

Introduction

Meeting the challenges of modern policing and the changing nature of crimes

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The NPCC Policing Vision 2025

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Policing Vision 2025 sets out a transformative agenda, which will enable the service to meet the challenges of modern policing, the changing nature of crimes and how they are committed and new and emerging threats to community cohesion and harmony.

The Police Service Statement of Mission and Values 2025 (set out in the Policing Vision 2015) highlights the significance of the PCSO role in meeting the overall vision:

...to make communities safer by upholding the law fairly and firmly; preventing crime and anti-social behaviour; keeping the peace; protecting and reassuring communities; investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice.

The Vision places providing an improved policing service for the public at the heart of its professional agenda. It states that 'the link between communities and the police will continue to form the bedrock of British policing'. It also identifies the 'need to develop a proactive and sophisticated understanding of community needs, to keep people safe, particularly as communities become more diverse and complex' as a key challenge.

PCSOs were introduced under the [Police Reform Act 2002](#) to allow chief officers:

...to appoint suitable support staff (community support officers) to roles providing a visible presence in the community with powers sufficient to deal with minor issues. Such staff would be under the formal direction and control of the chief officer.

The key function of PCSOs

The Act suggested the key function of PCSOs was to 'provide additional capacity to combat low-level disorder' and thereby help to reduce the public's fear of crime. This translates into providing a visible uniformed presence and exercising powers to deal with minor issues in a neighbourhood policing context. It also gives warranted officers greater capacity to focus on more serious crime and disorder and operational policing demands.

PCSOs play an essential role in neighbourhood policing teams and deliver their own unique and valuable contribution to policing. While this handbook explores examples of operational deployment, the fundamental precedents in relation to the role for which they are employed should be borne in mind. These are to:

- undertake public-facing duties in uniform
- be visible in their communities on targeted foot or cycle patrol (vehicle if rural community)
- deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB), low-level crime and incidents, local problems / priorities and quality of life issues
- identify, support and improve service to victims and vulnerable people
- conduct community engagement and problem-solving activity

The [role profile and the underpinning educational requirements of PCSOs](#) have been revised to assist the service in meeting its obligations under the neighbourhood policing guidelines and the Policing Vision 2025. At times of high demand, there is a risk that PCSOs will be deployed outside their role profile to meet operational needs, such as responding to general calls for service from the public. This practice should be monitored, especially where it is likely to remove a PCSO from their community, or places them at risk by assigning tasks to them which they do not have appropriate protective equipment for and powers to deal with. Great care should also be exercised when forces consider additional roles or responsibilities for PCSOs that sit outside of the core role identified. While an innovative approach to delivering improved local policing services is encouraged, the values of a role built on local visibility and problem solving should not be lost.

While chief officers can be flexible surrounding PCSO deployments to ensure the best policing, the following should be considered by those completing a task requested of them.

- Am I responding in accordance with my role profile?
- Is what I am doing lawful?
- Is it proportionate?
- Has a risk assessment been conducted?

- Does it reduce my ability to be visible and accessible to the public?
- Am I trained for the task?
- Have the necessary powers been authorised?
- Is the equipment appropriate for the task?
- Is the deployment likely to have a negative impact on satisfaction and confidence?

Tags

Career pathways Community engagement PCSO