“You are free to leave at any time”
Can Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Increase Retention Rates Among
Special Constables?

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Foreword

I was motivated to undertake this investigation following my experiences as a Special Constable (SC); firstly with Avon and Somerset Police, and currently with the Metropolitan Police. I commenced initial training with Avon and Somerset in spring 2010 in a cohort of 38 student officers of which 35 attested. Within 12 months a significant number had resigned or were not undertaking their minimum number of hours. Considering that SC are expected to commit a minimum of two years service, undertaking 16 hours duty per month to ensure the force receives a return on its investment, this seemed an alarming attrition rate. In a time of almost unprecedented economic stringency I considered whether it might be possible for more to be done to retain SC and thus provide the force with better value for money. The findings in this paper represent a year-long review of how / if Avon and Somerset Police can increase retention within the Special Constabulary.

I am grateful to Mr Robert Voisey, Avon and Somerset Special Constabulary Coordinator for making this project happen. He provided significant amounts of unpublished information and enthusiastically embraced the need to review current practices. The time and assistance Inspector Gavin Gaskain of the Metropolitan Police, Mr Jonathan Frost of the City of London Police Special Constabulary and Mr Jeffrey Martin the Avon and Somerset Special Constabulary Training Coordinator have also been of great assistance. The contribution from Jonathan Frost in particular, without whom the online survey would not have been possible, was invaluable.

Finally my thanks go the Police Officers based at Filton Police Station, Delta District, Avon and Somerset Police. The excellent training, support and experience I had whilst stationed there motivated me to undertake and continue this work even after my transfer to the Metropolitan Police.

Joe Whittle – June 2012
Introduction

This investigation originated from the need to address major shifts in the role and responsibilities of the Special Constabulary in the last decade. Special Constables (SC) are no longer just expected to police village fetes, direct traffic and help out in times of emergency. In the last decade, and particularly since the economic crisis and subsequent nationwide regular officer recruitment freeze, SC have become an indispensable resource in frontline policing. SC provided Avon and Somerset with over 146,000 duty hours in 2011, an average of 30.9 hours per officer per month (Voisey 2012). The majority of the hours performed by SC are at weekends when resources are most stretched (Special Constabulary Implementation Strategy 2008, 2.6.1).

A large-scale national SC recruitment campaign has resulted in the numbers of SC across England and Wales increasing by almost 25% in the last two years (Mulchandani and Sigurdsson 2009, Sigurdsson and Dhani 2010, Dhani and Kaiza 2011); however this increased recruitment obscures a consistent ‘wastage’ of approximately 3000, (at various times 15-20% of national strength) who resign each year (Mulchandani and Sigurdsson 2009, Sigurdsson and Dhani 2010, Dhani and Kaiza 2011). This substantial turnover in workforce incurs significant costs to forces nationwide both in monetary terms and experience. It is then vital to review and explore whether retention could be increased through exploration of factors contributing to retention and attrition.

This investigation aims to consider relevant changes in the last decade, and to re-evaluate who is becoming a SC and what their motivations are. Following the economic crisis in 2008 a national recruitment freeze was implemented. This paper offers quantitative evidence to demonstrate that many who would have applied to become regular officers are instead applying to be SC in order enhance their chances of a future successful regular application. This has resulted in substantial changes in the makeup of the Special Constabulary, with significant implications for its future. Recent Metropolitan Police recruitment drives have reinforced this theory, with regular recruitment coming exclusively from their current SC or Police Community Support Officer workforce. Avon and Somerset may need to adjust its approaches to both recruitment and retention to take into account this shift in the makeup of the Special Constabulary.

This paper is in three sections; commencing with background context and methodology. The second section analyses previous research findings and identifies key factors influencing SC retention. The third section analyses the results of two surveys undertaken within Avon and Somerset Constabulary during December 2011 and January 2012. The December survey comprised a questionnaire given to 53 trainee SC at training School. The second comprised a 20 question online survey of SC across three Avon and Somerset Police districts - 141 complete responses were received and analysed.
Conclusions and recommendations are then offered and discussed. Limitations to this methodology are also identified.

This investigation was voluntarily conducted over the course of a number of months in 2011/12, alongside a full-time occupation and frontline SC duties.
Section One

Background Context

There has been a broad aim nationally to recruit and maintain 20,000 SC by 2012 (NPIA 2010, p.4). In 2011 the Home Office reported the total strength of SC in England and Wales to be 18,421, a net 18.8% increase on the previous year; this also followed an 8.8% increase in 2010 (Dhani and Kaiza 2011). With a drive within the Metropolitan Police to recruit large numbers of SC for the Olympics it is likely this figure will again be surpassed in 2012.

While the above may indicate that the number of SC leaving is decreasing, national attrition rates have remained constant at just over 3000 per year (Mulchandani and Sigurdsson 2009, Sigurdsson and Dhani 2010, Dhani and Kaiza 2011). There has been a consistent annual turnover (or wastage) within the special constabulary of approximately 20% since the late 1980's (Mirrellees and Byron, 1994 p.49). The increase in overall strength indicated by the Home Office statistics above is due to increased recruitment nationwide; with almost 4000 new officers joining between March 2009 and March 2011 (Sigurdsson and Dhani 2010, Mulchandani and Sigurdsson 2009, Dhani and Kaiza 2011). Latest statistics indicate that in just six months March – September 2011 SC numbers rose by 945 (Dhani 2012 p.4). Increased recruitment therefore obscures the fact that a consistent and significant number of SC resign annually.

In line with this national trend Avon and Somerset Constabulary has in the last two years recruited and trained SC in unprecedented numbers - 154 attesting 2010-11 compared with 76 in 2008-09 (Mulchandani and Sigurdsson 2009, Dhani and Kaiza 2011). In the ten years before 2005, the size of the Special Constabulary in Avon and Somerset shrunk from 688 in 1996, to 305 in 2004 (Bauer 2005, p 1 - 4). This number rose to 497 in 2011 (Dhani and Kaiza 2011) with a current strength approaching 600 (Voisey 2012). While regular numbers within the force declined by 2.8% in 2011, SC numbers increased by a net total of 110 officers, almost 10% (Dhani and Kaiza 2011, p.32-35). In terms of wastage Avon and Somerset reflects well nationally with an attrition rate 10% lower than the national average (Voisey 2012).

The baseline cost of training and equipping a new SC in Avon and Somerset is approximately £1383 (Voisey 2012) (this figure is for providing uniform and time at training school only). NPIA statistics suggest it costs approximately £2775 to equip and train a new SC (Special Constabulary National Strategy Implementation 2010 – Appendix B). Guidelines suggest that a force will not see a return on its investment in training and equipping a SC until after one year of service, or 180 operational hours of duty has been completed (Special Constabulary National Strategy Implementation 2010 Appendix B). As the baseline figures above do not include administrative, ad-hoc costs, the cost of ‘on the job’ or monthly / quarterly refresher training, it is unlikely the force will see a return on its investment in a SC who only undertakes minimum
monthly hours until closer to two years service has been completed. Figures provided by Avon and Somerset show that 41% of SC who have left the force since 2005 completed under 2 years service (Voisey 2012). This indicates that there is scope for improving the value for money the force receives from the service of SC.

It is of key importance that forces select volunteers who will provide value for money (MacVean et al 2004, p38-39, 74, Mirrellees Black and Byron 1994, p.25).

"Cost analysis...showed the clear advantage of retaining Specials beyond the historic average stay of five years" (Special Constabulary National Implementation Strategy, 2008, 6.1.5)

Forces cannot or do not reallocate much used equipment; therefore a SC who leaves shortly after attesting, or during training, causes significant financial wastage (Keilthy 2000, p.31). Retention is also of importance due to the unique skills and experience an individual learns and accrues in the role which are lost to the force upon resignation (Mirrellees Black and Byron, 1994, p.50).

There can be little doubt that the SC role has evolved considerably in the previous ten years and especially since the onset of the recruitment freeze. Mould writes:

"...Specials who left the service ten years ago would find it hard to comprehend the level of skill and commitment required of today's volunteers" (2001, p.19)

Rising public expectations have seen unprecedented pressures upon police (Keilthy 2000, p.29, McVean et al 2004, p.17). At a time when Avon and Somerset is facing a 20% budget reduction (Avon and Somerset, 2011 p.8) more reliance has been placed upon SCs to provide a regular and visible presence. As SC are predominantly available during the weekend they play a pivotal role in anti-social-behaviour and anti-violence operations; providing much needed strength, and visible presence at times when resources are most stretched (Special Constabulary Implementation Strategy 2008, 2.6.1). Due to these changes the Special Constabulary has had to evolve to become more professionalized, with the demands upon it increasing to reflect this (McVean et al, p.4). For example Avon and Somerset SC are now deployed in non-uniformed investigative units, road policing, proactive teams and a number of other specialist duties (Voisey 2012). This is in contrast to the Special Constabulary National Strategy (2008) which envisaged SCs focussing on neighbourhood policing duties. These changes demonstrate how much the role of the SC has changed and evolved to meet policing demands during a time of austerity since the 2008 National strategy was published.
With the increased demands and professionalism required of a SC it is crucial that forces recruit effectively to reflect not only the increased expectations, but also changes in applicant’s skills and abilities. Anecdotal evidence suggests it is highly probable that those applying to the SC are now more likely to do so because recruitment to regular forces has all but ceased, and there is an expectation - linked to recent recruitment drives within the Metropolitan Police - that service as a SC will assist future regular applications. The implications here are twofold. Firstly that those joining do so with a view to becoming regulars are likely have a shorter ‘shelf life’ (Bauer 2005, p.i). Secondly police forces have a responsibility to ensure that if becoming a SC will not directly assist in joining the regulars, that this is made clear at the outset. The Special Constabulary aims to be a conduit between the public and police, with SC feeding back to the community their experiences. Therefore individuals leaving feeling disgruntled that their commitment and effort is not taken into account when the force recruits regular officers, could result in negative feedback.
Methodology

The literature review aimed to access the available sources including the Police National Library at Bramshill. Key texts were identified; a number of these are noted to be old and limited in range. One key text is a Home Office funded large-scale survey of SC based in the Metropolitan Police and surrounding forces by Mirrlees Black and Byron in 1994. It is of note that 18 years on, many of their findings are still pertinent. For example the research recommended defining a clear role for the special constabulary (1994, p.67); however ten years later Alexander (2001) and McVean et al (2004) were still advocating for this. This suggests that there remain some variables affecting retention which have not changed over time, or have not been addressed. Alexander (2000) undertook extensive research regarding SC premature wastage; however many of her recommendations, such using more targeted recruitment, better understanding of motivations to join, and a dual programme for those joining to ultimately become regulars, and those joining for altruistic reasons have not been adopted; a decade later and her study has become dated. Importantly, all of the above studies pre-date the recent national recruitment freeze and austerity measures. The Special Constabulary has changed immeasurably during the last 3-4 years it is crucial that further research and review is undertaken which takes account of these factors.

Background research for this paper is limited by the dearth of robust and relevant academic evidence. Even the findings of the most recent investigation, (NPIA research 2010) lack a degree of authority as the conclusions and recommendations are based on a relatively small survey size. However the complete lack of academic research in the area has resulted in this paper having to selectively utilise sources, such as the NPIA research 2010, to a limited extent.

The investigation itself endeavoured to seek responses from a large cohort of SC or student SC within Avon and Somerset, in order to give the findings creditability. The survey questions were based on those pertinent to retention used in previous surveys and adapted for Avon and Somerset (Alexander 2000, McVean et al 2004, NPIA 2010). As this investigation was undertaken specifically for Avon and Somerset, the author has endeavoured to make the findings and recommendations more specific to that force. However many themes identified do have relevance to forces nationwide.

It is acknowledged that the SC role varies from force to force and operational area (MacVean et al 2004, p.26, Mirelless and Byron 1994, p.27). For example within Avon and Somerset the work of SC at a non-response rural station will be vastly different to those based at Bristol City Centre. As a result this investigation sought opinions from SC based in a broad cross section of rural (F), suburban (D) and inner-city (B) policing districts.
Section Two

Push and Pull – factors which influence retention

a) Reasons which influence SC leaving

It is simplistic for forces to blame the voluntary nature of the SC role as a reason why individuals leave; identifying work, domestic and family priorities coming before their SC work. Alexander writes:

"...while forces may initially feel that the predominant factors leading to the premature wastage of Special Constables are beyond their control, it is clear that there other ‘internal’ factors likely to influence the decisions of Specials to resign. Most notable among these are: poor supervision, lack of training, not feeling valued, uninteresting duties, and not being deployed in a ‘worthwhile’ manner" (Alexander 2000, p.18)

According to NPIA research (2010 p.38) and Alexander (2000, p.5) the main reasons SC resign are:

- Domestic / work life balance
- Change of working commitments
- To become a PC / PCSO

Reasons for leaving Avon and Somerset were not documented prior to 2004, and the force is reliant on accurate information being passed to the Special Constabulary Coordinator. The database recording SC leaving reasons (see figure I) although in line with the national recording model used by other forces is too generalised. For example reason 206: "Resign unsuited to the role" is not specific enough. If the SC was unsuited what was the reason and how could future recruitment be altered to address this? Other entries appear to have been inconsistently inputted with similar reasons for leaving under different leaving codes. This makes it problematic to accurately assess the reasons for SC leaving Avon and Somerset. The table below is based on the spreadsheet containing all the reasons / leaving codes since records began. It was edited by the author to ensure clarity and consistency of results. Increasing the accuracy and consistency for reasons why SC are leaving the role would greatly assist future research.
Figure I: Number and reasons codes for SC leaving the force 2005 - 2011

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</tbody>
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Key – Reasons codes for Leaving the Special Constabulary

**Resignations**
- 201 Resign: Disenchanted
- 202 Resign: Domestic / Personal
- 203 Retrospective Resignation
- 204 Resign: Other Employment - becomes ineligible
- 206 Resign: Unsuit

**Retirements**
- 300 Retires
- 400 Medical Retirement

**Transfers/Enters Force**
- 501 Transfer to another Force as SC
- 502 Retire: Medical Retirement
- 503 Transfer to another Force as SC
- 504 Enter Regular Force - Avon and Somerset
- 505 Enter Regular Force - Other
- 506 Become PCSO

**Dismissal**
- 701 Dismissed
- 705 Required to resign
- 707 Resigned whilst under disciplinary investigation

As the table indicates, while disregarding the large numbers of retrospective resignations (these were due to the fact prior to the appointment of the Special Constabulary Coordinator in 2005 records were not being kept centrally) the main reasons SC have left Avon and Somerset appear at first to be outside of the forces control:

- 202 – Domestic / Personal
- 204 – Employment – becomes ineligible

However as noted above the recorded reasons for leaving have not been consistently inputted. Coupled with the fact the reason codes themselves are broad and not specific makes this assumption questionable. Similarly Mirrellees-Black and Byron found that 70% of SC who had recently resigned failed to given an accurate reason for leaving (1994, p.34). Alexander (2000) found that often there were number of factors which contributed to the decision to leave, rather than a single reason. Either way forces should not
simply concede that the reasons people leave are beyond their control. The force can at least address 'internal' factors it does have control over such as management, supervision, training and deployment to make any leaving decisions harder (Gaston and Alexander 2001, p.62, Alexander 2000, p. 16). Inconsistencies in terms of the reporting and recording why SC leave the role may mask the fact that in some cases more could be done to prevent SC leaving.

It has been suggested that a significant contributing factor to high SC turnover is to join the regulars (NPIA 2010, p.38). However in 2011 only 4.2% of SC in England and Wales resigned for this reason; over 95% left for other reasons (Dhani and Kaiza 2011 p.19). Avon and Somerset has recruited 71 SC into the regulars since 2005. This accounts for 15% of SC who have left Avon and Somerset during this period. A quarter to one third of those surveyed by Alexander stated that they joined in the hope of becoming a regular (2000, p.29). Mirrless, Black and Byron (1994, p.9) research argues that if motivation to join the SC is to become a regular, then the voluntary period will be much shorter, less than two years. This will have implications for the costs associated for training a SC who aims to leave within a relatively short timescale. It may also result in SC becoming disillusioned quickly if unsuccessful with applications to the regulars.

b) Factors which constrain SC

NPIA research (2010, p.9) found the main constraints which affect the number of volunteer hours a SC undertakes include:

1. No access to police vehicles
2. Lack of training
3. Lack of equipment
4. Lack of meaningful deployment
5. Negative attitude towards SC
6. Lack of regular supervision
7. Lack of welfare or support

Driving police vehicles, particularly in rural areas, can be key to operational policing (McVean et al 2004, p.26). Similarly when working out of stations with comparatively small response teams, being unable to drive police vehicles can result in SC spending long periods of a shift waiting to be ‘taken out’. As volunteers, SC are more likely to find this frustrating, spending a shift immobilised because of transport issues.

Alexander found that 10% of SC surveyed felt they were never used or deployed effectively (2000, p.55). More recent NPIA findings reinforced this with 12% saying that lack of meaningful deployment contributed towards their negative SC experiences (2010, p.34).
"With the rapid growth of the Special Constabulary in the last few years, the risk is that the average stay in the service will reduce if officers aren’t properly tasked or utilised” (National Implementation Strategy 2008, 6.1.5)

Due to the increased pressures on resources some forces are using SC in different roles; this offers development and variety. For example Avon and Somerset has piloted SC working in non-uniform investigative roles and also created District Proactive Teams. This is not universal (see McVean et al p.19) but is key to the development and variety required to retain the interest of SC.

"...individual case studies show clear evidence that Specials deployed in challenging specialist or responsible roles have longer service than those deployed in less demanding tasks.” (Special Constabulary National Implementation Strategy 2008, 6.1.5)

Lack of welfare, supervision and consideration are all quoted as reasons for disillusionment. It is important to distinguish between SC who are not fulfilling minimum hours with reason, and those without. Similarly earlier intervention before problems escalate or mount up, which is linked to welfare oversight, could help solve issues before they get out of control and assist retention in this regard (NPIA, 2010, p.10). Dorset Police for example have SC recruitment and retention officers while the Metropolitan Police utilise volunteers to monitor and follow up on those who leave (NPIA, 2010, p.23-25). Only 28.9% of forces (13) nationally have a retention strategy monitoring why SC leave and intervening where necessary. Avon and Somerset is not one of these forces; however Avon and Somerset’s retention record compares favourably with the rest of the UK (see figure II).
Negative attitudes towards SC from regular officers and other staff has often been cited as a significant contributing factor to SC wastage. NPIA research suggests 43% of SC surveyed had a negative experience stemming from Police or Police staff attitudes towards SC (2010, p.34). The classic reason for animosity is stated to be that SC use overtime funding and that the money spent on SC would be better spent on recruiting more regulars (Keilthy 2000, p.29, Gaston and Alexander 2001, p.60, Alexander 2000, p.7). This appears to be historical argument; for example Avon and Somerset do not allow SC to formally ‘cover’ the shifts of officers who have time off. Conversely Alexander found that two-thirds of regulars surveyed felt either confident or very confident in the abilities of SC (2000, p.68-69).

Whilst the problem of relations between SC and regulars does not seem to be a major concern, better understanding from regulars regarding SC role and responsibilities could be of benefit, and improve working relationship (Mirlesses Black and Byron, 1994, p39). SC would benefit from better integration with and understanding from regular colleagues regarding SC roles and motivations. From personal experience it makes a huge difference to be known and welcomed for a shift by regular colleagues, rather than eyed...
awkwardly as an unknown entity. Being welcomed into the policing environment was also found to be beneficial for retention by Mirrlees Black and Byron (1994, p. 41). If SC are tutored by other SCs and do a relatively small number of hours they are unlikely to integrate effectively with regular officers (McVean et al 2004, p.41, Mirrlees Black and Byron 1994, p.x). Mirrlees Black and Byron found that strong working relationships were key to morale of SC (1994, p. 70). McVean et al found that the most effective way of deploying a SC was with a regular officer, but that in practice this did not always happen (2004, p.27).

"The tutoring role played by regular officers in assisting the development of probationer special constables cannot be over-emphasised” (McVean et al 2004, p.62)

Experienced regular officers may be in a better position to be trainers than other SC. Considering the current recruitment freeze there may be numbers of tutor constables available force-wide whose tutoring skills would benefit SCs.

A further factor relates to the reputation / status, whether good or bad, that SCs have in certain areas and districts. This affects the variety and scope of roles regular colleagues will trust SC to undertake. Those SC with a ‘bad’ reputation see all SC tarred with the same brush (Mirrlees Black and Byron 1994, p.32, Alexander 2000 p.59-61).

"...just over half of all the Specials surveyed considered that the Regulars they worked with held very or extremely favourable attitudes towards them personally…but only one in five considered that Regulars held all Specials in such esteem”(Mirrlees Black and Byron 1994, p.40)

Perception, confidence and understanding that regular officers have of the skills and abilities of a SC is then an important variable in the role and performance of a SC (McVean et al 2004, p. 44).

c) The role of effective management in retention

Competent management of SC appears to be crucial to retention, as the lack of effective management or leadership, coupled with the voluntary nature of the role, makes it easy for any disillusioned SC to leave. NPIA research found 9% of SC had a negative experience linked to a lack of supervision (2010 p.34). Almost 30% of those surveyed by Alexander felt they had little or no support from SC managers. A similar figure were also either unconfident or neither confident / unconfident in their SC supervisors (2000, p.48-49). McVean et al found that 18.9% of SC surveyed felt they were poorly managed (2004, p. 57) while Alexander (2000, p.5) advocated that SC be managed by regulars. Within the Metropolitan Police a fusion of regular and specials
management currently operates; however to adopt this in other forces would incur costs which are likely to be prohibitive in the current climate.

McVean et al highlighted the need for forces to define a clear role for SC within the organisation to enable managers to utilise them effectively:

"...a lack of clarity concerning the role of the Special Constable, coupled with ad-hoc deployment methods, has led to the marginalisation of the Special Constabulary” (McVean et al 2004, p. 4)

In defining a clear role Special and regular managers will be empowered to more effectively utilise the resources to hand. McVean et al continue to suggest that a lack of clear communication between the parallel management structures can cause:

"...confusion...cultural clashes between the Special Constabulary and the regular force, as well as a lack of strategic coordination, particularly with rosters, briefings and deployment” (McVean et al 2004, p.4)

This lack of coordination can be particularly damaging for the volunteer SC and emphasises the importance of effective coordination and cooperation. Similarly without a clear idea of what to expect, regular managers are unsure how to best deploy SC (McVean et al 2004, p.13).

SC managers should be effective managers who supervise their officers operationally. This is of key importance considering the growth and increased responsibilities of SC. Poor performing or unsuited SC who are not effectively managed reflect poorly on the image of the Special Constabulary as a whole, and tarnish the SC image in the eyes of both the public and regular colleagues. If SC supervisors have little or no contact with those they are responsible for they will quickly become disconnected from conditions and feelings of those on the front line. Bauer found that Area and District officers within Avon and Somerset were often overloaded with paperwork and rarely supervised operationally (2005, p.5). One third to half of SC surveyed felt SC management was out of touch with frontline SC and that this could be a cause of low morale amongst the rank and file (Murrells Black and Byron 1994, p. 42-43).

d) The Transition from Training School and ongoing officer development

There is a need for the transition from Training School to operational policing to be managed effectively as SC are more likely to engage and perform hours if they are in a comfortable environment where they feel confident. This is particularly important with trainees coming straight from training school into one of the most demanding professions.
"...it needs to be recognised that, for many Specials (e.g. those serving just four hours per week) there can be large gaps between training and the opportunity to put specific training into practice...” (Alexander 2000, p. 54)

Managers need to manage this transition effectively. If trainees do not feel confident in their role, team or working environment then chances for disengagement dramatically increase. McVean et al highlight the fact that due to the nature of the job, it is unlikely SC will leave training feeling completely self-assured so they need to be confident enough to ask questions and learn on the job (2004, p. 36). This will be difficult to achieve if their transfer from training to the operational environment is not managed effectively. NPIA research found that 38% of SC said current training and development did not meet their needs (2010, p.30). McVean et al found that senior officers openly acknowledged:

"...the current training programme does not prepare Special Constables for the wide range of tasks that they encounter” (2004, p. 60)

It is impossible to train a volunteer in all the necessary skills that a regular officer learns over the course of 6 months full-time training. This makes it essential to ensure that the SC feels confident to develop and in the operational environment.

It is also relevant to highlight that there can be gaps between what SC are trained to undertake, and what are expected to perform. For example McVean et al (2004, p.66) found that. 81% of SC did not consider themselves trained in criminal investigation, but were expected to assist or lead in interviews. Previous research argues that training in its present form, is insufficient, because of the focus on core policing functions rather than preparing SC for the more diverse challenges they face (McVean et al 2004, p. 69, Mirrelees Black and Byron 1994, p. 18). Ensuring then that the training received is relevant and sufficient to the tasks and duties that a SC will be expected to perform is also of importance.

Development is another key retention area over which police forces have control. Avon and Somerset currently use the SOLAP (Student Officer Learning and Assessment Portfolio) and once this is completed, SC are not formally assessed, except if promoted. This makes accountability and managing poor performance more difficult. Similarly limiting SC development could hinder recruitment and retention (McVean et al 2004, p.37). Alexander (2000 p.52) found that satisfaction with SC training diminished over time which suggests ongoing personal development needs to be addressed. If a SC cannot measure their personal development, it is logical to assume that apathy may result as individuals are not challenged in their roles (Gaston and Alexander 2001, p. 57).
e) Job satisfaction and recognition

"A strong underlying satisfaction can prevent specific events from precipitating resignation. Improved retention can be achieved by identifying the benefits of being in the Special Constabulary and ensuring that these are retained and enhanced“ (Mirrelees Black and Byron 1994, p. 59)

Tailoring duties to those which SC most enjoy about the job could not only boost morale, but also help achieve greater job satisfaction. Alexander suggested if SC are not provided opportunities to perform the tasks they enjoy this can lead to resignations, as the voluntary nature of the role makes job satisfaction of particular importance (2000, p.42-43). 26.8% SC surveyed by McVean et al were assigned to roles they felt ‘unsuitably prepared for’ (2004 p.43) while Gaston and Alexander found a gap between the most enjoyed duties and those actually performed (2001 p.68). Linked to this is the idea raised by Mirrelees Black and Byron that SC must:

"...be able to identify an outcome to their work and to feel that it is of importance and has some impact on others’ lives“(1994 p.60)

NPIA research (2010, p.9) found that 76% of SC did feel valued by their force. This was expressed in a range of ways from a simple ‘thank you’, regular integration, being given responsibility, to being trusted and regularly communicated with (NPIA 2010, 35). This need to be valued is a main recurring theme in all previous surveys (Alexander 2000, p 4, Gaston and Alexander 2001, p. 70).

"It is for forces to ensure that line supervisors – who are in a position to motivate through praise and encouragement – are aware of the importance of making Specials feel valued” (Mirrelees Black and Byron 1994 p.ix)

In the absence of financial compensation, volunteers rely on job satisfaction and recognition to motivate them to continue to provide their time.

f) Using effective recruitment practices and understanding motivations for joining the Special Constabulary

NPIA research advocates using more targeted recruitment strategies to identify more ‘suitable’ recruits (2010, p.1). For example Leicestershire Constabulary reviewed pre-application processes to recruit better-suited people to the role (NPIA 2010, p.26). By better understanding the different motivations SC have for joining forces can tailor retention strategies more effectively (Alexander 2000, p.3-5). For example a middle aged retired applicant will have much different goals and motivations in joining than a school leaver. McVean et al (2004, p.19) provided a useful list of the commonly stated altruistic and career related reasons:
- Gain insight into the job
- Stepping stone to the regulars
- Help the community
- Do something useful with spare time
- Help the police
- Interest in law and order
- Enjoy meeting and helping people
- Failed to get into the regulars
- Personal development
- Learn new skills

Understanding and exploring motivations for joining is informative in terms of retention, as forces need to be able to not only meet these motivations, but also understand that SC with differing motivations for joining will enjoy differing lengths of service. For example, Gaston and Alexander (2001 p.66) reported that after 8 years as a SC 31.8% of those who joined to ‘help the community’ were still volunteering while only 4.8% of those joining ‘with an interest in joining the police’ remained. Alexander advocated targeting those who apply for altruistic reasons, rather than those planning to join as a regular, as the former are more likely to provide longer service (2000 p.35). Gaston and Alexander argue that a cost benefit analysis is needed, to ascertain whether forces get value for money from those joining purely to get into regulars (2001, p.69).

Statistically younger recruits who have yet to make ‘life choices’ such as family or long-term job commitments are likely to have shorter SC careers (Alexander 2000, p.22). 42% of operational SC within Avon and Somerset are 25 years old or under (Voisey 2012). In terms of ‘life choices’ then a significant proportion of the current SC workforce are of the age that Alexander highlights as being likely to have shorter SC careers. Similarly younger applicants are also more likely to have already applied, or intend to apply to join the regulars (Alexander 2000, p.32). SC under 30 years old were five times more likely to leave to join the regulars than those over 30 (Gaston and Alexander 2001, p.62). Mould makes the point that:

"My supervisory colleagues, and myself, have to recognise that up to a third of our volunteers are on loan to us for a couple of years before they apply for regular positions” (2001, p.19)

Alexander recommended the creation of a separate recruitment stream for those indicating their intention to join the regular police (Alexander 2000, p.4). SC who wish to join the regulars are more likely to commit a larger number of hours over a shorter period, and therefore have different requirements, needs and expectations (Mirrelees Black and Byron 1994, p.26).
Recruitment practices may have failed to keep pace with changes in SC motivation and expectations that have occurred since the nationwide regular officer recruitment freeze. The recruitment freeze has fuelled a surge in interest in becoming a SC. This provides forces with the opportunity to adopt more selective recruitment strategies; and in doing so potentially make savings by ensuring those it trains and equips provide value for money. As the results discussed in section three will show many serving SC do not feel the recruitment process is comprehensive enough. 66% of SC applicants in Mirrlees-Black and Byron (1994) survey suggested that the application process should be more rigorous as a 25 – 33% of those accepted would not have passed the tests for the regulars.

One strategy suggested to increase retention involves paying an annual ‘bounty’ to SC. However this proved unsuccessful in pilot schemes in the early 1990’s and as McVean et al state:

"...key issues faced by the Special Constabulary involve management structures, deployment and training rather than financial reward” (2004 p. 4-5)

Others argue that the voluntary nature of the role precludes financial gratuity, and previous schemes had little affect on retention (Mould 2001, p.20, Mirrlees-Black and Byron 1994, p.71, Keilthy 2000 p.24-24). Some forces such as Humberside have introduced, in conjunction with a local council, 50% reduction in council tax for SC (NPIA 2010, p. 26) however there appear to be few other comparable schemes across the country.

The factors above need to be taken into account in recruitment strategies to ensure the force is recruiting and investing in the applicants who will most benefit the force.
Section 3: Survey Results

Survey(s) background

One of the purposes of this research was to better understand the current motivations and reasons for becoming a SC, and also gain insight into the process involved. Two surveys were conducted. The first was a questionnaire (appendix A) distributed to two groups (total 53) of non-operational student SC at training school in December 2011. The first group (37) were undertaking their final weekend of training, and had recently attested; the second group (16) were almost halfway through their training. The survey itself consisted of 7 questions; however only 6 questions could be completed by the second group as one question (Q3) related only to those about to complete training. Owing to an oversight on the author’s part, it was not made clear to the trainee SC that all questions should be answered; this resulted in some unanswered questions. This factor together with the option in question 1 to tick multiple boxes resulted in the necessity to aggregate the answers to give overall percentages. The number of responses to each question is marked in the Appendix B.

The second survey was conducted online over a two-week period in January 2012. Three Avon and Somerset districts were utilised to try to encapsulate a cross section of SC opinion. These comprised F district (West Somerset), B district (City of Bristol) and D district (Bristol suburban).

The response to the survey was very good with 59% or 157 out of 264 officers across the three districts responding. Of these responses 141 were fully completed. Incomplete responses were filtered out to ensure answers to each question were weighted consistently. It should be noted that previous attempts at exploring retention (NPIA 2010, MacVean et al 2004, Bauer 2005) have been hampered by small survey sizes. The number of SC responding to both the paper and online surveys; totalling 194 attested and trainee SC, makes this one of the largest surveys of SC ever undertaken; in the process giving greater credibility and grounding to the findings.

A major factor behind the high response rate to the online survey is likely to be related to the fact that it was distributed via the Emergency Services Internet Booking System (ESIBS) giving SC access to emails and events calendars from home. The fact such a large number responded over a relatively short period also reflects well on the engagement of SC across the force. It is not the role of this survey to analyse individual district performances, as this was not a test of engagement between different districts; however for the purposes of weighting the data, the majority of results 56.7%, came from B district, D district 30.5%, F district accounted for 12.8%. In this regard the survey will reflect more the views of SC based in urban environments of the former county of Avon.
Survey results

There was an appropriate gender ratio of survey respondents with almost 68% coming from males and almost 32% from females. This split is representative of the male to female ratio in Avon and Somerset Special Constabulary as a whole (Dhani and Kaiza 2011). Similarly in relation to age there was a wide range of replies to encapsulate a cross section of experience and opinion.

**Question 1: How old are you?**

- 18-21: 34%
- 22-27: 22%
- 27-35: 26%
- 36-50: 14%
- 50+: 4%

**Question 2: How would you define your gender?**

- Male: 67%
- Female: 32%
- Prefer not to say: 1%
78% of respondents had been a SC for less than three years with just over 60% having less than two years experience.

**Question 4: For how many years have you served as a SC?**

- 1 year or less: 13%
- 1-2 years: 18%
- 2-3 years: 20%
- 4-5 years: 9%
- 5+ years: 40%

**Motivations**

One revealing finding was that almost 30% of respondents in the online survey would not have applied to become SC had regular recruitment been open.

**Question 5: If the force was recruiting for regular officers would you still have applied to become a SC?**

- Yes: 30%
- No: 70%
The results from question 7 reinforce this with almost 60% of answers indicating that they thought being a SC would benefit a future application to the regulars, or may be the best way to join the regulars.

It has already been suggested that the regular officer recruitment freeze and increased popularity in joining the police has seen a fundamental shift in the motivations of applicants to join the Special Constabulary. This was reflected in many of the free comments which indicated SC with pending, failed or prospective applications to join the regulars in the pipeline. Similarly 23% stated that the main skill that joining the Special Constabulary has helped them with is preparing for life as a regular. Whilst it is impossible to confirm due to the lack of prior comparable data, it does strongly indicate that more people are now becoming SC with a specific view to joining the regulars. As noted this could have an impact with regards to retention and beyond. For example SC may not only have a shorter ‘shelf life’ if they plan to join the regulars, but may also become frustrated and disillusioned if their sole motivating purpose for joining is to become a regular officer, and subsequently they fail in to achieve this. SCs are conduit to enhance understanding between the police and community any frustrations will be conveyed back to their communities through them.

These findings were duplicated within the paper survey (appendix B). The results indicated that 57% of respondents joined as they believed it is either the best way into the regulars, or with a view to joining and wishing to ascertain if this was the correct career choice for them. The small variance
with the online survey found that only 36% of trainee SC could positively say they would still have applied to be a SC if the regulars were recruiting.

This evidence strongly supports the idea that a large proportion of those joining the Special Constabulary are motivated by a desire to join the regulars. Ensuring that they are facilitated in achieving these goals and recognising that their career as a SC may well differ from those who join for more altruistic motives may be key to their retention. The force should also strongly consider which applicants provide value for money in the long-term.

Somewhat paradoxically considering the preceding paragraphs a large proportion of respondents, almost 88% suggested they envisaged a career in the Special Constabulary for 3-5 years. This could reflect the fact that there is little potential for regular recruitment in the near future. In considering this the free comments section was enlightening with views expressed including: "Depends how long it takes to become a regular" or "To continue as a SC until I become a regular." It is then possible that although some may see themselves as a SC for the foreseeable future, this could change once regular recruitment re-opened.

**Management**

How SC are managed is key to retention. It is encouraging that 75.2% of SC felt that management from senior SC was ok, good or excellent. However the other 24.8% who found it poor or very poor are a sizable minority if this figure is replicated throughout Avon and Somerset whose current SC compliment is almost 600 officers.
The positive indications above are also somewhat at odds with question 12 where only on 9.9% of SC said they wanted to be managed solely by SC. Almost 30% wanted to be managed by regulars and 58.9% by a mixture. This raises questions regarding the utility of having trainee SC tutored by other SC, and is a strong indication that integration with the regulars is something wanted by SC.
### Training

The transition between training school and becoming operational is a key link in the process of becoming a SC. This investigation indicates that if a SC does not feel either part of the team, or lacking confidence in the policing environment this can adversely affect retention. The online survey revealed almost 40% of SC did not feel ready for accompanied patrol after training. However, respondents from the paper survey (Appendix B) found only 2% stated they did not feel ready for frontline policing duties with the majority (56%) saying they felt ‘partially’ ready and 42% saying they felt ‘ready’. It should be noted that training has evolved since some respondents in this survey would have trained. It is also unlikely; owing to the wide range of responsibilities a police officer undertakes that most could feel ‘ready’ with just 8 weekends of training. However it does raise a question about whether more could be done to explore and act on any concerns that recruits may have before they leave training school. It is also likely that the forthcoming changes in training strategy and implementation that Avon and Somerset are on the verge of adopting may help to rectify this situation.

Linked directly, and perhaps influencing this was question 14 which found that less than 40% of operational SC felt their transition from training school to district was well handled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 14: Do you think the transition between the end of your training and becoming operational on district well managed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More concerning still the paper survey of trainee SC indicates over 20% had had no contact with their district. The paper survey asked three specific questions relating to this. 16% of those who had just attested and were ready to start frontline policing had not been contacted by their either a mentor or representative of their district. 24% said they did not feel they had received the support required to make the transition from training school to become operational. Almost 20% had taken it upon themselves to make contact with
a representative on their district rather than vice-versa. Clearly then the ‘gap’ between training school and operational policing exists and the force needs to ensure SC are supported through the transition.

A simple solution to this might be for the ‘ride-along’ scheme to be a mandatory part of training. This would specifically be for the mentor, beat manager or assigned response team to take the trainee SC out prior to attestation. In this way SC could meet their mentor / team, and also gain some practical experience of radio usage with scope also for a practical Pocket Notebook exercise to be carried out. Ensuring the ‘gap’ between training school and operational policing is bridged could help both boost retention long term through SC feeling more valued and part of the team, and ensure that SC are not ‘lost’ in the transition in the gap between training school and becoming operational.

Not related to the subject matter but important to note was that in both surveys, reflected strongly in the free comments, there was recognition and praise of the trainers and staff at training school. With the limitations highlighted in regards to training scope and depth it is positive that so many SC enjoyed their training school experience.

**Recruitment:**

This investigation has suggested that retention could be improved through better and more targeted recruitment. It suggested that current recruitment strategies may not be rigorous enough, and as the SC role becomes more popular, that a more modified and targeted recruitment process may increase retention by selecting candidates who will provide relevant skills and value for money. With 53.9% of those surveyed having either no opinion or did not feel the recruitment process was rigorous enough this suggests recruitment practices need to be reviewed.
In addition the paper survey of trainee SC found 34% either had no opinion or did not think the process was rigorous enough.

It is beyond the remit of this research to explore the area further however it would be informative to consider how recruitment practices across districts differ and if/whether this affects retention.

**Deployment**

How SC is deployed has been shown to greatly affect the satisfaction and experience a SC enjoys. If SC are not satisfied they are likely to disengage, as in most cases where volunteers are involved. It was then interesting to note that over 50% preferred to work with regular officers, while a further 43% wanted a mix of the two.

![Question 16: If given the choice would you prefer to work primarily alongside:](image)

Working with regular officers on a frequent basis will enable SC to more easily assimilate into the policing environment, overcome any SC/regular divide, and provide SC with training from professionals. It is of note that during a time when the force is not recruiting regular officers in large numbers, tutor constables are not automatically utilised for the role of supporting and training those who need it most, the voluntary SC. The response from this question is not conclusive however it does strongly indicate a preference for close working relationships with regulars and an overwhelming endorsement against working solely with other SC.

A positive aspect of the survey is that the vast majority of SC were happy with the range and variety offered in their role. Previous surveys found that lack of variety in duties performed directly affected both retention and the
hours performed (Alexander 2000, McVean 2004). However some of the free

text comments in particular suggested SC can still be left with ‘yob jobs’ or
dealing with anti social behaviour, with a lack of training meaning SC could

not undertake for example, arrest processes from start to finish.

Figure III below ranks the factors 1-5 in order of importance factors which SC

feel limit them in terms of performing their duties:

Figure III:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannot drive police vehicles</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of appropriate training</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate equipment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of meaningful deployment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitudes from (some) regulars and police staff</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate supervision</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate welfare or support</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The factor which received the highest ranking was being unable to drive

police vehicles. Avon and Somerset has recently changed the driving policy to

make the process easier for SC to drive police vehicles. This could alleviate

some problems in this regard. It should also be considered that with
increasing numbers of SC joining the force there may be a need to authorise higher numbers of SC to drive to be effective operationally. This is of particular relevance in rural areas.

Lack of appropriate training also ranked highly as did lack of meaningful deployment. Training is recognised to be a difficult area to address owing to the range of tasks expected of SC and the extremely limited time available to implement additional training to a volunteers. Lack of meaningful deployment is however something the force retains control over and ensuring the force offers variety in the role would help to address this.

Free text responses commented on the lack of flexibility in shifts. Some SC have busy family and work ties, so restricting them to one Beat or Response Team could be stifling, and seriously affect the hours they are able to do. Mentors and supervisors should, within reason, be supportive in helping arrange SC duties that fit into what they are able to allocate per month. Similarly queries were raised about the variety of roles offered. It may be that SC involvement with cross-district operations could add variety to the role.

Other free comments mentioned problems with getting through the SOLAP and induction periods. This is a key area in terms of retention, as if SC do not feel they are progressing and developing, they are less likely to feel valued and could disengage. This is particularly important for SC who do fewer hours (closer to the minimum 16 per month) as the risk of disengagement and lack of progression is greater here.

**SC / Regular Officer Divide**

One of the historic concerns has been the ‘divide’ between SC and regulars. This still exists, although it has diminished in recent years as regulars become more reliant on SC support. Over 20% of those surveyed said there was a divide, and a further 44% said there was a partial divide. This was also reflected in some of the free comments which mentioned: “anti Special Sgt’s” and regulars not being supportive or helping to develop SC. Considering the increasing numbers of SC and their more prominent role in policing this is concerning. In terms of retention this divide has historically been said to be a major influencing variable. With 20% of SC still suggesting there is a divide the force will need to consider how to address this.
**Feeling valued**

Almost 60% of SC felt valued by the force; this finding is positive; however it could be improved. SC are volunteers who perform a key role in frontline policing. Recognising this contribution and ensuring that the volunteers feel valued is pivotal to retention. Free comment answers to this question are revealing in that they identify specific examples. Valuing staff can be from as little as a "thank you" at the end of a shift, to recognition evenings and parades. How valued SC are made to feel can depend on who is in charge during their shift; this demonstrates the key role of management within SC retention. If SC is not managed by effective supervisors who are able to recognise and reward contributions, they may not feel valued and this is pivotal to retention within voluntary organisations (Alexander 2001).
Again reflected in the free comments is the perception amongst SC that volunteering for the role will assist them in becoming a regular. This again highlights the need for a clear message to be given to potential applicants, as those who perceive this may be disappointed if this is not the case.

The responses to question 22 poses difficulties in relation to interpretation. A preference for further training is suggested by 30%; however this has repeatedly been shown to be difficult to achieve owing to the part-time nature of the role. Other aspects such as better management and more variety of tasks have been covered above. It does however identify that the needs of SC are broad and diverse and that the force should consider how to address the needs of individual officers rather than adopt a broad-brush approach.
The ‘other’ comments captured a large number of requests for SC to be able to drive police vehicles. As already noted the force has recently changed its driving policy so it will need to be considered whether this addresses the issue.
Conclusions and Recommendations:

Avon and Somerset is not unique amongst other UK police forces in that it could do more to retain SC. The findings of this paper are limited and do not provide groundbreaking information to quickly reduce wastage; however it does identify a number of areas of good practice which the force could adopt, as well as identifying where action is required involving current SC recruitment and training. It also highlights and suggests a number of possible changes and improvements which could assist in modernising the Special Constabulary and reduce long standing issues affecting attrition. If these areas are addressed this could ultimately result in higher calibre officers who offer the force better value for money. The nationwide increase in SC numbers has not been matched with growth or reform in organisational and support structures. Avon and Somerset and other forces will have to proactively address this discrepancy in order to get the most from its volunteers and ensure SC are value for money.

The following are recommendations are based on the research and survey findings above:

1) Recruitment processes should be reviewed to take into consideration the increasing numbers and differing motivations of SC applicants. As societal expectations of police increase SC are required to develop higher levels of professionalism and undertake increased responsibilities. With high numbers of motivated applicants the force might consider more targeted adaptations to their current recruitment policies. For example closer application form scrutiny to assist in identifying inappropriate biases and prejudices, weak knowledge base or the use of scoring systems. By a more thorough application process, with, for example, involvement from regular officers in interviews etc, better quality candidates could be chosen to undertake the expensive training process.

2) The force should ensure SCs are facilitated in achieving the individual goals they hope to realise in joining. Consideration should be given to the fact large numbers of SC are joining because regular recruitment is not currently an option or because they intend to join the regulars in the future. The force needs take into account that those joining with this view are likely to have a shorter ‘shelf life’ than those joining for altruistic reasons. The effect of this is twofold: firstly it is costly to train and equip a SC who is unlikely to stay for less than two years, consideration should be given to increasing the number of hours expected to be performed for those expressly joining to be a regular; secondly the force needs to consider the impact of recruiting large numbers of SC who believe it will benefit their future application to the regulars, when at present this is not the case. A core aim of the Special Constabulary is to act as link between the community and police, therefore when a disgruntled SC leaves the lasting impression will be negative for the wider community. One
idea advocated by Alexander (2000) is for a separate recruitment stream for those joining with a view to becoming regulars and this is something the force could consider.

3) Managers, whether SC or regulars should ensure that the volunteers feel valued. Some free text answers mentioned specifically the perceived lack of recognition, and disappointment that on one occasion a recognition evening had been cancelled. Steps to address this such as recognition evenings, parades are planned (Voisey 2012); however more needs to be done and seen to be done, as feeling valued is key to SC retention. The voluntary nature of the role means that if a SC does not feel it is worthwhile – they will lose motivation. The force should explore further how this recognition and value can be fed back to Special Constabulary as this is an area the force can easily control and change. Linked to this is ensuring that managers are trained to effectively recognise and reward.

4) Linked to being valued is assignment. There is a difference between SC becoming frustrated due to lack of appropriate or monotonous tasks, and SC experiencing ‘real’ policing which is not always fast paced or exciting. SC do accept there are duties / periods when little may happen, or they may be dealing with particularly unexciting tasks; this is part of policing. However consideration should be given to broadening the range of tasks made available to ensure SC can develop and retain the motivation to volunteer. For example cross-district joint operations, or further involvement in specialist teams.

5) It should be reviewed how SC are allocated mentors and, if necessary, considering halting recruitment if the force cannot provide the requisite number of motivated supervisors. SC should be assigned where they are wanted and will enjoy support from motivated officers, rather than be placed with a mentor simply to fill a gap. SC are volunteers and as a result, want to feel their voluntary time is well spent and worthwhile. Given that some SC can only perform the minimum duty hours each month these shifts need to be spent as proactively as possible. Record numbers of SC are being recruited, ensuring key support structures such as trained and motivated mentors are in place is pivotal to retention.

6) Ensuring the ‘gap’ between leaving training school and arriving on district is bridged. SC in both surveys noted that they did not receive sufficient support in the transition between training and becoming operational. The emphasis should be on the SC to use initiative to make contact with their assigned mentor and or team; however managers need to ensure SC are assigned appropriate mentors who are willing to support probationer SC and that trainee SC know who they will be supervised by, and where they are based,
well in advance of attestation. Contact should be firmly established before the final weekend of training to ensure that queries and anxieties can be addressed. An effective way of doing this would be to require all SC to undertake a ‘ride-along’ shift with their assigned mentor or team.

7) SC managers should receive appropriate training and support to effectively manage their officers. Increasing numbers of SC put added strain on managers who it can be forgotten are also volunteers. Additional training and/or support would empower managers to more closely monitor those for whom they have responsibility, and detect early signs of disillusionment, address poor performance or inappropriate behaviours, and support SC who appear to be disengaging. Increased confidence and a robust approach to poor performance would benefit morale, and in this way aid retention as well as increase confidence in SC from regulars.

8) SC should work as closely and frequently as possible with regular officers who could also act as mentors. Avoiding situations where SC are mentored and work purely with other SC would aid both integration and training of SCs. Mentoring from regular officers would also assist in bettering understanding from regulars of the role and motivations of modern SCs.

9) With the growth of Avon and Somerset Special Constabulary consideration of needs to be given regarding how regular officers are involved in the management of SC. The force should compare other models of management including a fusion of regular and SC line management.

10) The force should review in detail reasons why SC leave Avon and Somerset. More specific reasons for leaving need to be obtained when a SC resigns; a method of doing this would be by way of a qualitative survey. Previous national research indicates that early intervention can reduce wastage, and that sometimes personal or domestic reasons given for leaving can be avoided if they are identified and acted upon at an early stage.

11) More analysis of the data collected from this investigation could be undertaken. For example cross tabulating the data from the online survey produced informative and insightful trends. For example it showed that officers who had served 5+ years were less positive about SC management and more inclined to approach regulars for assistance. More time then should be spent analysing the wealth of data collected.

12) This investigation is limited to the exploration of one facet of SC policing in one constabulary. It would be useful to replicate this investigation within at
least two other UK police forces in order to compare and contrast the findings. The current dearth of evidence relating to almost every aspect of the SC role is concerning. The necessary reliance on ‘old’ evidence within this investigation has been unavoidable. More research urgently is needed; and could assist in influencing national, regional and local polices relating to this crucial and developing aspect of UK policing.
Reference List

Alexander. J (2000): An Investigation into the premature wastage of Special Constables – Police Research Award Scheme Number 141 – Home Office


Gaskain. G (2012) Personal Communication – Sgt Gaskain works within the team who have overseen the recent recruitment of regulars from the Metropolitan Special Constabulary


National Policing Improvement Agency (2010): Special Constabulary Recruitment Marketing and Retention Surveys

Voisey. Robert (2012) – Personal communication with the author. Mr Robert Voisey is the Special Constabulary Coordinator for Avon and Somerset Police. He provided me with un-published materials relating to the research.
Research is being conducted by a former SC from Avon and Somerset into the experience SC have whilst part of Avon and Somerset. This survey is part of a wider research project, the aim of which is to improve the experience of Specials in Avon and Somerset. Your answers will provide key data for the research and all comments / views expressed are completely anonymous. Please take the time to fill this form in and return it on the morning of Saturday 10th December at briefing.

Please tick / circle:

1) What are your motivations for joining the Special Constabulary?
   a) View to joining regulars / want to see if cut out for the regulars
   b) Believe it is the best way of getting into regulars
   c) Wanted to help the community
   d) Interested in law and order
   e) Wanted to do something constructive with spare time
   f) Other – please specify:

2) If the regulars were recruiting would you have still applied to become a SC?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Unsure
   d) Not applicable

3) Now that you are about to finish your training do you feel ‘ready’ to work as a frontline officer?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Partially

If not, what more could be done within the timescale available?
4) Have you been contacted / been in contact with your mentor or representative from the district you are going to?
   a) Yes
   b) No

5) Do you feel you have received the support required from your district to make the transition from training to become operational?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Maybe

6) What kind of contact have you had with the district / station you are going to?
   a) Specials supervisor / other special has contacted you
   b) Regular mentor / supervisor has contacted you
   c) You have contacted one of the above
   d) Other please specify:

7) Do you think the recruitment process to become a Special is rigorous enough?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) No opinion

Are there any other comments you would like to make on any of the above or your experience so far?
## Appendix B – Paper Survey Results

### Question 1: What are your motivations for joining the Special Constabulary? (Multiple options available)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mod 8</th>
<th>Mod 3</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) View to joining regulars / want to see if cut out for the regulars</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Believe it is the best way of getting into regulars</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Wanted to help the community</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Interested in law and order</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Wanted to do something constructive with spare time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other – please specify: (none)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 2: If the regulars were recruiting would you have still applied to become a SC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mod 8</th>
<th>Mod 3</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Unsure</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Not applicable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 3: Now that you are about to finish your training do you feel ‘ready’ to work as a frontline officer? (Not including responses from trainee officers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mod 8</th>
<th>Mod 3</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Partially</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If not, what more could be done within the timescale available?

- All about experiencing the job,
- More Practicals
- More practicals and less time on computers
- More practicals
- Will be a lot of learning on the job as well
- More play role scenarios - practice into theory
- General further more thorough training with more time to go over things
- No - probably as ready as I can be without going on patrol
- More training but to be honest we understand it is a small timescale
4) Have you been contacted / been in contact with your mentor or representative from the district you are going to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) Yes</th>
<th>31</th>
<th>84%</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>67%</th>
<th>79%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (didn’t tick)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) Do you feel you have received the support required from your district to make the transition from training to become operational?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) Yes</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>11%</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>64%</th>
<th>24%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>didn’t tick</td>
<td>5 didn’t tick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) What kind of contact have you had with the district / station you are going to? (more than one option selectable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a)</th>
<th>Specials supervisor / other special has contacted you</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>61%</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>57%</th>
<th>60%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Regular mentor / supervisor has contacted you</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>You have contacted one of the above</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>Other please specify:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No contact</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Ride along</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Visit Station</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Work on district already</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>didn’t tick</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7) Do you think the recruitment process to become a Special is rigorous enough?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) Yes</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>69%</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>56%</th>
<th>64%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mod 8 (last week of training before attestation) Free text / other Comments
The initial contact meeting was very poor. I'm not sure if people actually know what to expect. Maybe ride-alongs or custody visits could be made part of the recruitment. I've been a regular officer so found the training great revision but am concerned about how much I would have learnt if it had been the first time.
I am thoroughly enjoying the training course thus far and am really looking forward to finishing.
I have really enjoyed it and the quality of training we had was outstanding with brilliant trainers. There are areas I don't think we covered enough, however I believe I will get a lot of support on district.
More could have been done early on to establish who trainers would be etc.
Very impressed with how well the training has been presented / organised.
There should be more clarity about the station that you are going to and it should not be changed at the last minute.
D district are very slow in contacting specials and I still don't know who my mentor is.
Keep up the good work.
I have really enjoyed my training so far and I am very much looking forward to starting - thank you.
I think the trainers have done a great job given the amount of time available for training.

**Mod 3 (halfway point in training): Free text / other comments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great enthusiastic trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprised there is no fitness test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No fitness test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has been a good insight into what working for the police entails</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53 responses in total - 16 from Mod 3 and 37 from Mod 8