Changing the Beat?

The Impact of Austerity on the Neighbourhood Policing Workforce

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Abbreviations

BCU	Basic Command Unit
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (London)
NP	Neighbourhood Policing
NPP	Neighbourhood Policing Programme
NPT	Neighbourhood Policing Team
NRPP	National Reassurance Policing Programme
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
RP	Reassurance Policing

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Executive Summary

Neighbourhood Policing (NP) has been described as being 'the key building block of effective and legitimate policing'.[1] It provides dedicated police resources to each and every local area, or neighbourhood, in England and Wales. The more popular aspects of local policing, such as visible foot patrols and the presence of familiar police staff, have become more prevalent since the introduction of policing reforms at the turn of the twenty-first century.[2]

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are the key deliverers of visible and community-focused policing tasks within Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), and therefore their presence is vital to the existence of NP in its current incarnation. Equally, the existence of NP and NPTs provides an appropriate structure within police forces for the role of PCSOs – they are inextricably intertwined. Therefore, the size of the PCSO workforce is potentially dependent on the continuation of the NP approach and *vice versa*.

This report describes the current state of Neighbourhood Policing provision in England and Wales by exploring the trends in the PCSO workforce. It reveals that:

- The NP workforce has been considerably weakened in England and Wales since 2010, as most police forces have reduced their PCSO numbers. This period coincides with the central government's 20% reduction in funding for policing.

- Police forces have responded to these financial challenges in a number of ways. Workforce reform in this era of austerity has resulted in most forces having fewer PCSOs; however, a minority of forces have increased their number. The biggest decreases are found in the two London forces and the biggest increases are found in Wales.

- Across England and Wales the proportion of PCSOs in the operational workforce has remained relatively constant, but also varies by force. Nationally, decreasing numbers of police officers, and increasing numbers of police specials, significantly influence PCSOs' share of the workforce.

[1] Stephens (2013)
[2] Mclean and Hillier (2011)

- Most police forces are maintaining the proportion of PCSOs in their operational workforces, which implies a commitment from many forces to the NP approach even in difficult times. Again, the biggest decreases are found in London and the biggest increases are found in Wales.

- How policing is delivered is influenced by how different forces decide to restructure their operational workforce. Fewer PCSOs signal a move away from certain police functions, such as reassurance and community engagement.

These findings highlight the need to consider the balance of the police operational workforce and its effect on the delivery of local policing. In an era of diminishing police resources, there is growing pressure for the police to protect the reactive duties of response and investigation at the expense of NP delivery, or increasingly using NPTs to carry out more reactive duties.[3]

A possible consequence is that the public start to feel that the police are not as visible or engaged with the community, that they are less able to perform the kind of policing that deals with local problems like anti-social behaviour, and thus less able to meet public expectations and desires. NP allows police forces to resource these symbolically important functions of policing.

According to the Crime Survey of England and Wales, the police have enjoyed rising levels of confidence and visibility by the public since the introduction of PCSOs and NP. However, the most recent survey for 2012/2013 shows that the ratings on these measures are starting to fall or level off. Going by previous evaluations of the effect of PCSOs and the NRPP, this could be related to the weakening of NP and the decrease in PCSO numbers. If these measures of confidence in the police and visibility continue to be seen as indicators of police success, consideration must be given to how effective local policing approaches can be protected in an era of austerity.

[3] HMIC (2014: p36 and p115-118)

Background

Neighbourhood Policing

The Neighbourhood Policing Programme (NPP) was implemented in 2005 as a central policing reform under the last Labour government, which aimed to standardise the approach to local policing through the creation of NPTs[4] in every ward within England and Wales. This policy was influenced by the preceding National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP), which was piloted across eight forces in England and Wales between 2003 and 2005. Both the NPP and NRPP are manifestations of the community policing movement, and emerged during a period in which the falling rates of crime were not matched by people's perceptions of safety; perceptions that crime was rising remained comparatively high.[5] This paradoxical situation was a key driver of policing approaches that sought to enhance public feelings of safety and confidence in the police in order to make neighbourhoods safer and more secure.

NPTs operate in a number of geographically defined areas within Basic Command Units (BCUs; themselves divisions of a police force area), covering every area within England and Wales. They are staffed by a small number of officers and staff in a hierarchical structure, often made up of an Inspector, a Sergeant, one or more Police Constables and PCSOs. NPTs are focused on three central objectives:[6]

1. Visibility
2. Community engagement
3. Problem solving

Visible presence in neighbourhoods, usually through foot patrol, for many years has been very popular with the public,[7] and this is considered to influence people's confidence in the police's ability to provide a desirable and effective service.[8] Having geographically fixed teams with dedicated officers allows the police to resource this symbolically important aspect of policing. It also keeps the same officers and staff within the same area for longer periods of time, which increases the familiarity of the NPT staff. This longer term presence is considered beneficial to engaging with communities and solving problems with consistency and deeper local knowledge.

[4] Also known as Safer Neighbourhood Teams in some areas.
[5] Jansson (2006: p20)
[6] Quinton and Morris (2008)
[7] See Wakefield's (2006) review of the literature on foot patrol.
[8] Dalgleish and Myhill (2004)

The Home Office conducted programme evaluations on both RP and NP during the early stages of piloting and implementation. The research measured the impact of each on a number of outcome measures, including 'crime', 'public confidence' and 'feelings of safety'. There were very positive results for RP on all outcomes[9], and promising results for NP at ward level[10] and later BCU level.[11] There is international evidence that other community policing programmes can also have very positive effects on similar measures.[12] However, in both England and Wales and abroad, it is evident that community policing programmes need time to embed themselves within police organisations, and therefore some evaluations do not show positive effects in the short term.[13]

Police Community Support Officers

PCSOs were created through the Police Reform Act 2002. Their introduction followed the same logic as workforce modernisation in other public services, such as teaching and nursing, as PCSOs represent a cheaper alternative to warranted officers when performing the daily tasks of NP. The relative affordability of this role meant that police forces could provide popular and reassuring visible policing to a greater extent than before.

PCSOs work for the police as civilians; they do not hold the office of constable, and therefore they do not possess the same range of powers as a warranted officer. They do, however, have a number of powers at their disposal[14] to deal with less serious crime and anti-social behaviour, such as powers to confiscate alcohol or issue fixed penalty notices for some low-level offences. They are mostly deployed as members of NPTs, focusing more on visible patrol and community engagement tasks, but they may be used for other roles in certain forces.

The Home Office's national evaluation of PCSOs in 2006 concluded that they were:

- More visible and familiar than police officers;
- Provided greater reassurance;
- More likely to be provided with information by the public due to their perceived accessibility and approachability;
- Good at engaging with young people and dealing with antisocial behaviour;

[9] Tuffin et al. (2006)
[10] Quinton and Morris (2008)
[11] Mason (2009)
[12] Skogan and Hartnett (1997)
[13] See footnotes 10, 11 and 12
[14] For a full list of these powers, see here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/117572/pcso-powers.pdf

- More engaged with communities than police officers; and,
- More diverse in terms of age and ethnicity.

The research also stressed that PCSOs were utilised best when their role was clearly defined, when they worked in a fixed location and when they were accessible to the public.[15]

Additionally, PCSOs' limited powers may be seen as strengths, if being viewed as less authoritative or threatening by certain sections of the public gives them better access to community information.[16] Desirably, they are less constricted by time-consuming response duties, and therefore should have more time to be accessible and familiar to their local community.[17] The relative affordability of PCSOs is also an important consideration for police forces due to the current climate of central funding reductions, the end of the ring-fenced PCSO funding in April 2013, and calls for the maintenance of 'the frontline' in policing.[18]

There is much agreement that PCSOs are best utilised for the purposes of visible patrol, engaging with communities and problem-solving, rather than responding to crimes – sometimes referred to as 'fire-brigade' policing – which would remove them from their core tasks.[19]

NPTs created distinct environments for the work of the majority of PCSOs, whose community-oriented roles, limited powers and relative affordability were expected to be suitable for many of the central tasks associated with NP. As the PCSO role has been central within the current structure and work of NPTs, the number of PCSOs employed by police forces gives an insight into the current state of NP and the implications this has for the future of the approach to local policing. Any change to the number and proportion of PCSOs working in NPTs can be seen to signal a consequent change in the approach to the delivery of NP. If NP becomes a luxury that forces cannot afford, PCSOs lose the structure that has established their role within all police forces in England and Wales.

[15] Cooper et al. (2006)
[16] For example, Clayman and Skinns (2012)
[17] O'Neill (2014)
[18] See HMIC (2011) for more information on 'frontline' policing
[19] Cooper et al. (2006); NPIA (2008); Cosgrove and Ramshaw (2013);

Objectives and Methods

The report follows a thematic structure in order to clearly answer three questions:

1. **What are the trends in the numbers and proportion of police community support officers since 2004?**
2. **How do these trends vary by police force areas?**
3. **What are the implications of these workforce trends for the roles of practitioners and the delivery of neighbourhood policing?**

Workforce data from the Home Office's *Police Service Strength* tables[20] is used as the main data source. This provides the most accurate, biannual workforce numbers for full time operational staff members, such as police officers, PCSOs and Police Specials, as well as other police staff. The data has been collated into a number of spread sheets, including:

- PCSO workforce by police force, 2004-2015
- Specials workforce by police force, 2004-2015
- Police Officer workforce by police force, 2004-2015
- Police Operational workforce by police force, 2004-2015

Each year's data refers to the workforce numbers in March, with the exception of 2013 which refers to both March and September figures, as the latter provides the latest available actual workforce numbers. The data for the years 2014 and 2015 are projections, and therefore represent the staffing intentions or predictions of police forces rather than actual levels for these periods. The three operational roles were chosen due to similarities – their potential to work within NPTs – as well as differences – different roles are used for different tasks and the employment costs are different for each.

Analysis of these data shows the percentage changes between various periods – e.g. change in the number of PCSOs March 2010 to September 2013. The periods were chosen to focus on the workforce changes since the start of central government's funding reductions. The percentage of each operational role as a proportion of the operational

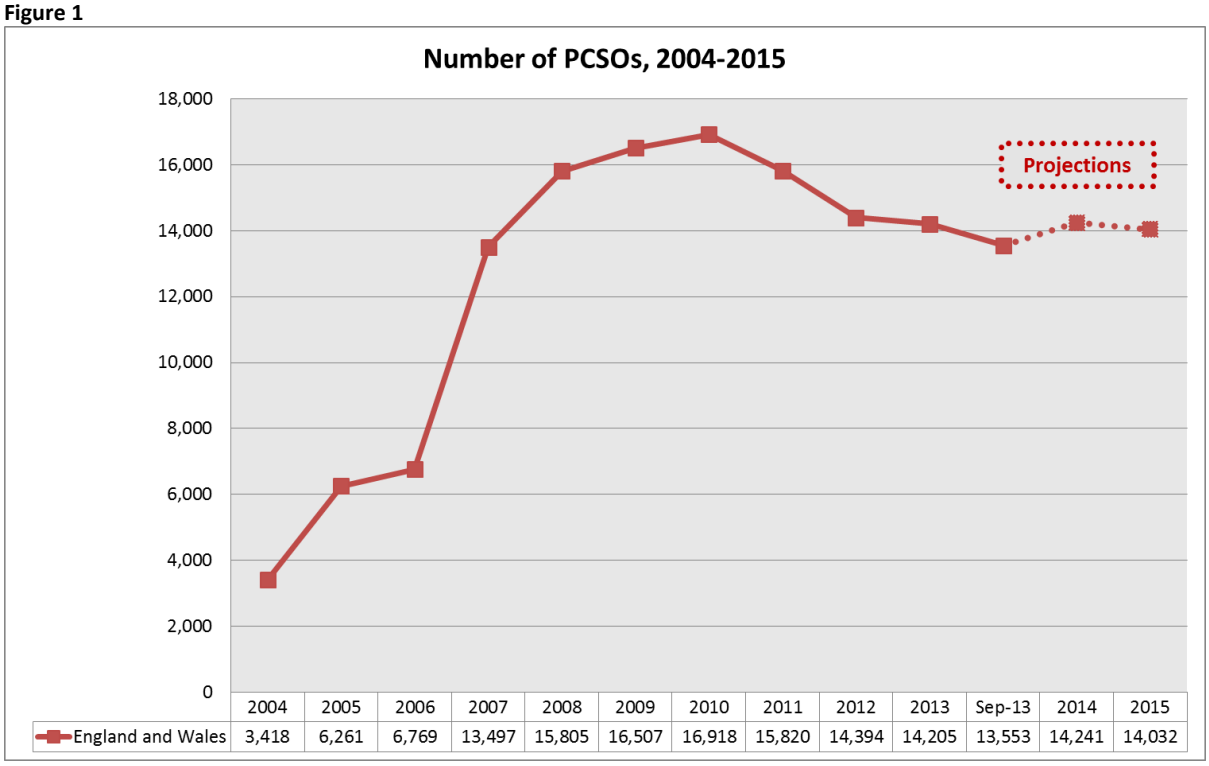
[20] The most recent of these, can be accessed online via the government data website, http://data.gov.uk/dataset/police_service_strength_england_and_wales.

workforce has been calculated in order to contextualise the numerical reductions in each workforce. In other words, though the workforce of one role might, for example, be decreasing, its share of the workforce could be maintained or even increased compared to other roles that are decreasing at higher rates. Looking at these proportions can give an indication of which police functions or approaches are being maintained, prioritised or diminished.

What are the trends in the number and proportion of police community support officers since 2004?

In England and Wales there was an upward trend in the numbers of PCSOs in the police workforce until 2010, when the workforce begins to reduce. The two steepest jumps in the periods of 2004-2005 and 2006-2007 represent the Reassurance and Neighbourhood Policing piloting stages respectively, when police forces had access to ring-fenced Home Office funding. This ring-fenced funding had to be used to employ PCSOs as part of the Home Office's National Policing Plan in 2002 and the full roll-out of NPP by 2008, and expired in April 2013.

Figure 1



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
England and Wales	3,418	6,261	6,769	13,497	15,805	16,507	16,918	15,820	14,394	14,205	13,553	14,241	14,032

The PCSO workforce began to decrease from 2010, coinciding with the change in government and the Home Office targets to reduce central funding to police forces by 20%, but started to level off with a much smaller reduction in the period of 2012-2013. This has taken the PCSO workforce in England and Wales below the levels of 2008, the first year of NP after the piloting stage (2005-2008). The projections for the years 2014 and 2015 show only slight fluctuations in each year and an overall reduction across the whole period of 2013-2015. However, the projected figures should be used with caution as they are subject to changes – i.e. they show intentions rather than certainty. This uncertainty is illustrated by **Table 1**.

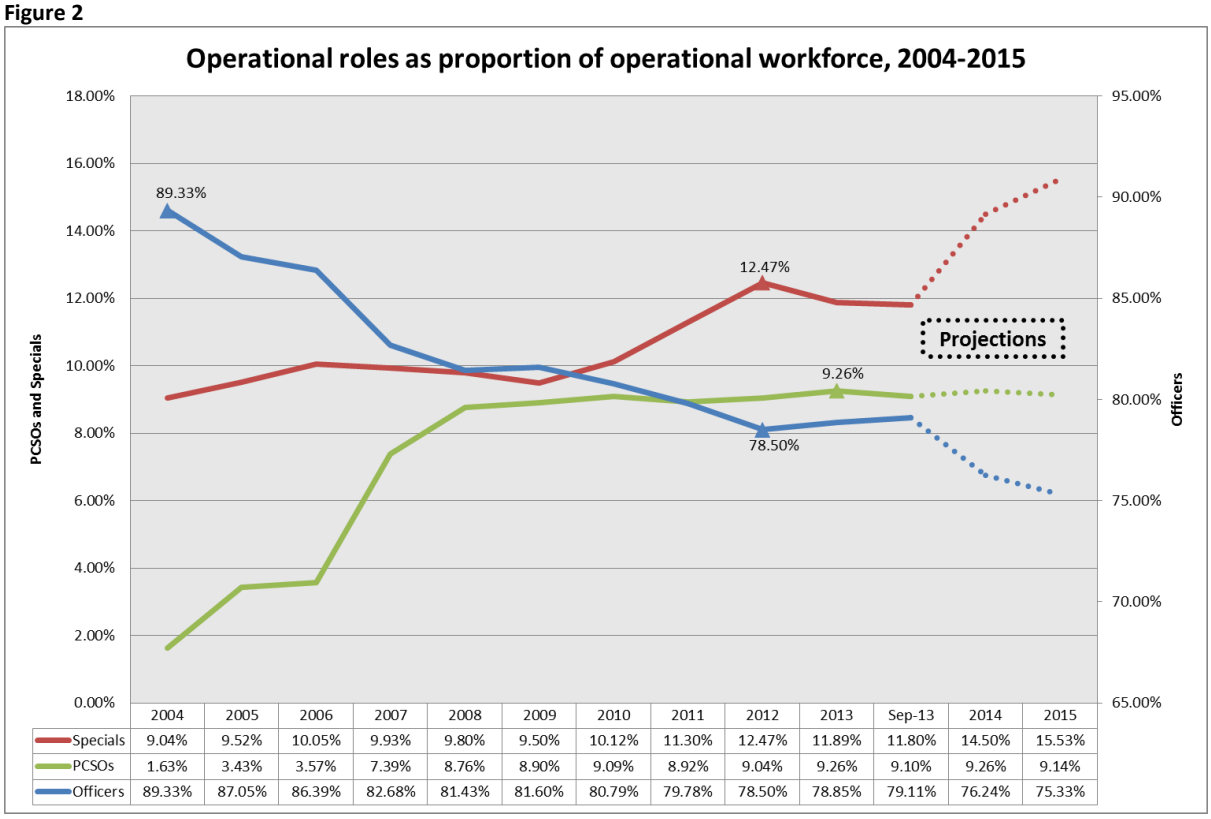
Table 1: Number of PCSOs, 2013-2015

	March 2013	September 2013	March 2014 (projected)	March 2015 (projected)
PCSOs, England and Wales	14,205	13,553	14,241	14,032

This table shows that regardless of the previous intentions of all 43 police forces – what the projected figures portray – situations can and do change, whether because of the challenges of retaining or employing staff, or a change in strategic workforce planning. The workforce figure for September 2013 suggests that, by 2015, the number of PCSOs in England and Wales could fall well below the projected figure of 14,032. The September 2013 figure represents the lowest PCSO workforce since before 2008 – the first year that each and every ward in England and Wales was to have its own NPT – falling close to the 2007 workforce level, with just 56 more PCSOs now than in 2007.

Between March 2010 and September 2013, the average reduction in PCSOs across all forces in England and Wales was 19.9%. This is very close to the 20% reduction in central funding, and seems to show that the PCSO workforce is falling in line with funding reductions – in other words, this operational, or 'frontline', role is not being shielded from the effects of fiscal reforms. However, although PCSO numbers are falling, in the operational workforce the proportion of PCSOs in England and Wales is relatively stable – 9.1% as of

Figure 2



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
Specials	9.04%	9.52%	10.05%	9.93%	9.80%	9.50%	10.12%	11.30%	12.47%	11.89%	11.80%	14.50%	15.53%
PCSOs	1.63%	3.43%	3.57%	7.39%	8.76%	8.90%	9.09%	8.92%	9.04%	9.26%	9.10%	9.26%	9.14%
Officers	89.33%	87.05%	86.39%	82.68%	81.43%	81.60%	80.79%	79.78%	78.50%	78.85%	79.11%	76.24%	75.33%

September 2013, representing a 0% change since 2010. This is due to changes in the other operational roles, with a loss of over 15,384 police officers and a gain of 2,563 police specials during the same period.

Whilst the figures for England and Wales show the general trend, we start to see big differences in the PCSO workforce trends by looking to the regional level. **Table 2** shows in league table format the percentage change of the PCSO workforce by region for three different periods:

Table 2

Regions[21] league table - PCSO workforce change					
2010-2013		**2010-Sep 2013**		**2010-2015 (projected)**	
Wales	49.0%	Wales	57.2%	Wales	61.9%
East Midlands	-1.2%	East Midlands	-2.2%	East Midlands	5.3%
South West	-2.9%	South West	-5.9%	South East	-3.4%
Yorkshire and Humber	-6.9%	South East	-6.2%	Yorkshire and Humber	-3.9%
South East	-7.9%	Yorkshire and Humber	-9.2%	South West	-7.8%
North East	-10.4%	West Midlands	-17.3%	West Midlands	-14.3%
North West	-12.7%	North West	-16.1%	North West	-8.3%
West Midlands	-14.4%	East of England	-18.1%	North East	-9.1%
East of England	-15.4%	North East	-30.4%	East of England	-10.8%
London	-42.0%	London	-49.3%	London	-54.2%

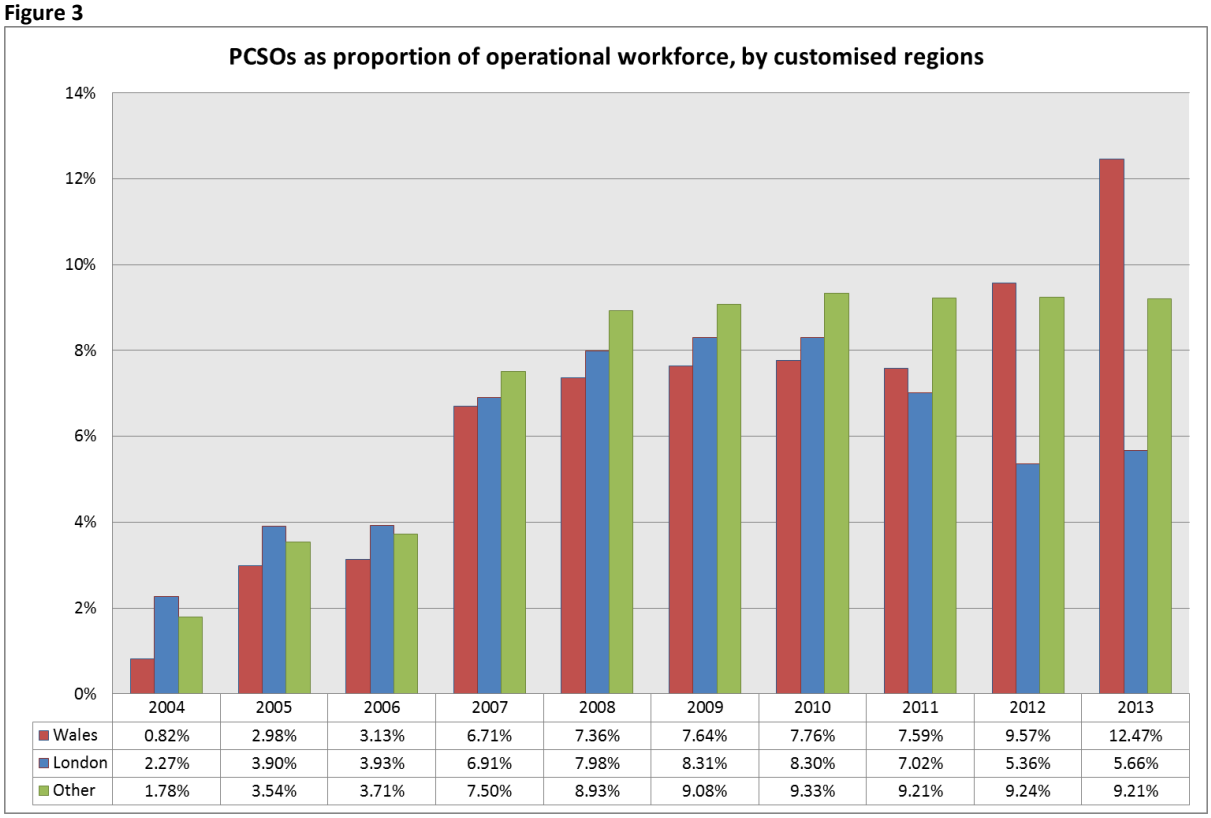
Between March 2010 and September 2013, the London PCSO workforce had been reduced by 49.3%, almost 30% larger than the average change (-19.9%) for England and Wales in the same period. Occupying the opposite end of the table to London, Wales shows even more exceptional changes when compared to English regions, with a 57.2% increase registered and further growth in the PCSO workforce expected by 2015. These changes represents new directions for both London and Wales.

From 2004 to 2011, London and Wales saw similar trends in the proportion of PCSOs in the operational workforce, whilst London year-on-year had a higher proportion of PCSOs in their operational workforce than Wales until 2010. This changed in 2011 with London's first notable decrease in the proportion of PCSOs since the creation of the role: PCSOs went from making up 8.3% of the operational workforce in 2010, to 7% in 2011, and then to 4% by September 2013 (see **Figure 3**). This means that not only were PCSO numbers being considerably reduced in London, they were coming to have proportionately less of a presence within the operational workforce, making up less of the workforce than they did in

[21] 'Regions' are based on the geographical boundaries used in the Home Office data. See appendix 3 for the corresponding forces to each region.

2007. In Wales from 2012, the trend was contrary, with PCSOs making up 9.6% of the workforce that year, increasing to 12.9% in September 2013.

Figure 3



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Wales	0.82%	2.98%	3.13%	6.71%	7.36%	7.64%	7.76%	7.59%	9.57%	12.47%
London	2.27%	3.90%	3.93%	6.91%	7.98%	8.31%	8.30%	7.02%	5.36%	5.66%
Other	1.78%	3.54%	3.71%	7.50%	8.93%	9.08%	9.33%	9.21%	9.24%	9.21%

The other regions of England have all seen reductions so far to a lesser extent than London but with varying degrees of change between them. South West and South East regions show changes between March and September 2013 that suggest they are currently on course to meet their projected targets. The opposite is the case for all other English regions, with the North East figures receding most from its 2015 projection, showing a larger reduction than the -19.9% average and representing a decrease of 162 PCSOs[22] between March and September 2013. The only English region to increase the number of PCSOs in this semi-annual period was the South East, jumping from 1,689 to 1,721 PCSOs. Nevertheless, the proportions for the English regions remained largely stable (see 'Other' in **Figure 3**), especially when compared to London and Wales.

[22] This figure may be distorted by the re-grading of PCSOs to police staff in the Northumbria region. The number of such cases is not provided by the Home Office data. Without further information on the numbers re-graded or reasons for it, this report will represent the effect of the re-grading as a reduction in PCSOs.

Key Findings

- Nationally, PCSO numbers increased alongside the establishment of new local policing approaches between 2004 and 2010.
- PCSO numbers started to decline in 2010 after central funding reductions. There are now more than 3000 fewer PCSOs compared to 2010.
- The proportion of PCSOs has remained stable in most regions, but has sharply increased in Wales and sharply decreased in London.

How do these trends vary by police force areas?

The data for police force areas provide the most accurate representation of PCSO workforce trends. As individual forces have ultimate control over their own staffing levels, analysing the trends at this level helps to uncover the contexts behind workforce restructuring. It also allows further interrogation of the regional data by breaking down each region into its component parts to test for divergent responses within these areas.

The data show that trends in the PCSO workforce between 2004 and 2010 are relatively consistent across the police forces in England and Wales. Centralised police reforms and access to the Neighbourhood Policing Fund coincided with the biggest increases in the PCSO workforce. Since 2010, however, there have been a number of differences in the change in PCSO numbers and proportion across forces. The vast majority have reduced their PCSO workforce, and this is reflected in the overall trend for England and Wales, but there are three broad, distinctive trends that can be identified. These are discussed below.

Proportionate reductions

The majority of English police forces have experienced reductions in their PCSO workforces below the average change in England and Wales (-20%). As the reduction to the central police funding is also 20% in real terms and police forces have been urged to protect the 'frontline', those forces that have experienced a PCSO change between -1% and -20% can be considered to have implemented workforce changes roughly commensurate with these new financial pressures.

Table 3 shows that within the forces falling into this bracket there is considerable variance in the PCSO reductions experienced. To further illustrate these differences, in the West Midlands 155 PCSOs were lost between March 2010 and September 2013, whilst Sussex and Suffolk each only lost 6.

This group can also be said to have experienced *proportionate* reductions, as the proportion of PCSOs in the operational workforces in each of these forces was not excessively altered – the changes to this measure registered between +0.8% and -0.8%. Although there is variation between these forces in terms of changes in PCSO numbers, the amount of fluctuation in PCSO proportions is less defined. For example, the proportion of PCSOs in Cleveland increased by 0.4% even as they lost 35 PCSOs over the same period.

Table 3

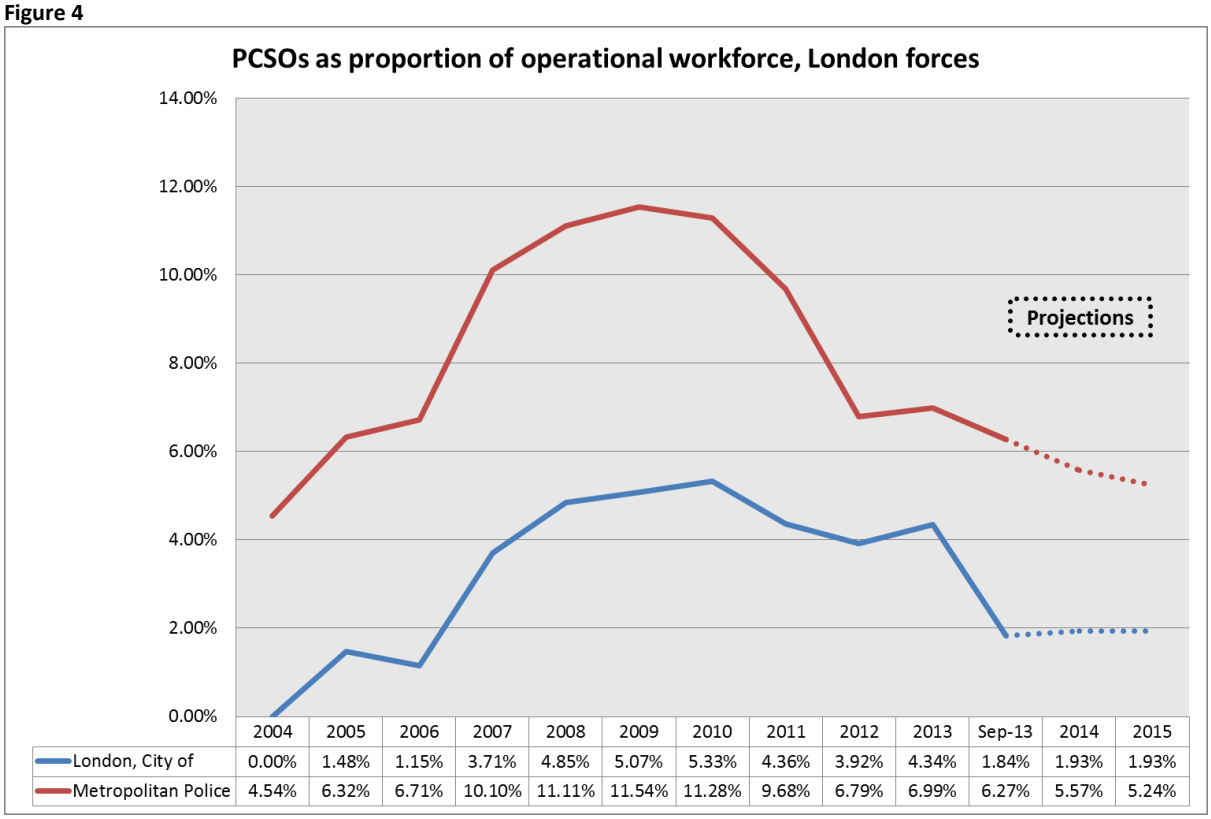
Forces with smaller reductions (<-20%), 2010-Sep 2013			
West Midlands	-19.1%	Bedfordshire	-11.3%
Dorset	-18.8%	Surrey	-11.3%
Cleveland	-18.3%	Durham	-10.3%
Avon & Somerset	-17.6%	Humberside	-8.6%
Lancashire	-17.4%	Norfolk	-8.4%
Gloucestershire	-17.1%	Greater Manchester	-6.5%
Cheshire	-14.9%	Derbyshire	-4.7%
Kent	-14.1%	Lincolnshire	-4.5%
West Mercia	-14.1%	Suffolk	-3.6%
West Yorkshire	-12.7%	Hampshire	-3.3%
North Yorkshire	-12.2%	Thames Valley	-3.2%
Staffordshire	-11.8%	Sussex	-1.6%

Disproportionate reductions

Certain forces have reduced their PCSO workforces by more than would be expected, using the central funding reductions as a benchmark for proportional decreases to operational staff.

Starting in the capital, both police forces in the London area had large proportional decreases to their PCSO workforce between March 2010 and September 2013. City of

Figure 4



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
London, City of	0.00%	1.48%	1.15%	3.71%	4.85%	5.07%	5.33%	4.36%	3.92%	4.34%	1.84%	1.93%	1.93%
Metropolitan Police	4.54%	6.32%	6.71%	10.10%	11.11%	11.54%	11.28%	9.68%	6.79%	6.99%	6.27%	5.57%	5.24%

London reduced their PCSOs by -70.5% – the largest percentage decrease in the country. The Metropolitan Police force had the largest decrease after City of London at -49.1%, or 2280 PCSOs – making it the largest reduction in the number of PCSOs. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) outlined plans for a new approach to local policing in the Metropolitan police force area in its police and crime plan (MOPAC 2013), in which the boundaries and staffing levels of NPTs were to be changed. This is likely to be connected to the fall in PCSO numbers within this area at that time.

Exceptional approaches in the City of London Police are not on the whole surprising, as this is the smallest policing area in England and Wales and has unique characteristics. The Metropolitan Police is also an exceptional force by many measures – such as the size of its workforce, the population and population density of its policing area – but with a higher proportion of its policing area being residential, the PCSO role within NP is possibly more suited to this force area than the City of London. These differences in priorities are reflected in the amount of PCSOs as a proportion of each force's operational workforce (see **Figure 4**).

London forces were not the only ones to see large reductions in their PCSO workforce. The other forces that saw reductions larger than 20% are detailed in **Table 4**.

Table 4

Forces with biggest reductions (>-20%), 2010-September 2013		
Region	**Mar 2010-Sep 2013**	
London	London, City of	-70.5%
London	Metropolitan	-49.1%
North East	Northumbria*	-43.8%
North West	Merseyside	-31.3%
Eastern	Essex	-28.5%
North West	Cumbria	-22.8%
West Midlands	Warwickshire	-22.5%
Eastern	Hertfordshire	-21.0%
Eastern	Cambridgeshire	-21.0%
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	-20.6%

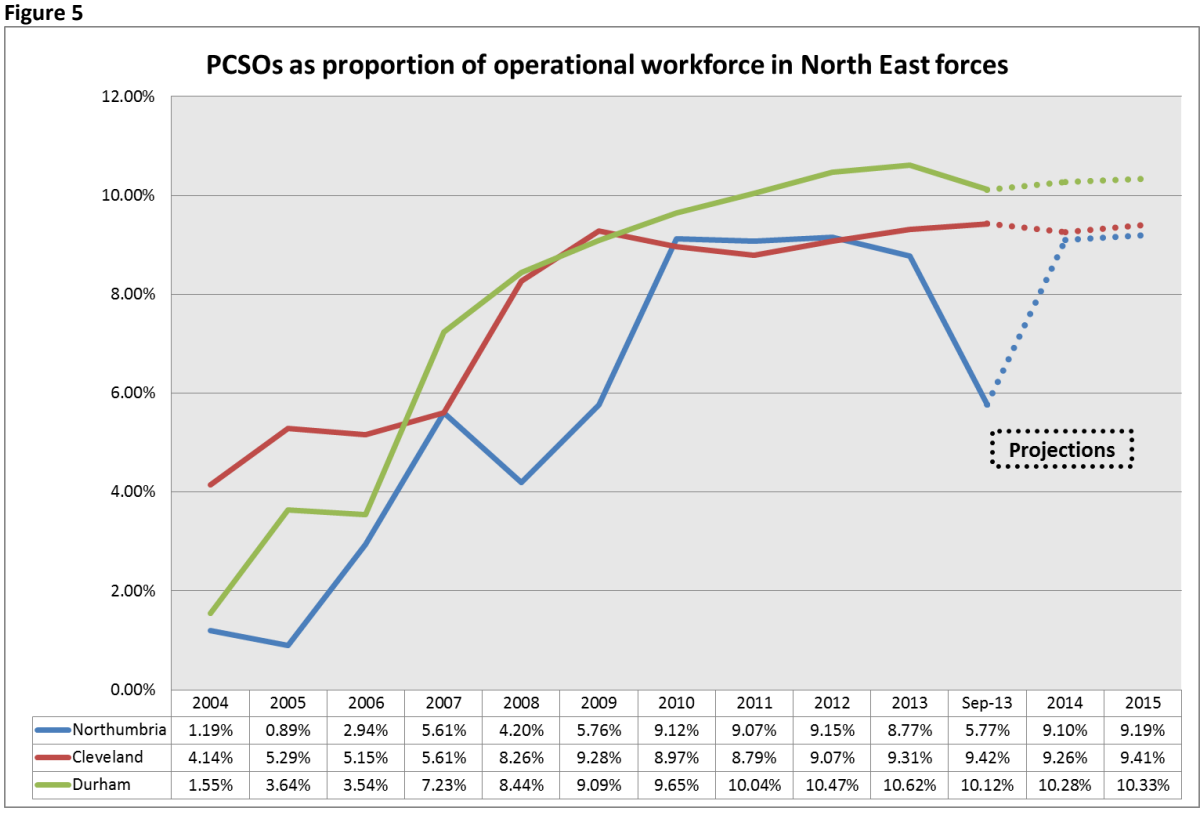
* Some of this change due to re-grading of PCSOs

Northumbria registered the next largest decrease in this period after the London forces, though as noted, this figure may obscure the real change due to the re-grading of PCSOs in this force. Using the period of March 2010 to March 2013, the change in Northumbria was less severe, at -10.6%. The other North East forces also saw reductions using the September 2013 measure: -18.3% in Cleveland; -10.3% in Durham. The proportion of PCSOs in the operational workforce has been maintained at a relatively steady level in

Cleveland and Durham, but Northumbria now has a much smaller proportional presence of PCSOs – 5.8% – as compared to the previous three years. This is also the second lowest proportion in England and Wales; only City of London has a lower level at 1.9%.

All forces in the North West region have seen reductions in the 2010 to September 2013 period, but two forces have seen reductions higher than 20%; a -31.3% change in Merseyside and -22.8% in Cumbria, meaning a respective loss of 147 and 25 PCSOs for each force. Both of these reductions mean that the forces now have fewer PCSOs than expected, going by their projected figures for March 2014. Cumbria, however, has increased its PCSO workforce since March 2013, suggesting that it could be on track for its 2014 and 2015 projections.

Figure 5



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
Northumbria	1.19%	0.89%	2.94%	5.61%	4.20%	5.76%	9.12%	9.07%	9.15%	8.77%	5.77%	9.10%	9.19%
Cleveland	4.14%	5.29%	5.15%	5.61%	8.26%	9.28%	8.97%	8.79%	9.07%	9.31%	9.42%	9.26%	9.41%
Durham	1.55%	3.64%	3.54%	7.23%	8.44%	9.09%	9.65%	10.04%	10.47%	10.62%	10.12%	10.28%	10.33%

In the Eastern region there are three forces with reductions larger than 20%; a -28.5% change in Essex and -21% in both Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Essex Police had projected a loss of 83 PCSOs (-18.6%) between 2010 and 2015, but have now registered an actual loss of 127.

Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire have also lost more PCSOs now than projected for 2015. There is now a smaller proportion of PCSOs in the operational workforce in Essex (7.9%) and Hertfordshire (8%) than the England and Wales average (9.1%), the English average (8.7%) and the Eastern region average (9.2%), and both forces have fewer PCSOs than they did before 2007 – the year before NP was fully rolled out.

Other large decreases are found in Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Police, two smaller forces that cover non-metropolitan counties. Warwickshire's PCSO workforce has decreased by 31 PCSOs (-22.5%) since 2010, but the force has projected further reductions by 2015 (73). Currently PCSOs make up 9% of the operational workforce, but by 2015 this could change to 6%, the third lowest figure for this measure. Northamptonshire now has 34 fewer PCSOs (20.6%) than in 2010, and similarly expects to further reduce the PCSO workforce to 112 by 2015. This means that PCSOs make up 7.8% of the operational workforce now, and potentially 6.1% in 2015.

Disproportionate increases

There are a number of forces that have maintained or even increased their PCSO workforces. **Table 5** shows the forces with increases:

Table 5

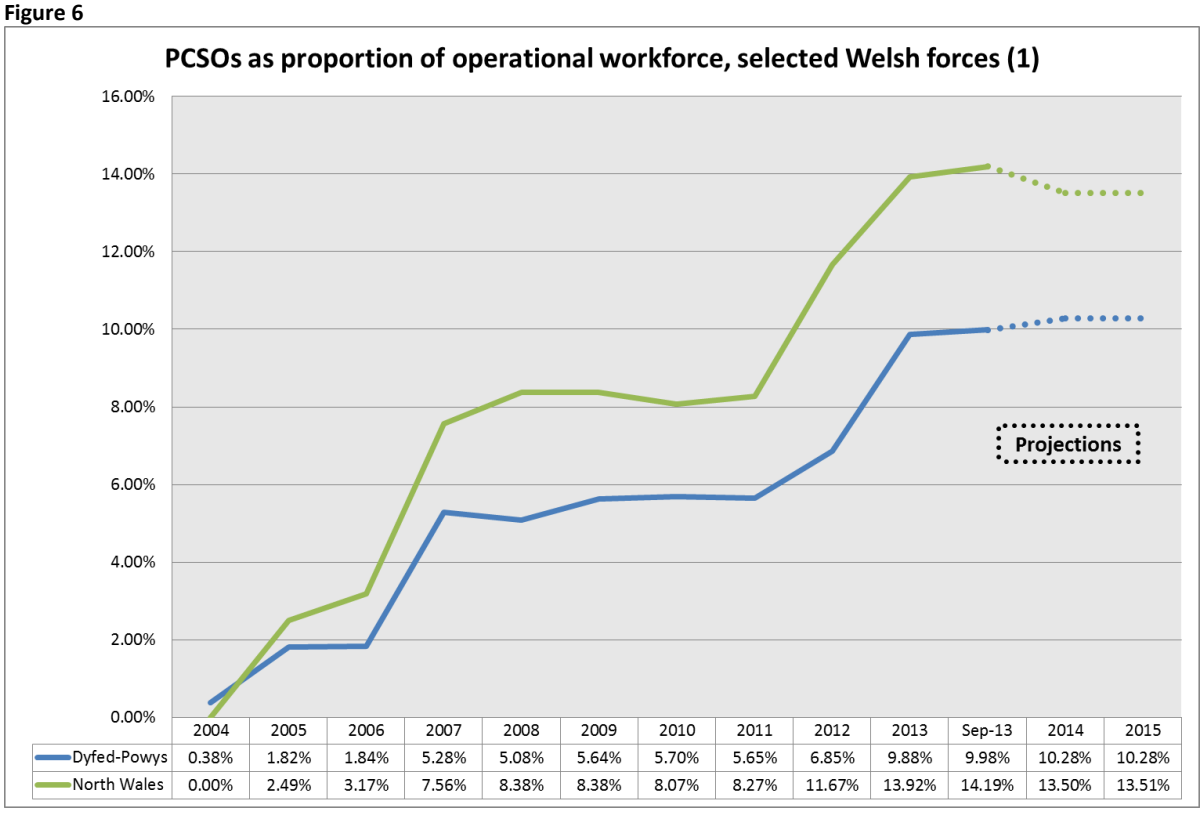
Forces with increases			
2010-Sep 2013		**2010-2015 (projected)**	
Dyfed-Powys	72.5%	Dyfed-Powys	79.4%
North Wales	70%	Gwent	72.0%
South Wales	50.9%	North Wales	66.8%
Gwent	49.3%	South Wales	51.0%
Devon & Cornwall	16.2%	Nottinghamshire	40.1%
Nottinghamshire	8.9%	Wiltshire	8.4%
Leicestershire	1.3%	Derbyshire	0.1%
Wiltshire	0.5%	Lincolnshire	0.1%
South Yorkshire	-0.1%	South Yorkshire	0.1%

It is clear that all Welsh forces have had the largest increases, making the changes to the PCSO workforce consistent within this region. The reason behind this is easily explained; the Welsh Labour government has funded 500 PCSO positions to be created between 2011 and 2015. In September 2013, Wales had 410 more PCSOs than it did in 2010, with the highest numerical gain in South Wales (+171) and the highest proportional gain in Dyfed-Powys (+72.5%). By 2015, Welsh forces expect to employ another 34 PCSOs.

This rise has contributed to higher proportions of PCSOs in the Welsh operational workforce between 2011 and 2013 (see **Figures 6 and 7**). The proportion in South Wales, for example, remained between 8% and 9% between 2007 and 2012, but as of September 2013 the figure stands at 14.9% - the largest operational workforce share in England and Wales. From 2008 to 2011, South Wales, North Wales and Gwent all had PCSO making up around 8% of their workforces, whilst Dyfed Powys had a proportion between 5 and 5.6% in the same

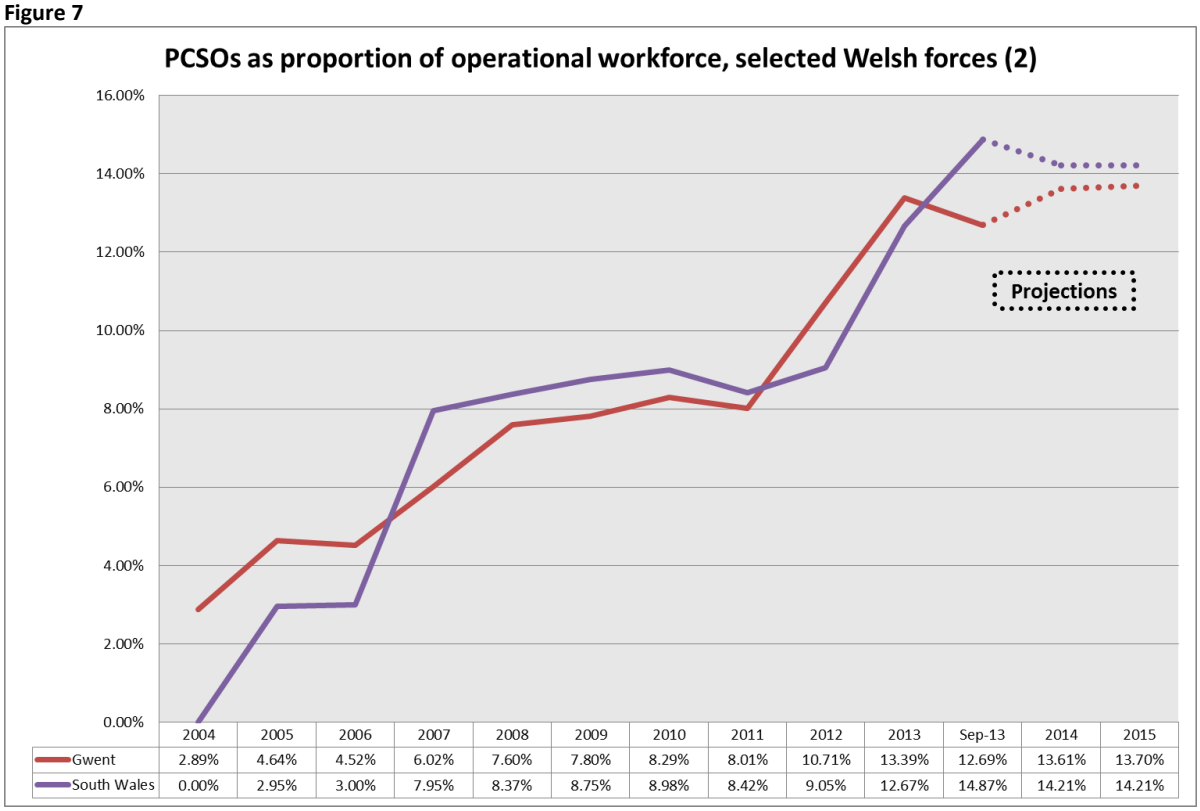
period. The significant increase in PCSOs since 2011 means that the Welsh police forces now work with very different workforce compositions.

Figure 6



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
Dyfed-Powys	0.38%	1.82%	1.84%	5.28%	5.08%	5.64%	5.70%	5.65%	6.85%	9.88%	9.98%	10.28%	10.28%
North Wales	0.00%	2.49%	3.17%	7.56%	8.38%	8.38%	8.07%	8.27%	11.67%	13.92%	14.19%	13.50%	13.51%

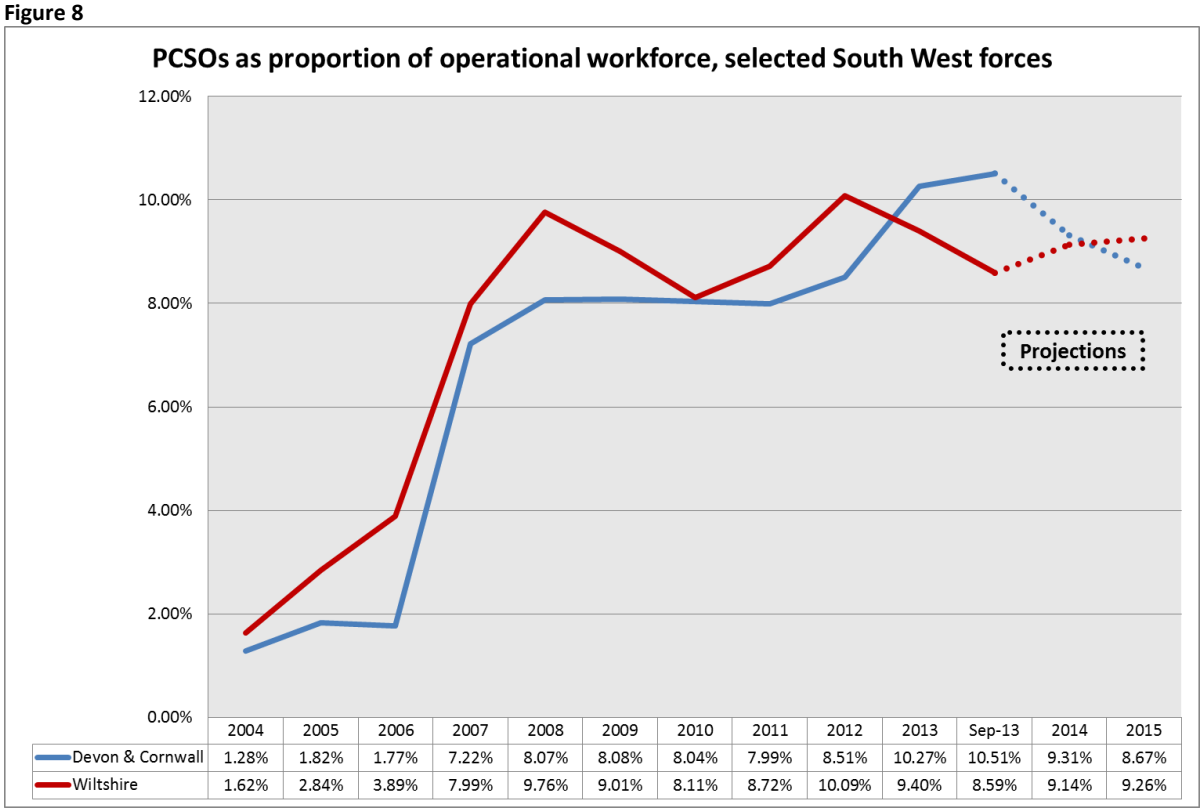
Figure 7



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
Gwent	2.89%	4.64%	4.52%	6.02%	7.60%	7.80%	8.29%	8.01%	10.71%	13.39%	12.69%	13.61%	13.70%
South Wales	0.00%	2.95%	3.00%	7.95%	8.37%	8.75%	8.98%	8.42%	9.05%	12.67%	14.87%	14.21%	14.21%

No other area has experienced the consistent increases across forces as seen in Wales, but there are some other notable increases. The South West region includes forces that have reduced their PCSO workforces by up to 18.8% (Dorset) since 2010, but Devon and Cornwall have added 59 more PCSOs (+16.2%) in the same period. The rise in Devon and

Figure 8



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
Devon & Cornwall	1.28%	1.82%	1.77%	7.22%	8.07%	8.08%	8.04%	7.99%	8.51%	10.27%	10.51%	9.31%	8.67%
Wiltshire	1.62%	2.84%	3.89%	7.99%	9.76%	9.01%	8.11%	8.72%	10.09%	9.40%	8.59%	9.14%	9.26%

Cornwall seems unexpected as the actual workforce trend is in opposition to the projected change between 2010 and 2015 (-0.8%). However, it appears that the trend could change again after a review of the PCSO role in Devon and Cornwall by the PCC.[23] Though Wiltshire police have registered a slight increase in their PCSO workforce (+0.5%), the workforce trend is moving away from the 2015 projection of an 8.4% increase. Nottinghamshire Police has increased its PCSO workforce by 24 (+8.9%) since 2010. The Nottinghamshire PCC pledged to employ 100 more PCSOs and to campaign against central funding reductions in his Police and Crime Plan, and the Home Office data shows a projected increase of 40.1% (+108) by 2015 in the force. If the force is to achieve these numbers, there is some way to go – 84 more PCSOs would be needed in the next year and a half. Regardless of the potential to fall short of the 2015 projections, Nottinghamshire has increased the share of PCSOs in its operational workforce from 9% in March 2010 to 10.5%

[23] Western Morning News (2014)

in September 2013, currently above the England and Wales average (9.1%) and East Midlands regional average (9%).

Summary of findings

Overall, there has been a variety of approaches to workforce restructuring in police forces since 2010. Although the large majority of police forces has reduced PCSO numbers, there are a number of forces that have maintained or increased their PCSO workforce strength. The change in PCSO numbers at the police force level ranges from -70.5% to +72.5%.

The London and Welsh police forces have pursued markedly different approaches, occupying opposite ends of a spectrum of workforce change. The changes in London are exemplified by the Metropolitan Police purposefully reassessing their local policing structures and workforces,[24] whilst in Wales all forces have received a Welsh Government grant for employing additional PCSOs. Although there are differences between the remaining English forces, these are less severe; whilst PCSOs are generally being reduced, their proportions are being largely maintained.

Key Findings

- There is a spectrum of responses to the challenges of funding reductions.
- Both London forces have reduced the numbers and proportion of their PCSO workforces to a greater extent than all other forces.
- All four Welsh forces have increased the numbers and proportion of their PCSO workforces to a greater extent than any force in England.
- The differences between most police forces in England are less pronounced – they have largely maintained the proportion of PCSOs in their operational workforces.

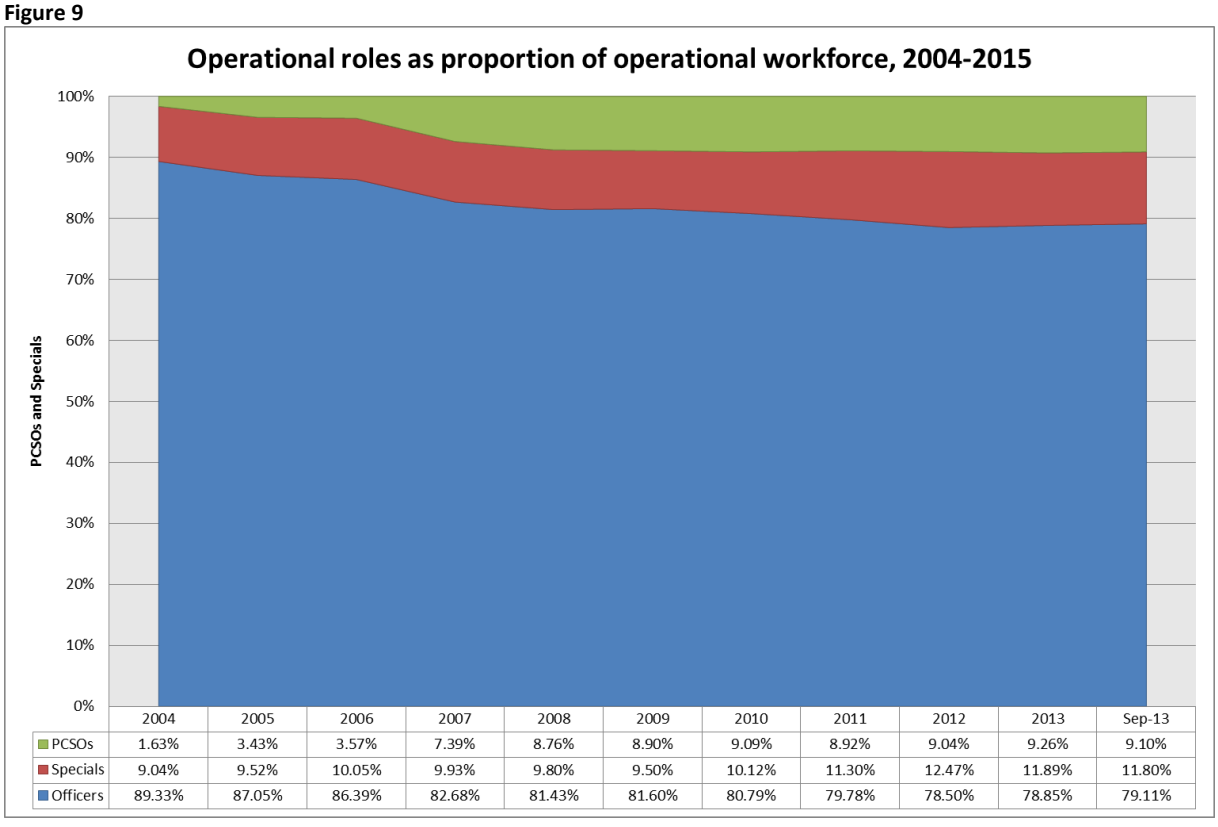
[24] MOPAC (2013)

What are the implications of these workforce trends to the roles of practitioners and the delivery of neighbourhood policing?

The vast majority of police forces have reduced the number of PCSOs in their workforces, and reductions in frontline staff are likely to have consequences for the way NP is delivered. NP has been weakened in England and Wales, but there are important distinctions between the ways that many police forces have adjusted their operational workforces.

Whilst officer numbers have also fallen in England and Wales, the number of specials has risen since 2010 with most forces taking on more of these volunteers. This has led to a change in the composition of the police operational workforce (see **Figure 9**). Officers still make up the largest portion, but the ratio has changed throughout the last ten years. As each of these different operational roles have specific characteristics, changing ratios within the workforce have implications for the delivery of NP. For example, PCSOs have a smaller range of duties and powers than officers and specials potentially do, and specials may not be used in specialist teams or roles to the same extent as officers.

Figure 9



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13
PCSOs	1.63%	3.43%	3.57%	7.39%	8.76%	8.90%	9.09%	8.92%	9.04%	9.26%	9.10%
Specials	9.04%	9.52%	10.05%	9.93%	9.80%	9.50%	10.12%	11.30%	12.47%	11.89%	11.80%
Officers	89.33%	87.05%	86.39%	82.68%	81.43%	81.60%	80.79%	79.78%	78.50%	78.85%	79.11%

Historical context

Considering the recent history of police reforms is vital to understand the implications for policing and workforce change in the current climate. Most importantly, the reassurance

policing approach was established to address the social distance between the police and the public that had arguably widened over the past few decades.[25] It was a response to the pitfalls of popular policing approaches in the 1990s – "zero tolerance policing" and "intelligence-led policing". These approaches were effective in reducing certain crimes, but did not make people feel safe and were considered to be punitive and intrusive by some.[26] The approaches focused heavily on the crime management of crime control functions of the police[27]– the direct prevention and detection of crime by the police.

By contrast, RP was intended to address public insecurities and assure local people that the police were providing the service they wanted. Through this reassurance, it was hoped that communities would become stronger and cooperate more with the police to help reduce crime.[28] In this way, the approach was considered to complement the crime control functions of the police with a stronger focus on the "neighbourhood security" functions[29] – reassurance, community engagement and community crime prevention. These functions can and do exist alongside the crime management functions, but they are often not considered central to the police mission by many police officers.[30] Therefore, teams and staff dedicated to these functions should help police forces to focus resources on public feelings of safety, readjusting the composition of the police role in society.

Due to the funding reductions made to the police contribution, there have been recent calls to change the way policing is delivered in order to make it more efficient.[31] As NP is resource-intensive, the current approach has been earmarked for significant changes, with a greater focus on the direct preventative work of the police.[32] These calls for reform signal a potential adjustment to police functions, away from neighbourhood security and towards crime management.

Against this historical context, changes to the operational workforce and NPTs can be viewed as signals of a reprioritisation of police functions. A large reduction in the amount and proportion of PCSOs, whose roles are the embodiment of the NP approach, is likely to lead to a restructuring of NPTs in terms of staffing levels or even geographical boundaries – e.g. NPTs covering larger areas than before. This then has the potential to reduce the focus on

[25] Innes (2004)
[26] Greene (1999)
[27] Innes (2004)
[28] The connection between strong neighbourhoods the prevention of crime is a feature of many influential policing theories – e.g. Wilson and Kelling's 'Broken Windows' (1982) and Sampson et al's 'Collective Efficacy' (1997)
[29] Innes (2004)
[30] Reiner (2010); Skogan (2008)
[31] For example, Fraser et al. (2014) and Greenhalgh and Gibbs (2014)
[32] Greenhalgh and Gibbs (2014)

the neighbourhood security functions of the given police force, and proportionally increases the resource allocation for crime management functions. The opposite can be said for forces that increase the amount and proportion of their PCSO workforces, where a strengthening of NPTs occurs and neighbourhood security functions are given a higher prioritisation.

Typology of Reforms

Three types of approaches to operational workforce reform are now suggested as a way of highlighting the different consequences for local policing delivery.[33] Due to the significant variation across the 43 police forces revealed by this research, it is difficult to envision the likely implications of these workforce changes for the whole of England and Wales. Nevertheless, there are certain assumptions we can make, based on the aforementioned historical contexts that indicate that different approaches to workforce restructuring subsequently influence policing styles and the prioritisation of policing functions.

1. Weakened NP

This label describes the situation where police forces have experienced high reductions in their PCSO workforce as well as a reduction to the proportion of PCSOs in the operational workforce. In the forces that have experienced such changes, there tends to be a relatively low proportion of PCSOs and a high proportion of officers.

With these changes, there is likely to be a move away from the functions associated more strongly with NP – such as visibility, reassurance and community engagement – due to fewer PCSOs and potentially fewer dedicated staffing resources for each NPT. The potential weakening of NP structures indicates that more focus may be placed on crime management functions, such as incident response and investigation.

10 forces make up the "Weakened NP" category, including both London forces:

London, City of
Metropolitan Police
Northumbria
Merseyside
Essex
Cumbria
Warwickshire
Hertfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire

[33] See **Table 6** on page 39 and **Table 7** on page 40 for further details of the characteristics for these different types.

2. Proportionally maintained NP

The forces in this category have generally experienced reductions to their PCSO workforces, but the proportion of PCSOs remains stable, changing by less than 1% in either positive or negative directions. The proportion of PCSOs in these forces tends to be mid-range, relative to forces with the highest and lowest proportions.

The consequences for this category are less clear, as the forces within it registered PCSO workforce changes between +1% and -20%. Some forces have the ability to maintain staffing levels in NPTs, whereas those at the other end of the scale may have to adapt their NPT structures, such as enlarging the boundaries of local policing areas and reducing the number of teams, or reducing staffing levels. However, as PCSOs are being maintained in proportional terms, there is an implied support for the policing functions associated with the NP approach, and there may not be as much change to the prioritisation of policing functions.

27 forces are included in this category, making it the largest of all three:

West Midlands	Durham
Dorset	Humberside
Cleveland	Norfolk
Avon & Somerset	Greater Manchester
Lancashire	Derbyshire
Gloucestershire	Lincolnshire
Cheshire	Suffolk
Kent	Hampshire
West Mercia	Thames Valley
West Yorkshire	Sussex
North Yorkshire	South Yorkshire
Staffordshire	Wiltshire
Bedfordshire	Leicestershire
Surrey	

The majority of included forces have reduced their PCSO workforce but maintained the proportion, whereas 3 forces – Leicestershire, South Yorkshire and Wiltshire – have maintained or increased the number of PCSOs. Apart from this division within the category, the proportion of PCSOs in each of these forces remains similar to its 2010 level.

3. Strengthened NP

This label refers to forces that have increased their PCSO workforce and have experienced an increase in the proportion of PCSOs by at least 1% for each measure. These forces tend to have a higher proportion of PCSOs and a lower proportion of police officers. However, the reductions in police officer numbers are not especially high within this group.

In these forces NPTs remain well staffed, and potentially have a higher proportion of dedicated PCSOs within them. Where PCSOs are increased in both proportion and number, this suggests a strengthening of NP structures and thus a prioritisation of neighbourhood policing functions. In cases where the proportion of PCSOs has risen extensively and the proportion of police officers has fallen, there is the potential for the crime management functions to be given relatively less prominence.

Currently there are 6 forces that fall under this label, including every force in Wales:

Nottinghamshire
Devon & Cornwall
Gwent
South Wales
North Wales
Dyfed-Powys

It is important to note that the categories describe directions of reforms, but not necessarily the current qualities and capabilities of the forces that fall under each label. For instance, the characteristics of a force like London's Metropolitan Police Service may be incomparable to other police forces in terms of their funding levels and staffing per NPT. Although this force has experienced the largest fall in PCSO numbers, it retains a large number of officers and PCSOs per NPT. The high number of officers also affects the PCSO proportion figure. Conversely, this force also has the unique demands of a large, global city that can affect the number of officers available to NP duties. Regardless of these factors, workforce changes that affect NP can still be seen as a signal of reprioritising approaches and functions, and the implications of these changes should be considered carefully in the future.

Key Findings

- Changes to a police force's operational workforce can signal a current or future reprioritisation of police functions.

- Decreases in the number and proportion of PCSOs leads to weakened neighbourhood policing and a potential prioritisation of 'crime management' functions. 10 forces fall into this category.

- Increases in the number and proportion of PCSOs leads to strengthened neighbourhood policing and a potential prioritisation of 'neighbourhood security' functions. 6 forces fall into this category.

- 27 forces have maintained the proportion of PCSOs in their operational workforce. The consequences for the delivery of neighbourhood policing in these forces may be varied.

Conclusions

The police operational workforce is changing across England and Wales. The number of PCSOs, the key deliverers of visible and community-focused policing tasks in England and Wales, increased most dramatically at a time when new local policing approaches were rolled out across England and Wales and supported by ring-fenced central funding. The funding reductions announced in 2010 have obliged police forces to reduce staffing costs, and this has impacted the resources available to NPTs. PCSOs are now fewer in number than in 2008, the year of the official roll-out of the NPP. With the expiration of the ring-fenced Neighbourhood Policing Fund in 2013, it is possible that the number of PCSOs in England and Wales will continue to fall.

A variety of changes to PCSO workforces across England and Wales has been revealed by this research, including large increases in PCSO numbers, large decreases, and reductions that are proportionate to the financial challenges faced. The biggest decreases are found in the two London forces and the largest increases are found in Wales. These two regions also have opposite trends in PCSO proportions, whereas this has remained more stable in most other English forces. The comparatively extreme approaches of London and Wales illustrate the potential impact of politics and governance on police workforces.

Changes to the proportion of PCSOs in the workforce have clear consequences for police functions due to the definition of their role. Forces with a strong PCSO workforce are more likely to prioritise the neighbourhood security functions of policing than those forces that have a smaller PCSO presence in their local policing structures. The police workforce data shows that most forces are maintaining the proportion of PCSOs in the operational workforce, even as the operational workforce is reducing. This implies a commitment from many forces to the NP approach even in difficult times.

The composition of the operational police workforce is also changing more generally, with specials making up a larger proportion of the workforce than ever before. This appears to be a logical approach to meeting the high demands placed on police services in a time of significant reductions in funding. However, although most police forces have been successfully recruiting more specials, the workforce data show that the intended increases in the specials workforce are not likely to materialise. Furthermore, retaining the number of these volunteer officers is also a challenge.[34] The effect that a larger proportion of specials combined with a smaller proportion of paid officers has on policing functions remains to be seen.

[34] See NPIA (2010) for more information on issues around the retention of specials.

According to the Crime Survey of England and Wales, the police have enjoyed rising levels of confidence and visibility by the public since the introduction of PCSOs and NP. However, the most recent survey for 2012/2013 shows that the ratings on these measures are starting to fall or level off. Going by previous evaluations of the effect of PCSOs and the NRPP, this could be related to the weakening of NP and the decrease in PCSO numbers. If these measures of confidence in the police and visibility continue to be seen as indicators of police success, consideration must be given to how effective local policing approaches can be protected in an era of austerity.

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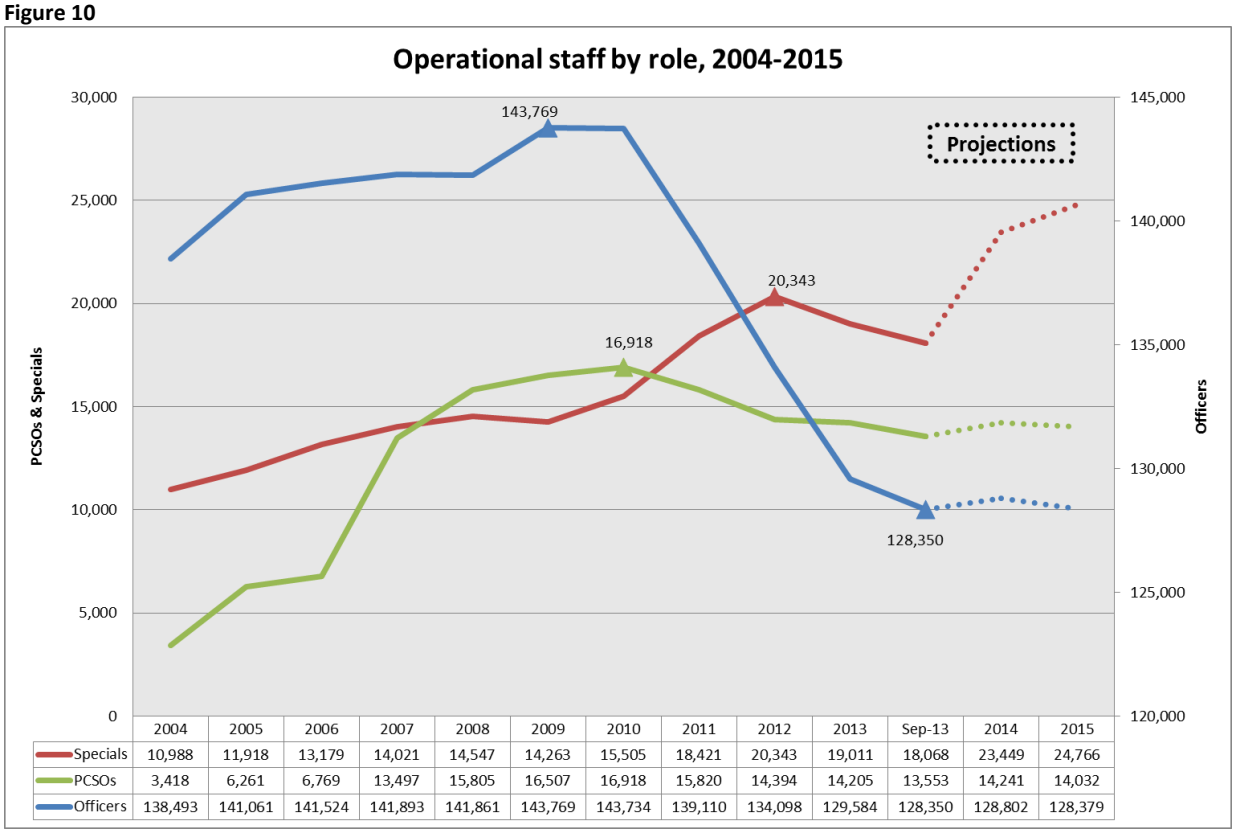
Appendices

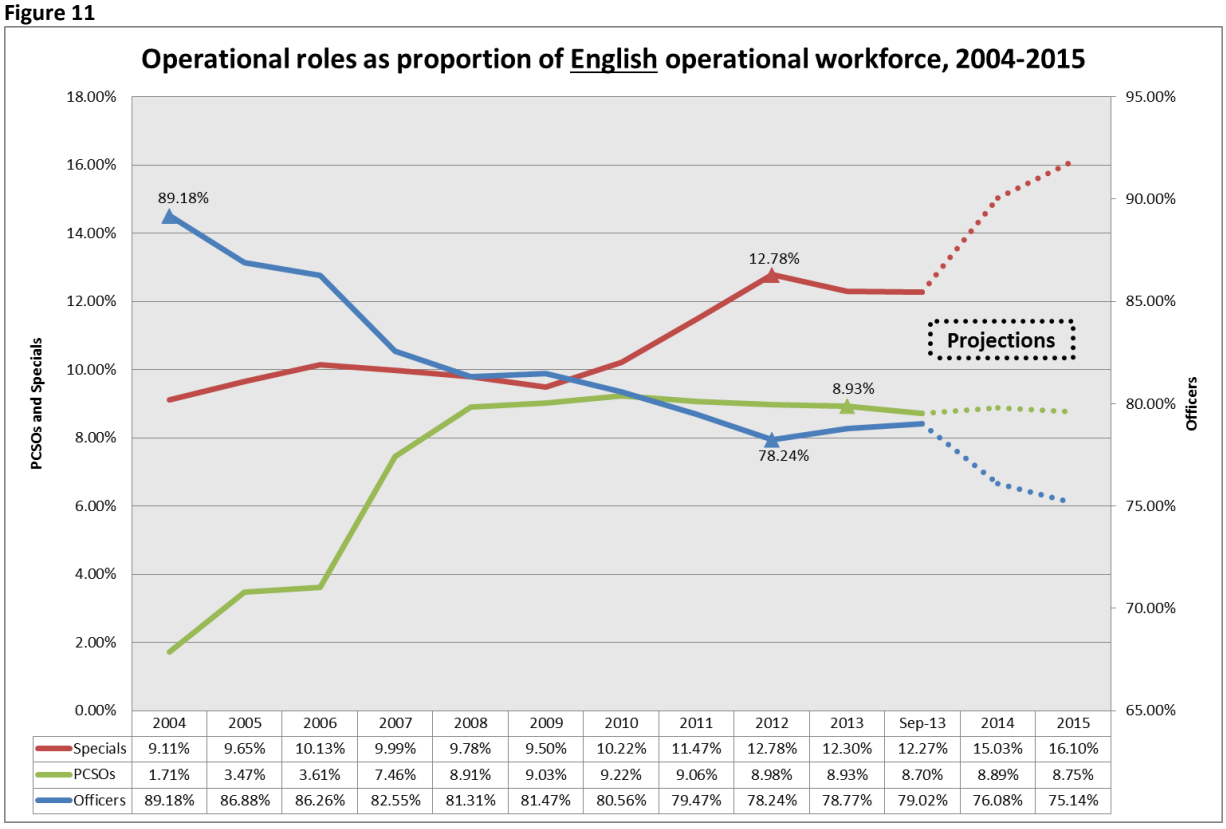
1. Additional Tables and Charts

Figure 10



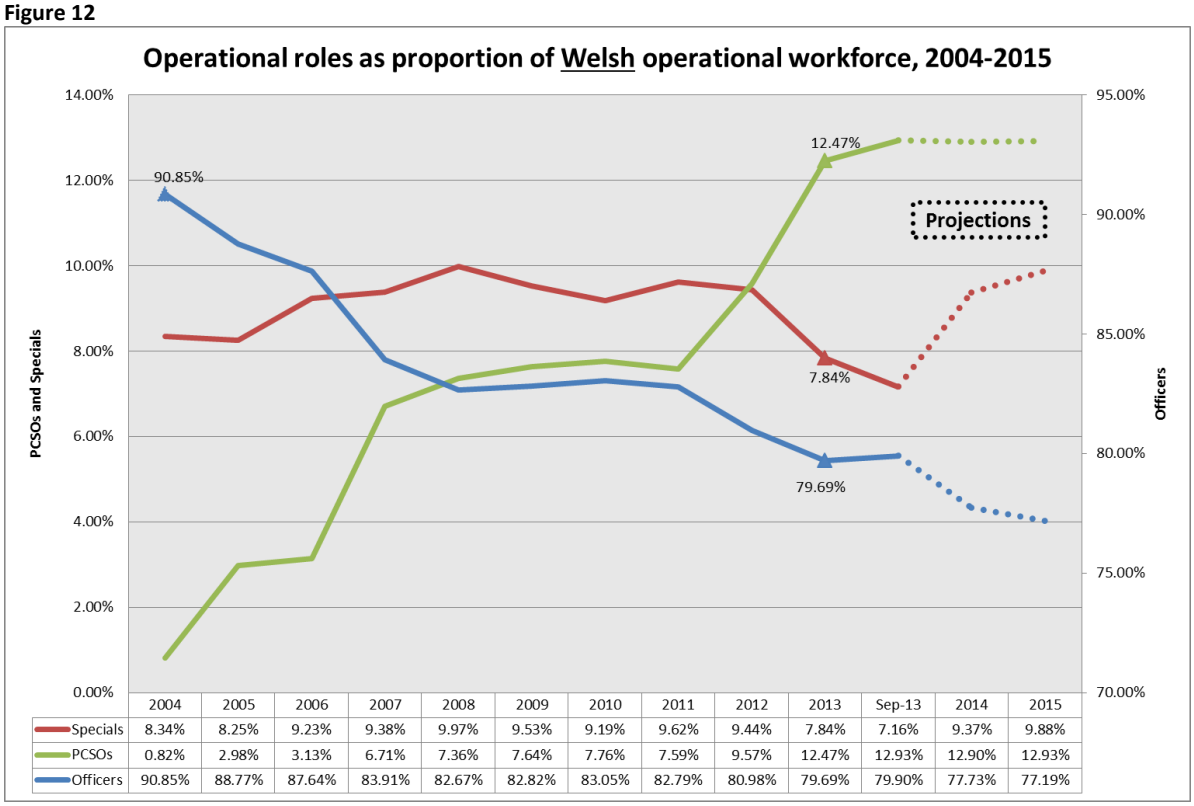
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
Specials	10,988	11,918	13,179	14,021	14,547	14,263	15,505	18,421	20,343	19,011	18,068	23,449	24,766
PCSOs	3,418	6,261	6,769	13,497	15,805	16,507	16,918	15,820	14,394	14,205	13,553	14,241	14,032
Officers	138,493	141,061	141,524	141,893	141,861	143,769	143,734	139,110	134,098	129,584	128,350	128,802	128,379

Figure 11



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
Specials	9.11%	9.65%	10.13%	9.99%	9.78%	9.50%	10.22%	11.47%	12.78%	12.30%	12.27%	15.03%	16.10%
PCSOs	1.71%	3.47%	3.61%	7.46%	8.91%	9.03%	9.22%	9.06%	8.98%	8.93%	8.70%	8.89%	8.75%
Officers	89.18%	86.88%	86.26%	82.55%	81.31%	81.47%	80.56%	79.47%	78.24%	78.77%	79.02%	76.08%	75.14%

Figure 12



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Sep-13	2014	2015
Specials	8.34%	8.25%	9.23%	9.38%	9.97%	9.53%	9.19%	9.62%	9.44%	7.84%	7.16%	9.37%	9.88%
PCSOs	0.82%	2.98%	3.13%	6.71%	7.36%	7.64%	7.76%	7.59%	9.57%	12.47%	12.93%	12.90%	12.93%
Officers	90.85%	88.77%	87.64%	83.91%	82.67%	82.82%	83.05%	82.79%	80.98%	79.69%	79.90%	77.73%	77.19%

Table 6: Typology of Reforms

Type	Characteristics of reform	Predicted Consequences
Weakened	• >-20% PCSO workforce change (since 2010) • Tend to have lower proportion of PCSOs • >-1% PCSO proportion change • Tend to have higher officer proportion • Officer workforce change between -7% and -18%	• Less dedicated staff for NPTs • NP likely to be restructured • Less focus on 'neighbourhood security' – e.g. visibility, reassurance, community engagement • More focus on crime management – e.g. incident response and investigation
Proportionally maintained	• PCSO workforce change between +1% and -20% • Tend to have mid-range PCSO proportion • PCSO proportion change between +1% and -1% • Officer workforce change between +3% and -17%	• Most forces have less staff for NPTs • Some NP structures weakened but more likely to survive • Similar approach to policing as currently
Strengthened	• >+1% PCSO workforce change • Tend to have higher PCSO proportion • >+1% PCSO proportion change • Tend to have lower proportion of officers • Officer workforce change between -5% and -17%	• NPTs well staffed • Survival and renewal of NP • Prioritisation of neighbourhood security functions over crime management

Table 7	All Police Forces by Workforce Change Type				
Type	Force	PCSO change (numerical)	PCSO change (percentage)	PCSO proportion change	PCSO proportion
Weakened	London, City of	-37	-70%	-3%	2%
	Metropolitan Police	-2,280	-49%	-5%	6%
	Northumbria	-192	-44%	-3%	6%
	Merseyside	-147	-31%	-2%	7%
	Essex	-127	-28%	-2%	8%
	Cumbria	-25	-23%	-1%	6%
	Warwickshire	-31	-22%	-1%	9%
	Hertfordshire	-55	-21%	-2%	8%
	Cambridgeshire	-44	-21%	-2%	9%
	Northamptonshire	-34	-21%	-2%	8%
Proportionally Maintained	West Midlands	-155	-19%	0%	8%
	Dorset	-31	-19%	0%	8%
	Cleveland	-35	-18%	0%	9%
	Avon & Somerset	-76	-18%	-1%	10%
	Lancashire	-74	-17%	0%	9%
	Gloucestershire	-25	-17%	-1%	8%
	Cheshire	-35	-15%	-1%	8%
	Kent	-55	-14%	0%	8%
	West Mercia	-39	-14%	-1%	9%
	West Yorkshire	-97	-13%	0%	11%
	North Yorkshire	-24	-12%	0%	10%
	Staffordshire	-28	-12%	0%	9%
	Bedfordshire	-13	-11%	0%	8%
	Surrey	-25	-11%	-1%	8%
	Durham	-18	-10%	0%	10%
	Humberside	-27	-9%	1%	12%
	Norfolk	-23	-8%	0%	12%
	Greater Manchester	-55	-7%	0%	9%
	Derbyshire	-8	-5%	1%	8%
	Lincolnshire	-7	-5%	0%	10%
	Suffolk	-6	-4%	0%	10%
	Hampshire	-11	-3%	0%	8%
	Thames Valley	-16	-3%	-1%	9%
	Sussex	-6	-2%	0%	10%
	South Yorkshire	-0	0%	0%	9%
	Wiltshire	1	0%	0%	9%
	Leicestershire	3	1%	1%	9%
Strengthened	Nottinghamshire	24	9%	2%	11%
	Devon & Cornwall	59	16%	2%	11%
	Gwent	70	49%	4%	13%
	South Wales	171	51%	6%	15%
	North Wales	110	70%	6%	14%
	Dyfed-Powys	60	72%	4%	10%

2. Police Regions

North East	Cleveland
	Durham
	Northumbria
North West	Cheshire
	Cumbria
	Greater Manchester
	Lancashire
	Merseyside
Yorkshire and the Humber	Humberside
	North Yorkshire
	South Yorkshire
	West Yorkshire
East Midlands	Derbyshire
	Leicestershire
	Lincolnshire
	Northamptonshire
	Nottinghamshire
West Midlands	Staffordshire
	Warwickshire
	West Mercia
	West Midlands
Eastern	Bedfordshire
	Cambridgeshire
	Essex
	Hertfordshire
	Norfolk
	Suffolk
London	London, City of
	Metropolitan Police
South East	Hampshire
	Kent
	Surrey
	Sussex
	Thames Valley
South West	Avon and Somerset
	Devon and Cornwall
	Dorset
	Gloucestershire
	Wiltshire
Wales	Dyfed Powys
	Gwent
	North Wales
	South Wales