
POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS (PCSOs)

Version 4

1. Policy statement

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are designed to act as the eyes and ears of the police service. The Police Federation of England and Wales recognises the role PCSOs provide in support of police officers and undertake functions where the use of warranted police powers is not required.

The PCSO role should be clearly defined to tackle low-level anti-social behaviour, to deliver public reassurance and to gather vital evidence and intelligence. PCSOs are not, and can never be, a replacement for a fully trained, fully sworn, fully accountable police officer.

2. Responsibility

The National Board is responsible for all policy formation.

3. Summary

PFEW believes that whilst there is a place for PCSOs within policing, their role should be in support and not in substitution of a fully warranted police service. However, with reducing numbers of warranted officers and PCSOs, it is time to reflect on the continued benefits of their role and whether in the current financial climate they are providing value for money.

It is important that there is a standardised role for PCSOs which is recognised and explained to enable the police service and the public to have a general understanding of what is expected of them. The role of PCSOs should not be to investigate crime but to provide information for warranted police officers to develop and formulate policing operations to detect crime and to bring offenders to justice. We remain unconvinced of the need for PCSOs to have the ability to use force while detaining people and we believe that some of the current standard PCSO powers should be reviewed.

PCSO powers should not be extended to support the police service where the numbers of warranted officers are falling. PCSOs have sufficient statutory powers and there should be no extension of those powers that could lead PCSOs into confrontational situations for reasons of their own safety and that of the public. At a time of financial restraint any increase in powers and training would not be cost neutral. Without full training PCSOs, other members of the police service and the public may be placed at risk. The powers that warranted officers hold would be strengthened by more investment in Continuing Professional Development for them rather than widening and duplicating the skills base of PCSOs.

The delegation of tasks away from warranted police officers towards police staff may have the effect of making officers more remote from the communities they serve with unintended consequences such as further reductions in public trust and confidence in police officers.

Any decision on the use of discretionary PCSO powers should remain an operational decision for Chief Officers to take and should not be the subject of consultation with the PCC. That way, the operational independence of the office of constable will be maintained in the British model of policing.

4. Procedures/implementation

PFEW will continue to lobby the Government on the basis that the service cannot sustain any further cuts in budget or workforce numbers without a significant impact on service delivery.

Responsibility is delegated to the National Secretary and/or appropriate sub-committee.

	Author	Date	Date to be reviewed	Change
Version 1	KP-EP	April 2015	April 2016	
Version 2	KP-EP	April 2016	April 2017	No change
Version 3	KP-EP	April 2017	April 2018	Minor amendments to refer to workforce statistics 2016
Version 4	KP	January 2019	April 2020	Minor changes

Signed by:



National Chair



National Secretary