

Volunteer police cadet programme for adults with learning disabilities and complex needs

An opportunity to become uniformed volunteer police cadets, deployed every month with neighbourhood policing teams to support communities through engagement

First published

17 May 2024

Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Community engagement Leadership, development and learning
Organisation	Gloucestershire Constabulary
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Region	South West
Partners	Police Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Children and young people

Aim

- To create the opportunity for vulnerable and disadvantaged adults to become uniformed volunteer police cadets carrying out operational duties in safe environments
- To break down barriers between the police and vulnerable people
- To improve trust and confidence in the police

Intended outcome

- Improved relationships with vulnerable communities
- Reduced barriers between police and vulnerable communities
- Improved public confidence and engagement with the police

Description

Gloucestershire Constabulary have started working with an organisation called Kingfisher Treasure Seekers. Kingfisher Treasure Seekers help vulnerable and disadvantaged people become fully engaged in the community, believing that it is community that enables people to thrive. Kingfisher Treasure Seekers work with people with [learning disabilities](#), [mental health](#) challenges, complex needs, and [young people](#).

Since 2018, Gloucestershire Constabulary have partnered with Kingfisher Treasure Seekers in an extension of the force volunteer police cadet programme. This started as a pilot with four treasure seeker police cadets. There are now fourteen cadets in the programme.

The Treasure Seekers Cadets become involved in operational duties in a safe environment. These duties include speeding operations and public engagements. The constabulary now have a dedicated Treasure Seeker High Sheriff Cadet who supports the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire when attending events.

The cadets meet once a month between 10:00 and 15:00 to go out with neighbourhood policing teams. The Treasure Seeker cadets don't do activities with the main cadet programme as they deploy during the week whilst the cadets are at school. However, the main cadet programme support the Treasure Seeker cadets at some events.

There is one staff member who is responsible for organising/running the Treasure Seeker cadets. Often, the staff member can ask for up to two additional volunteers from the force Citizens in Policing team (a team of Special Constables, Police Support Volunteers, and Volunteer Police Cadets, all of whom are volunteers).

The main cost involved in this initiative is the uniform. It is roughly £130 per uniform per Treasure Seeker cadet.

The constabulary are working to expand the programme through having six Treasure Seeker Cadet units across each of the local policing areas. There is also ongoing work with the National Star College (a specialist further education college for people with physical disabilities, brain injuries and associated learning difficulties). The future plan is to work with the National Star College and all of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools within the county.

Overall impact

The programme has received local, regional and national recognition. It was shortlisted for a World Class Policing Award in 2019. In 2020, the founder of the Treasure Seeker Police Cadets was awarded a British Empire Medal in the Queen's New Year Honours List.

There has been a demonstrable improvement in the relationship between the Kingfisher Treasure Seeker community and the constabulary. One individual in the programme disclosed they had been a victim of a serious offence, leading to an investigation and arrest. Three Treasure Seeker Cadets have gone on to paid employment as a result of improved communication skills and confidence.

This initiative has challenged perceptions and stereotypes. Vulnerable people are now empowered to be part of the police family, dressed in full cadet uniform, serving the community and keeping people safe from harm.

Learning

The Treasure Seeker Police Cadets have been described as an amazing asset to the community as they break down barriers and encourage conversations.

The constabulary advise ensuring that support is given for the programme by the Treasure Seekers – or any other SEN organisations that the individuals come from.

The constabulary also advise that this initiative needs to have someone running it who is passionate about making a difference to the individuals involved.

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Tags

Community engagement