

## 1. Introduction

Policing is changing...



A changing policing landscape requires a change in policing delivery...  
Do **Police Support Volunteers (PSVs)** have a role to play in this?

## 2. Methods – ‘Telling the Story’ through the Voices of Volunteers, Officers and Staff in London’s Metropolitan Police Service



Survey of volunteers  
Semi-structured interviews with volunteers, Met Police officers, staff and key stakeholders



The PSV: Who? Why? Motivations? Contribution?  
The PSV experience: Supported? Managed? Developed?  
PSVs and the police organisation: Integrated? Involved?  
The future for PSVs: More for less?

## 3. Emerging Themes from Fieldwork to Date\*

### PSV Motivations

Making the **community safer**; doing something **interesting and worthwhile**; being part of an organisation they **feel proud of**

I feel that I'm making a difference to the community

*Female, 18-21, Visual Images Identification Office (VIIDO) volunteer*

My local police station was closed and it was an opportunity to reopen it with volunteers. This is something I felt very strongly about...

*Female, 65-74, criminal exhibit stores volunteer*

Curiosity about the police. They are forever shooting themselves in the foot, and get lots of bad publicity. So what are they really like?

*Male, 65-74, admin support volunteer*

### PSV Experiences

**Supervision; support; interesting, worthwhile** roles. However, limited **development and feedback**, and PSVs often **don't have enough to do**

I thoroughly enjoy working with the Met Police and am hopeful that more work will be found for volunteers

*Female, 65-74, front counter volunteer*

I have other projects I wish to pursue and cannot afford to sit in an office doing nothing

*Female, 65-74, front counter volunteer*

As our duties decrease I feel the volunteers have not been used as much as they could be and therefore is a waste of a valuable resource

*Female, 75-84, front counter volunteer*

### PSVs and the Police

Feel **part of a team, respected and valued**. However, feel that **officers and public do not see them as part of team**; not involved in **decision making**

Feedback from the police officers I work with indicates that my support is invaluable

*Front counter volunteer, no demographic information provided*

We save the Met thousands of pounds...allowing officers to get on with other tasks

*Visual Images Identification Office (VIIDO) volunteer, no demographic information provided*

In my case the supervising officers...took too little interest in what I was doing.... As a consequence my efforts have not been as useful as I had thought. That's demoralising

*Male, 65-74, admin support volunteer*

### The Future for PSVs

**Greater demand? Or fewer resources** to manage and task? Volunteering is a **'low cost' not 'no cost'** option

Volunteering with the police allows the Met to save money and still provide a good service

*Female, 35-44, front counter volunteer*

Colleagues are under more pressure and cannot give time to my role

*Male, 65-74, admin support volunteer*

We need more volunteers but...we're not prepared to put resource in. In fact, we're going to take resource out...it's not a no cost option – it's a low cost option

*Male, senior police officer stakeholder interviewee*

\* 140 x volunteer survey responses; 5 x stakeholder interviews; 3 x pilot interviews with volunteer, officer and volunteer manager

## 4. Concluding Thoughts

- PSVs are steadily becoming an **engrained feature of a diverse and multi-faceted collective** – beyond the traditional officer role – who are involved in the delivery of policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- We need to **build the limited evidence base** to understand more about how 'others' are used, viewed and valued in policing, and how best to support and develop volunteers to enable both PSVs and police organisations to give and get the best out of volunteering.
- The possibilities are exciting, but the extent to which they will be fully realised will depend on the ability of both volunteers and the police service to **negotiate new ways of working together in changing times**.

Next steps: Further analysis of survey results; interviews with volunteers, officers and volunteer managers

## About the Author

- Melissa Pepper is a part time ESRC funded PhD student at the University of Surrey, UK, supervised by Professor Karen Bullock and Dr. Daniel McCarthy.
- Melissa's research interests are around policing, in particular the citizen's role in law enforcement and crime control.
- Melissa works for the London Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime contributing to research across a range of policy areas, including gender based violence, substance misuse, and community engagement.

