

Key Messages

- Covid-19 has had a significant impact on PSV programmes. Most police forces (34) had suspended their PSV programmes at some point during the pandemic period, and a similar proportion had experienced disruption in recruitment.
- Estimates in this benchmarking exercise for PSV hours nationally, at 190,000, are well below previous benchmarking estimates of 450,000 hours in 2018 and c.600,000 hours in 2016, with Covid-19 likely a predominant factor in that pattern.
- There were **7,632** PSVs counted by forces in this benchmarking exercise. This is broadly consistent with the circa 8,000 PSVs headcount of recent police national workforce statistics. The figure is a little lower than the most recent national statistics and previous benchmarking surveys.
- The level of knowledge and engagement with elements of the national PSV programme by individual forces varies. 14 forces reported they were fully aware of the work of the PSV working group, 22 said they were somewhat aware, and 8 said they were unaware. Whilst most forces have engaged with the Valuing Volunteers Framework, the PSV handbook, and have access to the knowledge hub, there are a body of forces that are less engaging in those elements.

Introduction: The purpose of this policy brief is to summarise the key findings the national benchmarking 2021 report (Britton *et al.*, 2021). Every police force across England and Wales, and the British Transport Police, responded in the early summer of 2021 to a survey which covered a wide range of aspects of their local PSV programmes.

The Impact of Covid-19: Covid-19 has had a significant impact on PSV programmes. Most police forces (34) had suspended their PSV programmes at some point during the pandemic period, and a similar proportion had experienced disruption in recruitment. Most forces have changed roles for PSVs and how they manage and communicate across their PSV programmes.

Only 25 forces (out of 44 surveyed) provided data on hours served by PSVs, reflecting data for only approximately half of PSVs nationally. Therefore, the data shared here only provides a partial picture of the whole. The figures present a low number of hours served, averaging at only 25 hours per PSV over a year, extrapolating nationally (if it is assumed there to be similar activity levels for the forces not providing data) at an estimate of **190,000** hours across all forces.



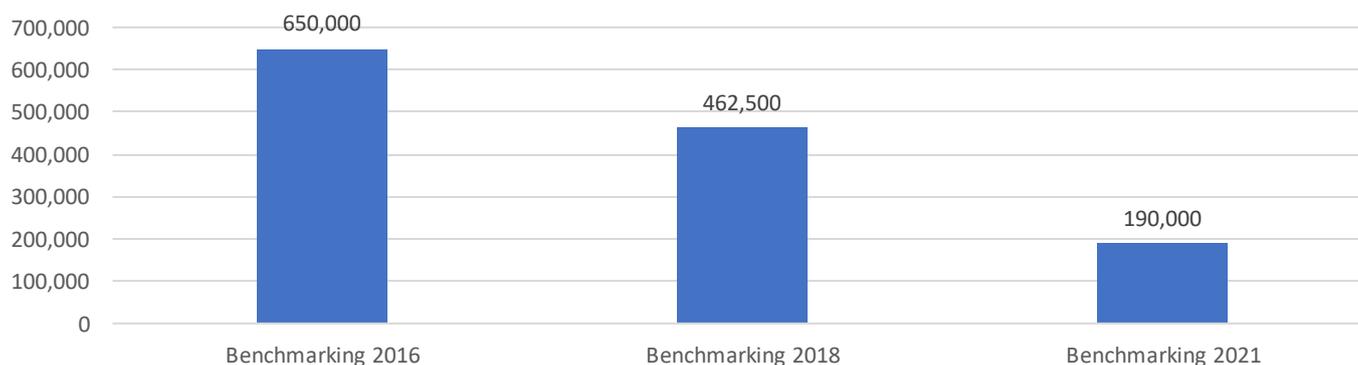
**Police Support Volunteers
National Benchmarking 2021**

Authors:
Dr Iain Britton
Joanna Binley
Dr Matthew Callender
Kathryn Cahalin

September 2021

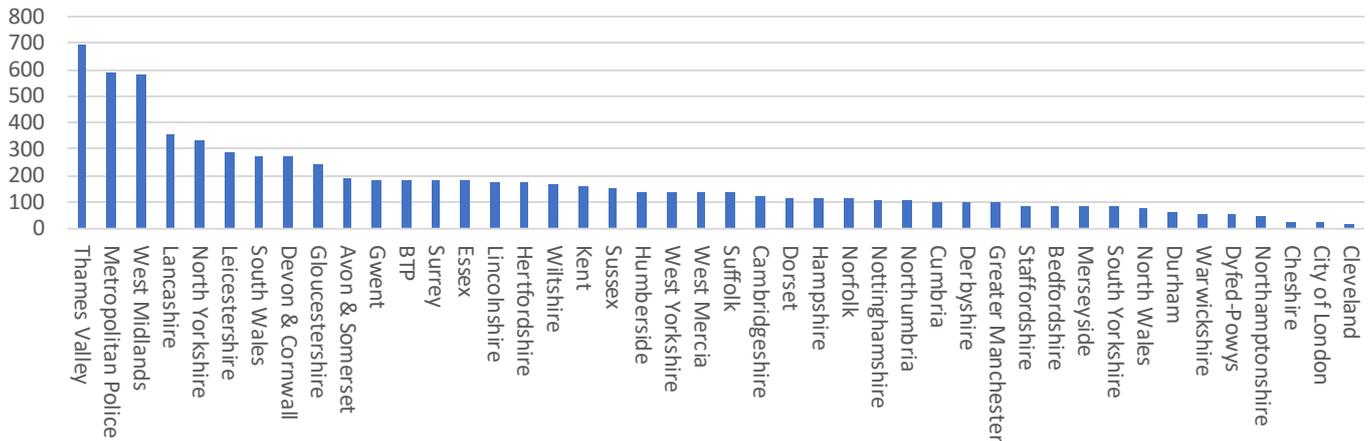


National projections of total hours served by PSVs, estimated from Benchmarking Surveys



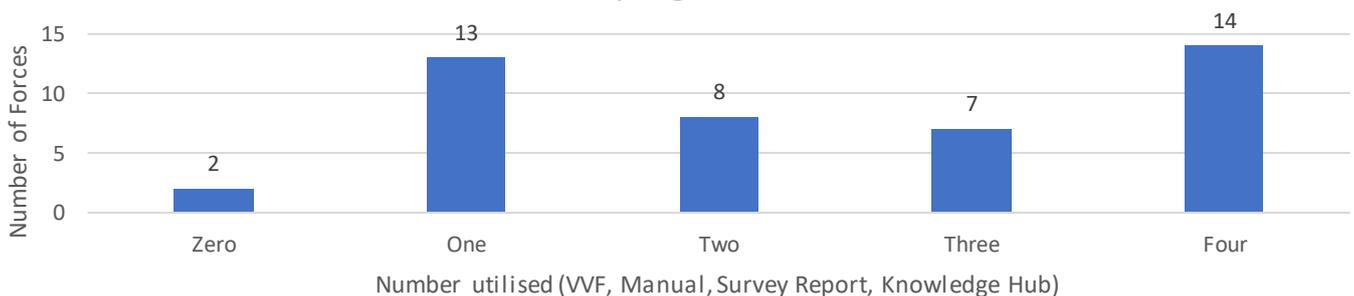
Headcount: The National Benchmarking Surveys show that, as was the case in previous benchmarking exercises in 2016 and 2018, every police force in England and Wales has an active PSV programme, albeit these programmes vary greatly in their scale and content. Looking across the data from forces at a national level, the overall number of PSVs identified was **7,632**. As shown in the graph below, this figure is broadly in the same range (slightly lower) to the national CiP benchmarking exercises in 2016 (8,106) and 2018 (8,265) and to figures provided for PSVs through the biannual national police workforce statistics.

Number of PSVs by force, National Benchmarking Survey, 2021



Demographics: Data on gender was shared by 36 of the 44 police forces, with 47.8% female of PSVs being female and 52.2% were male. 28 forces provided data on the age of their PSVs, comprising age data collectively for 3,777 PSVs (roughly half of all PSVs). The age distribution was skewed towards older age groups, with one in four (39.6%) aged 60 or over, and 58% aged over fifty. Consistently to previous Benchmarking Surveys of forces in 2016 and 2018, the data on ethnicity across forces is missing in a large proportion of cases, and there are also data challenges (including sizeable proportions of missing data) in many other forces. Similar problems exist in relation to data on disability.

Overall level of engagement by forces in wider national 'infrastructure' of PSV programme



Conclusions: Much of the picture across this 2021 PSV benchmarking exercise reflects a continuity with previous exercises in 2016 and 2018. Given five years have elapsed between the 2016 and 2021 benchmarking surveys, there is limited evidence overall of growth in numbers, roles, or impact. There have been some key developments at the national level, such as the Valuing Volunteers Framework, national surveying, national strategy, national handbook, and more recently developing of shared spaces on the knowledge hub. There remain challenges in the quality, completeness, and consistency of data across police forces in respect of PSVs which still need to be addressed.