Working with volunteers
A guide for neighbourhood policing teams and partners
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Foreword

This guide is one in a series produced by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) Citizen Focus and Neighbourhood Policing Programme Team aimed at increasing engagement with the public.

Volunteers can undertake a wide variety of activities in support of the work of the police. The aim of the guide is to help Basic Command Unit commanders, partners and neighbourhood team officers to work more closely with volunteers.

Evidence so far from the Citizen Focus and Neighbourhood Policing Programme shows that three key factors improve community confidence and lead to neighbourhoods becoming safer as well as communities feeling safer:

- Increasing police visibility
- Engaging with local communities to identify their concerns and priorities
- Working with local communities to solve the problems that matter to them.

This guide has been published after extensive consultation with police forces, partners, government agencies, and other practitioners from statutory, private and third sector agencies. We have been reliant on case studies sent to us by police forces, partners and other agencies we have contacted. We realise that there may be many more examples of activities taking place across the country and would welcome further contributions being sent to us for consideration.

The aim of the guide is to help Basic Command Unit commanders, partners and neighbourhood team officers to meet the needs of faith communities.

This document has been published alongside two other guides, both aimed at increasing engagement with communities: ‘Working with faith communities’ (NPIA 2010) and ‘Working with the third sector’ (NPIA 2010).


The examples outlined in this guide have been provided by forces and are used for illustrative purposes only. Unless otherwise stated they have not been formally accredited, assessed or evaluated by the NPIA.

We hope that you find the guide helpful and informative. If you have any comments about the guide or further case studies or examples that we might use, please contact us using the details at the back of the guide.
Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) have quickly established themselves as an integral part of operational policing across England and Wales. Neighbourhood policing is about engaging with local communities to identify their concerns and priorities, increasing police visibility but also, and crucially, working with local communities to solve problems that matter to them.

NPTs engage with many sectors of the community and have built strong relationships with individuals and community groups. By working alongside volunteers there is an opportunity to tap into the rich human resources, skills and knowledge provided by members of the local community.

Volunteers are already adding value to many NPTs across England and Wales.

There are different types of volunteer who help support neighbourhood policing:

- Neighbourhood Watch volunteers (over 7 million nationally)
- Police Support Volunteers (over 6,000 nationally)
- Special Constables (14,000 nationally)
- Other community volunteers such as Community Crime Fighters, Volunteer Police Cadets and those who volunteer with third sector organisations (in addition to Neighbourhood Watch volunteers).

Volunteering with the police is nothing new. Special Constables have been used within the Police Service for hundreds of years. They now number over 14,000 nationally, working alongside fully sworn officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to tackle crime and disorder.

Neighbourhood Watch (also known as Home Watch) was established in the UK in the early 1980s after originating in the United States and quickly became very popular. It is now the biggest voluntary movement in the country.

The use of Police Support Volunteers (PSVs) in Britain is a more recent phenomenon. The first known scheme can be traced back to 1992 in Kent. Today PSVs are widely used in over two-thirds of forces undertaking over 100 roles for police forces nationally.

Other community volunteers provide a number of important services for communities, including street patrols, projects and other activities.
Volunteering

Volunteering can be described in many ways. The Home Office definition states that a volunteer is someone ‘who commits time and energy for the benefit of society, the community, environment and/or individuals, undertaking this freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain’.

Volunteering in England is a highly popular activity. In 2008-09, 41 per cent of adults volunteered formally at least once in the 12 months prior to interview, with 26 per cent having volunteered formally at least once a month (Helping Out: a National Survey of Volunteers and Charitable Giving 2007). Volunteers contribute significantly to local communities, individual lives and the environment, and in economic terms are estimated to contribute £22.7 billion to the economy. In 2007/08 the number of people formally volunteering in England was 17.7 million (at least once a year) and 11.1 million (at least once a month).

A national drive to encourage joint working – an evidence-based approach

There is a strong drive nationally to encourage joint working. The 2004 Criminal Justice White Paper recommended the use of volunteers to extend the policing family. Louise Casey in her report Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime (2008) highlighted the importance of the police working alongside the public to tackle crime. Baroness Neuberger in her review Volunteering Across the Criminal Justice System (2009) argued that all agencies should have a targeted plan to involve volunteers to enhance their services.
Building trust and confidence

Robust evidence suggests that confidence can be improved by fully implementing neighbourhood policing through quality problem-solving, targeted foot patrol and community engagement. Each of these activities may be suitable for being supplemented by volunteers.

NPTs have built strong relationships with many individuals and community groups, and are involving people in identifying what matters to them locally. There are, however, further methods for reaching deeper into communities that we are just beginning to take advantage of.

Volunteers can bring diversity and much needed links to perceived ‘hard to reach’ communities and can help to deliver the Policing Pledge. For example, a survey produced as part of the National Strategy for the Special Constabulary found that 32% of Specials are female and 6% are from ethnic minorities compared to 21% female and 3.5% from ethnic minorities amongst regular officers.

Why people volunteer

People volunteer for many reasons, sometimes altruism, sometimes personal, but always for a purpose. Volunteering empowers people. It is rewarding for individuals. It cuts across divides such as age, race and gender which isolate and alienate people. It strengthens the bonds between individuals which are the bedrock of a strong civil society. And in doing so it helps to create a sense of citizenship.

Volunteers feel they gain from their volunteering in many different ways. Above all it gives them satisfaction and enjoyment. However, the benefits of volunteering are not felt evenly, not least because some groups face more barriers to getting involved than others. Those with no qualifications and those from specific ethnic minorities, for example, have been shown to volunteer less and have become the focus of initiatives to increase participation.

Benefits to the volunteer can include (with the corresponding national statistics):

- Sense of satisfaction from seeing the results of their volunteering (97%)
- Enjoyment (97%)
- Social benefits – the opportunity to meet people and make friends (86%)
- Opportunity to learn new skills (61%)
- Improved employment prospects (25%)
- Opportunity to gain a recognised qualification (14%)

Working with volunteers

This section will look at the different types of volunteers that you may work alongside as part of an NPT. It will highlight activities that volunteers can get involved in and support available. For ease, we will look at each category of volunteer separately. However, it is important to remember that the categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, a Police Support Volunteer may also be a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator and vice versa.

Police Support Volunteers

Police Support Volunteers (PSVs) are members of the public who freely give up their time to help the police, usually on police premises. They are now represented in the majority of police forces. PSVs are drawn from all parts of the community. They are not members of staff, do not wear uniforms and are not warranted. They perform their agreed voluntary roles alongside police staff and officers and are vetted to a level appropriate with the roles they are asked to fulfil. PSVs support officers and civilian staff. They do not replace staff roles or prevent the employment of police staff.

Since the first known scheme was established in 1992, the use of PSVs has grown and 75% of police forces in England and Wales now have volunteer programmes. There are currently over 6,000 Police Support Volunteers across the country performing over 100 different roles.

Police Support Volunteers at a glance

- There are over 6,000 Police Support Volunteers across the country.
- Volunteers perform over 100 different roles.
- Three quarters of forces have volunteer programmes.
- The use of PSVs is expected to increase by 70% between 2008-2012.
- 23 forces have paid volunteer coordinators.
The number of PSVs increased by 60% between 2006 and 2008 with a further increase of 70% forecast by 2012 (PSV Survey 2008).

In 2007, a PSV Programme Board was established to provide support and guidance to forces taking part in volunteer programmes. The PSV Programme now has a formal business plan to fully incorporate volunteering into police culture by 2013.

The development of programmes varies greatly up and down the country. Such schemes can encourage members of the public to share their expertise and skills with local police teams, acting as a conduit for community engagement links by opening their doors to members of the community who may not otherwise have a need to engage with their local police force.

Therefore in addition to providing valuable support PSVs may play a part in helping to improve confidence.

A PSV Board has been set up by the NPIA and each area of England and Wales has a regional coordinator that can be approached about any issue. There is a national business plan and an NPIA PSV web site has been developed outlining information on how to get the best out of volunteers, including case studies and policy documents. The website can be found here. The NPIA Workforce Strategy Unit has developed a toolkit for constabularies: ‘Police Support Volunteers: Helping Safer Communities’.

There is also an online ‘collaborative platform’ where forces can share issues and ideas. The NPIA has a list of force contacts for PSV. To find out who your force coordinator is check with your BCU or make contact with the NPIA by clicking here.

The PSV website provides a wealth of information to support forces in setting up and developing a PSV scheme. The Annex outlines more information covered on the website.
The potential benefits of using Police Support Volunteers

There can be benefits to using volunteers if the process is managed properly. They can:

- bring more diversity to the policing family and better reflect the community that the team serves
- have a better understanding of how police teams work, potentially leading to greater confidence
- become advocates for the police service within the community
- improve links to the community
- enhance and add value to core tasks undertaken by the team by providing support
- enhance enthusiasm and provide a fresh set of skills to a team
- provide a cost effective way to enhance frontline policing
- decide to join the service as PCSOs or fully sworn officers.

Anecdotal feedback from forces from a recent NPIA PSV survey (2008) included many positive comments which highlight the important role that volunteers can play:

- “Volunteers undertake tasks which would otherwise not be completed, support staff, represent the police, involve the community, provide enthusiasm, raise the ‘feel good’ factor in the workplace but above all provide quality.”
- “Volunteers have helped to build trust with our communities.”
- “Volunteers improve the efficiency of our force and improve the professional and high quality of service we provide to the public.”
Metropolitan Police – Volunteer Programme

The Met Volunteer Programme is now active in all 32 boroughs as well as in some other specialist business units across the MPS. Unlike the Special Constabulary they do not wear a uniform and are based within police sites undertaking a range of supporting volunteering tasks. There are 1,550 volunteers doing over 70 volunteering roles. Volunteers are diverse with a BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) mix of 44%. 18% of the team are aged 18-24, and 20% are over 65 with 5% of these being over 75. Met volunteers benefit the force in many ways. They bring a wide range of experience and skills to the teams that they support and add value by way of enhancement to the work of core staff – freeing them up to concentrate on what they were trained to do. Volunteers also encourage closer relationships between the community and NPTs by involving a wider range of London’s citizens. By engaging with volunteers, the police can get a better understanding of local concerns and issues relating to crime.

Warwickshire – volunteers aiding community engagement

Warwickshire has seen significant benefits to its levels of community engagement as a result of having the right Police Support Volunteers working within the force. Hate crime training that was recently provided to all frontline staff was assisted by Key Individual Networks who have become volunteers and regularly give their time. Members include individuals from Gypsy and Traveller, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), African-Caribbean and disability communities. Many of these volunteers regularly give their time and enable police officers and staff to increase their awareness of diversity issues.
Lancashire – Volunteer Programme

Lancashire has a well-funded central team in place to coordinate volunteers across the force. It sets policies, ensures the territorial divisions have guidance and the ability to deliver, and provides vetting of volunteers for the rest of the force. Each of the six territorial divisions has their own volunteer coordinator, although individual volunteers have their own line managers who set day-to-day tasks.

The benefits they have brought to the force include:

- making the policing family more diverse and representative of those that they serve
- opening up an organisation that was perceived to be quite closed and opaque
- increasing public confidence and giving the police a more ‘human face’.

Volunteers act as a bridge to local communities. They provide knowledge and insight into communities that many police officers did not previously have access to, and help to organise Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings.

The arrival of volunteers has increased the diversity of the policing family. Whereas policing is still a male dominated profession, 67% of volunteers are female. 6% of the volunteers are from a BAME background, in comparison to 4% of the workforce. The constabulary feels that this has had a large impact on how they police. The police force has often been perceived as a very closed organisation. The influx of volunteers has made them more open and reflective of the communities they serve.

Since the scheme started, Lancashire Constabulary has taken on 637 volunteers with an attrition rate of only 12 (6 of these went on to get jobs with the constabulary).

When Thames Valley Police completed a VIVA in 2009 it showed that for every £1 invested in its Police Support Volunteer programme there was a return of £2.43 (Source: NPIA PSV website).

Measuring the benefits

Measuring the benefits of volunteering is not always easy. Volunteering is not free, a fact often forgotten. At the same time, the efficiency gains resulting from the use of volunteers are often also overlooked in any business case.

The use of a VIVA (Volunteer Investment and Value Audit) can help to quantify the benefits of using volunteers. VIVA has been implemented by many large and small voluntary groups since its creation in 1996. It has been used in the public sector and employer-supported volunteering, and is approved by the National Centre for Volunteering and the Government.

Details of how to undertake a VIVA can be found here.
How Police Support Volunteers can support NPTs

In many forces, PSVs are already working to support NPTs in a variety of ways.

Volunteers are used in a wide number of roles depending upon the needs of each individual force.

Volunteers can undertake many different roles and the only restrictions on development are due to health and safety and not replacing staff/preventing staff employment.

Nationally, volunteers undertake over 100 roles, some of which are outlined below:

- Administration
- CCTV
- Chaplaincy
- Communications
- Community Safety
- Coroners
- Counter Services
- Crime Reduction
- Domestic Violence
- Drugs & Alcohol
- Major Incidents
- Mentoring
- Neighbourhood Policing
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Strategic Assistance
- Training
- Valeting/Stores
- Witness liaison
- Working with animals
- Working with children

A snapshot of some of these activities (with case studies) can be found in the Annex.

It is important to note that volunteers do not replace officers or staff or prevent the employment of a new staff member in any way. They are there to add value and provide support and activities that would generally not normally be available due to fully sworn police officers or police staff not having the capacity to undertake certain tasks. Volunteer role profiles need to be drawn up at Basic Command Unit/force level and agreed with unions before volunteers are used. These will clearly highlight that the role is not replacing a paid role but providing support that would not otherwise be available.
Special Constabulary

Each force in England and Wales has its own Special Constabulary, or volunteer police officers. Special Constables have the same powers as regular officers and wear a similar uniform. Many volunteer police officers are linked to NPTs.

With over 14,000 officers in England and Wales, the Special Constabulary now equates to around 9% of the number of full time equivalent regular officers. The average Special provides 171 hours of duty (excluding training) per year. There is currently a national drive to increase the number of Special Constables.

There is a national strategy for the Special Constabulary and dedicated web-based resources. Nine Regional Coordinators are available to support forces in the recruitment, management and marketing of resources for their use. More information is available on the website.

Lancashire – Special Constabulary (Operation Trojan)

Lancashire has Special Constables aligned to NPTs across the county. Special Constables have worked alongside other NPT colleagues on Operation Trojan which aims to reduce crime and disorder problems on public transport. Special Constables worked in plain clothes on buses to catch offenders who caused criminal damage to buses and other vehicles. As a result, missile attacks on buses fell by 61%, saving over £80,000 in Blackburn, Burnley and Padiham. Overall damage to buses fell by 66% and the force is now considering setting up a specialist team of Special Constables based within the Safer Travel Unit working across all bus networks.
Cheshire Constabulary – Volunteers as recruitment assessors

In October 2009 Cheshire Constabulary were selected by the NPIA to become the trial force for the New National recruitment standard for Special Constables. The principles of the National standard were to replicate the assessment method used to recruit regular police officers but tailor the exercises to that of a Special Constable.

The new recruitment model relied heavily on running an assessment centre which had various exercise syndicates. The process is now commonly known as SARP (Specials Assessment Recruitment Process). The SARP requires qualified assessors to mark written papers and interview perspective candidates. Cheshire was very keen on this new practice but wanted to ensure that the existing volunteers themselves were involved in the recruitment of additional volunteers into the police family.

The NPIA agreed to train a mixture of Special Constables, Police Support Volunteers and police staff. Selection of colleagues was done purely on a voluntary and availability basis. Trained assessors needed to commit to four weekend days acting as assessors after the initial training period. The pilot assessment centres have been successful and the use of volunteers to assess other potential volunteers has been a very credible approach. Cheshire has since held two further training courses and have 30 qualified Specials Recruitment Assessors across the police family. Cheshire are now actively looking to place further volunteers on its available assessor list and have included the role as an option for perspective volunteers.
Volunteer Police Cadets

Volunteer Police Cadets are young people aged between 14 and 18 who usually meet once a week to engage in constructive activities and try new opportunities.

Meetings usually include drill/inspection, some sort of physical activity, a guest speaker or input on a police related topic as part of an ongoing training programme. Cadet Units involve themselves in other activities at weekends and in school holidays which may include going away on camps/adventure weeks to different parts of the UK or even abroad. Various Cadet competitions are also held during the year, which test the skills they have developed.

Cadets often perform duties in support of local policing plan objectives. This is particularly the case in relation to NPT initiatives. Whilst they are not allowed to patrol with police officers, the Cadets can perform tasks such as crime prevention initiatives, message/leaflet delivery, test purchase operations to combat underage sales of alcohol, fireworks and knives and involvement in non-confrontational local events.

Metropolitan Police - Volunteer Cadet Profile

Police regularly attend a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and engage with the staff and the pupils there. Over a year ago, following a number of thefts of mobile phones, the head teacher conducted enquiries (not involving the police) and had specific concerns regarding one particular pupil in relation to gang membership. An officer from the local NPT attended the PRU and offered to speak to the youth in the presence of the head teacher. During this conversation it became apparent to the officer that the young man was someone who craved to be a member of a group. As part of their frank discussion it was clear that he was a gang member and craved the kudos that that gave him but was unaware of the potential pitfalls and dangers.

After suggesting to the pupil that he could join a ‘gang’ called the Cadets to try new activities, the young male asked to attend the meeting of the Cadets that evening.

The change in his behaviour and the fact that he was a member of the Cadets assisted the PRU placement panel in reintegrating him into a new secondary school. He has recently signed up with Trading Standards and is looking forward to assisting in age related sales.
The Community Crime Fighters programme was developed by the Home Office to foster stronger links between crime-fighting agencies and the communities they serve. Community Crime Fighters are members of the public who are already actively involved in their communities and want to do or know more.

There are now nearly 4,000 trained Community Crime Fighters around the country. They are members of the public who are already active in their community and who want to know more about what they can do to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Community Crime Fighter training has given them the knowledge, skills and confidence to act as advocates for their communities in relation to the police and criminal justice agencies. The scheme does not confer additional status, any formal role or authority on those who participate. However it recognises that those who are committed and want to play their role in keeping their communities safe need encouragement and support in fulfilling these crucial roles in our neighbourhoods.
Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network

Neighbourhood Watch is one of the biggest voluntary crime prevention initiatives. Sometimes known as Home Watch, it originated in the United States and in the early 1980s came to the UK, where it quickly became very popular.

Neighbourhood Watch is based around the idea of an active community working in partnership with the police, and a shared value focused on bringing local people together. At its most basic level, Neighbourhood Watch consists of a group of like-minded neighbours getting together to help reduce crime where they live and making their communities safer.

There are over 7 million Neighbourhood Watch volunteers across England and Wales. Although Neighbourhood Watch (or Home Watch in some areas) schemes are set up slightly differently in each area they are all founded on the belief that ‘getting together with your neighbours to take action can cut local crime’.

The 2006/7 British Crime Survey across England and Wales showed that in that year:

- Neighbourhood Watch covered approximately 3.8 million households;
- an estimated 16 per cent of households were members of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme and;
- 75 per cent of households who were not members said they would join a scheme if there was one in the local area.

NPTs will come into contact with Neighbourhood Watch volunteers on a regular basis. There is a single point of contact for each force area. Check with your Basic Command Unit (BCU) if you are unsure who the contact is.

A Neighbourhood Watch Toolkit is available here providing a wealth of information including how to set up a scheme, information on crime prevention, producing publicity material, funding and sponsorship and managing meetings.

At a local level, NPTs should maintain close links with Neighbourhood (Home) Watch Coordinators to enable a two-way flow of communication and keep volunteers abreast of issues in the neighbourhood that they may be able to help with. Communication from Coordinators may take place through meetings or updates given through a suitable communication system, newsletters and meetings.
Neighbourhood Watch schemes do not follow a set structure. However, most schemes have these important aspects in common:

- Schemes are run by their members, who all take steps to prevent crime, improve safety and reduce the fear of crime.
- Schemes are generally led by a resident volunteer co-ordinator, whose job it is to get people working together and make sure things get done. The co-ordinator liaises with the police and acts as a voice for the community. Some schemes also have a committee that meets regularly to plan which problems to target and which actions to take.
- Schemes are supported by the police, the local authority and sometimes by local Neighbourhood Watch associations. Members receive information and messages from the police, their local association or the local authority. This vital communication link helps to motivate members and keep schemes active.
- Each scheme is a community initiative, supported by the police but not run by them. The scheme’s success depends on what the members make of it as well as the level of support provided by the local police.
- Neighbourhood Watch schemes vary in size – they can be large, covering most of the houses on an estate, or they may involve just a few houses.

The Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network (NHWN) represents all Home Watch and Neighbourhood Watch members across England and Wales. It is the body which engages with the Home Office and other parties on the National Strategy Group for Watch Issues, at the strategic level. The website www.mynhw.co.uk, is recognised by the Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) as the official website for all registered Neighbourhood Watch and Home Watch members across England and Wales.

Durham – Farmwatch

Farmwatch is a partnership between the farming community and the police which encourages vigilance, communication and intelligence sharing in order to prevent crime and promote reassurance throughout the farming and rural community. In May 2009 Operation Sandfish achieved the most volunteers ever on a Farm Watch event. Four police forces were involved and 111 community volunteers took part. In early 2009, three men were caught stealing lead from the roof of a rural parish church due to the vigilance of patrols mounted by local volunteers.
For an organisation of over 7 million people there is a clear need for a representative structure which ensures that Neighbourhood and Home Watch members are plugged in to all appropriate levels of influence.

This structure was agreed by the Neighbourhood and Home Watch movement in early 2007 at a series of symposia held around the country. The feedback from these symposia led to the Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network for England and Wales (NHWN) being formed in July 2007. The structure is supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Home Office as well as the National Strategy Group for Watch Issues (NSGWI).

The diagram below outlines the structure of the Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network.
Merseyside – Homewatch

Margaret is the Chair and Coordinator for Homewatch in Sefton, a role that she has fulfilled in a voluntary capacity for twelve years. Margaret has set up a number of Homewatch schemes in Sefton, providing both reassurance to the community and invaluable assistance with information gathering, crime prevention advice and support for the force in general.

In one case a disabled man was having eggs and stones thrown at his windows and knocks on his front door. After contacting Margaret she arranged for a camera to be installed at the property and carried out reassurance visits. On one occasion when stones were thrown at the window the victim called the police who were in the vicinity. The police were advised as to what had been caught on camera and two youths were stopped in the area. Initially they denied responsibility but then admitted what they had done when confronted with the footage. There were no further incidents.

In another case a member rang Margaret to inform her about suspected drug dealing. She liaised with the police intelligence unit who advised her how to gather information. As a result the Homewatch member supplied her with the times cars visited, makes and registration numbers and eventually which flat the person lived in and where the flat was in the building. The end result was a raid that took place in which drugs were found. The Neighbourhood Policing Team worked with Homewatch members to ensure that the community was informed of the results.

Leicestershire – Chilloutzone

Harborough District Neighbourhood Watch has produced a website for pupils to access crime prevention advice and general curriculum advice without them having to search the web. The Chilloutzone website was designed by School Watch, a sub committee of Market Harborough Neighbourhood Watch Support Scheme.

The site offers local children of school age a safe environment to have fun alongside education and self awareness. The characters who guide pupils between 5 and 18 years old around the site were created following a competition involving over 28 schools in the district.
Greater Manchester Police – recruiting Neighbourhood Watch KINs

After recruiting local residents as the ‘eyes and ears of the community’, police in Gorton reported decreases in crime. Feeding back crime reduction successes at the Sacred Heart church in Gorton, Manchester, the local Inspector attributed reductions in crime to engaging with residents.

Crack house closures, drug seizures and arrests have been attributed, alongside close partnership work, to more officers on the street and the strong relationship with residents. Most residents belong to Neighbourhood Watch and are members of Key Individual Networks (KINs), working with police to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. The local NPT hopes eventually to have a key individual on every one of the 730 streets covered by the local neighbourhood management area. From an initial recruitment of 100 KINs, more than 350 are signed up – almost halfway to the target.
Working with volunteers from third sector organisations

There are many volunteers working within the third sector*. The government defines the third sector as non-governmental organisations that are value driven and which principally reinvest their financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals, and housing associations. For more information on working with the third sector see the separate NPIA guidance ‘Working with the third sector.’ *(The Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network is now also considered a third sector organisation).

There are over 137,000 charities and 61,800 social enterprises in England and 600,000 informal community organisations in the UK (Office of the Third Sector, 2009). This means the chances of NPTs coming across volunteers working for third sector organisations is high. There are many examples of local volunteers supporting NPTs and wider community safety issues through their third sector organisations.

Some examples of how their volunteers may help you are outlined below:

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<tr>
<th>Victim Support</th>
<th>Witness Service</th>
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<tr>
<td>Over 6,000 volunteers work for Victim Support providing valuable support to victims across England and Wales. Working alongside paid staff, volunteers provide free and confidential information, emotional support and practical help to victims of crime, their family, friends and other people affected. This support is provided to victims regardless of when the crime happened or whether it was reported to the police. Victim Support has a network of offices across England and Wales running and co-ordinating community-based services. The organisation runs a Victim Supportline (0845 30 30 900) which gives immediate help over the phone. The Victims’ Charter ensures that police services give victims the opportunity of a referral to victim support.</td>
<td>Victims and witnesses can be vulnerable in the criminal justice system. They are asked to provide information to help court cases yet it is often forgotten that these people are actually being asked to relive potentially painful events in an alien, and arguably clinical environment, in front of unknown faces. To combat this, the Witness Service, run by Victim Support in every criminal court, provides support and information to ease people through the difficult, and sometimes emotionally draining, experience of giving evidence.</td>
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More information about Victim Support can be found [here](#) and Witness Support [here](#).
Kent – Kent Search and Rescue

Kent Search and Rescue (KSR) is a voluntary group who offer lowland search and rescue assistance to Kent Police (as well as other emergency services and councils) for vulnerable missing persons. All members are volunteers and provide a 365-day service that can be activated by the usual deployment criteria. They work closely with Police Search Advisors and offer a 4x4 capability for searching difficult-to-access rural terrain. The 50 members are all Police Support Volunteers and are vetted accordingly.

KSR’s membership of the police volunteer programme has allowed them access to the rewards and recognition scheme currently operated. They have attended annual events, receiving awards in the process, and this will be developed as an exemplar of taking on board voluntary organisations into the overall programme.

KSR provides a service that has real resonance within a county where there are 1,800 vulnerable missing persons per year, in particular the increase in elderly people going missing because of conditions such as Alzheimer’s. The resources, both people and equipment, can be difficult to mobilise but the organisation provides immediate access to trained personnel and specialist equipment.

The partnership has allowed KSR to become an important part of Kent Police’s arsenal for dealing with vulnerable missing persons when appropriate and has also seen the police service benefit from the skills and expertise that are available.
Volunteer street patrols

There are a number of people who volunteer regularly to patrol the streets in their area. Working independently (although with the agreement) of the police, the majority have formal arrangements in place to ensure that they are run professionally and to support the community. Your force may support volunteer street patrols. The NPIA (2010) has published Street Patrols by Volunteers – a Briefing Paper which is available to download here. The paper looked at potential benefits and challenges of supporting established schemes, as summarised below:

Potential benefits of volunteer street patrols

**Support to Neighbourhood Policing Teams:** Patrols can link to NPTs, communicate directly with the public, and report issues causing concern. Work is being planned to extend this work to include Environmental Visual Audits.

**High visibility:** Volunteers generally wear high visibility tabards/uniforms contributing to the patrolling presence on the streets. There are several anecdotal examples of where the presence of volunteers has led to a direct public reaction, such as vehicles slowing down when seeing volunteers wearing tabards/uniforms. No formal evaluation has, however, been undertaken to establish whether volunteer patrols affect public confidence.

**Increased community engagement:** Volunteer street patrols can provide a bridge between the police and members of the public who may not approach police officers. There is some evidence, however, that suggests that if a structure is not in place and patrols do not continue, this could damage the reputation of the police.

**Increased informal control by the community and community ownership:** Volunteers can gain a better knowledge of their local area and have an increased sense of ownership of issues in their locality.

**Increased understanding of local policing:** Anecdotal evidence suggests that patrols might lead to a better understanding by volunteers of crime issues and the work of NPTs.

**Reductions in crime:** Some force self-assessments have highlighted patrols as contributing to crime reductions in some areas, although it is difficult to attribute specific reductions to patrolling activity.

**Reduced fear of crime:** Information about crime and risks can be provided to volunteers, and their direct experience of patrolling areas has anecdotally led to volunteers feeling safer within the areas in which they live.
Potential challenges in relation to street patrols by volunteers

**Health and safety issues:** The way schemes are established and rolled out needs to be considered by forces particularly in light of the limited training given to some volunteers.

**Public Liability Insurance:** Schemes generally provide Public Liability Insurance and Accident Insurance cover.

**Police needing to provide support to schemes:** Police input can include accompanying volunteers on initial patrols and attendance at monthly meetings. Although not significant amounts of police time and support are required, this needs to be factored into any decision made by forces to support schemes.

**Perceptions of patrols as being ‘policing on the cheap’:** The introduction of volunteer street patrols could raise questions around why members of the public are undertaking work that police officers are paid to do from the public purse.

**A perception that citizens are acting as vigilantes:** The danger that members of the public are being allowed to patrol the streets with authority might be a concern.

**Recruitment, selection and training:** Mixed approaches to recruitment, selection and training could lead to wide variances in the skills, abilities and motivations of volunteers and pose a risk to the sustainability of such schemes.

**Disillusionment from volunteers if police support is not maintained:** There is evidence to suggest that if a structured approach and guidelines are not put in place this can lead to breakdown of police support and disillusionment.

**Volunteers not representing the collective will of the community and lacking accountability to the wider community:** There is a danger that volunteers could be the ‘usual suspects’ who neither represent nor have the support/consent of their local community in relation to patrolling the public space.

**The lack of any statutory framework guaranteeing minimum guidance and police agreement/oversight:** Without formal agreement from forces and/or national guidance.

A number of scheme examples are outlined on the following pages.
Street Pastors

Street Pastor Schemes are an inter-denominational Church response to neighbourhood problems. They enable volunteers from churches to receive training and engage with people on the streets in night-time venues to care, listen, and help in practical ways. The schemes now have more than 2,500 trained volunteers and operate in over 100 locations in the UK.

Typically churches in an area come together and express an interest in Street Pastors. A management group is set up and a coordinator identified. At least four churches need to be involved in each scheme. Volunteers are recruited from local churches. References are obtained from their church and volunteers are provided with 12 days of training in two or three blocks. After the first block of training, volunteers can go out on the streets. Each volunteer receives a uniform (to help distinguish them from statutory authorities) and commits to going out on the streets at least once a month.

Leicestershire’s Street Pastors gave 37,440 hours of visible patrol and recovered 2000 items of discarded hazardous material (e.g. bottles) from the streets during 2008/09.

Exact times depend on the local situation, but volunteers normally go out at the weekends between the hours of 10pm and 4am, usually in areas known to have regular social disturbance. They are supported and organised by a coordinator. The initiative is essentially taking the care and concern in churches out on to the streets. Street Pastors patrol in pairs, with a minimum of two pairs operating together at any one time. Each volunteer carries a mobile phone for safety and as they walk, they talk and engage with people informally on the street, offering a sympathetic and non-judgemental ear. More information can be found here.
Street Watch

Street Watch has been operational in East Hampshire since its establishment in the village of Four Marks in February 2008. A group of residents who persistently reported to police that they lived in an environment of fear and intimidation were invited by the local Chief Inspector to patrol their own streets in high visibility jackets to work with police to challenge inappropriate behaviour and to engage more with their own communities. The scheme now operates in several areas within the force.

Street Watch members are ordinary citizens with no police powers. Groups are managed by a volunteer co-ordinator who keeps a list of volunteers and provides advice, guidance and support in consultation with the local police. Volunteers must patrol in pairs and register each patrol on a specific website that the neighbourhood policing team can look at prior to the patrols taking place. If volunteers spot suspicious activity they are asked to report it to the police but not get involved. A short training (usually one session) is provided followed by monthly meetings. Members of the NPT or a senior volunteer go out on the first patrol with new volunteers. Volunteers are asked to carry a mobile phone with them at all times. The Street Watch scheme has protocols in place and insurance is provided by an external insurer for any volunteer over 18 years of age.

Other street patrol schemes

There are numerous other schemes operating across the country. These are generally one-off schemes and include local Neighbourhood Watch schemes, Community Wardens, Student Neighbourhood Volunteers, Insight Days and Nite Lite schemes. A briefing about Street Patrols by volunteers is available here.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask your Basic Command Unit who the Volunteer Programme Manager/Coordinator is for your force.</td>
<td>If a PSV scheme has not been established in your force, encourage the BCU to nominate a central coordinator and to link in with the support available from PSV Regional Coordinators and the national PSV Board (signpost to resources on the PSV website). For work with other volunteers, your BCU should have a good overview of different types of organisations and be able to advise NPTs.</td>
<td>Central support for volunteering is vital for any scheme to be sustainable. Central policies and procedures need to be put in place first before police support volunteers are used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check which role profiles exist in your force already for NPTs and/or assess which role(s) your team could benefit from a PSV.</td>
<td>Over 100 PSV roles exist. Take a look to see whether there is any way that volunteers could be supporting your NPT.</td>
<td>Access knowledge and expertise from volunteers in relation to issues you may be working on. Contact with people perceived as ‘hard to reach’ in your area. Helps break down ‘us and them’ attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with your Volunteer Programme Manager/Coordinator to determine roles, times of the week and supervision structures for volunteers.</td>
<td>Your Volunteer Programme Manager may have a number of volunteers available for a wide range of activities. They will need tasking, supervision and you will need to find a mutually beneficial time for the work to be undertaken.</td>
<td>More focused approach to delivery. Good supervision and tasking leads to better retention of valuable volunteers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage people to volunteer with your force as a Police Support Volunteer in your NPT area.</td>
<td>Through your engagement with communities you can help raise the profile of volunteering with the police.</td>
<td>Helps break down barriers with communities.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Helps NPTs access community members who are perceived as ‘hard to reach’.</td>
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| Encourage people to volunteer with local third sector organisations that work alongside the police. | Third sector organisations provide a high number of volunteers.  
These include national organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch and Victim Support as well as local organisations doing valuable work to tackle crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour in your area. | Using the skills, knowledge and expertise of the third sector in your neighbourhood.  
Better use of resources available in a neighbourhood.  
Contribution to confidence and crime reductions.                                                                                                                                               |
Conclusion

Volunteers are undertaking a wide variety of roles, many supporting NPTs, in forces across the country. Working alongside Police Support Volunteers, Special Constables, Neighbourhood Watch or other community-based volunteers, such as Street Pastors, could bring a number of potential benefits. These include improved links with the community, more diversity within the policing family and added value to the core tasks you undertake as a team.

This guide has outlined the potential benefits, as well as the challenges, of working with volunteers. Volunteers are not a free resource and forces need to invest time, energy, commitment and support in order to recruit and keep them.

There is a national drive to encourage volunteering and forces are realising the potential benefits that volunteers can bring. As NPTs further develop their engagement with communities, volunteers can provide the capacity to add value to the important work of NPTs.
References


Resources

Community Crimefighters

NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action): details all local umbrella bodies for voluntary and community action including third sector agencies, volunteering opportunities and faith groups

Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network

Police Support Volunteers website (NPIA): provides support and information to forces on how to set up a volunteering programme

Special Constabulary

VIVA

Volunteering England
An overview of how Police Support Volunteers can support forces

Counter services
This can include staffing the front or back desk functions of police offices to ensure they stay open. Many police offices provide a focal point for communities but may not lead to many enquiries leading to some offices being closed to the public. Having volunteers provide this function means that the offices can open at regular hours meaning the public can register lost and stolen goods, or simply ask for information.

Bedfordshire – counter services
Leagrave station was closed to the public over ten years ago, although the NPT was still based there. At a community meeting in 2006 members of the public requested for the station to be re-opened. The police reversed this request by asking the public to come forward and volunteer to enable this which they did in abundance. Later that year, the force had found and trained enough volunteers to be able to open the station for four hours every weekday. Following this the Riesley office has now reopened and volunteers have also helped open a new station in 2008 at the Purley Centre in Marsh Farm.
Sussex – Counter services

The Southwater community police office is located in a small shopping centre in the heart of the village. The office is believed to be the first of its kind in the country and was opened in 1996 following the closure of the local police house. The office has proved to be a valuable resource for the community and the number of volunteers has grown steadily over the years. At present, there are 18 volunteers working at the office and the team continues to grow.

Volunteers work in shifts to keep the community office open throughout the week and have managed to maintain regular opening hours during weekdays. The office is the main base for two Police Community Support Officers and the use of the office means that these officers can spend all their time visible and accessible on their beat area without the need to travel to Horsham to access IT or other resources. The team deal with up to seven ‘over the counter’ enquiries during the course of each day. Each enquiry dealt with saves customers travelling into Horsham and takes administrative pressure off officers.

The team are fully trained to the standards of Neighbourhood Support Officers and deal confidently with 75% of all enquiries first hand (including creating and managing incident logs and dealing with lost and found property) without the need to call for the assistance of officers. In 2006, the invaluable work of the community office was recognised when the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex presented the team with the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen.

Merseyside – Enquiry Desk volunteer

Doreen has volunteered her time at the police Enquiry Desk at Copy Lane since January 2006. Doreen commits at least five hours a week to the role which has been extremely effective as Enquiry Officers have been called away to take statements often hindering them from answering other queries and telephone calls.

As a local resident, Doreen visited the Police Surgery at the Old Roan Library in order to speak to the local dedicated officer about a matter in her community. Upon realising that a police officer sat in the library for two hours every fortnight, often only receiving a couple of visitors, Doreen asked whether she could fulfil that role, enabling the police officer to concentrate on more pressing matters. In this role Doreen takes messages for the police officer and can often draw upon her previous experiences as a Magistrate to offer advice.
Training
As part of training new recruits, volunteers act out case studies in which PCs and PCSOs have to respond to based on recently acquired knowledge and skills. Volunteers give feedback on performance and the quality of interaction with the officers.

“It is such fun being a volunteer helping with the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP). You wake up in the morning and you don’t know what role play you’ll be doing until you get there. This is my fourth time but my first time was in a shopping centre so I was a bit nervous to be in front of lots of people but it is a great experience and I would definitely recommend it. One of my previous experiences has been to act as a drunken person in a supermarket car park which was good fun. It’s also nice just to do something different once in a while and know that you are making a difference.”

Alison Farrar
IPLDP volunteer, Thames Valley Police
Administrative functions

Volunteers can help in a number of ways: leaflet drops, minute taking, archiving, envelope stuffing, telephone answering, data inputting, photocopying information, undertaking telephone or door-to-door surveys and delivering newsletters and information. One force is trying to link a volunteer administrator to every NPT to help support the team and Neighbourhood Action Groups or Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings.

Hertfordshire – Three Rivers Neighbourhood Team

Increasing demand on NPTs and the implementation of the Policing Pledge have increased the requirement for appropriate support to be given to neighbourhood teams. This is essential if levels of confidence and satisfaction with local police are to be increased.

Bob is a police volunteer attached to the Three Rivers Neighbourhood Team and helps to fulfil elements of the Pledge and support neighbourhood policing in its wider sense. The tasks carried out include:

- assisting Sergeants to carry out Quality of Service reviews
- follow up calls after incidents to speak to witnesses and victims to either keep them updated or provide a courtesy call to provide reassurance and perhaps find out more information
- manages the team’s mail box system, calling people back within 24 hours who have had a message directed to the team mail box
- preparing briefing sheets for officers for their local meetings
- picking up voice mail messages for Sergeants and either dealing with them himself or forwarding an email to the sergeants with details of the message.

The work of volunteers like Bob has reduced the workload for Neighbourhood Sergeants, freeing them up to attend to other issues whilst helping to improve confidence and satisfaction with policing services locally.

Annex
Thames Valley Police – Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) Support Volunteers

The role aims to offer support to the Neighbourhood Specialist Officers when developing and running their NAGs. Duties can include: organising dates and venues for NAGs, taking minutes of the meetings, sending out notices to key contacts, putting together notices of future meetings and distributing leaflets on campaigns.

Cambridgeshire – Speedwatch

Many of the county’s neighbourhood panels were raising speeding as a major issue. It was impossible to meet the community’s demands for action on speeding as well as dealing with other issues. After the community started asking whether they could help carry out checks themselves, a pilot Speedwatch project was set up in April 2008. Led by an enthusiastic parish councillor the story quickly captured the interest of the community and local media. Following a successful three-month pilot, the police had data showing where speeding problems were occurring. Warning letters were sent out and prosecutions followed when police officers carried out targeted checks. One person who received a warning letter has since become a volunteer.

The success of the pilot led to it being extended across the whole of the county.

Northamptonshire – administrative support

In Northamptonshire one of the two BCUs relies heavily on four volunteers who assist with Neighbourhood Watch. They are based within an office adjacent to the front enquiry desk at Rushden police station and have limited access to force email systems. The volunteers provide assistance with making up crime prevention leaflet packs for distribution by NPTs across the BCU. The volunteers also assist with Neighbourhood Watch by setting up meetings and dealing with enquiries. The volunteers cumulatively contribute 40 hours of voluntary work each week to Neighbourhood Watch.

Community Speedwatch

Volunteers can support NPTs to help raise awareness within the community of the dangers of speeding and to help control the problem locally. This provides a practical way of local community volunteers doing something practical to help reduce speeding in their neighbourhoods.
CCTV control room
Volunteers help monitor CCTV in their neighbourhoods.

Lincolnshire – CCTV Volunteers
CCTV in the South Holland area of Lincolnshire was set up in late 2006. No funding was made available for staff to monitor the cameras 24 hours a day and therefore eight volunteers are used who provide coverage 16 hours a day, seven days a week. The local ‘Shopwatch’ radio system enables CCTV volunteers and Police Officers to communicate directly. Volunteers have ensured that the area has an effective and efficient CCTV system and without the input and commitment of volunteers there would be no CCTV system for the district.

Volunteer Chaplains
Most forces have Chaplains, many of whom are volunteers. It is estimated that volunteer Chaplains contribute at least 2,500 hours a month across all forces. Some may tend to think of Chaplains as only there to support police staff. However, they also provide a key link to their local communities. This provides opportunities for interaction with community policing initiatives and a voice in the community to provide effective community feedback. There are increasing numbers of Chaplains of other faiths. You may already be in contact with your local Chaplain. If not, you can find out their details by contacting your BCU.

Crime reduction
Volunteers can help reduce crime in a number of ways. In some areas PSVs have been tackling vehicle crime by checking parked vehicles for valuables on show. When they see articles they note down the registration number, noting the owners’ details and sending them a crime prevention letter highlighting the risk of them having their vehicles broken into. In other areas PSVs have been sending out crime reduction packs or supporting officers with crime reduction talks.
South Wales Police – Student Volunteer Scheme

The Student Volunteer Scheme currently operates at the universities of Cardiff and Glamorgan. It aims to improve the relationship between students and the full-time residents of the areas whilst engaging students in useful volunteering activities and increasing attendance at Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings by students and residents.

The students have assisted the local NPTs with a variety of tasks and have often developed their own initiatives of relevance to the local student population. Their assistance has enabled local officers to concentrate on more serious issues whilst being able to task volunteers to assist them in carrying out important public reassurance and crime prevention work.

Since the scheme began at the University of Glamorgan, there has been a 55% increase in attendance at the monthly PACT meetings, both by other students and residents and an overall decrease of 12% in the number of reported occurrences since the scheme started compared with the same period the previous year, with a notable decrease in the areas of dwelling burglary and theft from motor vehicles, areas targeted by the initiative. In Cardiff, during the running of the student volunteer scheme, burglaries in the main student area of Cardiff were reduced by 50% compared to previous years.
Lancashire – Homophobic hate crime

The diversity of volunteers and the perception of them by the public can lead to them being able to gather information from local residents that would not usually be forthcoming to uniformed police officers. One initiative in Blackpool, involving volunteers from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, received a volunteering award from Community Service Volunteers for its ability to reach out to a community that has traditionally been suspicious of the police. There had been a history of under-reporting of homophobic incidents in Blackpool (an area with a large gay community). The ‘blue phone’ initiative was set up, whereby gay volunteers were given mobile phones which members of the community could call to discuss any incidents, with a view to reporting them to the police. As a result, there was a huge rise in the number of reported incidents.

Bedfordshire – Smartwater

Smartwater, a forensic property marking solution, is a useful tool for NPTs to use and helps engage members of the public in crime prevention. However, it is very labour intensive to apply the Smartwater solution on to items of property and log each unique code on to the database. Volunteers work alongside uniformed officers visiting members of the public in their homes and assist with property marking and crime reduction advice.
Issues to consider when using Police Support Volunteers

There are several challenges that NPTs and forces generally need to be aware of when considering using Police Support Volunteers (A full outline of issues that need to be considered is available on the PSV website):

- **Recognising that volunteers are not a free resource.** Investment and commitment needs to be made in relation to recruiting, training and supporting volunteers as well as providing reward and recognition. However, the investment made should reap rewards in the long-term.

- **Ensuring that your force/BCU provides a structure for volunteering before making use of them at the neighbourhood level.** This should include recruitment, training and who will coordinate and support them, including finding them appropriate work and undertaking appropriate checks. The volunteering remit needs ‘ownership’ and buy-in by the force if it is to be sustainable. If a coordinator is used it is important to determine how many roles he/she can manage. Some forces have paid coordinators, others use voluntary Volunteer Coordinators and forces also use Volunteer Champions. Gaining the trust and confidence of managers is important to volunteer schemes working.

- **Communicating that volunteers are not taking roles away from paid workers.** In the face of budget cuts – the issue of explaining that volunteers are not taking paid roles from others. Develop role profiles that outline specific activities that volunteers will undertake. Work alongside unions such as Unison to ensure buy-in and ensure role profiles are agreed and signed off by a senior officer. Market the scheme in force and make people aware of the benefits of volunteering.

- **Understanding what is motivating the volunteer to give their time and keeping them interested.** Try to allocate activities to volunteers based on their interests and availability. Try to identify specific roles for potential volunteers to work on prior to recruitment.
• Making the recruitment process as non-bureaucratic and hassle free as possible. Ensure the recruitment process is sufficiently resourced. Decide what the vetting requirements should be and communicate with potential volunteers what the expected timescales might be. Some forces require all potential volunteers to undergo security clearance. Other forces have reviewed their volunteer roles and opted not to undertake security clearance for certain volunteers if the functions they will undertake do not require full clearance.

• Developing methods to recognise and reward voluntary service. Make sure volunteers are properly supervised locally, that they understand their tasks and have things to do if called in.

• Determining the access that volunteers can be given to data and/or computer systems. Volunteers should not need full access to IT equipment but may need to use computers to undertake their work. It is important that the level of access is agreed prior to volunteers starting work and that they are trained accordingly.

• Managing expectations. Volunteers may need to wait for vetting to take place or for a suitable role to be found. It is important that you stay in regular contact and outline the timescales involved.
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Working with volunteers

www.npia.police.uk
The examples outlined in this guide have been provided by forces and are used for illustrative purposes only. Unless otherwise stated they have not been formally accredited, assessed or evaluated by the NPIA.