

# Operational deployment

PCSO contribute to the policing of neighbourhoods through highly visible targeted patrols to reassure the public.

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## Building relationships and confidence with local communities

The primary role of a PCSO is to contribute to the policing of neighbourhoods through highly visible targeted patrols to reassure the public, increase orderliness in public places and be accessible to communities and partner agencies for problem solving at a local level.

The College of Policing role profile for PCSOs is aligned to the neighbourhood policing guidelines and the Policing Vision 2025.

The mission of policing is to prevent crime and protect the public. The Policing Vision 2025 applies to the whole police service, setting out what policing will look like in 2025 and beyond. It is underpinned by the police [Code of Ethics](#). PCSOs, who are often the first point of public contact, are crucial to the delivery of a professional service and maintaining public satisfaction and confidence in policing.

Local officers and neighbourhood policing teams will build relationships and confidence with local communities to support them and work with partners to prevent crime and deal with local issues. They will also solve problems and protect people through a focus on victims, offenders and locations. A greater emphasis on evidence-based practice will equip the workforce with the advanced skills needed to do this.

Centrally mandated operating models and national performance targets have been removed by the Home Office in favour of the overarching priority to reduce crime. It remains a matter for chief officers to control and direct their staff in accordance with their local police and crime plan objectives as set by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). These should reflect the views of local people, help police officers reduce crime and be underpinned by the neighbourhood policing

guidelines.

Effective PCSOs can directly affect police performance and public reassurance. They have a clear role to play in helping forces to achieve performance priorities on the fear of crime, feelings of public safety, public satisfaction levels and supporting overall performance.

## Effective deployment

Effective deployment of PCSOs will need to take account of national, force and local policing priorities.

## Intelligence briefings

PCSOs should receive regular intelligence briefings relevant to their area and be tasked in accordance with these. They should not, however, be deployed to perform tasks for which they are not trained.

## Health and safety

Forces need to equip their PCSOs in accordance with their different plans for deployment and with health and safety considerations.

## Access to vehicles

Access to vehicles in rural areas may be necessary, although the clear emphasis of PCSOs is high-visibility foot or cycle patrol. In urban areas, walking, cycling or public transport should be sufficient to allow PCSOs to patrol effectively.

Where PCSOs are allocated force vehicles, these should be liveried so that the public recognises them as belonging to the police.

## Investigating crime

While His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) does not recommend the use of PCSOs to investigate crimes, it is recognised there is an investigative element to both initial reports of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). This creates a paradox, as PCSOs become part of the investigation. There will always be a clear reassurance, crime

prevention and deterrent role for PCSOs. With comprehensive crime prevention training, they are well placed to conduct follow-up reassurance patrols and provide victims and neighbours with crime prevention advice. However, by this very activity a PCSO may become involved in the investigation process, for example where information/intelligence is offered by a victim or neighbour. Training should be in place to support how such information is managed and processed so that, while the recommendations of the inspectorate are observed, this does not frustrate investigating the crime.

## Powers

There may be a false expectation that PCSOs, like police officers, have a duty to engage in almost any situation or perform any task asked of them. To preserve their core role, and to ensure clarity for all concerned, it will need to be made clear that PCSOs have a limited number of powers and tasks, outside which they should neither stray nor be expected to.

Forces, local commanders and PCCs may wish to raise public awareness of the boundaries of the role that PCSOs carry out.

Tools to help avoid these pitfalls include publishing and agreeing intervention guidance and training PCSOs to deal with incidents through consideration of the situation, their powers and safety. Application of the [national decision model \(NDM\)](#) as part of daily interaction will assist PCSOs and those charged with their supervision to ensure the role is preserved and risks are minimised.

## Gathering intelligence

PCSOs will be in a position to gather considerable intelligence, which will need to be processed, in accordance with the [intelligence cycle](#). The potential for PCSOs to gain access to people who might ordinarily resist giving information to a police officer should not be overlooked. Forces will need to ensure that information sources are handled and overseen in accordance with the prevailing legislation and local procedure.

## Custody

PCSOs should not be used to convey detainees to, or from, custody in the absence of a police officer, or to enter a custody suite to book a prisoner in. Such activity detracts from their main role

and erodes the trust and confidence that PCSOs seek to build with the community. It also carries significant health and safety and legislative risk.

## Sharing good practice

Examples of local good practice should be shared among forces through the [Knowledge Hub](#) (you will need to log in) where there are communities both for neighbourhood policing and problem solving.

## Tags

PCSO   Community engagement   Career pathways