



D U C K F o O T

Valuing the Police

The General Public's Response in April 2012

on behalf of

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Research conducted in the week of April 23rd 2012

This report issued May 4th 2012

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1. The objectives for the research

The primary objective for the research is to establish whether people's attitudes shift when given more information and to identify the key facts that bring about any such change.

This research was commissioned by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to contribute to the gathering of evidence relating to the public perspective on the impact on quality of services as a result of changes forces are making or considering in order to close their budget gap. In particular changes in the structure of the police service could impact on the visibility of the police to the general public. Recent learning from various sources, including a very recent omnibus survey, had revealed how the public generally value visible policing because they see it as a proxy for effective policing; are against police station closures (even if channel shift is offered); and are initially against any cuts to public service.

The objective for this new research was to explore in more depth how the changes that impact on the visibility of the police might impact on general public opinion regarding the nature and quality of police services that concern them. A specific objective for the research was to establish whether people's attitudes shift when given more information about the extent of police resources and services that are covered by any constabulary and to identify the key facts that bring about any such change. Such findings could then be used to help inform police decision-making, and how best to communicate changes to the public.

A number of key themes had been defined as relevant to the objective of this research:

- What is it about police stations that the public likes versus other channels?
- What kind of interaction the public would want to have, e.g. only in person versus online etc?
- What would the public expect the split to be of specialist versus visible services
 - Spontaneous expectations
 - How expectations change when more information is given on what both specialist and visible policing groups are actually doing

2. Summary of Findings:

- There is a shared conviction that a visible, daily presence in the community is the most effective and necessary way for the police to act as a deterrent to crime; a belief that you have to be local to act local.
- Expectations of what visible policing should mean in practice were divided by the kind of neighbourhood people were living in, generation and gender.
- There is still a strong voice that anchors expectations of contemporary policing in what is recalled as policing half a century ago which is seen as 'safer times' to get back to.
- Those who don't share this idealised reference point are more able to reconsider their assumptions about the best ways for the police to be available to the general public.
- Asking people to make choices and exposing them to the full extent of police resources required in a modern force prompts a significant number of people to recognise that their best interests can be better served by prioritising the telephone over the front desk.
- Online access is generally regarded as no substitute for the phone or face-to-face as people struggle to see how this could process urgent calls for help.
- If overall visibility of the police is reduced concerns remain that a 'call out' service replacing the 'constant presence' service will undermine the police's ability to prevent crime and only be there after the event. 'Seeing is believing' remains a powerful emotional driver and visible policing in overall terms is still ring-fenced as the absolute priority service. Though the 'bobby on the beat' in the local neighbourhood only remains a necessity to an older voice.

3. Research method

3.1 A two-stage method

The objectives called for an approach that would allow for iterative learning on the part of participants in order to explore the potential to shift attitudes. This was achieved by using a two-stage approach of initial one hour group sessions, followed by brief telephone interviews to the group participants a couple of days later.

The group sessions would allow us to establish current views about the way people instinctively prefer their police service to be visible and accessible, then go on to explore responses to the kind of options the police face in terms of delivering a local service and finally consider how people react to the prospect of changes in scope and emphasis of resources, including visible policing.

Each group was made up of three people representing a particular demographic. This approach not only ensured we were able to hear different voices but also optimised coverage of the public within the budget limits of the research.

The follow up phone calls could provide insight into what memory of the issues discussed has settled in people's minds to influence their intuitions about visible policing in the future. Revisiting the ideas after at least 48 hours allows enough time for people's to have absorbed the new experience as sub-conscious memory, which drives intuitive decision-making.

3.2 Group discussion stimulus:

A number of statements were prepared for participants to rate on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing total disagreement and 7 total agreement.

1. *It's important to me to see police officers or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) patrolling the neighbourhood daily*
2. *The police should prioritise having the right specialist services on call when needed*
3. *I need to be reassured there's a police station local to me*
4. *I need to be reassured my local police station has a front desk where I can easily meet a police officer or PCSO*
5. *It's important to me that there's a police station in my area, even if there's no police counter open to the public'*
6. *For me, the most important means of contacting the police is the telephone*
7. *Online access to my local police would be a modern and effective way of contacting the police*

8. *I don't mind where the police person is working, so long as I get a fast response*
9. *Any further changes in police services can only be regarded as cutting back the level of service*
10. *I feel there can be room for streamlining police services that will benefit us all*

The following three choices were used to further facilitate discussion around the potential nature of changes in the service:

- *Would you rather see a police officer or PCSO on a daily basis, or would you rather know that if you require their services they would attend (i.e. resources available at demand and in places required)?*
- *Would you rather have a Police Officer or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) available at a police station front counter, or patrolling the streets and available by phone?*
- *Would you feel safer if you saw a police officer or PCSO on a daily basis, or if you knew they were investigating crimes like burglary or domestic violence, but out of sight?*

The final element of stimulus material was a matrix of police resources developed to quickly brief people on the extent and nature of services. It was visualised with 1-7 level controls as a simply way for people to indicate the kind of emphasis they sought, and under different levels of budget cut.

Police			Resources		
Visible Policing	Specialist Teams	Special Units	Processing	Management	Back Office
1. Incident response 2. Neighbourhood 3. Community relations 4. Traffic 5. Dogs 6. Firearms 7. Mounted	1. CID 2. Crime scene 3. Fingerprints/photo 4. Intelligence 5. Firearms specialists 6. Surveillance 7. Tech support 8. Air 9. Marine 10. Asset confiscation	1. Murder 2. Burglary 3. Drugs 4. Fraud 5. Hate 6. Vehicle 7. Vice 8. Immigration 9. Child, sex, domestic 10. Missing persons	1. Station enquiry counters 2. Control room 3. Call handling 4. Custody 5. Coroners officers 6. Crimes & incidents 7. Criminal records office	1. Chief Police Officers 2. Local Commanders 3. Staff officers 4. Operational Planning 5. Professional Standards 6. Criminal Justice	1. Training 2. Press office 3. Vehicle workshop 4. IT 5. Finance 6. Personnel 7. Health & welfare 8. Property 9. Supplies 10. Admin
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3.3 Sample design

The work was conducted in four police regions, with locations selected to represent different types of neighbourhood and crime levels:

1. South London, East Dulwich
2. South of Manchester, Timperley, Cheshire
3. South Wales, Penarth Vale of Glamorgan
4. Norfolk, Norwich

12 mini groups were conducted overall (3 people of similar age and class in each), 3 in each region. Each lasting an hour. Held over April 23rd to 25th 2012.

Group	SEX	AGE	CLASS	Location
1	M	18-24	BC1	1
2	F	35-54	C1C2	1
3	M	55+	C2DE	1
4	F	18-24	C1C2	2
5	M	35-54	C2DE	2
6	F	55+	BC1	2
7	M	18-24	C2DE	3
8	F	35-54	BC1	3
9	M	55+	C1C2	3
10	F	18-24	BC1	4
11	M	35-54	C1C2	4
12	F	55+	C2DE	4

People were recruited on the basis that they were not recent victims of crime, in order to avoid personal experience overwhelming responses and distorting the picture of the ‘general’ public’s viewpoint. Also excluded were people who hold especially strong views on policing in general. Perpetrators of crimes were also excluded. Everyone was recruited to attend knowing that the sessions would be about local policing but the exact nature of the topic was not be explained prior to their arrival.

4. Main findings

4.1 The public's opening position

Before discussing the issues raised by the need to meet budget gaps, the research participants were invited to individually give a rating between 1 and 7 to the statements below, where 1 was strongly disagree and 7 was strongly agree. The average ratings are given below.

<i>It's important to me to see police officers or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) patrolling the neighbourhood daily</i>	5.5
<i>The police should prioritise having the right specialist services on call when needed</i>	6.0
<i>I need to be reassured there's a police station local to me</i>	5.2
<i>I need to be reassured my local police station has a front desk where I can easily meet a police officer or PCSO</i>	5.3
<i>It's important to me that there's a police station in my area, even if there's no police counter open to the public'</i>	4.4
<i>For me, the most important means of contacting the police is the telephone</i>	6.2
<i>Online access to my local police would be a modern and effective way of contacting the police</i>	3.6
<i>I don't mind where the police person is working, so long as I get a fast response</i>	6.2
<i>Any further changes in police services can only be regarded as cutting back the level of service</i>	4.4
<i>I feel there can be room for streamlining police services that will benefit us all</i>	4.5

The sample for this research was only 36 people in total and these indices should only be read as a qualitative indicator and not statistically significant numbers. However, these numbers do reflect people's spontaneous gut feelings that strongly tend towards championing any kind of police service that is overtly visible in the community.

"You need a constant presence in built up areas." M, 20s, S. Wales

In tandem with their desire for visible policing there is also a demand for convenience of access and effectiveness in addressing needs. So they also want the right specialist services to be available on call when needed (actually rated higher than the importance of a daily visible presence). The reality of a modern lifestyle makes the telephone their most important contact point and at the end of the day what matters is a fast, effective response, not so much wanting to be able to find an officer for a face-to-face exchange.

These responses are an indication of a conflict of interests that most people express, to one degree or another. There is a comforting emotional security in seeing that the police are ever present, but there is a more practical recognition that what they actually require of the police is not necessarily best served by a 'the bobby on the beat' style of service. This potential conflict of self-interests is brought front-of-mind when people are asked to start making choices, but until a choice has to be made they simply expect it all to be there on hand, at their convenience.

Visible policing

There is a shared conviction that a visible, daily presence in the community is the most effective and necessary way for the police to act as a deterrent to crime; a belief that you have to be local to act local. The police being seen to be present in the community is an easy, comforting visual reminder that there is a watchful eye and someone to turn to at times of need and trouble. If the police are seen to be able to integrate with the society they watch over then people can feel that they live in a community that respects law and order – together we own the streets and neighbourhood, not the crook, the thief, the dealer and his cohorts.

"Visible I for all." F 50s Manchester

"The Police need to be able to start on the criminals before the criminals start up." M, 40s Manchester

People can hear statistics that tell them crime is falling but they trust their eyes and ears and the environment feels to have become harsher, more brutal, which amplifies this desire for more a civil society.

"I'm surprised when I hear crime is on the decrease, its not what it feels like." F 20s Norwich

The scale of expectations of what visible policing should mean in practice was divided by the kind of neighbourhood people were living in. Those who claimed to live in areas where they were seemingly more likely to witness frequent example of trouble on the streets, typically said to be unemployed unruly youth, were the most adamant about the need for neighbourhood policing on a daily basis. This view is exacerbated by feeling such troublemakers are highly disrespectful of the police and show no fear. So, their desire is also to witness the police proving themselves top dog in this conflict and deserving of respect so as to reclaim the neighbourhood on behalf of the law-abiding residents.

"Saturday night needs the police on the Street." M 60s S.Wales

Those who lived in more affluent residential areas, tended not to require such a personal character to the police presence in their neighbourhood. Not only were they not witness to trouble on their own front door, but also they were also less likely to be socially networked into the immediate community around them. As people less engaged in neighbourhood life they were simply less connected to the issue of feeling safe on one's own street.

The older person and those who live in tighter knit non-urban communities are the most enthusiastic for the PC patrolling on foot, with the bike mentioned as an evolution of this style of policing.

"Bikes are a good idea... not plodding about!" F 50s S.Wales

The older citizens tended to hanker after a style of policing that was how they imagine it used to be when they were young and living in 'safer times.' They can readily verbalise a desire for 'the bobby on the beat' who patrols on foot and is familiar and known by name to all in the community.

"The policeman in the neighbourhood has local knowledge." M, 60s, S.Wales

The younger generation of course have no memory of such times past and did not attach such a personal note to their desire for visible policing. Their relationship with the police could be far more distant and often guarded, and more so with those in more urban areas. While positive to the reassurance that the police are close to hand to be called on when needed, such residents did not tend to describe the local police in their area 'one of us.' The police officer is more front-of-mind as a figure of authority and someone not to be crossed. Here is the young person seemingly expressing an

attitude of cautious respect that the older person would be delighted to hear said. However, the young person was not always a fan for a constant police presence in the way that an older person is inclined to emphasise.

"Sort of ruining my day... I find a police presence intimidating." F, 20 Manchester

For the younger person, also those living in urban areas and those in affluent residential areas, police cars patrolling are instinctively the most effective presence the police can make in their community, the car giving them optimum speedy coverage of their patch, along with all the technological resources modern policing requires. Presence is more important than personal. And, the car is judged a far more visible symbol of presence in the community than an officer on foot.

The older enthusiast for the PC on his feet also acknowledges that the patrol car is the necessary way to deliver an effective visible presence in the contemporary environment.

PCSOs

Everyone was of the opinion that a visible police presence on the High Street, in public places, or the local neighbourhood is now more often than not PCSOs rather than PCs. There was little regard shown for the PCSO who is considered to be a cheap substitute for the real thing. The PC is considered better qualified and crucially properly sanctioned to act effectively in response to trouble, whether on patrol or called out. Thus there is a general feeling that the streets are not so well protected as they have been in the past. The reason for this is readily attributed to cost saving and making what budget there is go further. There was little or no reflection that the PCSOs may be an adequate resource to deploy as a visible presence able to call on more 'specialist' resources suited to addressing the needs of a specific incident. Instead people are quick to mention the nickname for PCSOs, 'plastic police' who lack the licence to act in the manner required to properly keep law and order. They are thought of more as a mobile help desk, less a figure of authority.

There was also limited mention of antagonism between PCs and PCSOs, the former being said to feel their jobs were under-threat. People's sympathies were with the PC who is missing from their community. This potential of tension within the local force did not help make people feel at ease with their local police service.

The local station

Those who desire the PC to be walking the neighbourhood street expect him or her to be based at a very local station that can be easily called with matters of concern, or when, *“handing in the wallet I found the other day.”*

“Penarth has gone. Barry Town is essential.” F 40s S.Wales

But very few in the sample had ever had cause to visit their local station and never had cause to think about its role with any depth. The necessity for a local station tended to be simply assumed as part of what the police needed – a base to be called out of when needed, or simply a place to go to work. And of course just knowing there was a place to turn to when in need offered reassurance.

“I didn’t know about the front desk.” F 20s Manchester

“Nice to know it’s there, but is that indulgent?” F 50s Manchester

4.2 Disrupting people’s assumptions

People’s assumptions about the nature of the service they need were challenged in two different ways. Firstly they were asked to consider choices between different aspects of visible policing. Secondly they were asked what cuts they would make if funds were more limited than present, forcing them to repeatedly cut back to a point where some aspect of front line services would have to be sacrificed.

People were asked to make this choice, *Would you rather see a police officer or PCSO on a daily basis, or would you rather know that if you require their services they would attend (i.e. resources available at demand and in places required)?* This raises a fundamental dilemma for people in that the police are expected to perform more than one function; they must foster a crime-free society as well as solve the crime that does happen. As discussed above, people strongly associate a daily visible presence with preventing crime, whereas solving crime is more associated with being called out to respond to an incident, whether that is the brawl in the street, a burglary or harm to an individual. This leads to people generally insisting that, “seeing is being” and the primary requirement of any force.

*“I’m adamant you need a local police presence as that is half the battle.” M, 60s
Norwich*

The idea of a call out service is also undermined by the frequent criticism of the time it can take for the police to respond to calls from a victim or concerned person. This could be out of first-hand experience or by report. Feelings about this choice are exacerbated by the issue of PCSOs replacing PCs as there is a concern that whoever responds is not qualified to act first-hand.

If the police were to become primarily a 'call out' service replacing the 'constant presence' service the belief is that policing will stop being a deterrent and become primarily a crime solving service that's only there after the event – a post crime not pre crime service.

"We don't just want policing after the fact." M, 40s Manchester

"You'll alienate people from the police by making them only associated with bad occasions." F, 40s S. Wales

A second choice was considered, *Would you feel safer if you saw a police officer or PCSO on a daily basis, or if you knew they were investigating crimes like burglary or domestic violence, but out of sight?*

Again, this is asking people to compare two different aspects of police work and again prevention through presence is instinctively clung on to as the primary need. However, it does reference a crime that concerns the law-abiding citizen and self-interest starts to show in their responses.

"I find myself contradicting myself." F 60s Manchester

The third choice presented was, *Would you rather have a Police Officer or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) available at a police station front counter, or patrolling the streets and available by phone?* This succeeded in disrupting assumptions about the worth of a local station, because there was clear benefit to the citizen proposed, as well as promising to maintain a visible presence. With a clear benefit proposed people see gain rather than loss - evolution towards a stronger service rather than erosion of a reassuring tradition. Self-interest sees a more convenient and realistic way to get help and potentially get a swifter response, although the concern remains that response times will not be as fast as wanted/required. A more personal touch is suggested, which appeals to older people.

Given the opportunity to consider this option further some people could start to imagine new ways of providing a front desk such as being based in the local library or community centre. Whereas others could chase back to a more cynical frame of mind and fear there would be no direct line to their local officer and that they will have to

join a call-centre queue for an impersonal service that's prioritising calls for an over-stretched force. While they can rationally agree that speed of response is more important than the actual location of the police base, intuition says greater geographic distance translates into a more distant, less responsive relationship.

"Over the phone you don't put people at ease." M 60s S.Wales

Online

Internet as a channel of access to the police is generally regarded as no substitute for the phone or face-to-face because it is not associated currently with any other kind of quick response service. People did not assume any police service could be along the lines of their own usage of facebook or twitter, i.e. used to strike up an immediate two-way dialogue with friends. They struggle to associate typing up their needs with the kind of urgency they imagine would prompt them to want police help. The spoken word just feels so much faster and interactive. No one conjures up any kind of a Skype service. How online could deliver on a 999 level of quick response would have to be demonstrated to prove its potential.

The Internet could only be seen as being a channel for an information resource. It could be recognised as a way of the police promoting their local presence/activity but this would require regular effort on the part of the resident and therefore intuition says it is highly unlikely to become habitual and broad spread. Those who were most inclined to follow local crime as a news story in the local paper were older and had not switched to the Internet for local news. But a younger generation could be aware of the police already using new media to reach out to the community, citing an example of a call for help via twitter in searching for a missing person.

"They can work smarter like using Twitter to communicate with the neighbourhood."
M 40s Manchester

Reviewing resources

After discussing direct choices participants were presented with this summary of all the resources the police call on to deliver their service in any force and asked to consider where they would place the emphasis of financial resource.

Police			Resources		
Visible Policing	Specialist Teams	Special Units	Processing	Management	Back Office
1. Incident response 2. Neighbourhood 3. Community relations 4. Traffic 5. Dogs 6. Firearms 7. Mounted	1. CID 2. Crime scene 3. Fingerprints/photo 4. Intelligence 5. Firearms specialists 6. Surveillance 7. Tech support 8. Air 9. Marine 10. Asset confiscation	1. Murder 2. Burglary 3. Drugs 4. Fraud 5. Hate 6. Vehicle 7. Vice 8. Immigration 9. Child, sex, domestic 10. Missing persons	1. Station enquiry counters 2. Control room 3. Call handling 4. Custody 5. Coroners officers 6. Crimes & incidents 7. Criminal records office	1. Chief Police Officers 2. Local Commanders 3. Staff officers 4. Operational Planning 5. Professional Standards 6. Criminal Justice	1. Training 2. Press office 3. Vehicle workshop 4. IT 5. Finance 6. Personnel 7. Health & welfare 8. Property 9. Supplies 10. Admin
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Spontaneous reactions remain favouring visible policing but being confronted by the full extent of what it takes to deliver a modern police service disrupted people's broad assumptions as they started to recognise that there were more behind the scenes services that were also part of the front line. Also, there is a recognition that resources are all interconnected and cannot be judged in a stand-alone way.

The prospect of further cuts to the police service was not unexpected because all public services are considered to be under the same pressure. That the emergency services are being squeezed is generally thought unwise, especially the police who have to cope with the consequences of a depressed economy more than anyone, i.e. arguing that rising unemployment means rising crime. This opinion is only exacerbated when people are presented with the breadth of police tasks and challenged to prioritise services.

"Need to get people back to work and kids off the street." M, 20s, S. Wales

Public services were often accused of systemic waste but there was little or no criticism of the police. It's felt that other public services should deservedly bear the brunt of the cuts, i.e. extravagant councils spending for the sake of using up budgets.

"The NHS hand out stress balls to staff!" M, 30s S. Wales

There are however felt to be inefficiencies within the police that come about because of demands placed on them from outside the service, the most front of mind being a belief that PCs spend most of their time doing paperwork to back up their actual work policing. This issue stirs people up to become angry at a culture of 'health and safety' that is seen as out of control and hampering policing and other aspects of public life, e.g. criminals not be chased for fear of causing the physical harm that leads to legal action

It is believed that many of the problems faced by an already over-stretched force would be solved by liberating the police, especially the front line officers, from having to "waste time" justifying their work to others. The service could achieve much more if it was not covered by a litigious culture that favours the villain.

"More authority for the police is more efficient for us all." F, 50s Manchester

When pushed to consider how police resources could be cut back, the desire inevitably is to preserve front line services so the focus of attention is on finding ways to reduce the cost of supporting those services. Responses could have been applied to almost any large organisation, for example: it is imagined that there could be tiers of management that could be stripped out; comment is made about bosses being over-paid; savings could be made by switching to out-sourcing of services such as fleet management/maintenance.

When pushed further people then look at more background aspects to the processing of crime such as 'Custody' or wonder whether the 'Criminal records office' is something that could become someone else's responsibility. The more people had to consider possible changes to the shape of the service the more they started to question some of their assumptions about how visible policing should be delivered. As seen all the way through the discussion self-interest drives choices. People come to recognize that there are resources working out-of-sight on their behalf to prevent crime not just solve crime. They then acknowledge that they want to be reassured that the police have the resources behind the scenes to tackle more remote but concerning issues such as terrorism. They want to feel that drug crime is being addressed at a higher level than the dealer on their local street corner. Putting participants in this frame of mind led them to recognize that deterrence requires more than a visible presence; invisible services are required too. Consequently participants tempered the insistence that a visible local deterrence force is the absolute priority, which nudges them into questioning whether here is room for organisational change across the frontline services that could prove money saving, i.e. the consolidation of departments. It becomes more important that they can make a call than where they call, so further centralisation of call centres is proposed. The station enquiry desk loses it worth to those who have never needed to visit the station.

The relative worth of specific aspects of visible policing starts to be questioned. The mounted police could be picked on, *"Horses! They just frighten us, what are they doing on the street?"*

Community relations could be picked on as not so essential by people who had earlier in the discussion championed a local personal touch to policing,

"Community policing is a nice idea but limited." M, 20s, S.Wales

Younger voices tend to start commenting that resources need to be focused on where crime is worst.

"Crime is not where Police officers happen to be." F, 20s, Manchester

However, 'seeing is believing' remains a powerful emotional driver and visible policing is still ring-fenced as the absolute priority service over specialist teams and units. But it is accepted that the local police station is perhaps increasingly an anachronism and that the car could be seen as the new front desk. It is accepted that modern technology can be used to put us all in touch with our local PCs and PCSOs, but there remains a resistance to this being impersonal and online.

4.3 On further reflection

Participants were telephoned a couple of days after the focus groups to see if their views had changed in any way. When asked to review their responses to the statements there was very little movement, with a minority of people mildly down-grading their commitment to aspects of visible policing.

Half of those called were adamant that their views had not changed, and this was mostly in regard to preserving a visible force.

"The emphasis should be on prevention so a presence on the street and contact with the public is essential." M, 60s, S.Wales

However, there was an overall recognition that the issue was more complex and difficult than was first imagined.

"I can now appreciate how important everything is." F, 30s, S.London

"I realise what needs to be considered and it's all important, but I'd not change my original answers." M, 40s, Manchester

"I have more respect for how hard it is to make cut decisions as everything has a knock on effect." F, 30s, S.London

A third of participants were able to say that the experience of considering the issue in such depth had led them to reconsider their priorities.

"My first reflex was to say more bobbies on the beat but now when I see what is involved this has changed a few opinions." M, 50s Norwich

The main shift was with regard to the value of local police stations and the front desk and the importance of telephone access and quick response. This was largely a shift expressed by women, with men more inclined to defend the high visibility.

"It has changed view on having a local police station, I now feel it is not so important. I'd use the phone in an emergency." F, 50s Manchester

"It now feels more important to have a quick response rather than a police station or counter." F, 40s, Norwich

"Should do away with duty desk. If I can get hold of them on the phone that's enough. No logic in walking the beat as you don't know where they are when you need them." F, 30s, S.Wales

5. Conclusions

The findings of this research concur with previous evidence that people's spontaneous opinion is to feel resentment at the prospect of cuts in the police service, see great value in visible policing and assume there is an important role for local police stations. However, when confronted with the potential of choices or the need to make changes it is recognised that visible policing is only the tip of the iceberg of the total resources required to prevent and solve crime, which leads to a recognition that uncomfortable choices may have to be made, i.e. not necessarily the most obvious to the general public. Changing the way the public engage with the police became a more acceptable decision for a significant number of people when it was realised that certain services are not necessarily critical to the police delivering prevention, protection or crime solving. Self-interest leads to people prioritising practical security over emotional security. But this requires an informed disruption to their assumptions which are rooted in a long-established familiarity with how policing has been served; otherwise people are inclined to remain adamant that no change should be implemented.