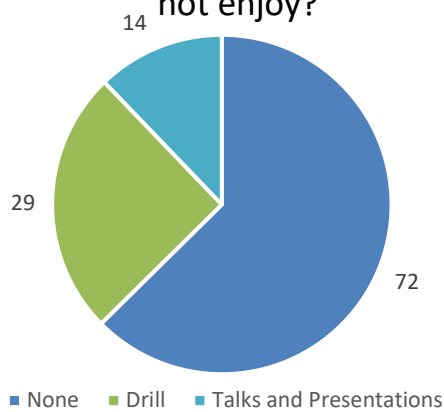
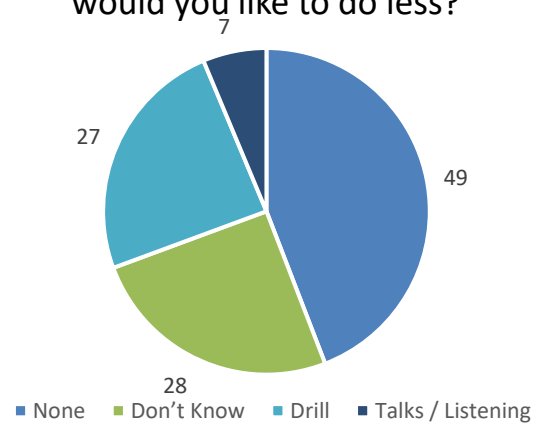


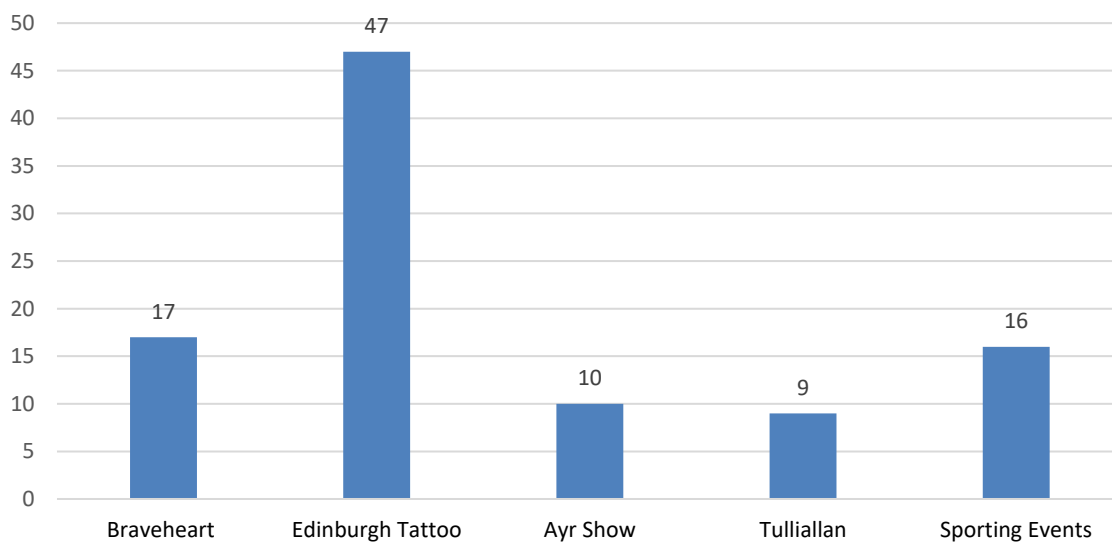
Fig. 4.3.4 What group night activities would you like to do less?



National events

The most popular national event that volunteers have taken part in was Edinburgh Tattoo (47), this was followed by Braveheart (17).

Fig. 4.3.5 What National Events have you enjoyed?



When asked what national events or campaigns they did not enjoy, most volunteers answered there were none they hadn’t enjoyed but some volunteers mentioned that cheering at races sometimes became boring. Other feedback from the volunteers included that they occasionally felt disregarded or were given silly tasks at events (10).

“At some big events we end up basically in charge of little kids on bouncy castles etc. I don’t enjoy this because if it gets really busy the parents just complain to us”.

As a result, although many people stated they had no suggestions for improvement (37), some feedback mentioned the volunteers felt like there were more ways that they could help at events, and they wanted more responsibility (4). Further suggestions for improvements at events were varied, some suggested that there needs to be more organisation and communication as the need for better time management and more walkie talkies was proposed. Other respondents suggested that the enthusiasm of the volunteers should be improved and the PSYV's should be advertised more at events so that people know what they do.

When asked if there were any national events or campaigns that they would like their PSYV group to be a part of, the answers were again varied, ranging from sporting (7) and music events (23) to Edinburgh days (8) and Firework events (5). One interesting response suggested that some groups do not get the same opportunities for national events as others due to group size and geographic location:

"We are a small community group [and] therefore don't get as good opportunities as groups like Glasgow or Edinburgh for example. Our youths only really go to things like leaflet drops constantly or bag packing while we see big groups go to concerts or competitions etc".

Local events

Local events or campaigns that the volunteers had enjoyed was diverse, with common enjoyable events being listed as leaflet drops (13), fireworks (12) and sporting events (29) such as running events. Many volunteers stated that they had enjoyed all the local events or campaigns that they had attended. However, some young people responded saying that they didn't enjoy events such as bag packing or events where they didn't do much.

"At the Edinburgh marathon, half of us were not needed there and were just standing in the booth cheering on the runners".

"We didn't really do much at all".

When asked what suggestions they had for PSYV involvement in local events, responses suggested that it should be ensured that there is always duties or roles for the volunteers and clearer insight of what these roles entail should be established beforehand. Another volunteer proposed that there should be a PSYV stand at events to explain to members of the public what PSYV do and attract more members. The volunteers also suggested some local events and campaigns that they would like to be involved in, some of these suggestions included more sporting events, concerts, and charity campaigns.

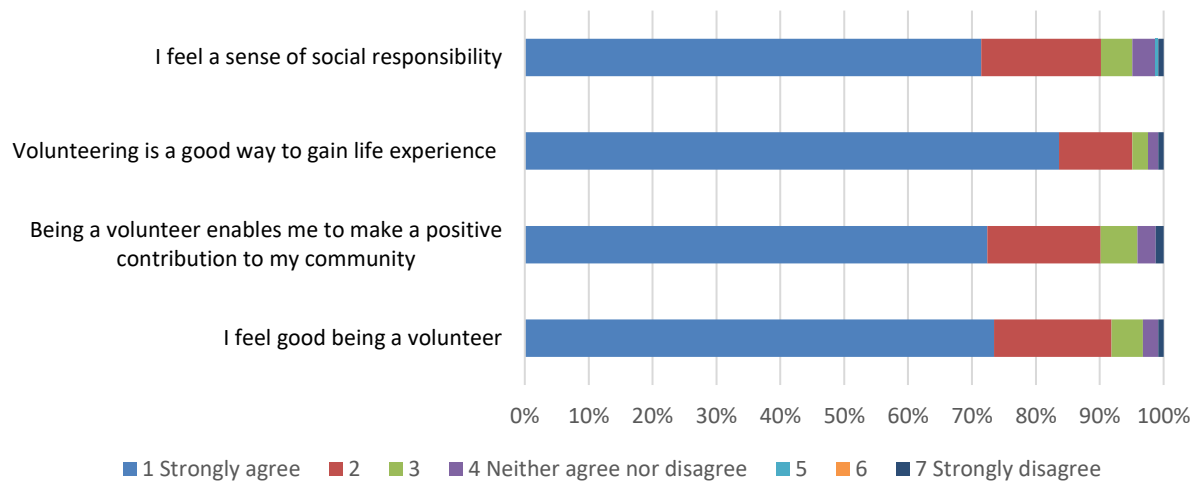
In summary, the most popular group night events were team building exercises and learning about the police. This enjoyment of police activities is to be expected due to the high proportion of youths who joined PSYV for greater police insight. More group work, talks with new people and fitness activities were listed as suggestions for activities the volunteers would like to do more of. However, there were contradictions in responses due to differing views within the sample as it was also suggested that some would like to do less drill and talks as their group night activities. Although these were common responses, the majority stated that there were no activities that they would like to do less of. The most popular National Events was overwhelmingly Edinburgh Tattoo, however there were some perceived inequities in group opportunities for national events. It was also suggested that at some volunteering events volunteers do not receive enough responsibilities and as a result some

events can become boring or unorganised. Recommendations have been made to mitigate these notions in section 7.

4.4 Skills, benefits and challenges of being a PSYV

Citizenship and volunteering

Fig. 4.4.1 Views on volunteering



Over 95% of youth volunteers gave positive responses regarding being a PSYV and their sense of social responsibility, life experience and being able to make a positive contribution to their community. Two youth volunteers chose ‘strongly disagree’ for all statements above and another youth volunteer also strongly disagreed that being a volunteer enables them to make a positive contribution to their community.

Gains and challenges

Many of the gains from volunteering as a PSYV listed by the youth volunteers related to the learning of new skills and gaining experience which would help them in the future. There were over 60 references to skills made including communication, social, leadership, teamwork, problem solving and overall life skills. Ten of the youth volunteers also referred to their future career as volunteering as a PSYV would look good on their CV or help them get into the police force. A significant gain for 73 of respondents was a boost in confidence.

“Builds my confidence and gets me out doing stuff when instead I would be sitting doing nothing”.

Another common theme referred to the positive social aspects of PSYV such as belonging to a family, gaining a sense of community, and making friends. This also related to getting to interact, support and learn from the wider community (24).

“[I am] Able to give back to my community, and I gain a family”.

When asked if there was anything they found challenging about being a PSYV, 109 youth volunteers did not write an answer and a further 61 youth volunteers responded ‘no’, they felt no challenges. Of

the remaining respondents, the most common challenges raised included engaging with new people (17) and making time to volunteer and having volunteering take up too much of their free time which can be hard to manage (14). Other issues included public speaking and talking to new people (7):

“Having to talk in big groups where you don’t really know anyone”.

The final significant issue they found challenging about being a PSYV, was being worried about the perception or reaction of their peers about them volunteering with PSYV due to young people’s negative views of the police (8).

“Some people don’t like the police therefore don’t like us”.

Young people’s perceptions of the police will be discussed further in section 5.1.5, as many of the youth volunteers believed that their peers (outside of PSYV) do not like or trust the police, which may have a negative influence on their perception of PSYVs.

Similarly, to ‘what the youth volunteers think they gained from PSYV’, the respondents spoke mostly about how the PSYV helped them gain skills and experience which would help them in the future. More specifically, 28 volunteers suggested it would look good on their CV, 21 suggested it would improve their confidence and communication skills, 14 suggested it helped them learn skills for the future and 32 suggested it would improve career or job opportunities.

“I think it will help me a lot in the future because it will show/give me confidence and it will help me earn Jobs in future careers”.

“It’s a good thing to put on my cv and can display my commitment, communication, teamwork and leadership skills”.

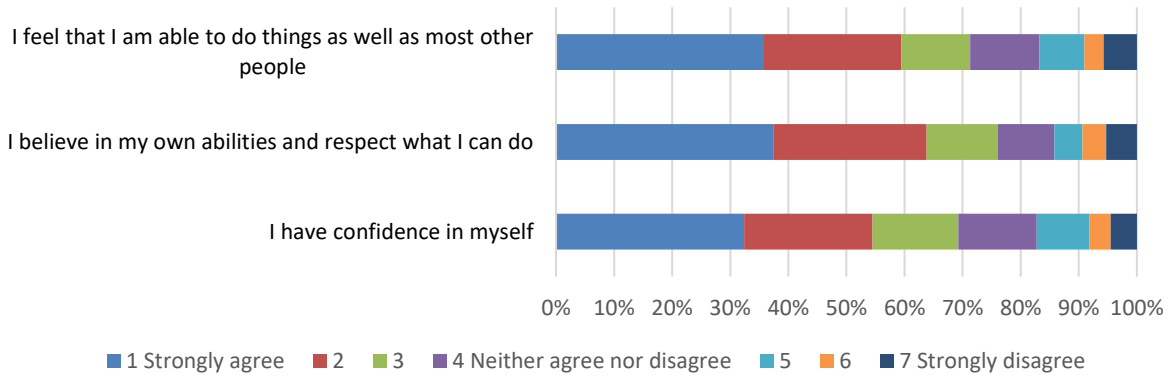
Significantly, 60 of the volunteers mentioned the police in their responses either in general reference to how being a PSYV has helped them gain knowledge and experience of what it is like to be in the police (29), or specifically that being a PSYV would help them become a police officer and make it easier to get into the police force (35).

“It will help me join the police in the future”.

Perception of skills

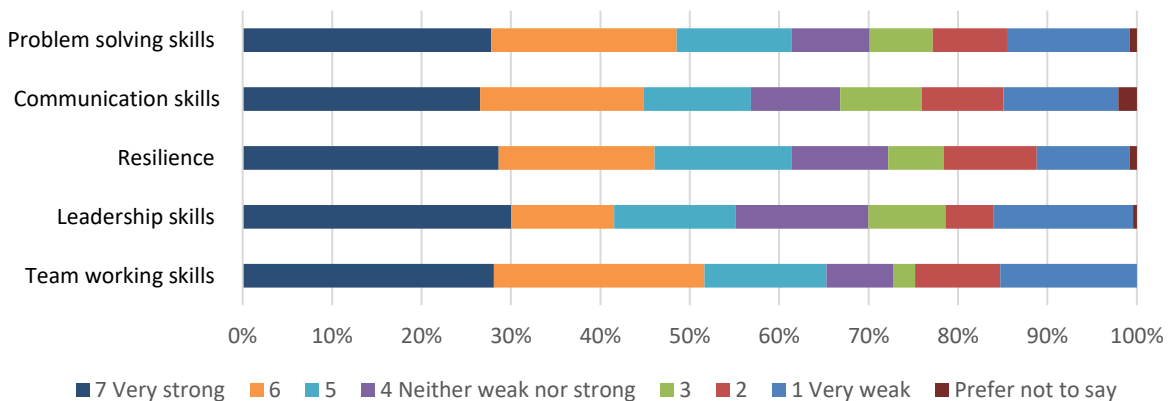
Nearly 31% of the PSYVs did not agree they have confidence in themselves, as 17% (42) of respondents disagreed with the statement ‘I have confidence in myself’ and 14% (33) responded ‘neither agree nor disagree’. When investigated further, it was found that those who had been at PSYV longer, were more likely to rate their confidence skills higher. Furthermore, 59 youth volunteers also did not believe in their own abilities or believe they are able to do things as well as others.

Fig. 4.4.2 Perceptions of own abilities



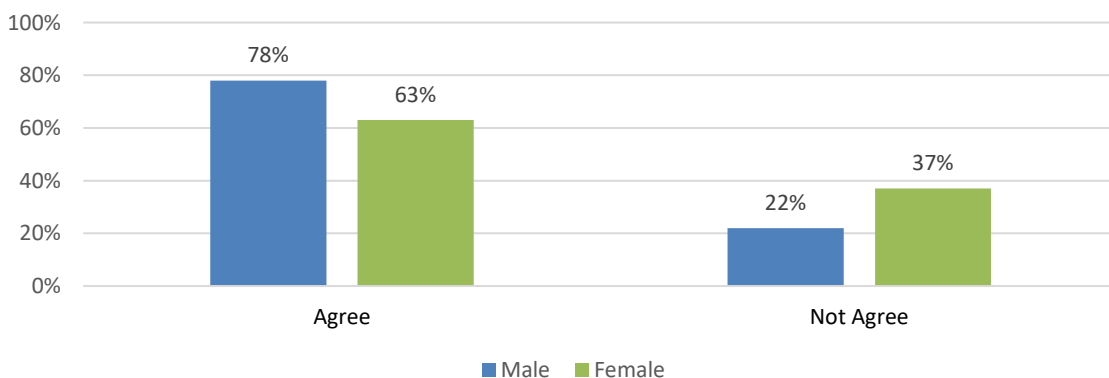
This is also reflected in figure 4.4.5 as many believed that they had weak problem solving (30%), leadership (31%), communication skills (33%), resilience (28%) and teamworking (28%). On further investigation it was found that 40% rated at least one of their skills to be ‘weak’ and 22% rated all of their skills to be ‘weak’.

Fig. 4.4.3 Self rated perceptions of skills



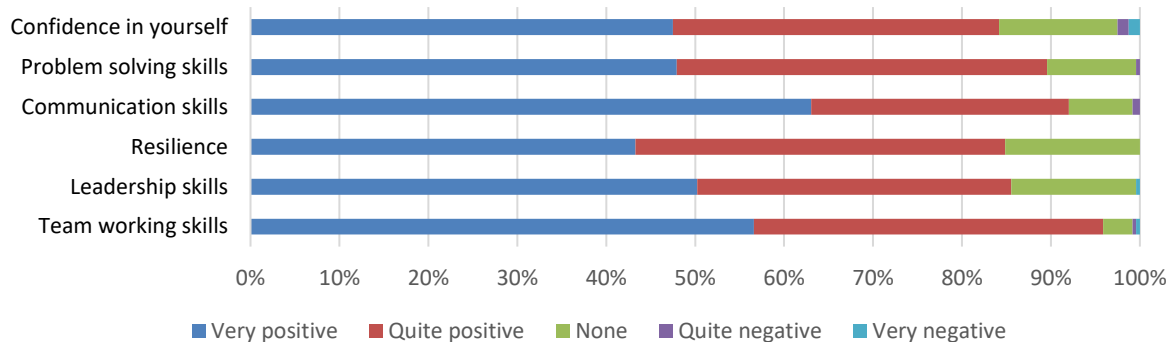
There was also a statistical significance in gender to those who agreed with the statement “I have confidence in myself”, with 78% of males agreeing but only 63% of females agreeing.

Fig. 4.4.4 "I Have Confidence in Myself"



The effect of PSYV on skills and confidence

Fig. 4.4.5 What affect, if any, has being a PSYV had on your skills and confidence?



Nearly all respondents felt being a PSYV had a positive influence on their skills, particularly their team working skills. 6 respondents felt that PSYV had a negative effect on their confidence in themselves, two felt a negative effect on communication and teamworking and 1 person felt a negative effect on problem solving and leadership skills.

Most of the respondents provided explanations for how PSYV had positively affect them, as 87 stated that it had improved their confidence in some way. 44 youth volunteers explained how getting to meet and talk to new people within PSYV and the public improved their confidence, especially when meeting new people, when they had previously been shy. There was a strong emphasis on improved communication skills (45) and others discussed the theme of getting to try out new things and gain new experiences by pushing themselves outside their comfort zone (12).

“I wasn’t really confident before PSYV, but PSYV made me be able to speak to people, take risks and overall, just enjoy life by not being scared to interact or do things”.

“PSYV has drastically helped me develop confidence and teamwork skills, I have come a long way from when I joined and was extremely shy and I see PSYV help almost every other recruit the same way”.

There were few other skills listed by the youth volunteers, 22 volunteers reiterated their improved communication skills, 8 answered teamwork, and 6 leadership skills in addition to confidence (13). Some skills not previously mentioned which were answered once includes patience, empathy, cooperation and listening skills.

“I have worked on my leadership skills by helping new volunteers get used to the group and introduce them to everyone”.

Overall, the responses in this section were largely positive, almost all the volunteers gave positive responses regarding being a PSYV and their sense of social responsibility, life experience and being able to make a positive contribution to their community. Gains listed from being at PSYV included learning new skills, gaining experience and positive social aspects. Most respondents did not find anything challenging at PSYV. However, the minority listed things such as balancing PSYV with other obligations, engaging with new people and potential negative perception or reaction of their peers

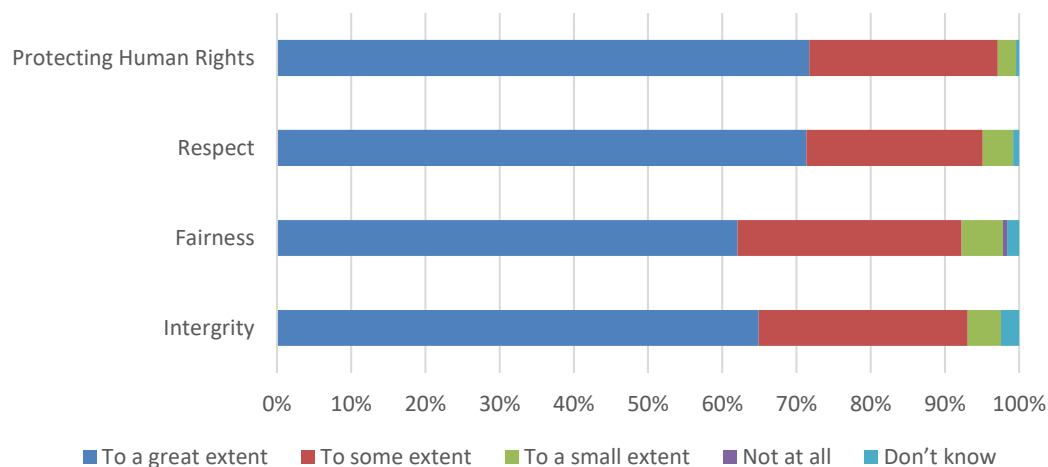
due to police association. Despite the overall positive response, many of the volunteers still did not have self confidence in their skills and a statistically significant percentage of females (63%) did not have confidence in themselves. On further investigation of self confidence, it was found that those who had been at PSYV longer were more likely to agree with the statement “I have confidence in myself” which could suggest that involvement in the PSYV programme helps to increase self confidence in their volunteers.

4.5 Perceptions of the police

Perceived police values

More than half of the responding youth volunteers felt that ‘to a great extent’ Police Scotland upholds the values of integrity (65%), fairness (62%), respect (71%) and human rights (72%). Two respondents provided reasons behind why they felt Police Scotland uphold these values, including that the PSYV programme teaches the volunteers to be fair, honest and kind, also that they “*believe police officers hold empathy for public*”. Only a small percentage of youth volunteers felt Police Scotland only uphold the values of integrity (4%), fairness (5%), respect (4%) and human rights (2%) to a small extent.

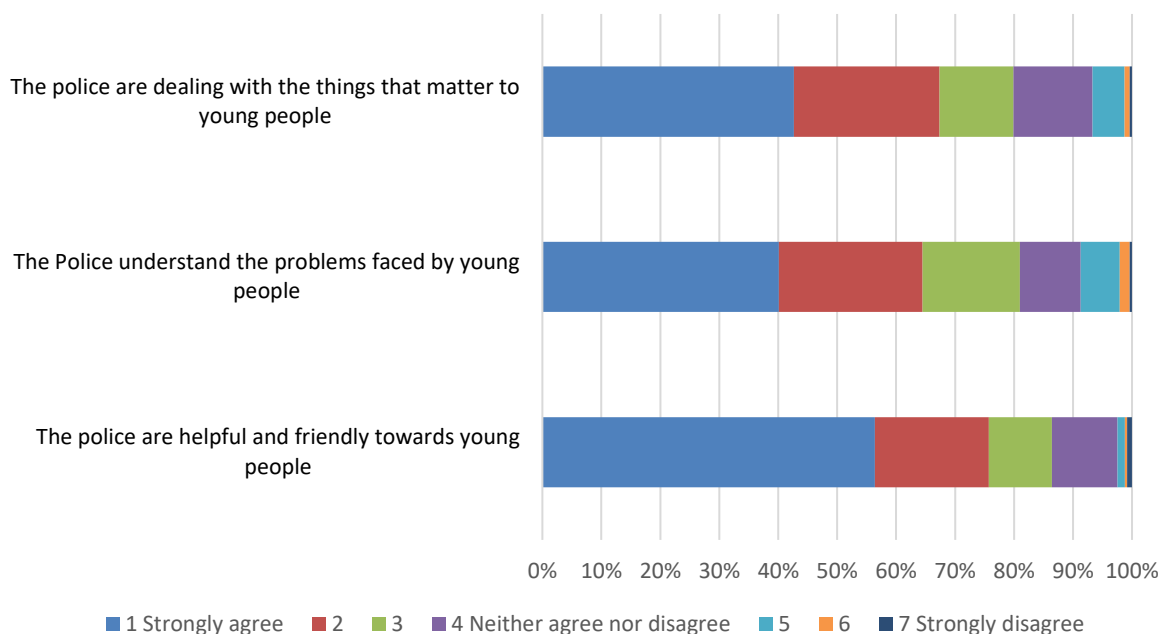
Fig. 4.5.1 To what extent do the police uphold the following values?



One of the youth volunteers explained: “*I feel the press puts the police down. And they never report on the good things that happen in the force*”. Suggesting the media may have a negative influence on the volunteers and the wider public's views of the police. One respondent selected that they feel Police Scotland does ‘not at all’ uphold the value of ‘fairness’, however they did not provide a reason. Another youth volunteer who did not feel the police uphold to a great extent the values of integrity, fairness, respect and protecting human rights, explained:

“I have had both positive and negative experiences with police officers in Scotland. But I believe that it isn't all cops who will treat people unfairly or brutally it is only a small amount”.

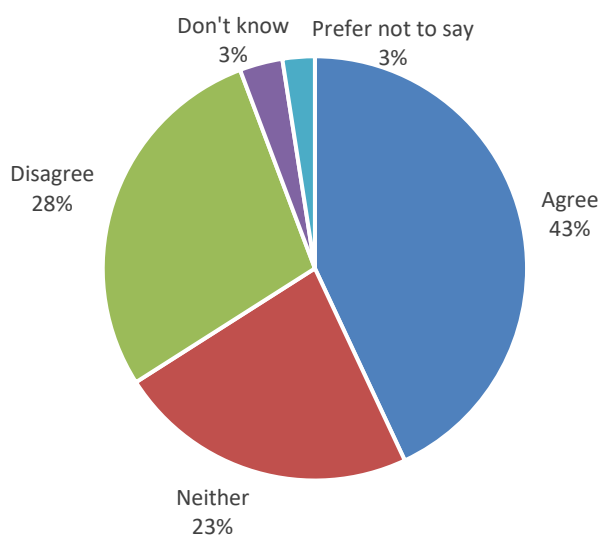
Fig. 4.5.2 Perceptions of the police



Most youth volunteer respondents agreed to some extent that the police are helpful and friendly, understand the problems faced by young people, and are dealing with the things that matter to young people. However, when asked whether they felt like the police sometimes treat young people unfairly, 43% agreed and 28% disagreed.

When asked to rate their overall perception of the police, 85% rated it positively, whilst 3% rated it negatively, and 5 respondents stated they 'prefer not to say'. Significantly, this demonstrates that whilst most of the youth volunteers may have an overall positive perception of the police, they still believe the police can treat young people unfairly.

Fig. 4.5.3 The police sometimes treat young people unfairly



Interestingly, there was a statistically significant difference in males and females in their responses to the statement “the police sometimes treat young people unfairly”, with 36% of females agreeing and 60% of males agreeing. In addition to this there was also a statistically significant difference in those who were White and non-White in the responses to the statement “the police are dealing with things that matter to young people, with 82% of those who were white agreeing but only 64% of those who were not of White ethnicity agreeing.

Fig. 4.5.4 "The police sometimes treat young people unfairly"

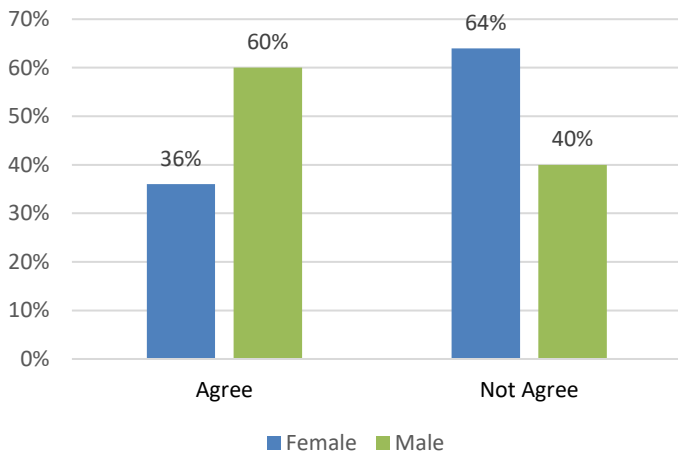


Fig. 4.5.5 "The police are dealing with the things that matter to young people"

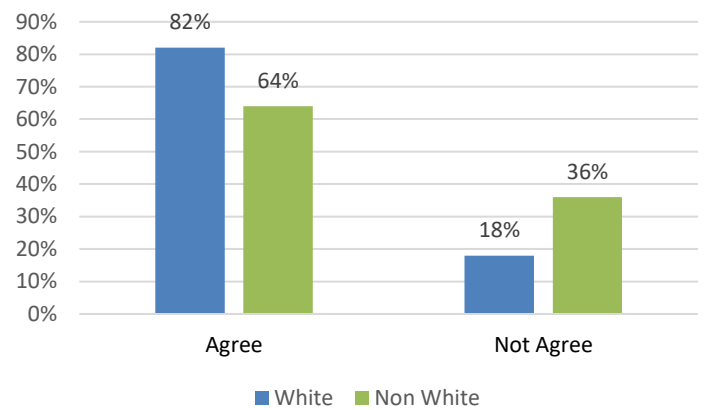
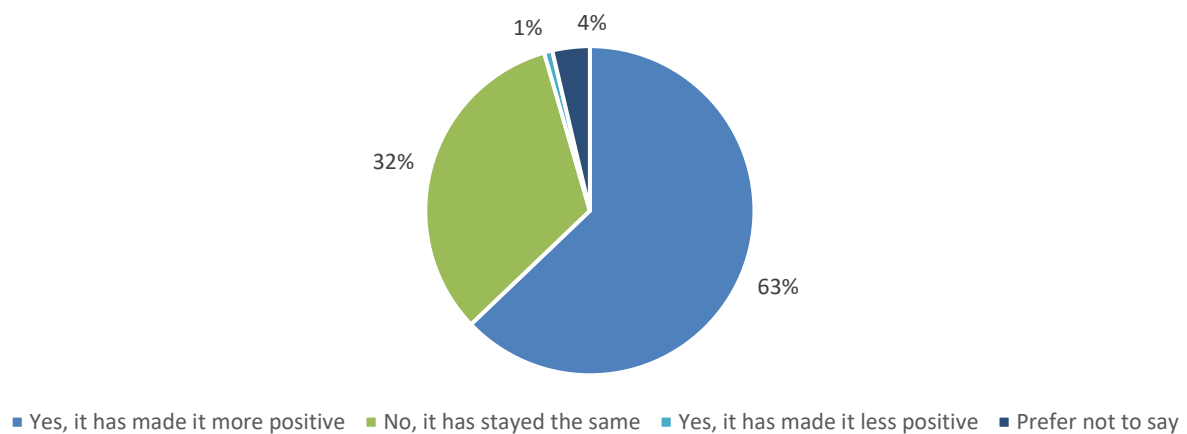


Fig. 4.5.6 Has being in PSYV changed your perception of the police?



Many respondents stated that the PSYV did not change their perception of the police because they already had a positive perception prior to joining the PSYV which remained positive. Multiple respondents discussed how they had always “*respected the police*”, “*liked them*” and “*looked up to*” the police as “*role models*”. Whilst the majority of those who provided a reason for their perception of the police staying the same related this to an already positive view of the police, one youth volunteer wrote that they had “*not seen much*” of the police suggesting there had not been an opportunity for their perception to change.

Over half (63%) of the youth volunteers responded that the PSYV made their perception of the police more positive, of which most provided a reason relating to previously having a more negative view of

the police. Through the PSYV they got to meet police officers and understand more about what the police force does, which made them more respectful and empathetic of the police. A predominant theme within the youth volunteers' reasons for their perception of the police becoming more positive, was that they now understand better the role of the police; what the police do and why they do these things. Another recurring theme was the humanisation of the police by getting to meet and talk to police officers about their experiences, by being in the PSYV,

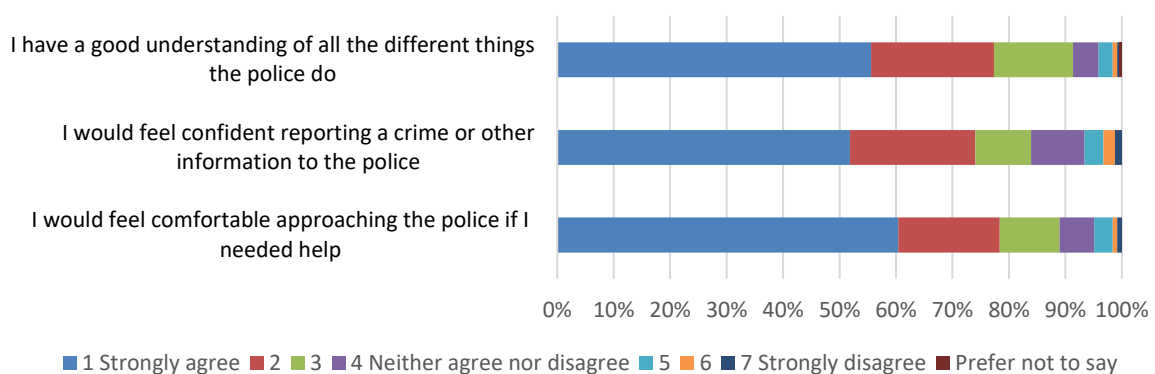
"I think it makes you understand how the police feel and work and humanises police officers".

When discussing their previously more negative perception of the police, some of the youth volunteers referred to external influences and how interacting with police officers in the PSYV has allowed them to see a different side to the police than what is presented in the media.

"Previously I was uncertain about the police as the media was depicting a lot of negative situations and you always hear about police officers neglecting their duties however a lot of the police I've interacted with during my time with PSYV has deflected these views".

A further reason given by some of the youth volunteers for their perception of the police improving suggests they were previously intimidated by the police which they now no longer feel. One of the volunteers described that he previously thought the police were "a bit scary" which they no longer believe, and the other volunteer described how they now "feel confident talking to the police" whereas they previously had not.

Fig 4.5.7 Feelings towards the police



Most respondents indicated they would feel comfortable approaching the police and confident reporting a crime and over 90% felt they have a good understanding of all the different things the police do. As discussed earlier, many of the youth volunteers felt that gaining a better understanding of the role of the police had improved their perception of the police which may have also helped make them feel comfortable approaching them, however, 9 respondents still disagreed with the statement.

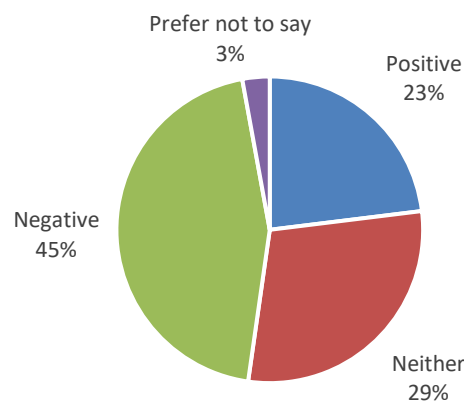
Additionally, 12 youth volunteers did not feel comfortable approaching the police and 16 didn't feel confident reporting a crime or other information. Significantly, when asked if they had ever had a negative experience of the police, 20 of the youth volunteers stated that they had. These negative experiences included themes of being disregarded or not listened to by the police, the attitude of individual officers and experiences of abuse. For example, one person stated that in the past they were "battered and bruised many times by the police at 14-15 whilst in [a] mental health crisis". Another

referenced a time when they had experienced a police officer being “*very rude and not wanting to engage*” with them. Furthermore, 21 youth volunteers preferred not to say and 203 had not had a negative experience of the police.

Community perception of the police

Most (45%) of the youth volunteers responded that they believed that in the wider community their age group had a negative perception of the police, and 21% thought their age group had a positive perception of the police.

Fig. 4.5.8 In the wider community, what do you think the perception is of your age group towards the police?



Most of those who thought their age group have a negative perception of the police provided reasonings, whereas very few provided a reason for choosing that their age group had a ‘positive’ perception of the police. One reason provided for choosing ‘positive’ was “*I just felt like that’s a good answer*” which may suggest the individual chose an answer which they thought the researcher wanted. Another volunteer reasoned that “*some people don’t like the police, but I like the police*” and one stated “*there are a few people my age that like the police*”. The majority of the other volunteers who chose ‘positive’ either did not provide a reason, wrote they were “not quite sure” or provided an answer which was unrelated to the question.

71 (29%) of respondents chose ‘neither positive nor negative’ in answer of what do you think the perception is of your age group towards the police. Of those that did provide a reason for choosing ‘neither positive nor negative’ many discussed how different people will have had different experiences with and perceptions of the police so whilst some may think the police are helpful others may be afraid of getting in trouble with them.

“I think most people think that police are scary but some do think that they are helpful. It’s a mixture of both”.

Some of the respondents who chose ‘neither positive nor negative’ also stated most people their age hate the police: “*most teens hate the police*”, yet this response would suggest that they think the wider community’s perception of the police is negative rather than neither nor.

The most common theme raised by the youth volunteers, including from those who chose both ‘negative’ perception and ‘neither positive nor negative’ was regarding the behaviours and attitudes of those in the wider community of their age group. Many indicated that people their age or teens in

the community often partake in illegal activities such as recreational drug use, underage drinking and smoking, and antisocial behaviour. Therefore, they do not like the police as they try to stop this behaviour or “stop you from having fun”. Some expanded that people their age group are often immature and irresponsible, and do not realise that the police are trying to help them and keep them safe from harm.

“I think immaturity has a lot to do with their perception of the police. They don’t fully understand or take the time to understand the role of the Police and what they do for them and their community. They see the police as “grassers” and “ruin the fun” but they don’t actually realise the harm that their “fun” can cause. They don’t believe that the job the Police carry out is for their benefit and the benefit of those around them”.

Some of the youth volunteers argued that there is a lack of respect for the police and their role within the community, particularly as young people are not held accountable for their actions.

“A lot of young people do not have respect for the police as there is minimal accountability for young people’s actions if a crime is committed”.

Another reason provided was that young people don’t like or trust the police because they feel the police treat young people harshly or unfairly and do not respect young people. This stigmatisation of the police may lead to a lack of trust as one youth volunteer commented:

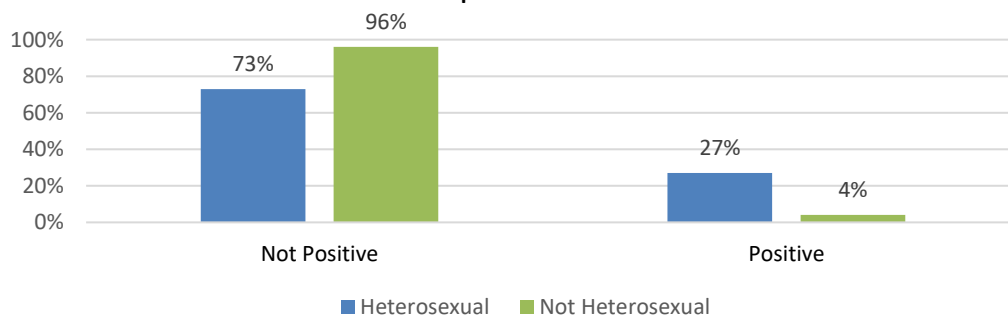
“Some police aren’t approachable and don’t listen to younger generations”.

Some of the youth volunteers also raised the suggestion of external factors negatively influencing young people’s perception of the police including their parents and the media.

“I think the police are misunderstood mainly due to the media”.

Interestingly, there was a statistical significance in the responses to this question as only 4% of those who classes themselves as not heterosexual believed that the wider community had a positive perception of the police, in comparison 27% of those who classes themselves as heterosexual thought the wider community had a positive perception of the police.

Fig. 4.5.9 "In the wider community, what do you think the perception is of your age group towards the police?"



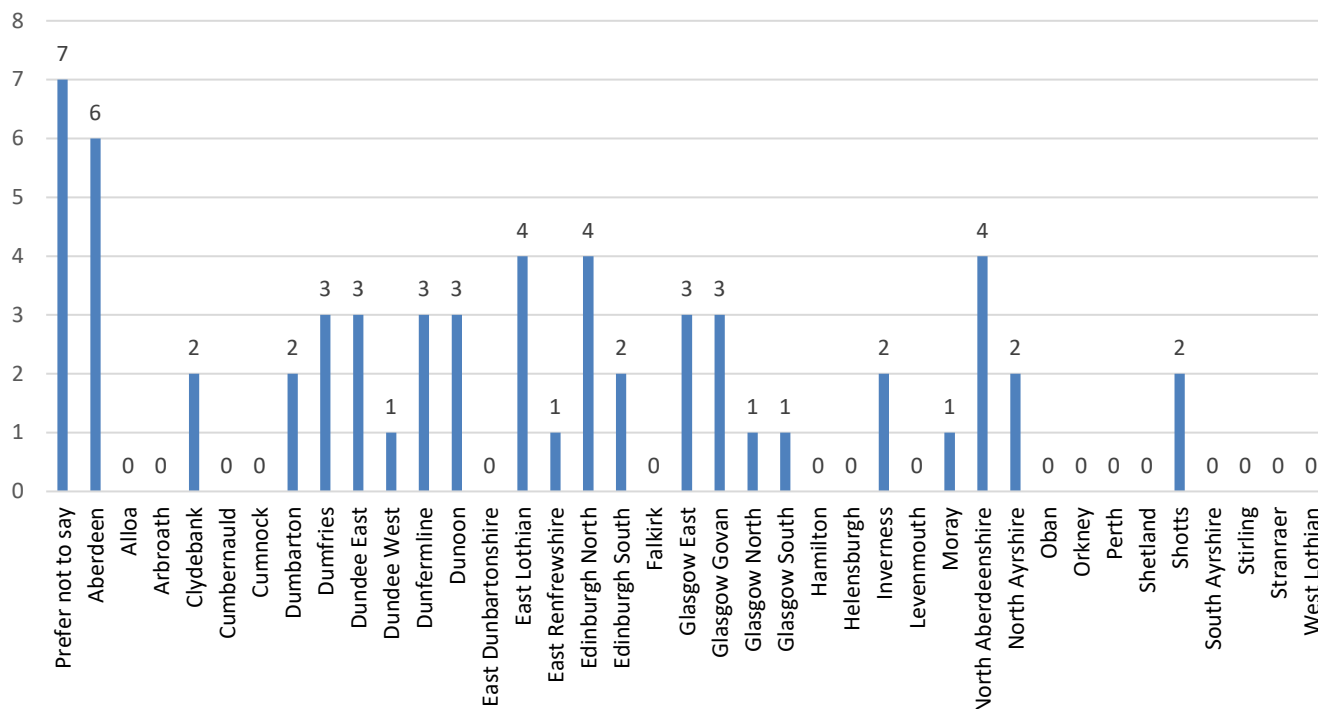
In summary, more than half of the responding youth volunteers felt that ‘to a great extent’ Police Scotland upholds the values of integrity (65%), fairness (62%), respect (71%) and human rights (72%). In comparison, Police Scotland also asked these questions to the wider population of young people in

Scotland and found that in September 2023 only 19-22% of the sample thought that the police upheld the same values to a “great extent”. In this survey a small percentage of youth volunteers felt Police Scotland only uphold the values of integrity (4%), fairness (5%), respect (4%) and human rights (2%) to a small extent, this percentage is again different to the Police Scotland’s findings of the wider youth population as 18 to 20% stated they upheld the values “to a small extent”. Most respondents indicated they would feel comfortable approaching the police and confident reporting a crime and over 90% felt they have a good understanding of all the different things the police do. These findings are consistent Police Scotland’s findings on the wider youth population as in September 2023, most of the wider youth public would also feel confident in reporting a crime or incident to Police Scotland, with 22% being very confident and 40% being fairly confident.

5. National Online Survey of Adult Staff and Volunteers Results

5.1 Demographics of the sample

Fig. 5.1.1 Area of adult staff responses



In total there were 61 respondents to the adult staff and volunteers survey. Of the respondents, 57% were female and 43% were male. Most respondents identified as 'White' (97%) and 3% were 'Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British'. The most common age range was 18-25, followed by 31-45 and 51-64.

Fig. 5.1.2 Gender

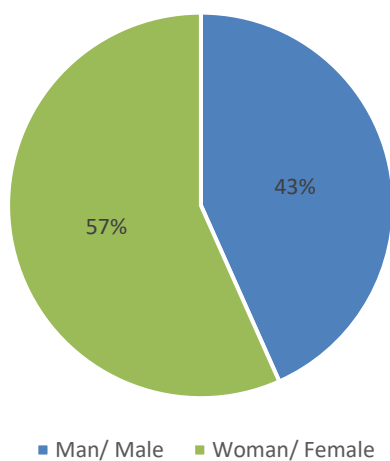
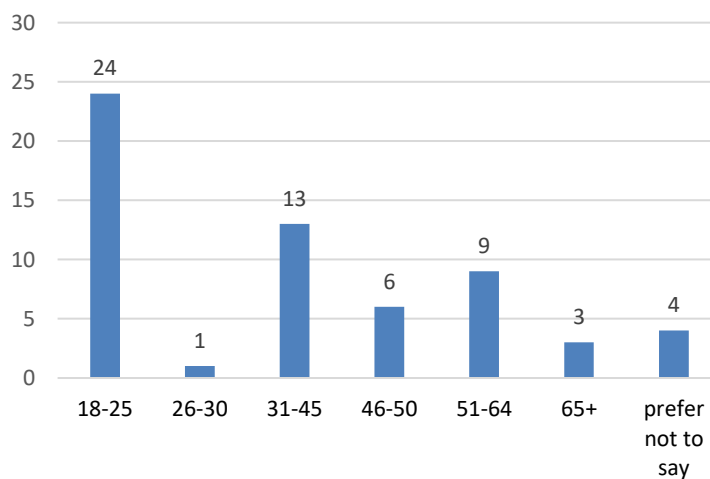


Fig. 5.1.3 Age



Most (33) of the respondents were Adult Volunteers, followed by Group Coordinators (14), Deputy Group Coordinators (6), Senior Adult Volunteers (3) and 4 preferred not to say. 14 of the respondents stated that they worked more than 20 hours a week at PSYV, of these 11 were Group Coordinators.

Fig. 5.1.4 Role

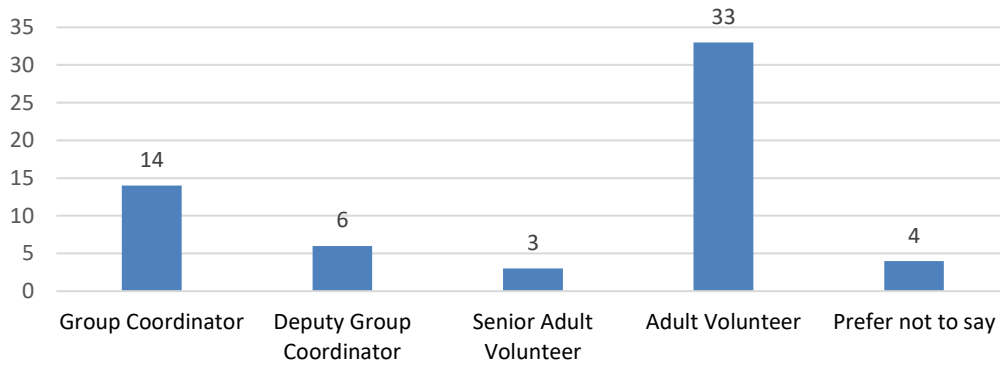
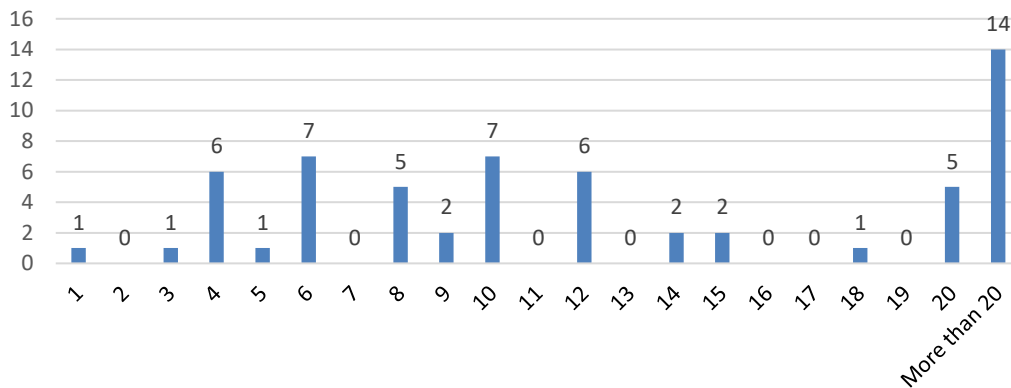


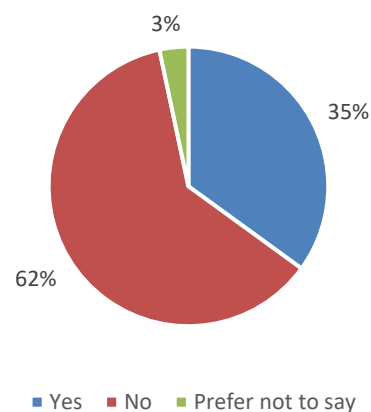
Fig. 5.1.5 Hours



Only 35% of respondents were a PSYV themselves. Of these respondents, when asked about their own experiences as a PSYV, all of the responses were extremely positive, with one respondent stating:

“I have been a part of PSYV since I was 13 years old. I started as a youth volunteer, and then transitioned into a adult volunteer when I turned 18. PSYV has honestly been the best thing I’ve been a part of and so thankful for everyone that’s helped and supported me during my time at PSYV. I will continue PSYV for as long as possible it’s something that I really enjoy being a part of”.

Fig. 5.1.6 Were you a PSYV?

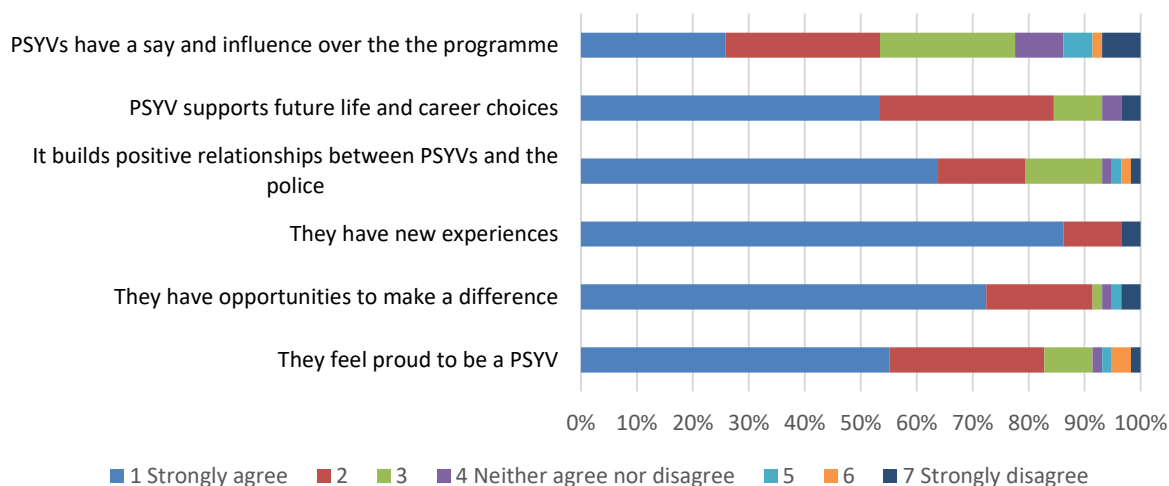


5.2 Perceived benefits of PSYV for young volunteers

When asked if they think the volunteers enjoy being a PSYV, most (58) agreed with the statement, (1) neither agreed or disagreed and (2) disagreed, stating that they did not think the volunteers enjoy being a PSYV. Around 92% of the Coordinators and Adult Volunteers thought that the youth volunteers feel proud to be a PSYV, however, (4) disagreed with the statement. The further responses continued to be positive, with most Coordinators and Adult Volunteers believing that PSYV gives an opportunity to make a difference in the community (57). Most respondents also agreed that volunteers get to make new friends through PSYV (58) and they have new experiences through PSYV (59). When asked if the volunteers get to meet people from different backgrounds, (58) agreed and (3) disagreed, similarly, when asked if the PSYV programme values and encourages diversity, (56) agreed, (3) neither agreed or disagreed and (2) disagreed.

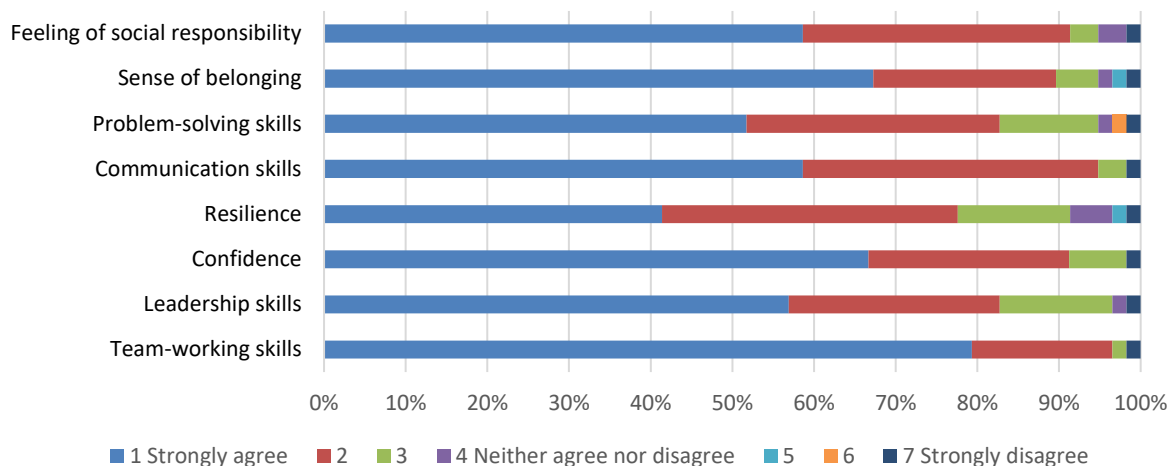
Most Coordinators and Adult Volunteers agreed with the statements that the programme “builds more positive relationships between PSYVs and the police” (57), “it makes PSYVs more aware of future opportunities in the police” (57) and “it supports PSYVs in their future life and career choices” (57). However only (47) Coordinators and Adult Volunteers believed that the PSYVs have a say and influence over the direction and content of the programme.

Fig. 5.2.1 Percieved experience of being a young PSYV



Out of the responses, 97% Coordinators and Adult Volunteers believed that being a PSYV had a positive impact on the leadership and confidence skills of young people involved in the programme, and 98% believed that PSYV had a positive impact on teamworking and communication skills. Only one person disagreed with these statements. 95% felt that being a PSYV had a positive impact on young people’s problem-solving skills, sense of belonging and feeling of social responsibility. The lowest positive response was in the resilience question, with 92% of responders believing that the PSYV has a positive influence of resilience for the young volunteers, however this is still very high. It should be noted that one individual scored all statements relating to the positive influence of PSYV on skills as ‘strongly disagree’.

Fig. 5.2.3 PSYV has a positive impact on young peoples' skills



When asked “what do you think are the key benefits of being a PSYV for young people?”, the most popular response was an increase in confidence (27). Similarly, the next most popular answer was that the PSYVs are able to learn new and valuable skills (22) such as team working, public speaking and problem solving.

“Makes them more confident and develop key skills that can help them throughout their life while simultaneously engaging with the community and creating positive relationships”.

Another popular answer was that PSYV enables the young volunteers to meet new people (11), additionally, some Coordinators and Adult Volunteers believed that the PSYV programme benefitted the young volunteers as it helps them be prepared for the future through new experiences (7) and can be especially beneficial for those who seek a future career in the police.

“Since the groups are run by police officers this gives the youths good insight into the career and will be able to ask any questions they may have to someone who has first-hand experience in the role of a police officer”.

One respondent was especially positive of the PSYV programme stating:

“PSYV instils good values in the YVs that they MIGHT not have picked up elsewhere and these values are beyond priceless and shall be with them forever! Another benefit the YVs gain is that there are hard things ahead of them in life and PSYV gives them the skill set to deal and cope with them. It also installs an awareness that there are bad people out there and they should not do as they do. It makes the YVs aware that there are a lot of people out there that are not as fortunate as they are. The training and following duties displays structure and routine which they carry forward to tomorrow and every day thereafter”.

To summarise, most adult volunteers thought that the PSYVs enjoy being a PSYV, are proud to be a PSYV, that they make new friends, are given an opportunity to make a difference in the community, have new experiences, and that PSYV builds a positive relationship between the police and PSYVs. The

adult volunteers felt that PSYV helped the youths gain skills such as communication, confidence and leadership and so the programme benefits the young people greatly. These responses are highly positive as it shows that the adult staff and volunteers believe that the programme is a positive thing for young people’s lives.

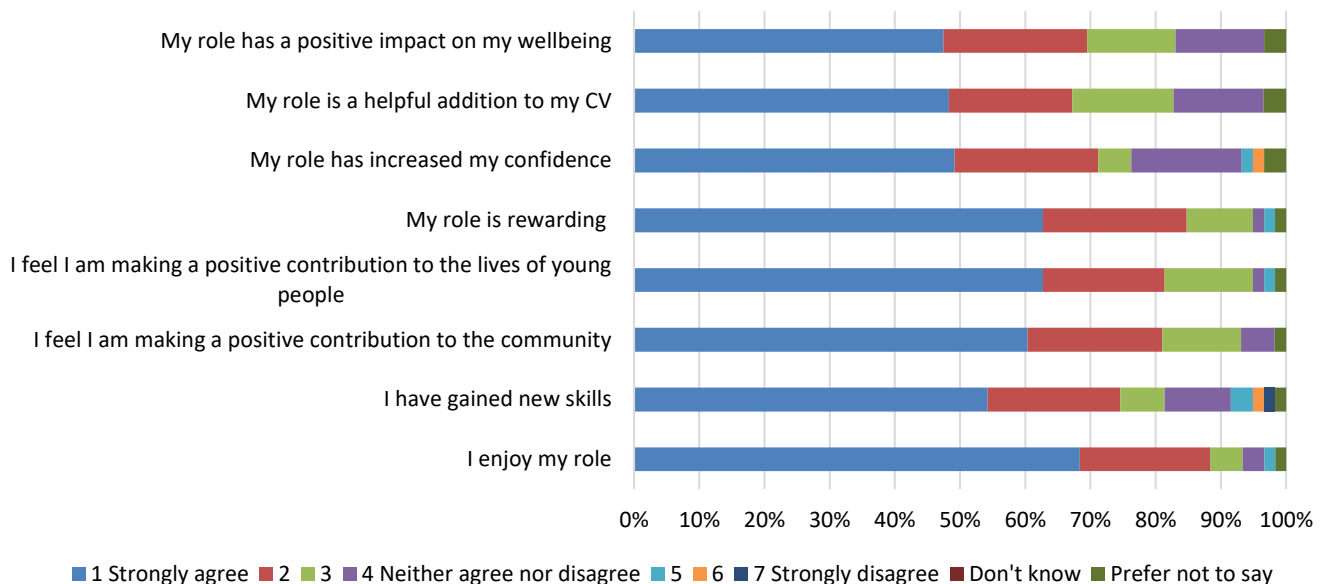
5.3 Gains of the Role

Out of the sample, 95% stated that they enjoy their role in PSYV and 79% suggested that the role has increased their confidence, 83% believe they have gained new skills, 95% feel they are making a positive contribution to the community, 96% feel they are making a positive contribution to the lives of young people and that their role is rewarding, and 86% believe their role has a positive impact on their wellbeing.

When asked about the key gains from being a PSYV Coordinator or Volunteer, the most common answer was the increase skills of which several different ones were listed (31) including leadership, organisational, communication and social skills and confidence. Having a positive impact on young people’s lives was the next most popular answer (17), as one person stated:

“I enjoy and feel rewarded by encouraging and providing mentorship to young people. I particularly enjoy seeing those who are quiet and shy develop through their journey with PSYV”.

Fig. 5.3.1 Benefits of being a PSYV adult volunteer/coordinator



As a result, the Coordinators and Volunteers stated that they gained a sense of self-worth and personal gratification from doing something positive through their work in the PSYV programme (7), with one person explaining this as:

“Personal pride that I have assisted young people on their journey into adulthood”.

Coordinators and Volunteers also felt that their role had helped them gain a better understanding of the issues that young people face, therefore allowing better insight into young people's lives (4). Another positive gain mentioned by some was the opportunity to have an impact and interaction in the local community through the volunteering work of the PSYVs (9).

"What PSYV does with/for the YVs is above and beyond what all the other youth groups I have been involved in. I feel good that I via PSYV and all those involved in PSYV are investing in the younger generation to make them very good citizens and they shall install the excellent values into their kids, family and friends. The YVs are us tomorrow!"

Almost all Coordinators or Adult Volunteers stated that they would recommend the role to others. Reasons given for this answer included that it is a highly rewarding role (13) which provides a unique opportunity to watch and help young people to develop and grow (8). Some also believed that the role was fun and enjoyable (8), providing the ability to give back to the community (5) in addition to the possibility of new experiences and opportunities that might not be available outside of PSYV (5).

"It is a highly rewarding role, creating opportunities for both YVs & AVs (including coordinators) that would otherwise not be there. The role provides adults with a unique chance to play a positive relationship with YVs & be a good role model. It is one of Police Scotland's success stories & enjoys the support of local divisions who see the benefit in building closer relationships & breaking down barriers with YVs & local communities".

"I feel very much privileged beyond words!"

However, a few people (4) stated that they 'don't know' if they would recommend the role of being a PSYV Coordinator or Volunteer. Reasons given for this answer was that *"There is no direct benefit to being an AV"* and *"It takes a certain personality and character to undertake this role"*, other people did not give a reason for their answer.

Overall, the responses in this section are again positive as most of the sample stated that they enjoy their role in PSYV and say that the role has increased their confidence and they have gained new skills. Most also feel they are making a positive contribution to the community, a positive contribution to the lives of young people and their role is rewarding, having a positive impact on their wellbeing. Key gains to the role that were listed included gaining a range of skills, having a positive impact on young people's lives, self-worth and personal gratification and impact/interaction within the local community. Almost all the respondents stated that they would recommend the role to others.

5.4 Training support and operations

Most of the respondents (53) believed that the PSYV programme is run well, five neither agreed nor disagreed and two believed that the PSYV programme is not run well. Most respondents believed that they have enough colleagues (45) and that the strategy for the PSYV programme is well communicated from a national to local level (45).

Fig. 5.4.1 The PSYV programme is well run

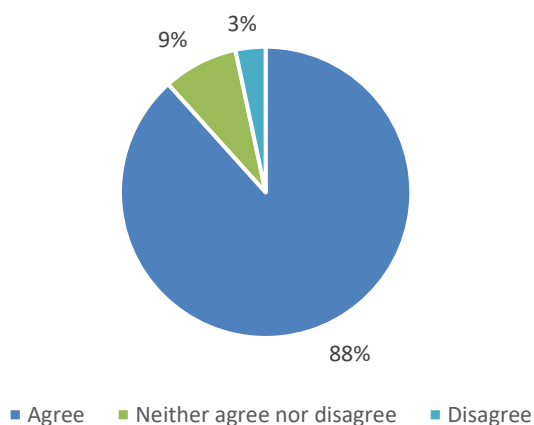
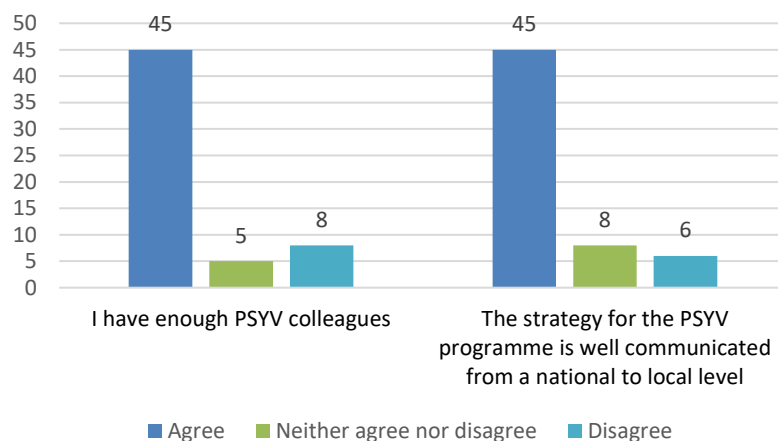
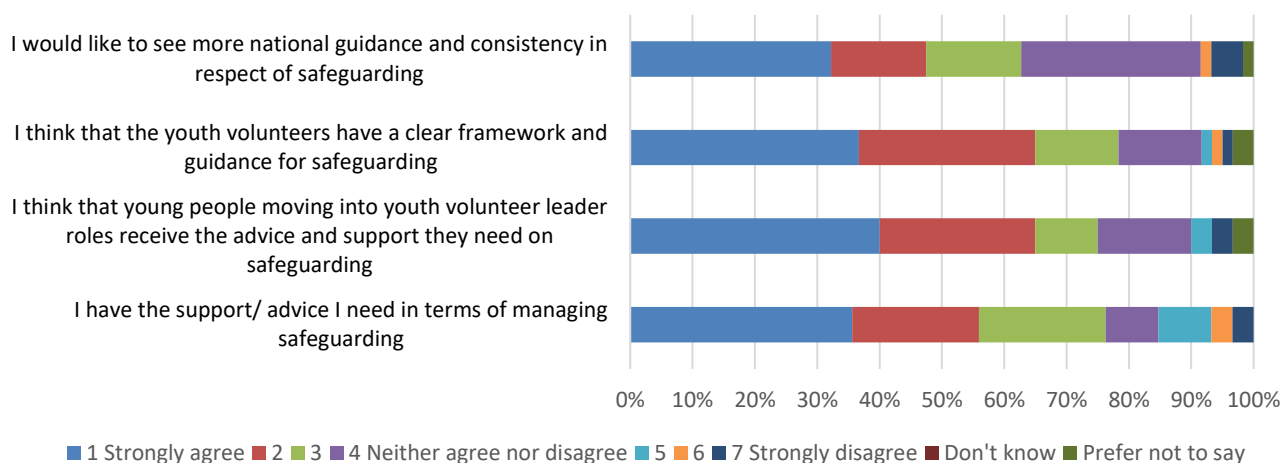


Fig. 5.4.2 Views on the organisation of the PSYV programme



For safeguarding, 76% felt that they had the support and advice they needed and when managing safeguarding concerns, 15% believed that they did not and 8% neither agreed nor disagreed. However, 63% felt that they would like to see more national guidance and consistency in respect of safeguarding.

Fig. 5.4.3 Safeguarding



One of the main challenges listed for PSYV Coordinators and Adult Volunteers is balancing their role in PSYV against other work and personal commitments (14). Other challenges included a lack of training and guidance on how to deliver sessions and what group sessions should look like (4) as *“there is no real structure to group nights and no training on how to deliver lessons to youths”*. Some respondents suggested that poor communication and lack of support from national teams contributes towards these barriers (4). There was also mention of a lack of Coordinators available and

Coordinators should delegate more to the Adult Volunteers to avoid sessions having to be cancelled. One complaint was that some Coordinators *“do not want active involvement”* which makes things difficult for the Adult Volunteers. On the other hand, one person felt that the Adult Volunteers do not give enough dedication, time, and contribution to the sessions and another mentioned there needs to be more Adult Volunteers available.

Other Coordinators and Adult Volunteers who responded felt the main barriers for them in their role was the behaviour of the youth volunteers (4). Some believed they are not taken seriously by the youths and that this can lead to disengagement, behavioural challenges, and a lack of respect. Another person suggested that they found it difficult to keep up with the *“trends”* and risks out there for young people today which creates barriers to connecting with the youths. One notable response was that disabilities or behavioural difficulties of youth volunteers are not always disclosed to the leaders. Although this person understood that such information may not be allowed to be disclosed, they felt that a change in this would help them *“to establish what kind of person do I have here and what can I do and what should I not do to ensure the ethos and principles of PSYV are installed as effectively as possible.”*

The most common answer to the advice and training that the Coordinators and Adult Volunteers would like to receive in the future was updated training for lesson plans, ideas, and teaching materials (17). It was suggested that this advice would help the Adult Volunteers to further the development of the young volunteers’ skills and future prospects. Importantly, some suggested that they would like more safeguarding training in addition to their mandatory training. Specifically mentioned was child protection training in addition to training on working with young people with complex needs and first aid refreshers (12). Other suggestions included clearer communication from the national team in terms of the purposes of PSYV and clearer frameworks on how to deal with conflict and group management.

Many respondents did not have any suggestions on how they could be supported in their role. Of those who did propose suggestions, these again included the need for more guidance and training days on a range of topics such as how to manage groups which would help leaders to feel more confident in their roles (9). Others expressed a need for better communication between groups and national teams (4), and to be more informed on the plans and new ideas of PSYV. Another suggestion was the provision of a list of activities available for the groups and what skills can be improved with each activity.

In summary, most respondents believe the programmes is run well, however, many stated that they would like to see more national guidance and consistency in respect of safeguarding. The main challenge listed was balancing their role against other work and personal commitments. It was regularly stated that they would like to receive updated training for lesson plans, ideas, and teaching materials. Some suggested that they would like more safeguarding training and child protection training in addition to training on working with young people with complex needs and first aid refreshers. Some suggestions on how they can be more supported in their role again included more guidance and training to allow them to feel more confident in their roles. Despite these suggestions, 88% of respondents believed that the PSYV programme is run well, which is a positive finding.

5.5 Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to PSYV

The Coordinators and Adult Volunteers were asked “what, if any, do you think the key strengths of the PSYV programme?”. The most common answer was the skills, growth, confidence, knowledge, and experience that the young volunteers gain from taking part in the PSYV programme (12). Many believed the opportunities and experiences that allowed the young volunteers to actively participate and engage with the community (13) was a key strength as the social aspects and new experiences opens up future opportunities for the volunteers (10). Other responses suggested the communication and respect between all the members of PSYV was a key strength to the programme (4) as it brings people from all backgrounds together, promoting good relationships and respect for all members.

On the other hand, the key weaknesses of the PSYV programme suggested by the Adult Volunteers and Coordinators was extremely varied. Criticisms surrounding the training, curriculum and content was brought up by some of the respondents again (7). For example, some believed the training is not regular enough or there are not enough opportunities to do courses. Others believed that the training, and course and teaching materials needed to be updated and it does not relate enough to police content.

“A lot of repetition on the content, can be slow and boring for the kids. Needs to be more engaging and practical”.

Some suggested that the PSYV does not have enough interaction with the police (3) which has led to a “*lack of awareness*” from other Officer and that some police officers still do not know what PSYV is. For example, one person stated:

“I’ve heard senior officers questioning ‘what do we get from the PSYV’ which makes me wonder if they see any point to it at all”.

Another issue brought up was that there were uneven opportunities available for different groups “*Availability of volunteer opportunities are based on where you are based geographically in Scotland*” and so, as in the youth volunteer survey, it was suggested that smaller groups do not get the same event opportunities as larger groups.

A few respondents suggested that the lack of awareness of what PSYV is and how it can help sometimes hinders opportunities to help in the local community. One respondent suggested that advertising what PSYV is and how it aims to help the community could eliminate some prejudice towards the organisation and therefore provide more volunteering opportunities:

“The constraints of being part of Police Scotland with the associated prejudice... I also think that PSYV can publicise the good work done within each and every community”.

The most popular improvement and development suggestion for PSYV from the Coordinators and Adult Volunteers was more involvement from the police (7) as,

“Some people joining PSYV want to become police officers and this will give them more motivation and an insight into what the police actually do”.

As such, it was also suggested that activities could include more police related content to educate those who are interested, which would also help to bridge the gap between young people and the police further. Another improvement suggested was more publicity or advertising for PSYV (5), this was for two reasons, to recruit more volunteers and to also advertise that the PSYV is available to assist in events in the local community. The latter would support achieving another suggestion made which was increased event opportunities (12), including both national and local, for the young volunteers to continue developing their skills. By making national events more available to all groups it would encourage groups to interact and build relationships with each other.

Most commonly the respondents identified finance and funding as a big threat towards the PSYV programme going forward in the future (12). Alongside this, a common concern was with a lack of interaction with the police (6), which could be attributed to a potential lack of funding, as one person stated:

“Losing the direct involvement/support of Police Scotland would in my opinion, be detrimental to PSYV & lose sight of why PSYV was established - to build a positive relationship between youths & Police. Without direct police support, PSYV becomes SYV with competition from other youth organisations”.

Additionally, another person stated, “I think YVs join PSYV as they are interested in a future career in the Police or similar and are disappointed with the lack of structure” and another person suggested police officers lack of awareness of what PSYV is contributing to this issue. Other issues mentioned which could impact the future of PSYV was the lack of time, resources, training and advertising (6). There was also a concern over the numbers of volunteers and groups potentially diminishing because of these issues (7). One respondent had concerns over the limited age window for the programme:

“...the age window for youths is 13-18 means that youths come and get the basic intro but because there is a constant rotation of people leaving and coming in the whole group ends up repeating the same things”.

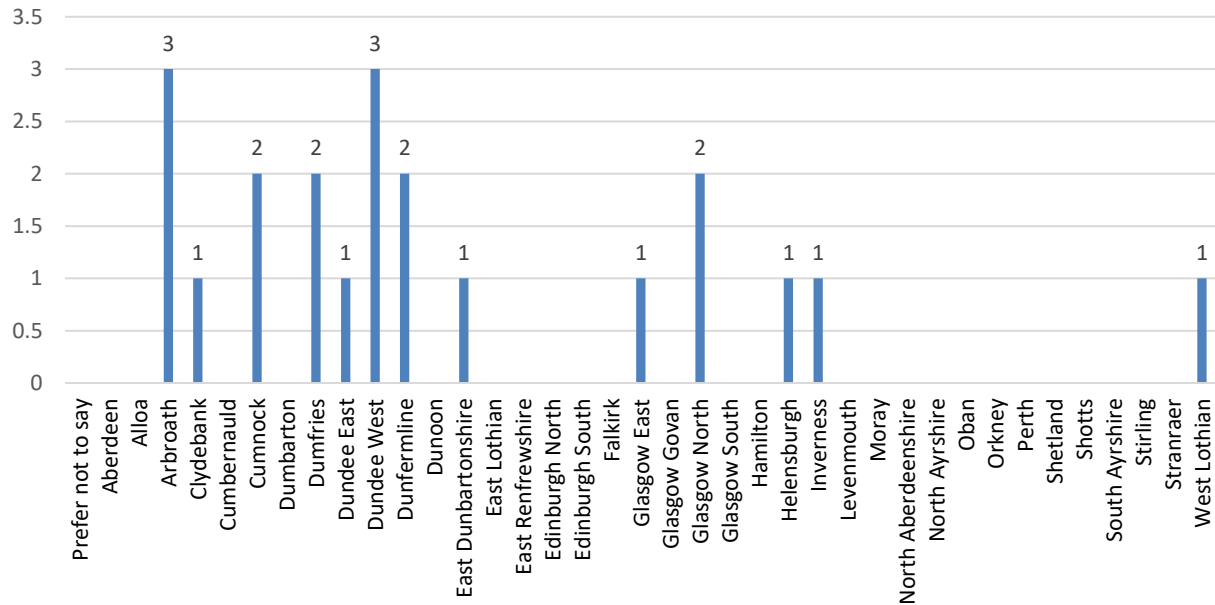
Similarly, some mentioned that the repetitiveness of the content could lead to a lack of interest from the youth volunteers and therefore a loss in numbers and commitment to the PSYV programme (7).

To summarise, the key strengths to the PSYV included themes such as skills, growth, experiences and community interaction that the young volunteers gain from taking part in the PSYV programme. Key weaknesses suggestions included criticisms surrounding the training, curriculum and content. Some people believed that the PSYV does not have enough interaction with the police, which is a concern due to the large numbers of youths joining for police insight. Another issue brought up was that there were uneven opportunities available for different groups and so, as in the youth volunteer survey, was suggested that smaller groups do not get the same opportunities as larger groups. Most commonly the respondents identified finance and funding as a big threat towards the PSYV programme going forward in the future. Alongside this, a common concern was with a lack of interaction with the police.

6. Alumni Responses

6.1 Demographics

Fig. 6.1.1 Area



So far, there has been 26 Alumni responses, some of which (21) have given the area in which they were a PSYV. Of the respondents 65% were female and 35% were male, one respondent also considered themselves to be trans or have a trans history. Most of the Alumni responders were White (24), followed by Mixed or multiple ethnic group (1) and Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British (1). The ages of the responders ranged from 16 to 24, with most common age being 19.

Fig. 6.1.2 Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

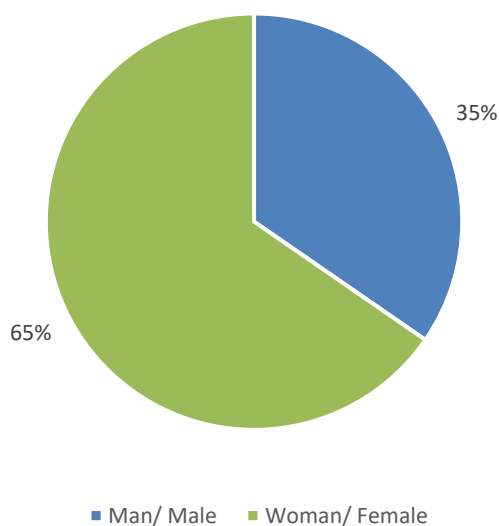


Fig. 6.1.3 What is your ethnic group?

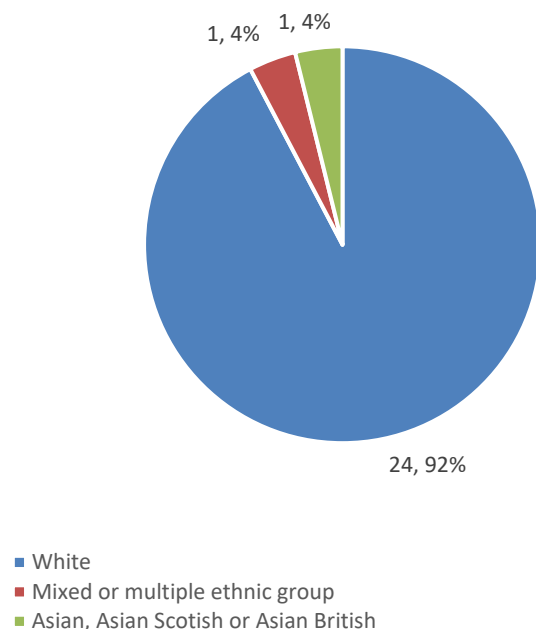


Fig. 6.1.4 Age

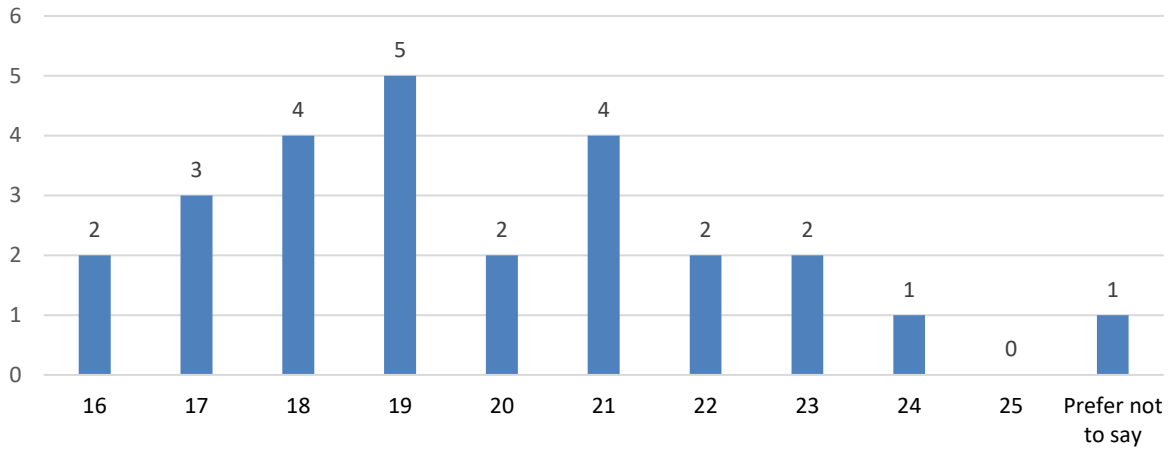
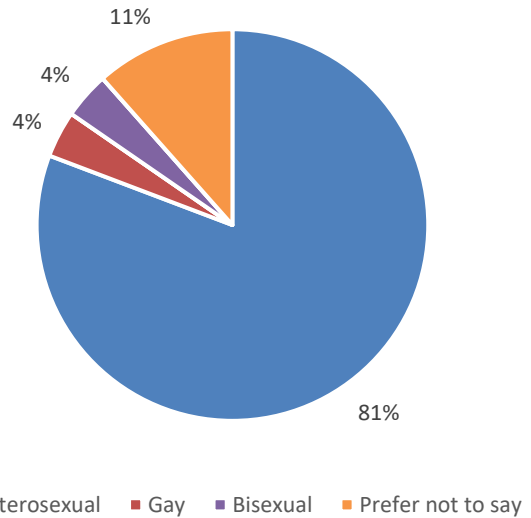


Fig. 6.1.5 Sexuality

Most responders (81%) identified as heterosexual, this was followed by 11% preferring not to say, 4% gay and 4% bisexual. Most of the Alumni (20) had no religion, 3 were Roman Catholic, 1 Other Christian, 1 was Hindu and 1 preferred not to say.



The majority of responders has been a PSYV for 4 years to less than 5 years (11), followed by 3 years to less than 4 years (8). When asked how long ago they has left PSYV, 19 had left over a year ago and 6 had left less than a year ago.

Fig. 6.1.6 How long were you a PSYV?

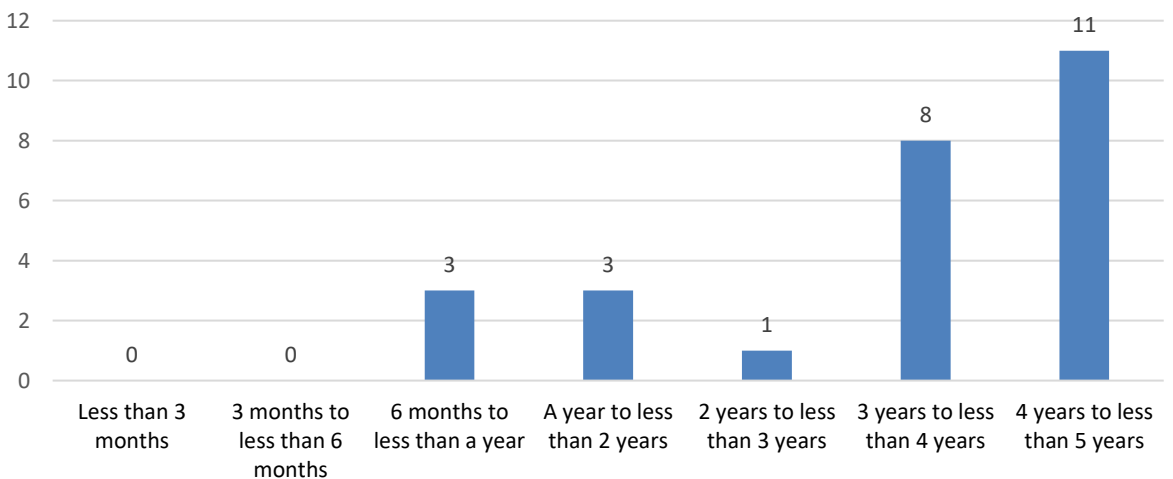
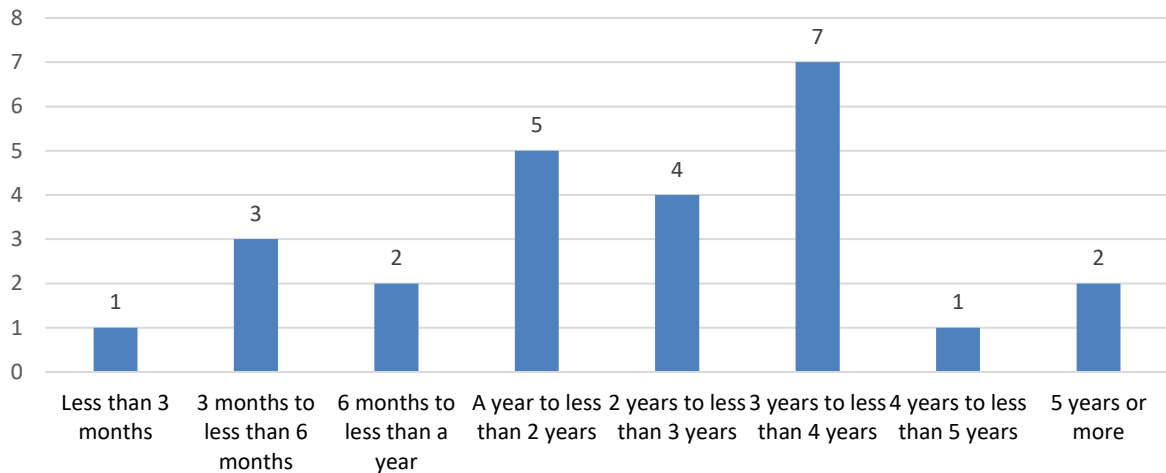


Fig. 6.1.7 How long ago did you leave PSYV?



Only 15% (4) of the Alumni’s who responded went on to volunteer with PSYV as an adult, leaving 85% (22) who chose not to. 57% of the Alumni are currently in employment and 43% are in education.

Fig. 6.1.8 Did you volunteer with PSYV as an adult volunteer?

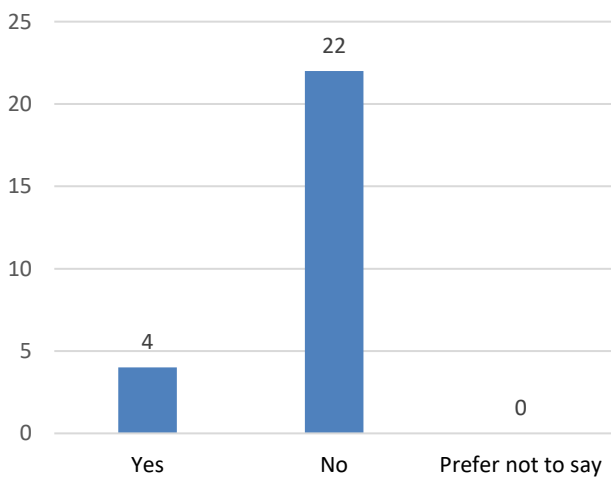
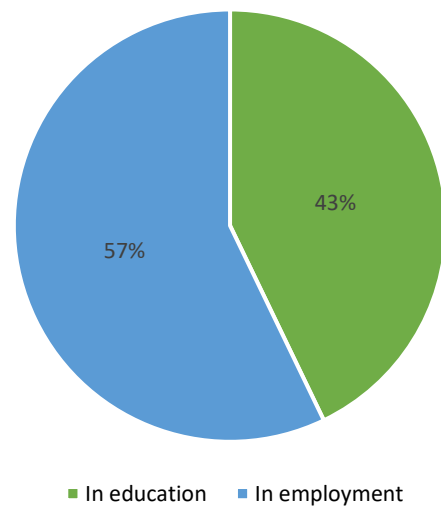


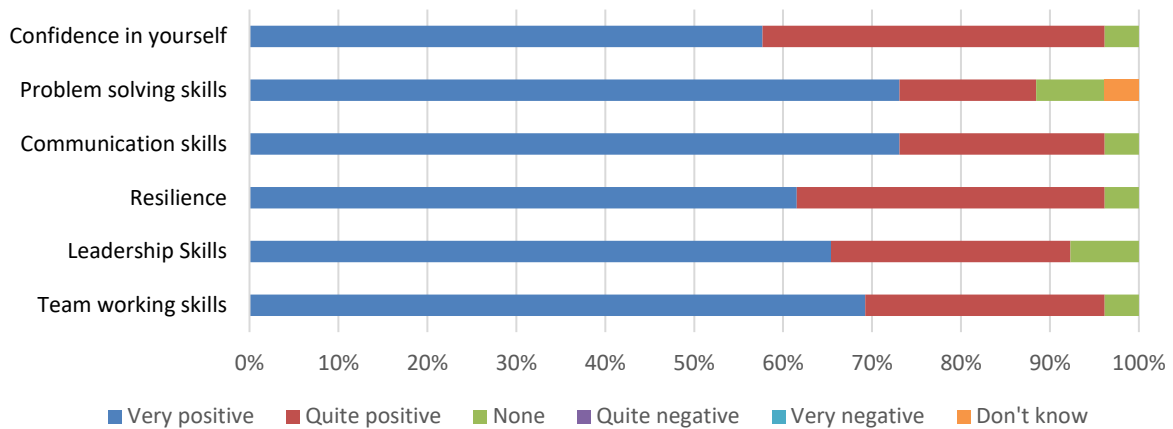
Fig. 6.1.9 What are you doing now?



6.2 Impacts of PSYV

When asked about the impact PSYV had on their skills and confidence, most of the responses were positive by stating there had been a “very positive” impact. None of the responders had stated that their time at PSYV had caused a negative impact on their skills and confidence. 96% stated that being a PSYV had a “very positive” or “quite positive” impact on their team working skills, resilience, communication skills and confidence in themselves and 92% stated being a PSYV had a “very positive” or “quite positive” impact on their leadership and problem-solving skills.

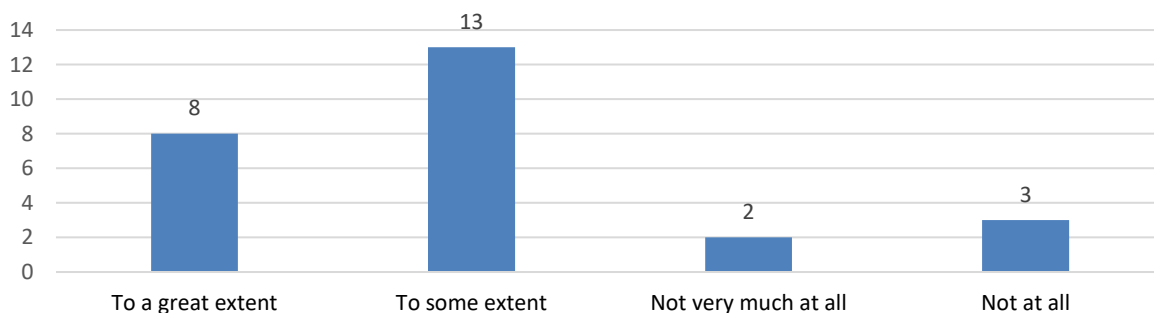
Fig. 6.2.1 What impact, if any, has being a PSYV had on your skills and confidence?



71% of respondents (21) stated that to a great or some extent being in PSYV had influenced their decision making in terms of what they wanted to do in life, whereas 19% believed it did not. Reasons for these responses included that PSYV had helped them identify a career path, for some joining the police and others deciding that a police career was not for them through gaining a better understanding of Police Scotland. Additionally, some people explained the volunteering they did at PSYV helped them understand they had a passion for helping others and broadened their understanding of opportunities. One person even stated that being at PSYV helped them explore the idea of going to university:

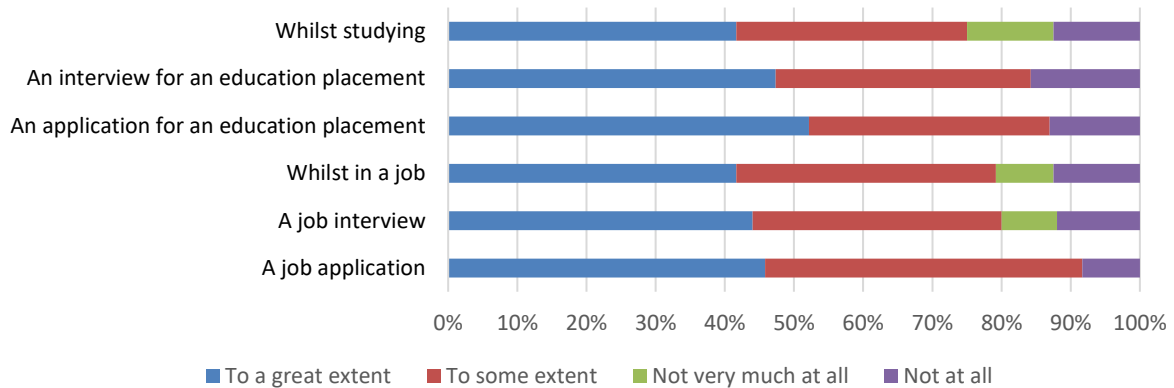
“Then it was an adult volunteer who suggested Community Education at Dundee University to me and now I'm in my 4th year. All because of the volunteering from PSYV”.

Fig. 6.2.2 Did being in PSYV influence your decision making in terms of what you wanted to do in life?



Again, the responses were positive for the question “has your experience as a PSYV helped you in any of the following situations?”. 92% stated it had helped in a job application, 87% stated it had helped in an application for an education placement, 84% in an interview or an education placement, 80% in a job interview, 79% whilst in a job and 75% whilst studying. 8-16% of respondents stated their experience as a PSYV had not helped at all in any of these categories.

Fig. 6.2.3 Has your experience as a PSYV helped you in any of the following situations?

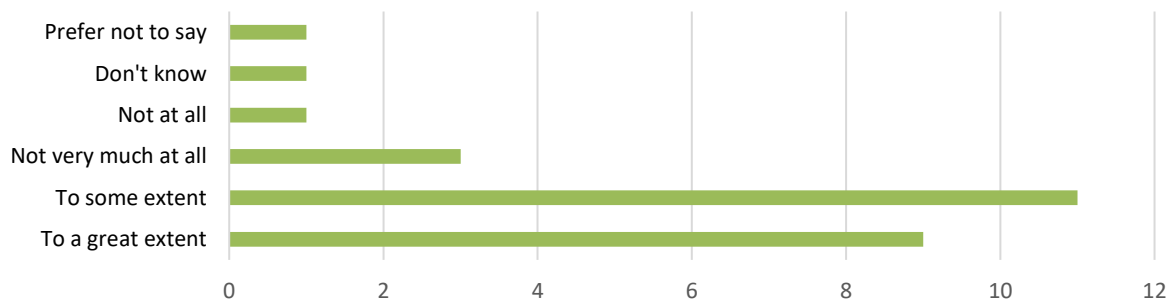


Similarly, 77% of respondents stated their experience as a PSYV has helped them to a great or some extent, 11% not very much at all, 4% not at all, 4% don't know and 4% preferred not to say. The main reason given for their PSYV experience helping them since they left was that they had gained confidence through their experiences. Other themes included gained social and communication skills in addition to overall transferable life skills.

“The skills and experience I gained from PSYV has had an effect on all aspects of my life. I use these skills daily and can use my past experiences working with members of the public in any capacity”.

However, there was one negative response where the Alumni suggested there was too much focus on uniform standards and not enough on volunteering, this person also stated that in their area the *“the head of the PSYV was a bully who made inappropriate remarks to the girls”.*

Fig. 6.2.4 To what extent do you think your experience as a PSYV has helped you since you left?



The respondents were asked if they had any suggestions on how the PSYV programme could be improved. Some suggested more information about career paths and opportunities other than the police and less focus on activities such as “boot polishing” and more about helping people in the community. As such, some wanted more community engagement and a greater variety of national and local events available to groups. However, one person emphasised that regular breaks were needed on these occasions:

“...during events, breaks should be allowed as there were multiple events where we weren't even allowed to sit down for 4+ hrs. make events more fun as we are volunteers so by making them more fun will encourage more people to volunteer”.

Overall, most of the Alumni had very positive responses to the impact of PSYV on their lives. For example, many state it has influenced their decision making on what they wanted to do in life. PSYV has helped the Alumni in many ways such as in job application and interviews as well as with educational placements and whilst studying. Overall transferable skills such as confidence and social skills were listed as some of the main gains from PSYV. Suggestions for improvement were also put forward, for example, there was a suggestion that there should be more focus on helping people in the community and there are improvements in the way events are handled. However, the consensus was that PSYV is a valuable organisation which has helped them in many different ways.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, this interim report demonstrates significant positivity across the PSYV from the perspectives of young people and adult volunteers. The evidence shows how youth volunteers develop their skills, alongside gaining important opportunities, through volunteering at PSYV. Some of the main skills young people gain from the programme are communication, social skills and confidence, which are valuable transferable skills which will support their development as they grow older. The added aspects of social responsibility through a range of activities facilitates valuable contributions to a range of communities. The benefits of participation were evidenced in the Alumni survey as most respondent stated that PSYV had a very positive impact on them, had given them transferable skills, helped them to decide a career and helped in applications, interviews and educational placements.

PSYV is different from other youth organisations due to the involvement of Police Scotland. It is evident in the youth responses that this interaction and insight into the police is a valued factor of the programme, especially due to 66% of the volunteers being interested in a police career when older. More than half of the responding youth volunteers also felt that 'to a great extent' Police Scotland upholds the values of integrity (65%), fairness (62%), respect (71%) and human rights (72%), which is a far higher percentage than the wider population of their age group. This may be due to them already having a positive perception of the police, as a high percentage are interested in a police career, and some PSYVs also feel that being on the programme has increased their positivity towards the police.

It is worth noting that 'non-heterosexual' participants were less likely to agree than those that classed themselves as 'heterosexual' that the PSYV Programme encourage and values diversity and less likely to rate the perceptions of their age group in their community to be positive towards the police. Additionally, non-White PSYVs were less likely than White PSYVs to agree that the police are dealing with things that matter to young people. Due to comparatively small numbers of respondents in the 'non-heterosexual' (26) and 'non-White' (28) categories these differences must be treated with some caution. However, they will be monitored to determine whether they reappear in the PSYV surveys in 2024 and 2025. There were also significant differences between male and female participants, these differences are more reliable with the proportion within each group being more evenly split than for ethnicity and sexual orientation. Firstly, female PSYVs were significantly less likely to agree than male PSYVs that they have confidence in themselves, this reflects findings in wider society that females rate their self-esteem and confidence lower than males, which emerges in adolescence (e.g. Carducci *et al.* 2021). Secondly, males were more likely than female PSYVs to agree that the police sometimes treat young people unfairly, there is less consistent evidence within the wider literature to support this finding, with some studies finding no differences (e.g. Sindall *et al.*, 2017). Analysis on all demographics will be repeated in the future surveys.

The adult staff and volunteers were overall very positive about their roles and responsibilities, with 95% stating that they enjoy their role and almost all respondents would recommend their role to others. Key gains to the role were the ability to have a positive impact on young people's lives, personal gratification, and interaction in the community. The adult respondents stated the opportunities that PSYV gives their young volunteers is a key strength to the programme.

There were, however, several areas that were identified in the analysis that could be improved, and several evidence-based recommendations are made below to support the development of the PSYV programme as well as to enhance the experience/benefit of participation for young people and facilitation for adult volunteers.

Recommendations

There is currently limited information on the demographic breakdown of the entire population of PSYV, which presents two important issues. Firstly, the extent to which the PSYV programme is both inclusive and representative of the wider population is currently unknown. Secondly, the extent to which the PSYV survey responses are representative of the wider population of PSYVs is not determined, meaning we do not know if some groups are under or overrepresented.

R1. It is recommended that Police Scotland consider conducting a short demographic census of their PSYV population on a yearly or two-yearly basis as well as consider the introduction of an Equality and Diversity Form for new entrants.

It is important to acknowledge that many of those joining PSYV are interested in joining the police, with nearly half very interested, and the most common stated reason for joining is because they want a career in the police. Although, not regularly commented on by the PSYVs, a common suggestion by the adult staff and volunteers was that there should be more police interaction and police related content in the PSYV programme. It was also suggested that there is a lack of awareness of what PSYV does by other Police officers. It is important that Police Scotland consider the extent to which the balance is struck in being a youth organisation that is attractive to, and meets the needs of, all young people whether they intend to have a career in policing or not (as it is important to acknowledge that a fifth of the sample were not very or not at all interested).

R2. It is recommended that the National PSYV team review the communication strategy to disseminate information about PSYV to Police Scotland colleagues to raise awareness as well as consider the inputs from different policing teams into the programme.

There were several events and activities that young people valued and enjoyed whilst being a PSYV. A suggested improvement by young people was that they would like more responsibility and clearer job roles when volunteering at events. It is recognised that an expansion of responsibilities may not be possible due to safeguarding restrictions. These point sits within the wider topic of youth voice shaping PSYV.

R3. It is recommended that for all external activities, a standard pro forma be developed with PSYVs input which outlines the nature of the activity, roles and responsibilities for PSYVs as well as benefits/value of the activities for different participants/recipients (e.g. PSYVs, Community, etc.).

R4. It is recommended that a youth voice strategy be developed, establishing mechanisms for young people to consistently have a voice and say into how the programme is run and their participation in different activities.

The adult staff and volunteers expressed a want for additional safeguarding training to enhance the statutory training that they currently receive, specifically more national guidance and consistency. It is important to note that statutory safeguarding training and guidance is already provided to all

members of staff and adult volunteers. In addition to this, the adult staff and volunteers also expressed the need to have more updated and regular training on content for sessions, how to run these sessions and enhanced/specialised training on how to deal with difficult behaviour.

R5. It is recommended that enhanced safeguarding training is made available to all adult staff and volunteers to enable further understanding and knowledge on important safeguarding topics, including explicit procedures for both adults and young people to report safeguarding issues.

R6. It is recommended that regular training sessions on content and group management is also made available so that the that the adult staff and volunteers can feel even more supported and confident in their role.

Across all surveys, there were perceptions of uneven opportunities for the events available for different groups. Although these claims are not able to be validated at this time, the perceived inequities between different groups are impactful to the experiences of some of the youth volunteers and adult staff/volunteers.

R7. It is recommended that a national audit is undertaken to assess the participation of groups with events/campaigns.

It is important to note that this is the first report of findings from the evaluation and further insight will be obtained as the evaluation progresses, this will include tracking PSYVs over time through yearly surveys, in-depth qualitative work with young people, a building sample of leaver and Alumni surveys and consultation with key stakeholders (see Section 3 for further detail). Further reports will be produced in the Autumn of 2024 and 2025.

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Appendix A: Contextual Visit

Supporting the Royal Military Edinburgh Tattoo (August 2023)

During a site visit in August 2023, the research team observed a PSYV group from North Edinburgh support the Royal Military Edinburgh Tattoo. The group, consisting of 5 PSYV along with adult volunteers, supported the Events Team to accompany individuals with accessibility needs up the Royal Mile into Edinburgh Castle. PSYVs were observed as complementing the Event Team, receiving a bespoke briefing prior to the crowds being allowed entry and integrated themselves well with other professionals supporting the event.



Figure 1 PSYV Event Briefing



Figure 2 PSYV Assisting Individuals with Accessibility Needs

During the visit, the Event Coordinator shared how during the 2023 series of events, PSYVs have supported over 1,000 individuals to access the event. It was noted also by police officers how PSYVs were professional and passionate about their role in the Tattoo. It was stated how they helped the Events Team with their role and were an

invaluable support to the event. PSYVs were not treated and perceived as extra to the event team, but rather as part of the team and therefore would have reduced the available resource should they have not been there.

The PSYVs described how the Tattoo was one of the highlights of the year, with some supporting the event for the first time and others returning to the event having supported the Tattoo in previous years. An important benefit for the PSYVs was to attend the Tattoo following their duties, which for some represented a 'once in a lifetime' experience which they were able to share with family and friends at home. The PSYV programme facilitated the event and provided practical support in the form of a minibus to enable young people to travel to and from the event, noting how for some the timing of the tattoo coincided with the school calendar.



Figure 3 PSYV Supporting Crowd Entrance



Figure 4 PSYV Assisting Individuals with Accessibility Needs

With the average demographic attending the Tattoo being older, the opportunity for PSYVs to support the Tattoo also represented a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between older people and young people, representing young people in a positive way.

Critically, without the PSYV programme, less people with accessible needs would have been supported, given the high demand and the physical challenges associated with entry to Edinburgh Castle and the added benefits of positive young people interaction with older people would have been lost. From having spoken to several event staff and police officers, this loss had PSYVs not supported the event would have been noticeable and would have negatively impacted the overall functioning of the Tattoo.



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