Acknowledgements

The Regional Co-ordinator Recruitment Marketing and Retention sub-group is keen to acknowledge the following for their time, effort and contribution to the research and development of this report.

All 43 police forces of England and Wales, specifically the specials co-ordinators, who took part in the recruitment marketing survey and responded openly and honestly to the questions asked.

Special constables from the south west, north west and London regions, who took part in the retention survey and responded openly and honestly to the questions asked.

Cheshire Constabulary Performance Management Team who fully supported the development, dissemination, management and collation of responses of the two surveys and their subsequent support, advice and assistance with the analysis of the data collected.

The Regional Co-ordinator Team for their assistance with the dissemination and delivery of the recruitment marketing survey.
Foreword

Trisha Dash-O’Toole, Head of the Special Constabulary Regional Team, National Policing Improvement Agency

In August 2008, a funding programme was announced to increase the number of special constables in England and Wales through the establishment of nine regional co-ordinators. The responsibility for the nine co-ordinators rests within the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA). The remit of the regional co-ordinator is to drive forward a more targeted approach to the recruitment and development of the Special Constabulary. The co-ordinators work closely with police forces, the regional lead at the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and force strategic leads to identify their needs and provide support to enable the Special Constabulary to develop and continue their outstanding work.

The Special Constabulary’s contribution to policing is immense, and time and time again these unique volunteers illustrate high levels of dedication and professionalism. However, we need to ensure that they are supported and continually developed so that they are up-to-date with the challenges faced by modern policing.

Furthermore, the findings from the web based surveys contained in this report indicate that by using targeted recruitment material forces can maximise the opportunities to attract suitable candidates.

In addition to this, there is a need to make sure forces are valuing their special constables, not only in terms of recognising the fantastic commitment that they give to their force, but also to the communities they serve. This should ensure that forces retain their services in the long term, demonstrating their value and keeping their skills within the service.

This report is offered for forces to utilise and it is suggested that retention strategies could be developed and implemented reflecting the findings of this report in order to improve retention, not only of serving officers, but for the new special constables that are currently being recruited.
Foreword

Chief Constable Peter Fahy, QPM
ACPO National Lead for Special Constabulary

In 2008, the Government gave a clear commitment to reduce the number of targets which apply to policing. However one target which remains is to increase the number of special constables to 20,000. This has given a huge endorsement to the Special Constabulary and shows the enormous support behind the volunteer force. We now have a network of regional co-ordinators to help forces to grow their numbers, and giving greater responsibility to the chief officers of the specials has been a crucial ingredient in turning around what had been a long term decline in numbers.

One of the challenges that the Special Constabulary faces is the growing complexity of policing and how to cope with the full range of duties. We have had to be realistic on this. The core role of any police officer is in local patrol and reassurance and this is also the role the public value the most. Therefore specials are now embedded as a key element of neighbourhood policing. This strengthens the relationship with the public, but along with this comes a public expectation of a consistent presence. The retention of this presence is vital and having strong retention strategies in place will not only value the role of the Special Constabulary, but also service the real expectation of the public.

We still have a distance to travel, but I hope you find that this report supports your force in enhancing and developing your marketing, recruitment and retention strategies.
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1. Executive summary

1.1 In August 2008, the Home Secretary made an announcement regarding the development of the Special Constabulary Regional Co-ordinators Team. Nine regional co-ordinators were in post by May 2009. The purpose of the regional co-ordinator role is to action the Green Paper requirements of increasing the numbers within the Special Constabulary to 20,000 across England and Wales. The regional co-ordinator posts are funded by the Home Office for two years.

1.2 The Special Constabulary Regional Co-ordinator Team form a part of the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) Workforce Strategy Unit, who has the overall responsibility for Special Constabulary policy. The regional co-ordinators operate on a partnership basis between the NPIA and ACPO. They have the remit of helping forces to manage projects that increase the awareness and raise the profile of the Special Constabulary. The NPIA have overall responsibility for these posts. The regional co-ordinators also provide forces with a mechanism to effectively apply policy in respect of the NPIA and ACPO agenda.

1.3 The regional co-ordinator role was developed to ensure that key stakeholders (Home Office, NPIA, ACPO and forces) fulfil the Green Paper requirements to raise awareness and boost the numbers within the Special Constabulary, through key initiatives at both force and strategic level.

1.4 In June 2009, the recruitment marketing and retention sub-group of the NPIA Special Constabulary Regional Co-ordinator Team was formed and were tasked with identifying Special Constabulary recruitment marketing and retention activity within the forces of England and Wales. The objectives of this work were to:

- identify the market for the recruitment of special constables in order to support forces in their recruitment activity
- identify blockages to recruitment in order to allocate funding to forces and to alleviate those blockages
- research retention issues and activity in order to support forces with their retention strategies.

1.5 In order to achieve these objectives the sub-group carried out the following activities.

- An online recruitment marketing survey was sent to all 43 forces, addressed to specials co-ordinators or equivalent.
- 140 special constables from the north west, south west and London regions were invited to complete an online retention survey.
- In addition to the sub-group work, a survey of special constable leavers from 2008/09 has been carried out by the National Strategy Implementation Team Programme Manager; details of the results of this work will be provided in the retention part of this report.

1.6 The information collated from the online surveys was analysed with the support of the Cheshire Constabulary Performance Management Team, the findings of which can be found in the main body of this report.
1.7 There are opportunities described within this report to support and inform chief officers, Special Constabulary chief officers and those working within the field. It is offered as a strategic resource to improve recruitment marketing and retention wherever there is a need and within the context of each force’s strategic vision for the Special Constabulary. In particular the survey highlights the following:

I. The survey indicates that the most commonly used form of recruitment marketing is the force website (96.3 per cent of respondents). This is followed by 85.2 per cent stating word of mouth as a successful recruitment tool. Only 11.1 per cent of respondents use modern media i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter despite the internet being the most utilised method for attracting applicants.

II. The five most frequently used recruitment marketing materials are:
   • force website
   • posters
   • exhibition stands
   • recruitment brochure
   • promotional gifts.

III. The majority of forces record applicant information by age, gender, ethnicity and disability and we can assume that as a result of this activity, forces are able to determine where they need to target their recruitment to reach under represented groups; 66.7 per cent of forces have a recruitment marketing plan for 2009/10 and beyond.

IV. Based on the amount of free text responses supplied by forces in this survey, it was evident that blockages to recruitment did not sit solely within recruitment marketing activity. Blockages to the increase in Special Constabulary numbers also existed in HR support, training, uniform, equipment and other resource needs.

V. The top five methods to market the Special Constabulary internally were:
   • force intranet
   • award nominations
   • internal force publication
   • senior officer reports
   • inclusion in the policing plan.

VI. The benefits gained from marketing the Special Constabulary internally are perceived by respondents to be that it enables police staff and police officers to have a greater understanding of the special constable role. Respondents reported that this results in the Special Constabulary being more integrated and supported by the organisation, hence making special constables feel valued, which in turn can lead to improved retention of the Special Constabulary.

VII. The most commonly used internal marketing processes are via the force intranet, award nominations and internal publications.
VIII. The special constables surveyed cited a number of benefits to having volunteered with the Special Constabulary. The main reasons were:

- improved interpersonal skills
- transferable skills and experience
- self confidence
- making a difference in the community
- better understanding of police work.

IX. The top five reasons to join the Special Constabulary in 2009 were:

- to make the community and environment safer
- to join the regulars
- spare time or worthwhile activity
- personal development
- interest in law or policing.

X. Comparisons between the results of this survey to a similar survey carried out in 2000\(^1\), shows that there appears to have been little change in many of the reasons for joining the Special Constabulary. Personal development still remains a key reason to join, however it seems more applicants now join the Special Constabulary to make the community safer.

XI. The top five reasons the Special Constabulary was chosen rather than another volunteering agency were

- diversity of the work
- policing interest
- to join the regulars
- response to marketing
- to protect the community.

XII. This would indicate that with careful marketing focus and the identification of what appeals to a special constable initially, opportunities exist to reduce Special Constabulary wastage and may assist in the retention of specials once they have joined.

XIII. The special constables surveyed placed significant value on being adequately trained, not only in initial training but in continuous training. Overwhelmingly ‘to have more training’ was the most significant change they would make. Additionally \textbf{100 per cent} of all respondents stated that continuous training and development is extremely important, very important or fairly important to them.

XIV. Seventy per cent of special constables surveyed were completely, very or fairly satisfied with the way in which their force communicated with them. This leaves a substantial proportion (30 per cent) who are fairly or very dissatisfied or neither satisfied or dissatisfied with such communication.

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\(^1\) Home Office (May 2000), Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, ‘An Investigation into the Premature Wastage of Special Constables’. 
XV. The top five improvements suggested to make communication better were:
  • remote IT access (29 per cent) of respondents
  • special constables who supervise other special constables to have effective communication skills
  • regular newsletters or meetings
  • to be more flexible in communication
  • not to forget the Special Constabulary.

XVI. Fifteen per cent of respondents stated that there were no changes or improvements needed to the way their force communicates with them.

XVII. The survey revealed that in terms of the ability of a special constable to effectively carry out their duties, a number of constraints and negative effects were experienced, these included
  • lack of ability to drive
  • lack of training
  • lack of equipment
  • lack of meaningful deployment
  • negative attitude to them.

XVIII. These responses were generally mirrored when asked to describe negative experiences, these included negative attitude from police colleagues, lack of meaningful deployment, lack of regular supervision, lack of equipment and a lack of welfare support.

1.8 In terms of ensuring members of the Special Constabulary remain serving, the survey identified the areas most enjoyed in the course of their duties. The most significant areas were community reassurance and making a difference, teamwork, social benefits, personal development and the transferability of skills. These findings further reinforce the need to meet these criteria to ensure the Special Constabulary operates at its most effective levels.

1.9 A potentially important factor that has a positive impact on retention rates is special constables feeling valued. Notwithstanding some of the negative issues highlighted; 76 per cent of special constables surveyed did feel valued by their forces. The survey findings suggest that the factors that can make this happen are to simply receive a thank you, support and integration with regulars, being given responsibility, being trusted and regularly communicated with.

1.10 In terms of what forces could do more of to ensure that the special constable feels valued; 19 per cent stated that a clear definition of role was the most important, followed by more support from the force, training provision and integration into the police family (all at 14 per cent each).
2. **Implications and recommendations**

2.1 The following are recommendations based on the findings from the Recruitment Marketing Survey. They are only suggestions and practical hints in order for forces to develop their recruitment marketing strategies. This list is by no means exhaustive, however it is drawn from the web based survey of all forces in England and Wales. More details can be found in the body of the report.

2.1.1. Based on the amount of free text supplied by forces in this survey it was evident that allocation of funds should not be focused solely on recruitment marketing activities as forces were experiencing blockages to recruitment elsewhere. This resulted in forces being invited to bid for funding with a broader remit than that of recruitment marketing, such as HR support, training, uniform and equipment and resources.

2.1.2. Increasing the numbers of special constables is not limited to marketing tactics, forces should consider clearing blockages within other internal processes such as training, equipment, uniform and HR.

2.1.3. Many forces collate reasons for leaving, however it appears that this is often at the point of departure. Forces should ensure that retention strategies are designed to resolve issues for special constables prior to leaving.

2.1.4. Forces should consider the use of an internal Special Constabulary survey to identify those areas that can contribute to, and enhance their recruitment marketing material, and retention strategy.

2.1.5. Forces should evaluate the success of their marketing efforts to ensure resources are maximised and appropriate groups are being reached to publicise marketing material.

2.1.6. Forces should utilise demographic information to assist the targeting of under represented groups.

2.1.7. The survey revealed that 13 forces have a retention strategy for special constables, and some of these forces claim to have improved retention rates. It appears that forces rely on information from exit questionnaires to identify problems; proactive intervention at a much earlier stage should be considered to negate issues and improve the retention rate.

2.2 The following are recommendations based on the findings from the Special Constable Retention Survey. They are only suggestions and practical hints in order for forces to develop their retention strategies. The list is by no means exhaustive, however it is drawn from the web based survey of three ACPO regions. More details can be found in the body of the report.

2.2.1. Forces may wish to consider tapping into the findings of this research in relation to the reasons people join the Special Constabulary rather than other volunteer organisations, and ensure these reasons are reflected in marketing and retention strategies.

2.2.2. Forces may wish to consider including the benefits of becoming a special constable not only within their marketing strategy, but also in any continued retention strategies under development.
2.2.3. Forces are encouraged to review the levels of continuation training provided for the Special Constabulary, as surveyed members placed significant value on this.

2.2.4. Forces may wish to review how they communicate with members of the Special Constabulary. Consideration should be given to improved remote IT access and training for Special Constabulary supervisors to develop more effective communication skills.

2.2.5. In terms of effectively carrying out special constable duties forces should consider reviewing the:
- lack of opportunity to drive (e.g. force policy, access to vehicles and driver training)
- lack of training
- lack of equipment
- lack of meaningful deployment
- negative attitude towards the Special Constabulary

2.2.6. In terms of ensuring the members of the Special Constabulary remain serving, the survey identified the areas most enjoyed in the course of their duties. The most significant areas were community reassurance and making a difference, teamwork, social benefits, personal development and the transferability of skills. These findings further reinforce the need to meet these criteria to ensure the Special Constabulary operates at its most effective level.

2.2.7. A significant factor that impacts on retention rates is the area of being valued, this report identifies the area that has the most impact - a simple thank you. Forces are encouraged to examine their processes in this area in light of the information provided within this survey.

2.2.8. By comparing the previous research on attracting and retaining special constables, it would appear that there has been a negligible shift in the reasons why people apply to be a special constable, what motivates and retains them, and what ultimately makes them leave. It could be assumed that these reasons will remain constant into the future, and forces may wish to consider therefore, developing their retention strategies based on the report findings.

2.2.9. It appears that forces are relying on information from exit questionnaires to identify problems, whilst this will identify issues it is arguably too late to influence a leaver to stay. Proactive intervention at a much earlier stage should be taken to negate issues and improve retention rates.

2.3 The survey results suggest that in order to retain their special constables forces should:
- say thank you and recognise their contribution
- provide clear role definition
- provide continuous training and development
- provide remote IT access
- provide meaningful deployment
- monitor attitude to special constables of regular officers and other police staff
- facilitate enjoyment and variety in the special constable role

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2 Alan Hedges (July 2000) 'Attracting and Keeping Special Constables'.

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• provision of effective management
• ensure integrated into policing family
• ensure supervisors have the skills to lead.

2.4 The special constables surveyed cited a number of benefits to having volunteered as a special constable. The main reasons were:

• improved interpersonal skills
• transferable skills and experience
• self confidence
• making a difference in the community
• better understanding of police work.

2.5 These reasons can be integrated into marketing and retention strategies to attract potential candidates and to retain those that forces have.

3. **Structure of the report**

3.1 The remainder of this report presents the results of:

1) The Recruitment Marketing Survey – this is the survey of Special Constabulary co-ordinators and also covers some questions on retention.

2) The Special Constable Retention Survey – this is the survey asked of a selection of special constables from the London, north west and south west regions.

3.2 A copy of the questionnaires are available to view by following the below link to the NPIA Regional Co-ordinator Team web page.

Part one

Recruitment Marketing Survey
4. Recruitment Marketing Survey

Introduction

4.1 The aim of carrying out the Recruitment Marketing Survey was to establish how forces recruit special constables, the methodology behind their recruitment activity, their current marketing arrangements, budgets and any blockages to recruitment as a result of lack of funding. The survey also included some questions on the methodology used by forces to retain their special constables.

4.2 The information gathered as a result of this survey would be used as a way to collate significant information to enable the sub-group to share ideas, identify where blockages to increased recruitment are, and subsequently assist with funding allocation. For example, as a result of preliminary survey findings, in December 2009 funding was allocated to forces for areas other than recruitment marketing, such as training, resourcing, uniform and equipment.

Survey method

4.3 In August 2009, an electronic survey was sent to Special Constabulary co-ordinators in all 43 forces or their equivalents, inviting response to a number of questions in relation to their recruitment, marketing and retention activity. The link to the survey was sent to forces by the respective regional co-ordinators on 30 July 2009 with an extended deadline for completion of 20 August 2009. It was made clear on the survey that any responses should reflect the ACPO view of the police force concerned.

4.4 There was a 100 per cent response from forces and the information collated from the online survey was analysed with the support of the Cheshire Constabulary Performance Management Team. The questions, responses and findings can be found in the main body of this report.

Survey results

4.5 The results of the survey are presented in charts with some examples of quotes to illustrate some of the responses. The quotes have been selected to illustrate a particular activity of potential interest to others.
4.6 Recruitment marketing related questions

Forces were asked: What methods do you use to attract potential applicants?

Activity example

Leicestershire Constabulary “Mobile phone and email to those expressing interest so we can advise them of forthcoming seminars and events.”

Activity example

Suffolk Constabulary “Our main thrust is via a schedule of recruitment information evenings run by the specials recruitment team in various locations across the county. We hold up to 12 events annually and target the areas where our need to recruit is the greatest.”
Forces were asked: Do you evaluate the success of these methods of promotion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity example**

**Metropolitan Police Service** “The advertising placed into standard media outlets are given a specific code to be quoted upon application. This allows us to measure the success not only of each advertising campaign but of specific outlets, for example London Underground posters. Advertising literature is also printed with an identifying code which again allows us to monitor the success of that literature. Each borough is given a code to use so that when it is quoted by applicants the borough can be credited with the successful recruitment of that applicant.”

**Activity example**

**Essex police** “A marketing form is included in application packs. These are analysed to establish which media methods are the most effective.”
Forces were asked: What marketing material do you use to promote the Special Constabulary to potential applicants?

Forces were asked: Do you record applicant information by age, gender, ethnicity and disability?
Forces were asked: Do you use applicant demographic information to target under represented groups in your force?

Activity example

Devon and Cornwall Police “We have used a poster campaign to target specific groups. Mature female. We are also working with our Diversity team to highlight areas with under represented groups.”

Forces were asked: Do you record applicant information by failure reasons?
Forces were asked: Do you have a recruitment marketing plan 2009/10 and beyond?

Activity example

Cumbria Constabulary “Has a marketing strategy in place in order to ensure the numbers of special constables within Cumbria Constabulary are increased, whilst ensuring effective deployment within the neighbourhood policing model, taking into account the Constabulary priorities, local policing plans and the Special Constabulary National Strategy.

Cumbria Constabulary is committed to recruiting a diverse and representative Special Constabulary and the plan will ensure they are working towards recruiting, training and retaining an establishment that is representative of the community the specials serve.”

Forces were asked: What type of budget do you have for recruitment marketing in your force?
Forces were asked: How do you market the Special Constabulary to your own organisation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intranet</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award nominations</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal force publication</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior officer reports</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion in policing plan</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESP</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulletins</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarisation days</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity example**

**Leicestershire Constabulary** “We have in place an internal communications plan agreed with our corporate communications section. We have a volunteer working for us who takes photographs of specials in action so that we can better portray the work they do.”

**Activity example**

**Cumbria Constabulary** “Ensure that an input on the role of a special constable is given on the police staff induction every month.”
Forces were asked: What benefits have you gained from marketing your Special Constabulary internally?

**Activity example**

**Devon and Cornwall Constabulary** “A small increase in recruitment of police staff. An increased understanding of the role and breadth of experience the Special Constabulary provides. A greater interest in the role and more support from senior officers.”

**Activity example**

**Kent Police** “We get people who have knowledge of police practices and systems – are already part of the police family. Communication and maintenance of contact is far easier.”

**Activity example**

**Leicestershire Constabulary** “... resulting in better management and integration with regulars ... This ethos has been shared with the regulars and is leading to an improved understanding, especially at middle management level, of the value that specials represent to them at BCU and local level. There was a school of thought that our specials were remote from the regular force but this trend has now been reversed.”
4.7 Force retention strategy related questions

The Recruitment Marketing Survey also asked questions around retention. The examples of activity contained in this report are only a selection of force responses to the questions asked.

**Forces were asked: Do you record leaver information by age, gender, ethnicity, disability and reason for leaving?**

- **Age:**
  - Yes: 31
  - No: 10
  - No response: 4

- **Gender:**
  - Yes: 33
  - No: 8
  - No response: 4

- **Ethnicity:**
  - Yes: 32
  - No: 9
  - No response: 4

- **Disability:**
  - Yes: 27
  - No: 12
  - No response: 6

- **Leaving reason:**
  - Yes: 42
  - No: 1
  - No response: 2

**Forces were asked: How and when do you collate reasons for leaving and who collates this information?**

- **How?**
  - National exit interview questionnaire: 23
  - Force exit interview questionnaire: 20
  - Face to face interview: 20
  - Phone interview: 7
  - Other: 5
The Recruitment Marketing Survey revealed 100 per cent of respondents collate special constable’s reasons for leaving, however only 55.6 per cent of forces that responded are using the national exit interview questionnaire. The remainder use their own force exit form. In terms of a retention strategy only 28.9 per cent of respondents have this in place.

**Activity example**

**Dorset Police** “We have two special constabulary members who perform the role of recruitment and retention officers. We record hours performed on a monthly basis and have several stages at which we make contact with specials who are not performing duty to identify any problems and hopefully provide support to bring people back. The recruitment and retention officers visit specials at home to discuss problems and issues face-to-face when necessary.”
Forces were asked: Do you have a retention strategy?

Activity example

**Wiltshire Police** “Our retention strategy is contained within our new special constabulary strategy signed off by the chief constable. The whole strategy works towards an effective and satisfied workforce...”

Activity example

**Thames Valley Police** “Reducing the numbers of specials leaving is in our delivery plan, retention and duty hours per officer are to be viewed as an indicator of the health of the special constabulary. Special chief inspectors and senior management team leads have been tasked with managing absence by reviewing specials who have not performed duty hours for a month and action plan individuals where appropriate. A leaver’s survey has been conducted and will be analysed. PDRs will be rolled out and the process used to match the activities of special constables to their skills and interests as far as possible.”
Forces were asked: What methods do you use in order to retain special constables?

**Activity example**

**Gloucestershire Constabulary** "Exit interviews are carried out to establish if there is any trend analysis or reasons for people leaving, any request to leave are followed up by the senior specials management team to enable early intervention to provide flexibility and support."

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**Activity example**

**Metropolitan Police** “A specific retention team, made up of volunteers, has been formed with the intention of conducting an interview with each officer who has indicated a wish to leave, before they actually leave the service. The aim is to try and resolve any issues, before they leave that may enable them to remain within the service.”

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**Activity example**

**Humberside Police** “One of our four councils gives a 50 per cent discount off council tax for the commitment of 16 hours every four weeks.”

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**Activity example**

**Leicestershire Constabulary** “We have improved our pre application process in order that we might recruit applicants more suited to the role. Our initial training has been improved to give a better standard of special and we are introducing management training for supervisors in order that they can be better prepared for their role. We have a specific intervention process for the section officers to follow for those specials who under perform, our communication plan is designed to improve retention and we monitor all the leavers as to why they resign.”
Part two

Special Constable Retention Survey
5. Special Constable Retention Survey

Preface

5.1 Currently we are experiencing a climate where forces are recruiting to contribute to the 2008 Home Office Green Paper requirement of 20,000 special constables by December 2011. It is important to note that in order to contribute to this number a priority, other than attracting new potential applicants to the Special Constabulary, is to retain existing specials. This assumption is made as a result of feedback from the data gathered from this survey and the feelings conveyed from forces by the Regional Co-ordinator Team.

5.2 The results of the survey show that the retention of special constables relies on a number of significant themes, namely, training and development, leadership, HR management, performance management, deployment and tasking (consistent with five out of the seven work streams from the Special Constabulary National Strategy).

5.3 The survey indicates that when special constables feel valued they are more likely to remain as a special constable. This report has identified some themes that forces can potentially utilise to develop their retention strategies.

Introduction

5.4 The aim of carrying out the retention survey with existing specials constables was to establish the reasons why, and under what conditions, a special constable will remain in their role.

5.5 The aim is to provide analysis of the data and encourage forces to utilise this information for the development of, or to further enhance, their retention strategies.

Survey method

5.6 An electronic survey was devised and with the agreement of the relevant force’s special co-ordinator, was sent to special constables from the north west, south west and London regions.

5.7 The e-survey was sent out via force specials co-ordinators on 30 July 2009 with a response deadline of 5 August 2009. A selection of 140 special constables from a variety of ranks and service were invited to complete the survey, and 103 (73 per cent) of those responded.

5.8 Anonymous raw data has been provided to those forces whose special constables responded to the survey for their consideration. Forces have the option to share this information on a regional or indeed national basis, as a way to provide examples of the type of information that can be gathered and the worth of carrying out such a survey.
5.9 Survey results

Special constables were asked: For what reason did you consider volunteering?

![Graph showing reasons for considering volunteering]

- Make community/environment safer: 34%
- Join regulars: 21%
- Spare time/worthwhile activity: 10%
- Personal development: 10%
- Interest in law/policing: 8%
- An experience with police: 5%
- ESP: 1%
- Counter terrorism: 1%

Special constables were asked: Why did you choose to volunteer with the police service rather than any other voluntary organisation?

![Graph showing reasons for choosing to volunteer with the police]

- Diversity of the work: 26%
- Policing interest: 24%
- Joining regulars: 19%
- Response to marketing: 13%
- Protect community: 6%
- Police staff member: 6%
- ESP: 3%
- Uniformed/disciplined/professional org: 3%
Special constables were asked: What benefits, if any, have you gained from volunteering as a special constable?

- Improved interpersonal skills: 30%
- Transferable skills/experience: 17%
- Self confidence: 13%
- Making a difference in the community: 11%
- Understanding of police work: 11%
- Social benefits: 7%
- Different from paid job: 5%
- Pride/self worth: 3%
- Benefits (travel/medical): 3%
- No perceived benefit: 1%

62.1 per cent of respondents (64) stated that continuous training and development in their force meets their current needs. A lower proportion of respondents (58.8 per cent, 25 in total) with between 5 and 10 years service as a special constable stated that the continuous training in their force meets their current needs.
Special constables were asked: What changes/improvements, if any, would you make?

100 per cent of all respondents stated that continuous training and development is extremely important, very important or fairly important to them.

Special Constables were asked: How important is continuous training and development to you?

100 per cent of all respondents stated that continuous training and development is extremely important, very important or fairly important to them.
Special constables were asked: Why is continuous training and development important to you?

- To be current and up-to-date: 59%
- Develop knowledge and skills: 12%
- Be a competent officer: 9%
- Vicarious liability: 6%
- Quality service to community: 5%
- To be a better officer: 4%
- Team communication: 3%
- Retention: 2%

Special constables were asked: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way in which your force communicates with you?

- Completely satisfied: 5%
- Very satisfied: 28%
- Fairly satisfied: 37%
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied: 13%
- Fairly dissatisfied: 14%
- Very dissatisfied: 3%
Special constables were asked: What changes/improvements would you make to the communication methods your force uses?

- Remote IT access: 29%
- SC supervision to have effective communications: 17%
- None: 15%
- Regular newsletter/meetings: 12%
- Force to be more flexible in communication: 8%
- Not to forget special constables: 8%
- More personal contact/interest in SC: 5%
- Less emails: 5%
- SC open forum: 1%

Special constables were asked: Have you ever had any constraints imposed upon you which limit your role as a special constable?

- Yes: 43%
- No: 47%
Special constables were asked: If yes, what constraints are they?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of training</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of equipment</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of meaningful deployment</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitude/culture to SC</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/life balance restricting volunteer hours</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of recognition for contribution</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforced deployment</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special constables were asked: What have you enjoyed most about being a special constable?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community reassurance/making a difference</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social benefits</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development/transferable skills</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging/excitement</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful deployment/tasking</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being appreciated</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special constables were asked: Have you ever had any negative experiences as a special constable?

- Yes: 61%
- No: 39%

Special constables were asked to: describe the negative experiences you have had.

- Regular/police staff attitude to SC: 12%
- Lack of meaningful deployment: 9%
- Lack of regular supervision: 7%
- Lack of welfare support: 6%
- Dealing with difficult public: 5%
- Being supervised by non regulars: 5%
- Failure to join regulars despite length of service: 4%
- Not recognising volunteer: 3%
- Bullying: 2%
- Lack of training/development: 2%
- Traumatic event: 2%
- Failure to join regulars despite length of service: 2%
Special constables were asked: Do you feel valued by your force?

- 76% Yes
- 24% No

Special constables who felt valued by their force were asked: What makes you feel valued?

- Receiving a thank you: 39%
- Support/integration with regulars: 27%
- Being given responsibility/trust: 12%
- Communication: 7%
- Awards/nominations: 6%
- Meaningful deployment: 4%
- Investment in training/development: 4%
- Positive comment from community: 1%
Special constables who do not feel valued were asked: Why do you not feel valued?

Special constables were asked: What would your force need to do to ensure that you feel valued?
Special constables were asked: What motivates you to remain as a serving special constable?

A larger proportion of male respondents (55 per cent) stated that they intend to serve 10 years or more as a special constable, compared to only 33 per cent of female respondents.
6. Additional work - National Strategy Programme

6.1 In addition to the sub-group work, a survey of special constable leavers from 2008/09 was conducted by the National Strategy Implementation Team Programme Manager, whereby 104 special constables responded.

6.2 The findings of this report show that the top three reasons for leaving were:
- change in working commitments
- domestic/work life balance
- to become a police constable or a police community support officer.

6.3 It can be noted that research in 2000\(^3\) revealed the same reasons as above for special constables leaving (bar the PCSO role which was not in existence in 2000).

6.4 When the above three external factors are filtered out of the total responses, the top ten reasons for leaving are:

1. management issues
2. role of special constable
3. lack of training and/or development opportunities
4. lack of volunteer benefits
5. workload
6. organisational culture
7. relationship with regular colleagues
8. discrimination and/or harassment
9. working condition
10. fairness at work.

\(^3\) Home Office (May 2000), Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, 'An Investigation into the Premature Wastage of Special Constables'.