



'NO TIME FOR COMMUNITY POLICING ANYMORE'



PCSO CUTS REPORT no.3 APRIL 2016

1. Introduction

'No time for community policing anymore' is a telling quote from one PCSO who responded to UNISON's survey on the impact of government cuts on neighbourhood policing. This report describes the results of the survey. It is the latest in a series of reports on PCSO cuts which UNISON has published. This series aims to bring to the attention of the public and politicians the reality of what is happening to community policing before it is too late. We will continue to stand up for, and support, our PCSO members in the very difficult circumstances in which they are now working.

The survey shows that government cuts continue to take their toll on the ability of police forces in England to deliver community policing where it matters – on the streets for local people. Responses to the survey of UNISON's Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) members across England and Wales, undertaken in April 2016, show that:

- 74% have seen PCSO numbers reduce in their neighbourhood policing team
- 78% have seen community beat police officers in their team reduce
- 57% of PCSOs have stopped performing some core neighbourhood policing duties and have been redeployed to work which keeps them off the beat
- 77% of PCSOs say that their neighbourhood policing team has become less visible since they started working as a PCSO
- 61% are more stressed than they were when they started
- 53% of PCSOs now regularly have to deal with work that should be the responsibility of other agencies, e.g. health service, social services etc.

2. Synopsis

This report is split into the following sections:

- Background to the cuts
- Latest UNISON PCSO survey results
- Conclusion

3. Background to the Cuts

The Government's cuts to the police service have been drastic in their level and impact. Since 2010, central government funding for police forces in England and Wales has been cut by a whopping 20%. These cuts have found their way into reductions in front line policing. Neighbourhood policing has taken a disproportionate hit, with PCSO numbers in England reducing by 30% overall between 2010 and 2015.

In London, the current Mayor oversaw a totally astonishing 62% reduction in PCSO numbers in the capital over the same period.

In Wales, the Assembly Government bucked the trend and invested in an increase in PCSOs in the four Welsh forces. Where there is political will, there is clearly a way.

Please see table 1 at the end of the report for full details of the cuts by force, taken from the official Home Office Police Strength Figures.

4. UNISON PCSO Survey Results

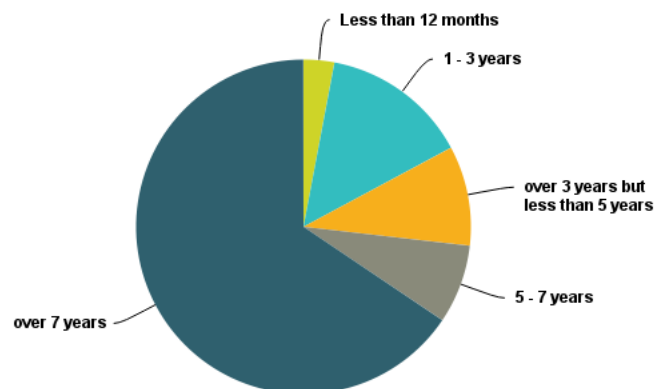
In April 2016, UNISON sent an on-line survey to all our PCSO members working for forces in England and Wales. The survey aimed to better understand the impact that the cuts to the neighbourhood policing workforce, as set out in the statistical record, were having on the day to day work of our members.

852 UNISON PCSO members responded to the survey.

Here are the detailed responses to each of the questions that they answered:

Q1 How long have you worked as a PCSO in your force?

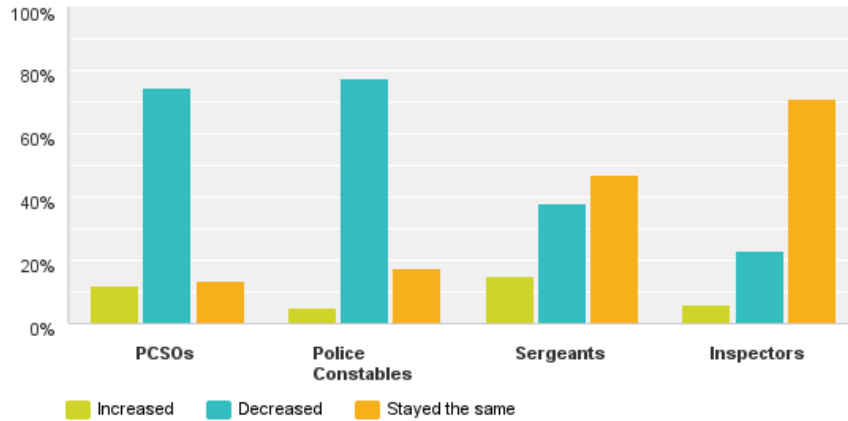
Answered: 839 Skipped: 13



- The overwhelming majority of respondents (66%) had worked for their force as a PCSO for more than 7 years, so this is a survey sample with a great deal of neighbourhood policing experience and expertise contained within it.

Q2 How have numbers in your Neighbourhood Policing Team changed since you became a PCSO?

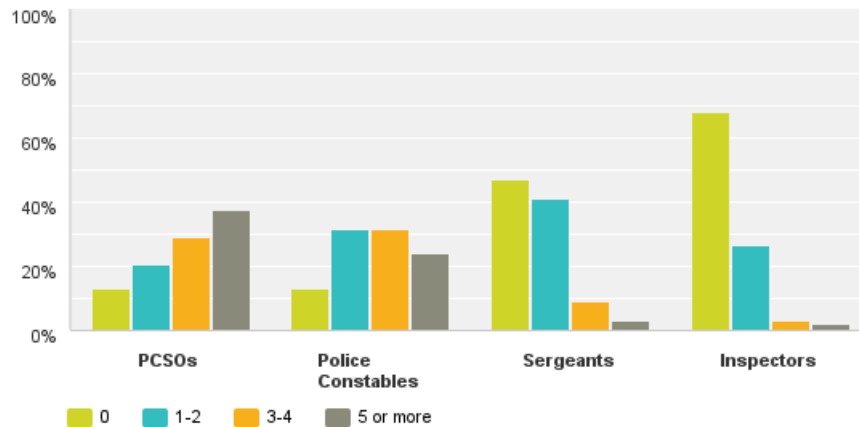
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- 74% of respondents said that PCSO numbers had reduced in their neighbourhood policing team since they became a PCSO
- 78% said that police officers on their team had been reduced in the same period
- Most said that sergeant and inspector numbers had remained the same.

Q3 If numbers have decreased, by how many?

Answered: 782 Skipped: 70



In relation to PCSO cuts, respondents reported as follows:

- 37% said that 5 or more PCSOs in their team had been removed
- 29% said 3-4 PCSOs had gone
- 20% said 1-2 PCSOs had gone
- 13% said none – very probably the respondents here worked for a force in Wales

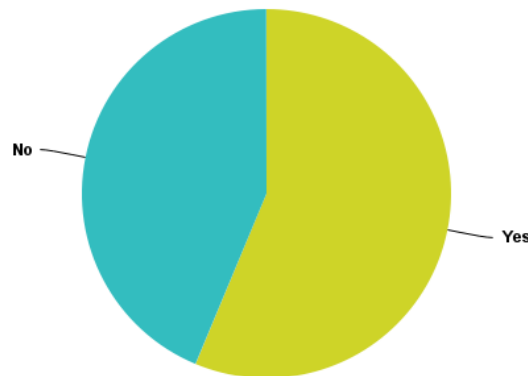
In relation to police officer cuts, respondents reported as follows:

- 24% said that 5 or more police constables had been cut from their team
- 31% said that 3-4 police constables had gone
- 32% said 1-2 constables had gone
- 13 % said none had gone

It is very clear from these results that the heart of neighbourhood policing, PCSOs and police constables on the beat, is in the process of being stripped out in most forces.

Q4 Have you stopped doing any particular work in your Neighbourhood Policing Team since you became a PCSO?

Answered: 842 Skipped: 10



- 57% of PCSO respondents said that they had stopped doing certain work in their team since they were appointed.

Those PCSOs who answered yes to question 4, were asked in question 5 to describe briefly what kind of work they were no longer carrying out?

Given the information about the level of PCSO and police officer cuts in neighbourhood policing, both from the official statistics and the above survey results, it is hardly surprising that PCSOs have had to stop doing certain things in order to cope with the reduction in personnel and resources.

But what is shocking is how the cuts have eaten away at the core patrol and reassurance role which was envisaged for neighbourhood policing when it was first created. The results show how PCSOs have, in many cases, been forced into taking on inappropriate police officer duties to fill in for resource gaps in response policing and investigative teams.

We have grouped a representative sample of the responses to the question - what you have given up – under the following headings. They vividly describe the type of work from which neighbourhood policing appears to have retreated as a result of government cuts.

Responses to this question also highlighted what PCSOs are doing instead. The results are very revealing, as these verbatim responses from PCSOs show.

Stopped: High Visibility Foot Patrol

'Now I cover the whole of the division due to force demand and the lack of PCSOs in other areas.'

'Less beat work, more paperwork'

'Very little foot patrol. Mainly out in vehicles due to decreased numbers and increased demand. Don't get to speak to members of the public much.'

'Proactive foot patrols.'

'We used to do more patrol on our patches with police officers, but it is not possible today due to the decreased number of police officers.'

'Hi visibility patrol has decreased. There isn't enough time to do it. The workload placed on you is too big and high visibility patrol is unable to be completed like it used to be.'

Stopped: Community Work

'We are encouraged to do less community work.'

'Any community engagement is now not possible. We are now deployed to incidents and home visits with no time for patrolling and talking to the public.'

'I find it hard to get into the schools, as two of us do what was three beat areas, which six PCSOs used to cover.'

'I am no longer a visible presence on the street. I spend most of my time on a computer or at meetings. I understand that we need meetings, but I am not achieving as much as I was when I was out on the street.'

'I no longer have any time to complete the core task of my duty, namely high visibility foot patrol, visiting vulnerable groups proactively and visiting victims of crime for follow-ups additional to the bare minimum. A large 'neighbourhood policing' element has been lost. I also have no support or time for the huge amount of intelligence gathering that came from this time spent in my community.'

'Pretty much all I do now is crime call-back.'

'With the new policing plan I now very rarely carry out foot patrol or community engagement'

'Hard at times to recognise the job I was employed to do.'

'Community engagement is less due to higher demand from officers to conduct crime enquiries'

'The whole role in general has ceased to be "Community Support" in favour of being utilised as a cheap option for inspectors and sergeants to use as a mini-response resource, taking the role away.'

'Community-based work and not being in the area responsible for patrolling therefore are not gaining the intelligence we used to or speaking to local residents or getting to know local youths.'

'I am currently finding it more difficult to fit in foot patrol time as I am now being utilised more and more for responding to incident calls and being allocated grade 3 & 4 incidents on a regular basis. My neighbourhood area has also increased by an extra 100 sq miles since a new operational strategy was put in place.'

'Geographically, my area has dramatically grown in size which has had a huge impact on what I used to do on a daily basis, foot patrol. This has pretty much stopped, and I spend most of my time driving from job to job.'

'No time for community policing anymore'

'Members of the public are constantly saying that they don't see us as regularly and, due to further shift changes, the shifts now are not compatible with neighbourhood issues that are ongoing. I envisage on-going problem solving to be made difficult where no PCSOs are on duty on some evenings, which is our core anti-social behaviour business.'

Replaced by: Police Officer Duties

'When I joined I was told that PCSOs were not to investigate crime and now most of my time is taken up investigating crime.'

'We are now aligned to work with response. This has caused major gaps in every beat team being available for their area, therefore PCSOs are responding to all beats, not just their own, taking valuable time away from the community.'

'I am doing a lot more high-end stuff now that a few years ago would have been referred to the neighbourhood constable. I am dealing with more crime and non-crime. I am officer in charge of cases and I am dealing with more harm and risk.'

'Just don't have enough time to patrol now. Feels like I'm a response PCSO now.'

'We spend less time out walking our beats due to there being less of us and getting called to more jobs by communications.'

'The role has changed. I would say we are more like cops than PCSOs these days, but without the power, or the tools to do the job.'

'I do feel that the increased financial pressure on the force as a whole has had a huge impact on the wellbeing of officers, who sometimes have an impossible task of responding to the public and providing the best solution to their problems. I now feel like I do not have the time to give the quality of service that I would like to give members of my community due to other requirements of the job. I hope that this is a temporary situation and will still try my best at providing good service to the public, who we are employed to protect.'

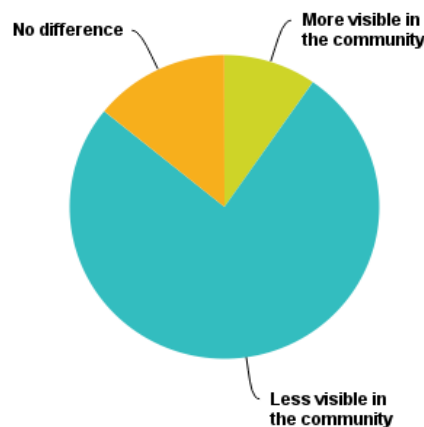
'PCSOs now are becoming more like police officers more and more tasks are be done by PCSOs. The role of a PCSO in our force has completely changed'

'I still believe PCSOs are a vital part of Community Policing. I still enjoy making a difference, however I have noticed my workload has increased due to officers' over-reliance on us doing some of their enquiries'

'I feel that as a PCSO sometimes the work we do is not valued by our superiors and that the role of a PCSO and the incidents we attend and deal with are in reality more that of a Police Constable than a PCSO and I do not believe this is understood by higher management. I feel at times we are just underpaid Police Constables but are expected to just grin and bear it. This has had the effect of me looking for other work outside of policing.'

Q6 Thinking of your neighbourhood policing team, over the time since you began working as a PCSO, has your team become:

Answered: 848 Skipped: 4

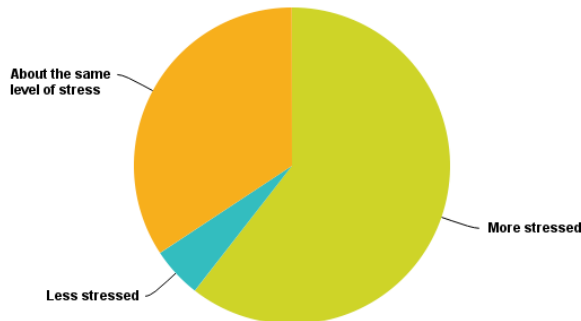


- 77% of PCSOs said that their team has become less visible in the community since they started work as a PCSO

This stark statistic shows very clearly that the original conception of neighbourhood policing as a reassuring presence in every community as more or less disappeared. The result here ties in very well with the verbatim responses set out above to Question 5, and shows that the cuts to police budgets and particularly to PCSO and neighbourhood police officer numbers has seriously weakened community policing across England. Communities are clearly being let down as a result.

Q9 Regarding your current workload, do you feel more stressed or less stressed than you did when you started work as PCSO?

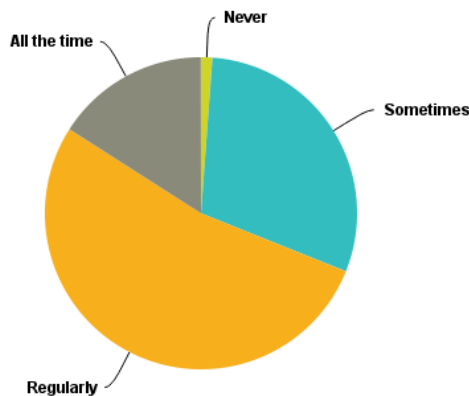
Answered: 849 Skipped: 4



The impact of the cuts and the resulting changes in duties for our PCSO members have had a major detrimental impact on the levels of stress that our members are experiencing at work. Nearly two thirds of members (61%) are feeling more stressed than they did when they started work as a PCSO.

Q11 How often do you deal with incidents that should be dealt with by another agency (for example, the health service, social services, other emergency services)?

Answered: 846 Skipped: 6



There has been much discussion lately of the impact of government cuts to other public services, particularly cuts to local government funding, and the impact that this has on the level of demand now placed on the police service as the public service of last resort. The results of our survey show that this impact has been felt very keenly by our members working as PCSOs.

- 16% of PCSOs undertake work which they believe should be the responsibility of another agency all the time
- 53% undertake this work regularly

This can only exacerbate the effect of the cuts on neighbourhood policing. Cuts to public services have consequences far beyond the confines of those individual services and it is very often left to the police to clear up the consequences. The Government needs to recognise this and resource the police service accordingly.

Question 12: Please sum up how you feel about your job, including any ways that this has changed since you began working as a PCSO.

Respondents to the survey gave a wide range of answers to this question. Although there are a lot of demoralised PCSOs out there, struggling to reconcile their role with the negative changes which the cuts have brought about, many PCSOs remain proud to serve the public and make a difference to the lives of local citizens on a daily basis. The job can obviously be a stimulating and enjoyable one, but increasingly the values of community engagement are being squeezed, leading many PCSOs to question the very title of their own job.

'We used to be Police Community Support Officers and be out in our areas and have local knowledge, they need to drop the Community part now!'

'Demoralised. We have to log everything in duplicate yet are told we should not be in the station. Rarely have a break. Expected to remember so much. Be on patrol and in challenging situations alone being the only officer on duty. Lack of officers within team means no help for issues that we can't deal with ourselves e.g. drugs'

'I thoroughly enjoy my job and the challenges that it provides, no 2 shifts are ever the same.'

'I am no longer the link between the community and Police. I am simply another resource utilised in menial tasks. There is no relationship between myself and our community any longer.'

'It is a frustrating (and stressful) job in that you don't have powers to deal with some things you need to, coupled with the fact local authorities use some of these powers you have rather than dealing with it themselves – it's an easy fix for them to 'demand' we do it. I put up with working unsociable hours because of the need for work. I am worried about the future - have PCSOs really got one?'

'I enjoy my role. Sometimes more powers would be helpful.'

'I still enjoy it after 10 years of being a PCSO, however, in that time the job has changed from a mainly police presence & hi visibility foot patrol role to that of paperwork and system updates. I do get out patrolling as before, however, not as regularly. I would like to see a refocusing on this as well as an increase in powers so we can deal with issues more effectively limiting the necessity of calling out a constable and effectively giving the taxpaying public "more bang for their buck".'

'I love my role and the ability to make a difference in the community. However, our numbers have reduced from 20 down to 9 (4 of whom work reduced/flexi hours), but we are still required to cover the same work load!'

'I no longer do the job I joined for. I constantly gather evidence for constables' crimes and due to the massive lack of staff I now work a much larger patch instead of a given ward area. There is only myself on full time, and work with a pc who only works 2 out of 6 days on a given ward. This is nearly no cover for the residents. I have 11 years experience and I wish to leave this incredibly horrible job. This is not a safe job either!'

'Our role is utterly undervalued by both the police hierarchy and government. Without PCSOs there would be no visible police presence on the street as the day of the "Beat Bobby" are long gone! The police are no longer proactive but reactive and generally attend domestics!'

'Working solo crewed on late shifts in a rural area is restrictive, and at times is demoralising. I no longer patrol specific hotspots on my beats. Having no personal protective equipment to protect myself, and knowing that back-up i.e. response officers are understaffed, invariably committed and stretched to the limit, safety is a priority. Unfortunately this means areas that need a presence are not receiving the visibility that's required. Extra powers recently given to PCSOs assists us when dealing with ASB, which is a bonus.'

'The problem is every profession has had cuts financially, which leads to poor service. Police are the first and last call for every problem in the community, which leads to us dealing with problems that should be dealt with by other agencies. I consider myself very privileged to be a PCSO.'

'I loved this job when I first started. But paper work has doubled since I started, yet we are not allowed to be in the station for over half an hour morning and evening. We regularly get involved in things out of our role. We don't get rest time or time to recover. We are like social workers, health workers, anti-social behaviour officers and school helpers all rolled into one. We cover a lot of things to help officers, because there is not enough time for them to do it as they are short staffed. We don't get thanks for what we do, just told our job could stop at any time. I lost the enjoyment of the role a long time ago. We are not appreciated for what we do.'

'Since joining, the role has become increasingly de-motivating, uninspiring and I feel completely unhappy within the role. We are increasingly becoming distant from the community, as we are being pushed to deal with more and more crime and not community engagement.'

'I feel isolated because the team work on differing shift patterns so I normally have to work alone. Getting all the work done e.g. crime reports investigated and neighbourhood email requests come first. I am often called upon by control room to take jobs which are often not suited for a PCSO. I feel I have lost touch with the community - I used to go out on foot, speak to people and gather a lot of intelligence. That hardly ever happens now. When the neighbourhood team was split onto different shifts we found it hard to do things together (operations).'

'De-motivated more or less sums it up. I work on my own day-in-day-out with no assistance from anyone. Nearest sergeant is 8 miles away. When I started 9 years ago I worked on a neighbourhood policing team of 15 cops/PCSOs and things got proactively done. Now there's no-one to do that anymore.'

'I love it most of the time. I manage my day and appointments and always on the look out to keep myself busy. I consider myself very proactive, and take pride in my work. I am very professional, committed and have no issues with getting 'stuck in''

'PCSO numbers have been eroded since I joined and are likely to decrease further in the near future. The nature of the job has changed, as the force tries different ways to save money. Neighbourhood policing is dying and will disappear forever with the demise of PCSOs'

5. Conclusion

The results of UNISON's third PCSO cuts report make for grim reading. Despite the strong commitment that still exists among PCSOs to deliver for their local communities, it is very clear that the original conception of the job has changed radically in the last 10 years.

Following 6 years of government cuts to police funding:

- the number of PCSOs and neighbourhood police officers has been drastically reduced
- as a result, the PCSO role is now far less visible in communities
- community policing is rapidly disappearing
- PCSOs are much more stressed as a result of increases in workload
- PCSOs are being taken off community duties to cover for police officers, or to pick up the work that other agencies are no longer able to carry out

The cuts to policing have been severe, but many will be surprised that they have fallen disproportionately on neighbourhood policing, which has been cut by 30% compared to the background level of cuts of 20%.

The government is failing to support neighbourhood policing. This UNISON PCSO cuts report is another wake up call to both politicians and communities to start getting behind community policing before it is gone forever. UNISON will stand by and support our PCSO members to achieve this aim, but we will need the support of others to succeed.

TABLE 1

PCSOs

Police Force	PCSOs March 2010	PCSOs Sept. 2015	Change from 2010-2015	% Change
Avon & Somerset	430	330	-100	-23.26%
Bedfordshire	116	91	-25	-21.55%
Cambridgeshire	209	145	-64	-30.62%
Cheshire	237	207	-30	-12.66%
Cleveland	193	116	-77	-39.90%
Cumbria	111	93	-18	-16.22%
Derbyshire	181	148	-33	-18.23%
Devon & Cornwall	363	356	-7	-1.93%
Dorset	164	149	-15	-9.15%
Durham	175	150	-25	-14.29%
Dyfed-Powys	83	137	54	65.06%
Essex	445	252	-193	-43.37%
Gloucestershire	148	121	-27	-18.24%
Greater Manchester	842	780	-62	-7.36%
Gwent	143	178	35	24.48%
Hampshire	347	323	-24	-6.92%
Hertfordshire	262	214	-48	-18.32%
Humberside	317	247	-70	-22.08%
Kent	387	333	-54	-13.95%
Lancashire	428	311	-117	-27.34%
Leicestershire	233	223	-10	-4.29%
Lincolnshire	149	143	-6	-4.03%
Merseyside	468	340	-128	-27.35%
Norfolk	275	176	-99	-36.00%
North Wales	157	228	71	45.22%
North Yorkshire	198	192	-6	-3.03%
Northamptonshire	164	101	-63	-38.41%
Northumbria	438	192	-246	-56.16%
Nottinghamshire	268	280	12	4.48%
South Wales	335	412	77	22.99%
South Yorkshire	328	270	-58	-17.68%
Staffordshire	237	230	-7	-2.95%
Suffolk	173	155	-18	-10.40%
Surrey	224	133	-91	-40.63%
Sussex	377	299	-78	-20.69%
Thames Valley	500	473	-27	-5.40%
Warwickshire	138	89	-49	-35.51%
West Mercia	279	221	-58	-20.79%
West Midlands	811	570	-241	-29.72%
West Yorkshire	763	578	-185	-24.25%
Wiltshire	126	118	-8	-6.35%
Total	12,222	10,104	-2,118	-17.33%
Metropolitan Police	4,645	1,689	-2,956	-63.64%
London, City of	52	17	-35	-67.31%
Total	16,919	11,810	-5,109	-30.20%