



Institute for
**Public Safety
Crime and Justice**

Police Scotland Youth Volunteers Evaluation: Year 3 Report

Authors:

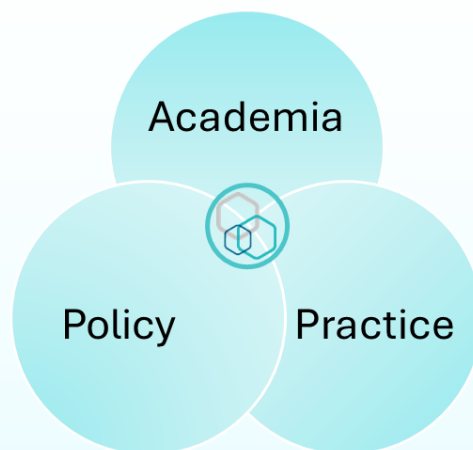
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About the IPSCJ

Established in 2014, the IPSCJ at the University of Northampton is a premier research, evaluation and consultancy organisation situated in the fields of public safety, crime, and justice. Positioned at the interface between practice, policy, and academia, the IPSCJ has delivered insight and innovation to enhance public service delivery models, organisational strategy, and service user outcomes. The IPSCJ collaborates with partner organisations at local, regional, national, and international scales to address key global challenges. The core mission of the IPSCJ is to support positive evidence-based policy and practice change for the benefit of society.

Our Priorities



Strategic Priority 1: Early Intervention & Diversion

This theme explores issues such identifying ‘at risk’ children and adults at an early stage to intervene and where possible divert from the criminal justice system into effective support. Example projects include:

- **Identification of Ex-Service Personnel in the Criminal Justice System & Barriers to Uptake of Support in England, Wales and Scotland**
- **Evaluation of Voluntary Attender Pathfinders**
- **Evaluating Out of Court Disposals (OOC)**
- **Reduction and Prevention of Serious Youth Violence and Knife crime**

Strategic Priority 2: Prevention & Protection

This theme supports police, criminal justice agency and third sector projects strategically and operationally that aim to prevent harm, protect and keep safe; individuals, communities, and places. Example projects include:

- **Understanding serious violence in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire: A qualitative, exploratory study**
- **Evaluating the Serious Violence Duty Implementation**
- **Evaluation of #Citadel: A holistic approach to reducing harm from Class A drugs**
- **Evaluation of Safe, Healthy and Empowered (SHE) project: A multi-intervention programme for families affected by domestic violence**

Strategic Priority 3: Treatment & Rehabilitation

This theme explores projects that treat and rehabilitate individuals who are in contact with the criminal justice system in the community or in prison. Example projects include:

- **Community Sentence Treatment Requirement (CSTR) Multisite Evaluation**
- **Review of Care for Older People in Prison**
- **Perinatal Mental Health in Prison**
- **Mental Health Street Triage Review**

Strategic Priority 4: Contribution & Capability

This theme supports projects aimed at understanding and enhancing the contributions from policing staff as well as citizens to policing, considering issues such as wellbeing, trust and value. Example projects include:

- **Citizens in Policing in England and Wales**
- **East Midlands Special Operations Unit Organisational Development**
- **Police Support Volunteers in England and Wales**
- **Volunteer Police Cadets in England and Wales**

Executive Summary

Vulnerabilities:

- To identify vulnerabilities, the PSYV national team undertook an exercise which invited young people in the programme to complete an internal questionnaire.
- The questionnaire was completed with consent and was voluntary. In total, 180 out of 591 provided a response (30%).
- In total 43% of those who responded were at an **increased risk of involvement in youth crime**.
 - There are several risks of involvement in criminality and serious violence. 65 young people were identified as meeting one of these criteria, with 8 meeting 2 criteria, 3 meeting 3 criteria and 2 meeting 4 criteria.
- In total 86% of those who responded were at an **increased risk of poor wellbeing and health**.
 - When considering the criteria for young people who are vulnerable to poor wellbeing and health, 98 young people were identified as meeting one of these criteria, with 36 meeting 2 criteria, 13 meeting 3 criteria, 4 meeting 4 criteria and 3 meeting 5 criteria.
- In total 91% who responded were at an **increased risk of poor educational attainment**.
 - When considering the criteria for young people who are vulnerable to poor educational attainment. 92 young people were identified as meeting one of these criteria, with 36 meeting 2 criteria, 21 meeting 3 criteria, 9 meeting 4 criteria, 3 meeting 5 criteria, 1 meeting 6 criteria and 1 meeting 7 criteria.
- The results presented above demonstrate that the programme is engaging with young people who have a range of and, in some cases, multiple indicators of vulnerability. Notwithstanding definitional issues, the evidence above demonstrates the programme is meeting its strategic aim.
- Considering the data, around a fifth of those surveyed met 3 or more of the vulnerability criteria captured in the exercise. One young person met seven. Whilst there are universal inputs in the programme for young people that provide support, there is a cohort of young people who may require more specialist support to both positively engage with the programme and succeed.
- Strategically, the Volunteer Coordination Unit may benefit from better defining the risk(s) the programme is better or weaker at mitigating.
- Operationally, this information will be important for coordinators and adult volunteers.
- It will be important, now having completed this exercise, to maintain record and establish procedures to maintain its accuracy.

Youth Volunteer Opinions:

Views on PSYV

- The main reason given for joining PSYV was to gain life skills including confidence, social skills and team working. Following this, the most common response was to gain policing experience or knowledge, particularly in the hope of a future career in policing.
- There has been a slight increase in PSYVs stating there is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run (43%). Although most had no suggestions, notable improvements suggested ideas around group dynamics, which included issues around the new restructuring that has occurred to their group, wider police recognition towards PSYV, better group equality and encouragement for new people to make friends.
- Overall, the Youth Volunteer views on the PSYV programme are positive with 78%-94% agreeing with the statements relating to the programme.
- Young people who have been a PSYV for more than two years have less agreement towards the statement "PSYV is run well" than those with less than two years of experience.

- Those who identified as Non-Heterosexual were less likely to feel that they could be themselves at PSYV than those who identified as Heterosexual.
- Opinions on group night activities and events have been consistent over the three years with a want for interactive activities and organised group nights and a need for more meaningful duties at some events.

Skills and Confidence

- Just under two-thirds (61%-65%) of those who responded believed that they can do things as well as most other people, believe in their own abilities and have confidence in themselves. When asked to rate their skills from weak to strong, the majority of Youth Volunteers rated their skills as strong at 71%-84%. Around 7% rated their communication, leadership and teamworking skills as weak.
- For self rated perceptions of skills, statistically significant differences have been found based on the survey year. In Year 1 56%-66% rated their skills as strong, in Year 2 of the survey this significantly increased to 71%-84%. In this year's survey (Year 3) the proportion of those who rated their skills as strong has slightly dipped for some statements (78%-83%) but still remains higher than the ratings in Year 1. For the skills of leadership and communication, ratings have continued to increase each survey year, with the highest proportion rating their skills as strong in the Year 3 survey.
- The majority of respondents felt being a PSYV had a positive influence on their skills, particularly their team working and communication skills with 93% and 92% respectively saying PSYV had a positive impact. In comparison to Year 2, there were increases in positive ratings for all variables.
- It was found that PSYVs who were young carers were more likely to say that PSYV had a strong effect on their resilience.
- Out of the sample, 88%-97% of participants gave positive responses regarding being a PSYV and their sense of social responsibility, life experience, being able to make a positive contribution to their community and feeling good being a volunteer.
- Statistically significant differences were found with Females being more likely to agree that they feel good being a volunteer. Additionally, since the drop in agreement to the statement 'I feel a sense of social responsibility' in the Year 2 survey (from 95% in Year 1 to 89% in Year 2), levels of agreement have slightly increased in the Year 3 survey to 90%. However, this is still 5% lower than in the Year 1 survey.

Perception of the Police

- When asked to rate their overall perception of the police, 86% rated it positively, whilst 2% rated it negatively, 9% rated it neither positive nor negative and 1% preferred not to say. Upon further analysis there was a statistically significant difference in the answers to this statement based on ethnicity. With 90% of White individuals rating their perception as positive compared to 74% of Non-White individuals.
- More than half of the responding participants felt that Police Scotland upholds the values of integrity (64%), fairness (63%), respect (75%) and human rights (76%) 'to a great extent'. A significant difference identified for the statement 'Police Scotland upholds the value of protecting Human Rights' with less Non-White participants rating this as 'to a great extent' than White participants.
- Most of the Youth Volunteers who responded agreed that the police are helpful and friendly towards young people (88%), the police understand the problems faced by young people (71%) and the police are dealing with things that matter to young people (65%). When asked their levels of agreement on the statement '*the police sometimes treat young people unfairly*' 31% of the Youth Volunteers agreed.
- 61% stated that being in PSYV has made their perception of the police more positive. Reasons given for PSYV making their perception of the police more positive included gaining more understanding, realising the work the police do to help, because the police are friendly, they have overcome a bad experience, and they have gained trust in the police. Most reasons given for their perception staying the same was that they have always liked the police.
- Most respondents indicated they would feel comfortable approaching the police if they needed help (90%), confident reporting a crime or other information to the police (84%), that they have a good understanding of all the different things the police do (91%).

- Most (46%) of the youth volunteers responded that they believed the wider community of their age group had a negative perception of the police. 28% stated that the perception was positive, 23% stated neither and 3% preferred not to say.
- Length of service played a role in this statement with 38% of those who had been there less than a year stating the perception was positive compared to 18% for those who had been there for a year to two years and 33% for those who had been there for two plus years. There was also a difference in gender, with 38% of males stating there was a positive perception compared to 22% of females.

Case Studies:

- Researchers visited PSYV groups to conduct qualitative case studies which involved focus groups and creative methods to engage young people in further defining strengths and weaknesses in the PSYV programme and how the programme can be improved.
- Similarly, to the survey results, when asked about their gains at PSYV, the most popular answers were confidence and gaining new friends. In addition to this a range of skills were identified as key gains from PSYV such as leadership, organisation, communication, and teamwork.
- When asked '*What do you enjoy most about PSYV?*', again, similarly to the survey answers, the most popular thing is their 'events' or 'deployments'.
- Many of the youths struggled to answer the question '*What are some of the things you least enjoy about PSYV?*'. However, for those who did answer, the most popular answer was drill, with main reasons for this being that it is boring, repetitive, and stressful.
- When asked to suggest improvements for PSYV, the most common theme was again answers surrounding the events.
- It was clear from the focus groups that many of the PSYVs felt they had gained a lot from their participation, with confidence and communication were the main key skills mentioned by the participants.
- The theme of youth voice was discussed with some stating that there isn't much input from the YVs, but others stated that although coordinators are open to youth input, the youth don't seem to take advantage of those opportunities.
- When asked in the focus groups if there are existing mechanisms for them to share their opinions most of the youths didn't feel that they did and suggestions of the usefulness of anonymous feedback methods were made.
- In the focus groups when asked about the balance of police activities and involvement, many stated that although they are not interested in a policing career, they would still like more police involvement as they find it interesting.
- Others had more negative views towards the police involvement in the programme, they stated they felt as if they were just a check box for police Scotland and used by them or see it as a one-way relationship particularly at events.
- Some of the volunteers also mentioned some negativity from other people when they find out that they are involved in PSYV and as such, they often hide it from their peers.
- In the focus groups many of the youths outlined the lack of wider awareness of what PSYV is and participants gave things they would say to promote PSYV.

Alumni Survey:

- Overall 42 alumni completed the alumni survey, of which 30 gave the area in which they were a PSYV.
- 79%-92% stated that PSYV had a positive impact on their skills and confidence.
- In total 75% stated that being in PSYV influenced their decision making in terms of what they wanted to do in life.
- The majority of alumni who participated in the survey stated that, where applicable, their experience as a PSYV helped them in situations such as a job application (85%), job interview (75%), whilst in a job (77%),

in an application for an education placement (78%), in an interview for an education placement (75%) and whilst studying (70%).

- 65% stated that their experience in PSYV has helped them since they left and 25% stated it had not helped very much or at all.

Leavers Survey:

- In total, 37 leavers completed the survey. Of these participants, the majority (27%) had been a PSYV for a year to less than two years.
- The participants were asked why they left PSYV. 36% left because they had aged out of the programme, 56% for another reason and 8% preferred not to say.
- 8% stated that they intend to volunteer at PSYV as an adult volunteer, 41% stated they do not, 27% selected maybe and 24% did not know.
- The statements with the highest level of agreement was '*The PSYV programme encourages and values diversity*' and '*I learnt new skills as a PSYV*' with 83% agreeing.
- The statements with the highest disagreement, although still low, were '*I enjoyed being a PSYV*' (20% disagreed) and '*I would recommend being a PSYV to other people*' (21% disagreed). For the statement '*There is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run*', 63% agreed, 26% neither agreed nor disagreed and 11% disagreed.
- 57% stated that they think young people have enough say into the activities on the PSYV programme, 29% stated no and 14% did not know.

Adult Staff and Volunteer Opinions:

Benefits of PSYV for Young People

- Overall the adult staff and volunteers were extremely positive towards the benefits of PSYV for the Youth Volunteers with the majority (94%-98%) agreeing with the statements. The most positive statement with 98% agreement was '*They get to meet people from different backgrounds through PSYV*'. The statement with the highest level of disagreement, although still very low at 4%, was '*I think they enjoy being a PSYV*'.
- It was found that there was a dip in agreement in Year 2 to the statement '*It supports PSYVs in their future field and career choices*', however, in Year 3 the agreement level has increased to 91%.
- In Year 3, the majority of respondents agreed that PSYV has a positive impact on young people's skills (86%-98%). Leadership skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills were all rated the highest with 98% agreement and only 3% disagreeing that PSYV has a positive impact on these skills. Resilience was rated the lowest with 86% agreeing, 11% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 3% disagreeing.
- Those who had been a volunteer or coordinator for 3-5+ years all agreed that PSYV positively impacted feelings of social responsibility, sense of belonging and teamworking skills of PSYVs. Those who had less time volunteering were less likely to agree (79%-90%).

Gains of the Role for Adult Staff and Volunteers

- When asked to rate their levels of agreement to statements relating to the personal gains of the role most respondents agreed (66%-99%). The most positive statement was '*I feel I am making a positive contribution to the lives of young people*' with 99% agreeing to the statement.
- Agreement has decreased over time to the statement '*Being a PSYV coordinator or volunteer is a helpful addition to my CV*' with 86% agreeing in survey Year 1, 74% agreeing in Year 2 and 66% agreeing in Year 3.
- When asked '*What do you think are the key things that you gain from the role of PSYV coordinator or volunteer?*' the most common answer was having a positive impact on young people.

- When asked 'Would you recommend being a PSYV coordinator or Volunteer to others?' 89% stated 'Yes', 5% did not know or preferred not to say and 1% said 'No'. The majority of those who gave an answer to why they would recommend the role to others stated that it is because it is a very rewarding role.
- 82% stated that they intend to stay in their role in the foreseeable future, 14% stated they did not know and 4% preferred not to say.

Training Support and Operations

- Responses towards the PSYV programme were overall positive. 95% of respondents stated that they feel confident to carry out their role and 85% stated that the programme is run well. Statements with less agreement were 'The strategy for the PSYV programme is well communicated from a national to local level' with 15% disagreeing and 'I have enough time to do the role well' with 16% disagreeing. The least positive statement was 'I have enough PSYV colleagues' with 22% disagreeing.
- Responses to the statement 'I have enough PSYV colleagues' have become more negative over time. Agreement has decreased from 78% in the survey Year 1 to 58% in Year 2 and now sits at 57% in Year 3.
- Half of the participants (50%) disagreed with the statement 'I find it difficult to fit the role of PSYV coordinator or volunteer into my life', with 36% agreeing and 14% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
- On questions surrounding support, the most positive statement was 'I feel supported in my role as a PSYV coordinator or volunteer' with only 9% disagreeing. 11% stated they don't have the support they need in terms of developing social action for PSYVs and 18% stated they don't have the support they need in terms of developing a curriculum for the PSYVs.
- When asked 'What support, advice or training would you like to receive in the future?', for those that gave a response, the most common answer was new lesson plans. Others mentioned more regular training and support and safeguarding training and refreshers.
- Questions on safeguarding were answered positively. 91% stated they have the support or advice they need in terms of managing safeguarding, 81% think the youth volunteers have a clear framework and guidance for safeguarding and 78% stated they think YVs moving into the role of Avs get the advice and support on safeguarding that they need. However, when asked if they would like to see more national guidance and consistency in respect of safeguarding, 53% agreed with the statement.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Treats

- Participants were asked 'What, if any, do you think are the key strengths of the PSYV programme?'. Answers included youth development, community work, opportunities and experiences for young people, building the relationship of the police and young people, giving young people policing information and the positive environment.
- Participants were asked 'What, if any, do you think are the key weaknesses of the PSYV programme?'. Weaknesses included, a lack of resources (including lesson plans), funding, local policing support and knowledge, events, general support, volunteers, and training.
- When asked 'What do you think are the opportunities for the PSYV programme going forward in terms of how it can develop and improve?' responses varied. Some stated that they would like more national group meets, more support, more promotion of what PSYV is and recruitment, a curriculum to follow and more national events.
- Main threats to the programme included, lack of funding and support from Police Scotland, lack of adult volunteers, lack of Youth Volunteers, group co-ordinations not given enough time for the role, and a lack of events.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Approach

1.1 Introduction

This report provides findings on vulnerability, the third national online survey of PSYV's, case studies, alumni and leavers surveys and the third national online survey of Adult Staff. The report is concluded with key takeaways from this round of research and relevant recommendations are made. This evaluation was commissioned by Police Scotland and has been undertaken to identify the impact taking part in the PSYV programme has for young people, their lives and on the wider community they are part of. Police Scotland wish to understand what positive outcomes, if any, the programme enables and where there could be changes or improvements to enhance PSYVs experiences through taking part.

1.2 Approach

National Online Surveys with the Young Volunteers (September/October 2023, 2024, 2025)

The IPSCJ has created an online survey which has been distributed to PSYV groups across Scotland to obtain data on the young volunteer experiences as a PSYV, what they feel they have gained from the experience and what can be improved. The survey captures several topics including:

- Motivations of young people for becoming a PSYV.
- The activities they have participated in and experience they have gained.
- Their perceptions of the police and whether they feel their perceptions have changed since becoming a volunteer.
- The impact they feel PSYVs have on their communities.
- The survey will also collect demographic information to understand the reach of the scheme particularly in terms of whether it is reaching a range of young people from a variety of backgrounds, as well as to explore whether there is a variation in experience across factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, and disability/neurodiversity.

This report shares the findings from Year 3 (2025) and compares to previous results presented in the Year 1 and Year 2 surveys. Young people were provided an anonymised identifier to enable the responses to be tracked for those that have completed the previous surveys. This allowed for monitoring of how being a PSYV may impact on young people's trust and confidence in the police, their own confidence, resilience, ability to cope with transition and their feelings of citizenship and inclusion.

National Online Surveys with Adult Staff and Volunteers (November 2023, 2024, 2025)

This survey explores staff and Adult Volunteer views towards training, support, and operational issues. Participants were asked about their views on the benefits of the volunteer scheme for young people, the police and the wider community. They were also asked about their own experiences and the facilitators and barriers they experience in carrying out their role. They were asked about their overall views of the scheme from a strategic perspective in relation to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The survey also includes the question as to whether they were PSYVs themselves and what impact this may have had on their lives. The survey has been conducted in November 2023 and November 2024 to assess change and was extended to also be conducted in November 2025



Leaver's/Alumni Surveys

Dedicated surveys have been developed to be shared with young people who exit the programme either unplanned or before a natural conclusion of their PSYV experience. The surveys are also for those who have reached the natural planned end of the programme.

The Leaver's survey has been shared at the point of exit to specifically capture how their PSYV experience has impacted them, as well as potentially contributing to their next steps in their life course. The Leaver's Survey also provides an understanding of why cadets leave before the natural conclusion of their PSYV experience. The Leaver's Survey was available from September 2023 to July 2025. The Alumni Survey is being shared with young people who have previously been a PSYV to capture how/if their experiences in the programme have influenced their destinations, as well as any other impacts having been a PSYV may have influenced.

Case Study Sites (Summer 2024, Summer 2025)

Case studies were conducted with three PSYV areas which involved in-depth qualitative work with young people and adult staff/volunteers. They involved focus groups and creative methods to engage young people in further defining strengths and weaknesses in the scheme and how the scheme can be improved. Adult staff and volunteers also completed short interviews about the context and cohort overall, allowing comparison between groups in terms of emergent and shared strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

Involvement of Young people in the Evaluation Design and Delivery

It is important young people are able participate in the design and delivery of the research as well as the interpretation of the results. To date, the PSYVs have participated in the evaluation in the following ways:

1. One of the PSYV groups have produced a short video to introduce the research to their fellow PSYVs.
2. A small number of PSYVs have reviewed and tested the annual survey, the Alumni survey and the leavers survey and provided feedback on them.
3. They have been asked if there were any questions, they would like to be asked to those that run the programme.

1.3 Analytical Approach

Survey Responses

The qualitative survey response from both the Youth Volunteer survey and Adult Staff and Volunteers survey were thematically analysed by seeking out emergent themes from within the answers through coding. Semantic coding was used to code based on the explicit meaning of the participants answers. An inductive approach was taken to the analysis to avoid pre-existing conceptions from interfering with theme generation. Therefore, a member of the research team coded the answers and then sense checked them with a mother researcher to discuss and refine categories.

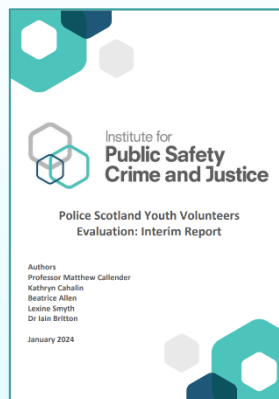
The quantitative data from the surveys was analysed using SPSS. The quantitative survey questions asked participants to score their agreement to a question with a series of statements. For example. The Youth Volunteers were asked to rate their agreement to the statement 'PSYV is run well' using a 7-point scale, 1 being Strongly agree to 7 being Strongly Disagree. Using SPSS the scores were recorded as follows: 1-3 were recorded as Agree, 4 was recorded as Neither and 4-7 were recorded as Disagree. Analysis of results to find statistically significant answers was conducted using Chi-Square testing at the 95% confidence level ($p < .05$). Phi and Cramers V statistics were reported depending on the number of categories within the variables for which a strength of association was being tested.

1.4 Previous Outputs

Throughout the three years of this evaluation a range of publicly available outputs have been developed. The outputs are listed below alongside the QR codes and links to access them:

Police Scotland Youth Volunteers Evaluation: Interim Report:

This report provides preliminary findings of the first ever evaluation of the Police Scotland Youth Volunteer (PSYV) Programme. This is a preliminary report, which provides findings from a survey of 248 PSYV's (approximately a third of all PSYVs), a survey of alumni PSYVs (to which there are currently 26 responses) and a survey of PSYV's Coordinators and Volunteers to which 61 responded.



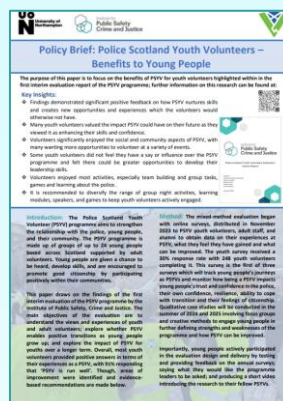
Police Scotland Youth Volunteer Interim Evaluation – Short Report:



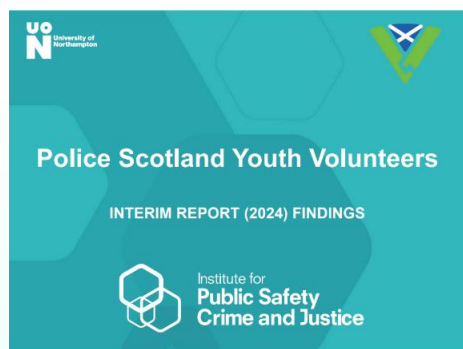
This short report summarises the research background and aims, data collection method and the key findings and recommendations. The findings of this first evaluation of PSYV have been overwhelmingly positive from respondents including the youth volunteers, adult staff and volunteers and alumni. Though some key areas of improvement have been identified, from which several evidence-based recommendations have been made to support the development of the PSYV programme as well as to enhance the experience and benefits of participation for young people and facilitation for adult staff/volunteers.

Policy Brief: Police Scotland Youth Volunteers – Benefits to Young People:

The purpose of this paper was to focus on the benefits of PSYV for youth volunteers highlighted within in the first interim evaluation report of the PSYV programme. The policy brief highlights the significant benefits of the programme to young people's personal growth, future prospects, and their increased community and police engagement. Recommendations and observations aimed at enhancing the value of the programme to all youth volunteers have also been considered.



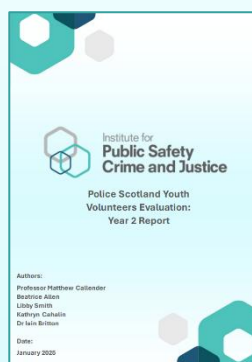
Video of PSYV Interim Evaluation for Youth Volunteers:



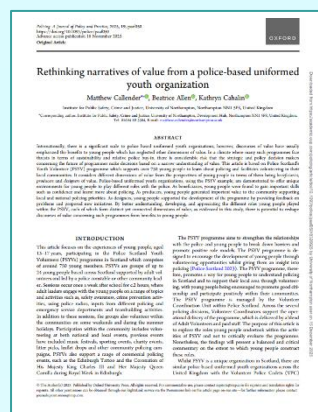
A video presentation on the interim findings of the evaluation of Police Scotland Youth Volunteers created for the youth volunteers. The video includes an explanation of the aims of the research, the research design, interim survey findings and future research methods. This video was shared with the youth volunteers via their 'Band' platform.

Police Scotland Youth Volunteers Evaluation: Year 2 Report:

The report provides findings from the second national online survey of PSYV's, matched cases from Year 1 to Year 2 of the Youth Volunteer survey and the second national online survey of Adult Staff and Volunteers. This report provides findings from a survey of 315 PSYV's, 43 matched cases from Year 1 to Year 2 and a survey of 86 Adult Staff. Finally, the report is concluded with key takeaways from this round of research and relevant recommendations are made.



Rethinking Narratives of Value from a Police-Based Uniformed Youth Organisation:



This article is based on Police Scotland's Youth Volunteer (PSYV) programme. It considers different dimensions of value from the perspectives of young people in terms of them being beneficiaries, producers and designers of value. By better understanding, developing, and appreciating the different roles young people played within the PSYV, each of which form distinct yet connected dimensions of value, as evidenced in this study, there is potential to reshape discourses of value concerning such programmes from benefits to young people.

Videos for PSYVs and Adult Staff and Volunteers:

Two videos were produced following the Year 2 report. One video was designed to engage with the Youth Volunteers, giving them an update on Police Scotland responses to the findings. In this video youth volunteers participated in a question and answer session with a member of the research team and the PSYV National Team. The other video was an update from the PSYV National Team to the Adult Staff and Volunteers at PSYV about changes and responses to findings from the national survey. These videos were uploaded to YouTube and the links to access were shared across the PSYV 'Band' platform to all members.



PSYV Young People Update March 2025



An Update from the PSYV National Team for Adult Staff and Volunteers

Chapter 2: Vulnerability

2.1. Introduction

In the first interim report from this review, it was recommended that “Police Scotland consider conducting a short demographic census of their PSYV population on a yearly or two-yearly basis as well as consider the introduction of an Equality and Diversity Form for new entrants”. Following this recommendation, Police Scotland completed a piece of work to engage with young people in the programme to identify self-reported vulnerabilities. This chapter presented the results.

It is important at the outset to state that vulnerability conceptually is multilayered and complex. Armaş and Albulescu¹ (2025) argue that “vulnerability stands out as the most important predictive variable in the equation of risk”, arguing for a more dynamic than static conceptual understanding. The College of Policing sets out how policing has adopted the THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement) definition of vulnerability. This states that a person is vulnerable if, as a result of their situation or circumstances, they are unable to take care of or protect themselves or others from harm or exploitation. There are differing, and strong, viewpoints concerning the capacity of the “police and other services [to] succeed in supporting ‘vulnerable’ people, and what the role of the police and partner agencies should be in this work”². Whilst acknowledging a position of scepticism among some concerning the role of the police to support vulnerable people, there is a growing view that the police play a critical role in supporting vulnerable people as first responders and as that information sharing between the police and public services can achieve better outcomes⁵.

Within the context of the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers programme, there is a strategic aim to have at least 25% of young people from vulnerable backgrounds. Therefore, the PSYV programme forms a part of the operational response by Police Scotland to supporting vulnerable people and reducing the risk of future harm.

2.2. Identifying vulnerability

To identify vulnerabilities, the PSYV national team undertook an exercise which invited young people in the programme to complete an internal questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed with consent and was voluntary. In total, 180 out of 591 provided a response (30%). The IPSCJ then were provided anonymous population level data to be processed and presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 PSYV Internal Equalities Questionnaire

Parent and Carers out of work	Yes 36 (20%)	No 144 (80%)
Has been previously excluded from school	Yes 10 (6%)	No 170 (95%)
Has difficulty in reading/writing or talking	Yes 48 (27%)	No 132 (88%)
English is their second language	Yes 23 (13%)	No 148 (87%)
Previously been a victim of crime	Yes 19 (11%)	No 161 (89%)
Have a long-term illness or disability	Yes 63 (35%)	No 117 (65%)
Care Experienced/have experience of care.	Yes 31 (17%)	No 149 (83%)
Known to truant from school	Yes 9 (5%)	No 171 (95%)
Misused drugs or alcohol	Yes 2 (1%)	No 178 (99%)
Been involved in criminal activity	Yes 4 (2%)	No 176 (98%)
Receive free school meals	Yes 36 (20%)	No 144 (80%)
Has been known to self-harm	Yes 31 (17%)	No 163 (91%)

¹ Armaş I, Albulescu AC. From static to dynamic: Conceptual and operational developments of vulnerability. iScience. 2025 Feb 20;28(3):112070. doi: 10.1016/j.isci.2025.112070. PMID: 40160419; PMCID: PMC11951036.

² [0002852.pdf](#)

2.3. Understanding vulnerability

There are different lenses of risk through which to understand vulnerability. This section considers some key risks that face young people and the prevalence of vulnerability within the PSYV cohort.

Risk of involvement in crime

There are several risks of involvement in criminality and serious violence.

The World Health Organisation's Fact Sheet on Youth Violence³ identifies a range of factors relating to the individual, close relationships and within the community/wider society. These are:

Risk factors within the individual

- attention deficit, hyperactivity, conduct disorder, or other behavioural disorders
- early involvement with alcohol, drugs and tobacco
- low intelligence and educational achievement
- low commitment to school and school failure
- involvement in crime
- unemployment
- exposure to violence in the family.

Risk factors within close relationships (family, friends, intimate partners and peers)

- poor monitoring and supervision of children by parents
- harsh, lax or inconsistent parental disciplinary practices
- a low level of attachment between parents and children
- low parental involvement in children's activities
- parental substance abuse or criminality
- parental depression
- low family income
- unemployment in the family
- associating with delinquent peers and/or gang membership.

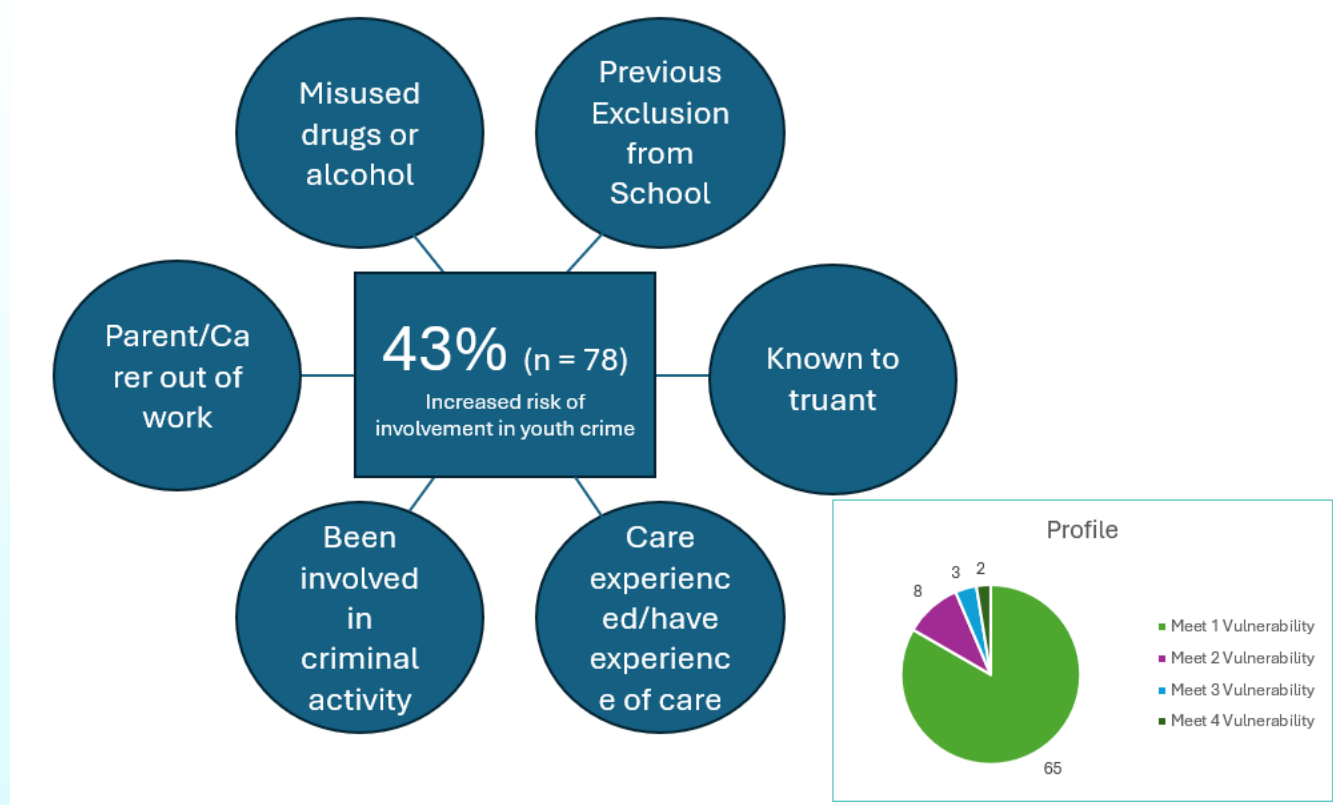
Risk factors within the community and wider society

- access to and misuse of alcohol
- access to and misuse of firearms
- gangs and a local supply of illicit drugs
- high income inequality
- poverty
- the quality of a country's governance (its laws and the extent to which they are enforced, as well as policies for education and social protection).

When considering vulnerabilities captured in the PSYV exercise, the figure below illustrates the proportion of young people who are vulnerable to involvement in youth crime. 65 young people were identified as meeting one of these criteria, with 8 meeting 2 criteria, 3 meeting 3 criteria and 2 meeting 4 criteria.

³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence>

Figure 2.1 Proportion of PSYV Vulnerable to Involvement in Youth Crime



Reported in the Home Office Practitioner Toolkit for working with young people to prevent involvement in serious and organised crime⁴, in 2016, the Home Office funded Project Engage which, led by Greater Manchester Police, sought to effectively identify individuals at risk of involvement in SOC. The programme identified several common factors among participants. They include:

- involvement in antisocial behaviour
- drug and alcohol misuse
- mental health problems
- living in a neighbourhood known to have SOC activity
- not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- if in education – low attainment, have numerous exclusions, not in mainstream education
- violent behaviour
- impulsiveness
- risk-taking behaviour
- parental hostility towards authority figures
- lack of engagement with professionals

When considering vulnerabilities captured in the PSYV exercise, the figures below illustrate the proportion of young people who are vulnerable to involvement in serious and organised crime.

Figure 2.2 identified factors (limited) that are strongly associated with increased risk of involvement in serious and organised crime. Ten young people were identified as meeting one of these criteria, with 3 of these meeting 2 criteria.

⁴ [A Practitioner Toolkit – Working with young people to prevent involvement in Serious and Organised Crime](#)

Figure 2.2 Proportion of PSYV Vulnerable to Involvement in Serious and Organised Crime (Limited)

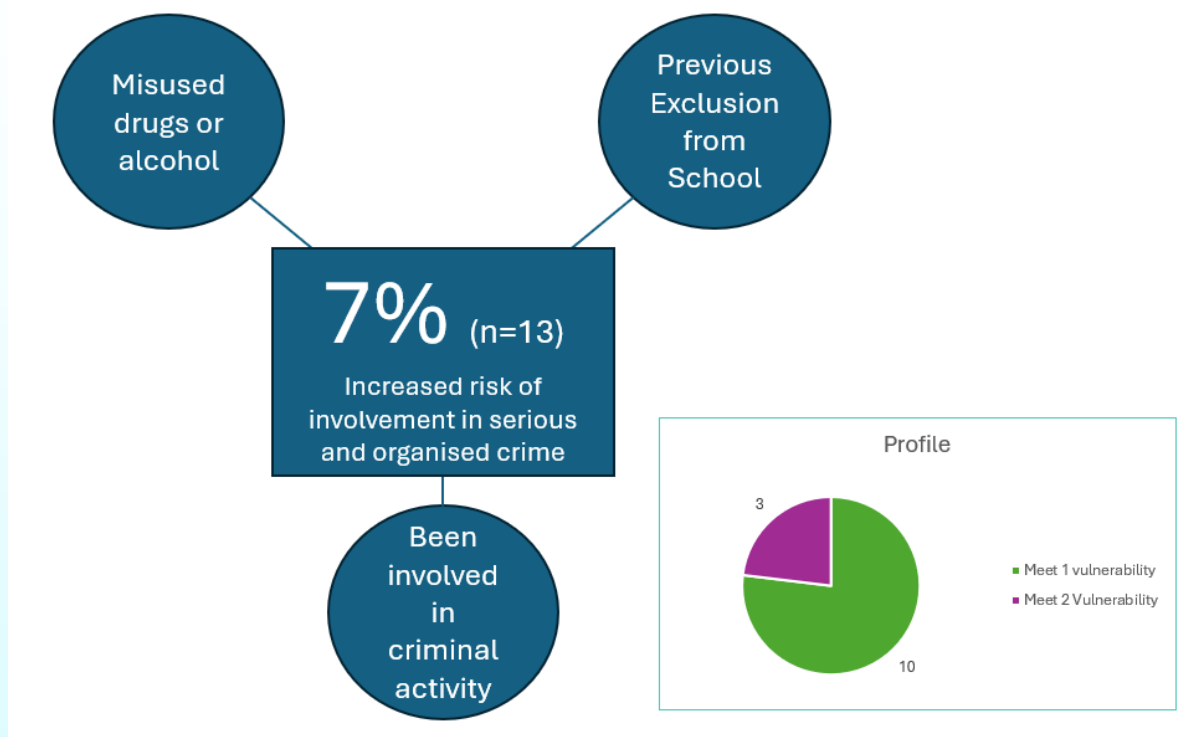
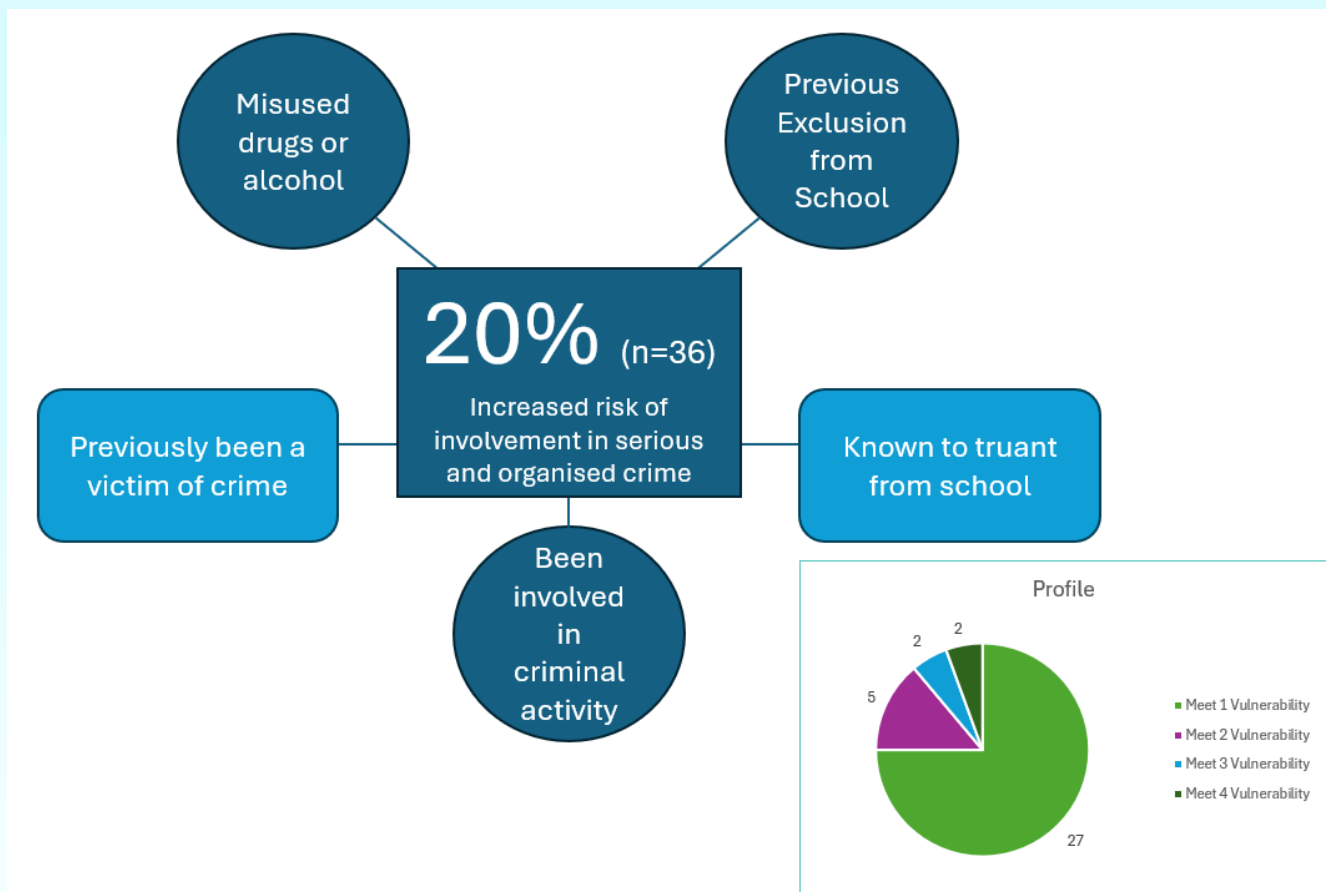


Figure 2.3 identified factors (expanded) that are associated with increased risk of involvement in serious and organised crime. 27 young people were identified as meeting one of these criteria, with 5 meeting 2 criteria, 2 meeting 3 criteria and 2 meeting 4 criteria.

Figure 2.3 Proportion of PSYV Vulnerable to Involvement in Serious and Organised Crime (Expanded)



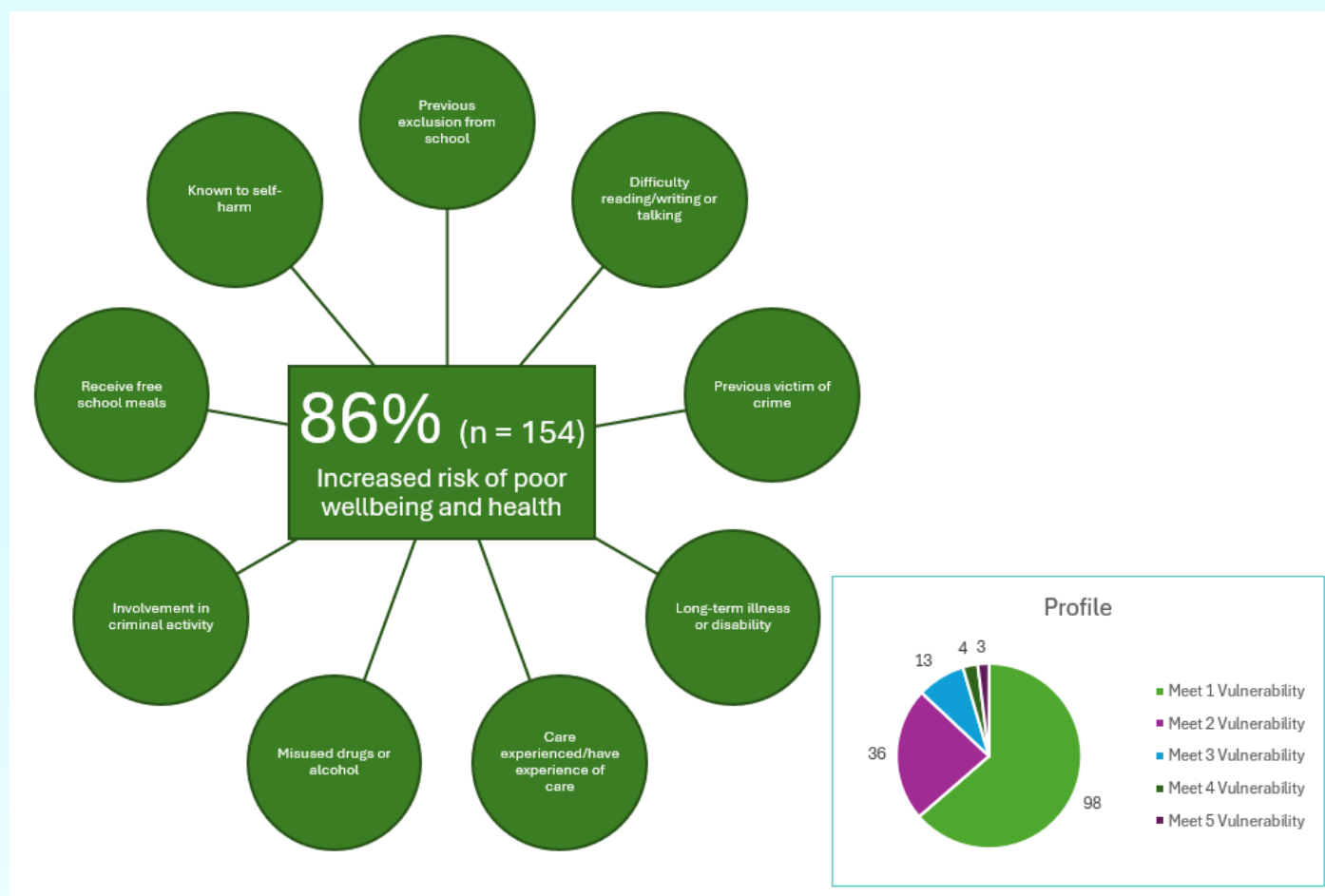
Risk of poor wellbeing/health

The Department for Education⁵ outlines how “Research suggests that there is a complex interplay between the risk factors in children’s lives, and the protective factors which can promote their resilience. As social disadvantage and the number of stressful life events accumulate for children, more protective factors are needed to act as a counterbalance”. Several factors are identified to be considered when considering risks of poor wellbeing, including (not exhaustive):

- Communication difficulties
- Physical illness
- Family breakdown (including where children are taken into care or adopted)
- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Exploitation, including by criminal gangs and organised crime groups, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation

When considering vulnerabilities captured in the PSYV exercise, the figure below illustrates the proportion of young people who are vulnerable to poor wellbeing and health. 98 young people were identified as meeting one of these criteria, with 36 meeting 2 criteria, 13 meeting 3 criteria, 4 meeting 4 criteria and 3 meeting 5 criteria.

Figure 2.4 Proportion of PSYV Vulnerable to Poor Wellbeing and Health



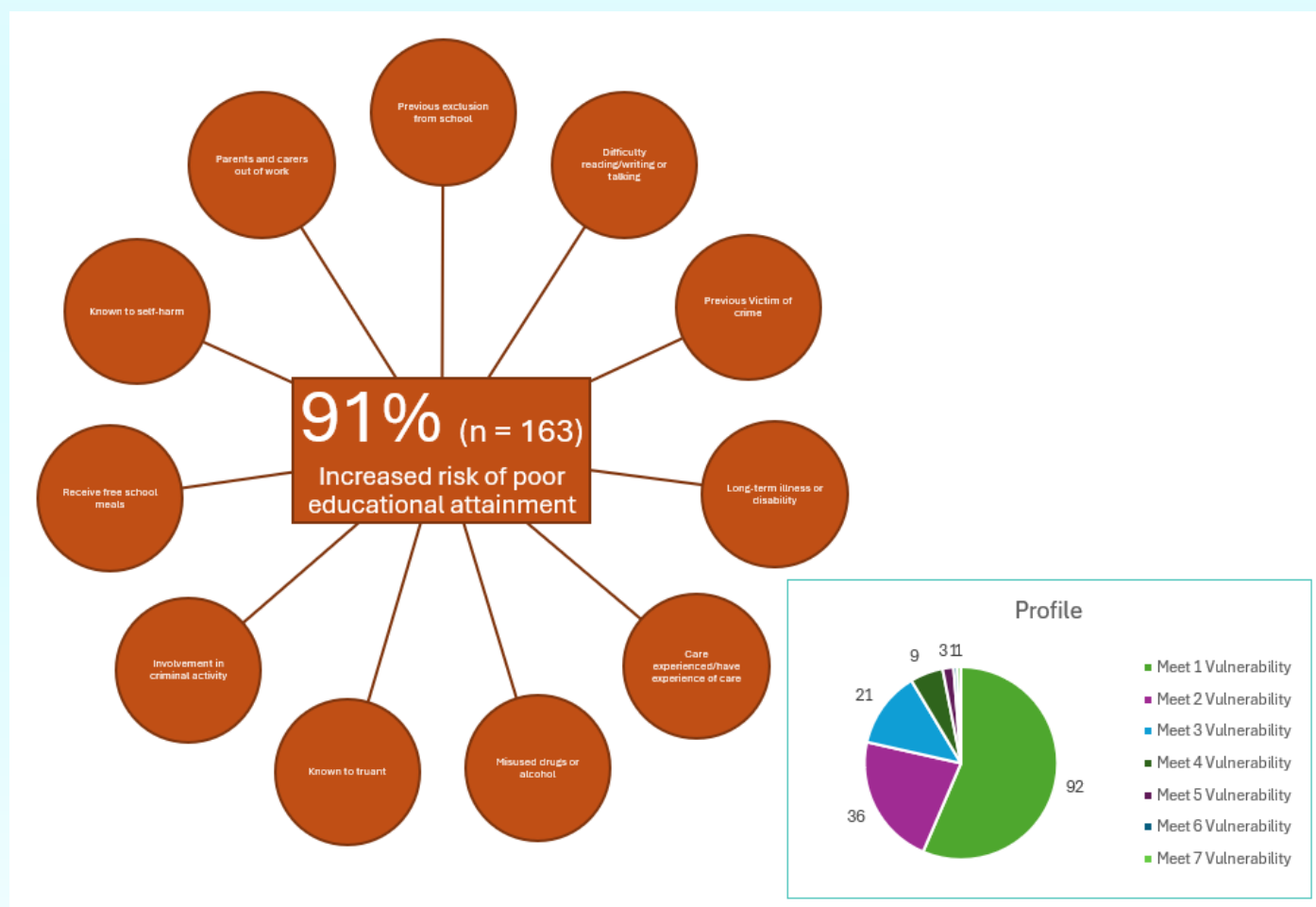
Risk of poor educational attainment

The National Centre for Social Research⁶ identify a range of factors associated with educational attainment amongst secondary school age children. These include (not exhaustive):

- Cognitive capabilities
- Physical health
- Adverse childhood experiences
- Engagement in risky behaviours (smoking, alcohol)
- Mental health
- SEND
- Being looked after or identified as a child in need (CIN)
- Low socio-economic status
- Parental unemployment
- School attendance

When considering vulnerabilities captured in the PSYV exercise, the figure below illustrates the proportion of young people who are vulnerable to poor educational attainment. 92 young people were identified as meeting one of these criteria, with 36 meeting 2 criteria, 21 meeting 3 criteria, 9 meeting 4 criteria, 3 meeting 5 criteria, 1 meeting 6 criteria and 1 meeting 7 criteria.

Figure 2.5 Proportion of PSYV Vulnerable to Poor Educational Attainment



⁶ <https://natcen.ac.uk/publications/what-factors-impact-attainment-during-secondary-school-years>

2.4. Responding to vulnerability

At the outset of this section, it is important to recognise that significant work was undertaken by the Volunteer Coordination Team to complete the equalities data capture. This work is valuable and will enable the programme to better understand, identify and respond to vulnerability.

An important reflection here is that the strategic aim of having at least 25% of young people from vulnerable backgrounds mobilises the concept of 'vulnerability' indeterminately. As outlined in the previous section, dependent on the inherent risks facing young people, the Volunteer Coordination Unit can consider the vulnerability alongside risk(s) understood alongside the overarching purpose and strategic aims of the programme.

The results presented above demonstrate that the programme is engaging with young people who have a range of and, in some cases, multiple indicators of vulnerability. Notwithstanding definitional issues, the evidence above demonstrates the programme is meeting its strategic aim.

It is worth noting that there are significant and existing strengths of the programme to respond to vulnerability. As evidenced through this research, there are benefits of participation in the PSYV in terms of increased confidence, belonging and skills. The design of the programme (weekly sessions with young people in a safe environment with wider opportunities to participate in social action projects) offers a valuable space for young people to learn, grow and thrive.

Considering the data, around a fifth of those surveyed met 3 or more of the vulnerability criteria captured in the exercise. One young person met seven. Whilst there are universal inputs in the programme for young people that provide support, there is a cohort of young people who may require more specialist support to both positively engage with the programme and succeed.

Strategically, the Volunteer Coordination Unit may benefit from better defining the risk(s) the programme is better or weaker at mitigating. This may have implications for what types of data are captured through the lifespan of a young person's journey through the programme to evidence programme value. Indeed, there may be strategic value to such information in business cases and/or funding applications.

Operationally, this information will be important for coordinators and adult volunteers. This exercise has emphasised the importance of knowing the young people within their groups, understanding their vulnerabilities and putting plans into place to establish protective factors. There may be opportunities to involve partner agencies for individuals or groups to achieve this.

It will be important, now having completed this exercise, to maintain record and establish procedures to maintain its accuracy.

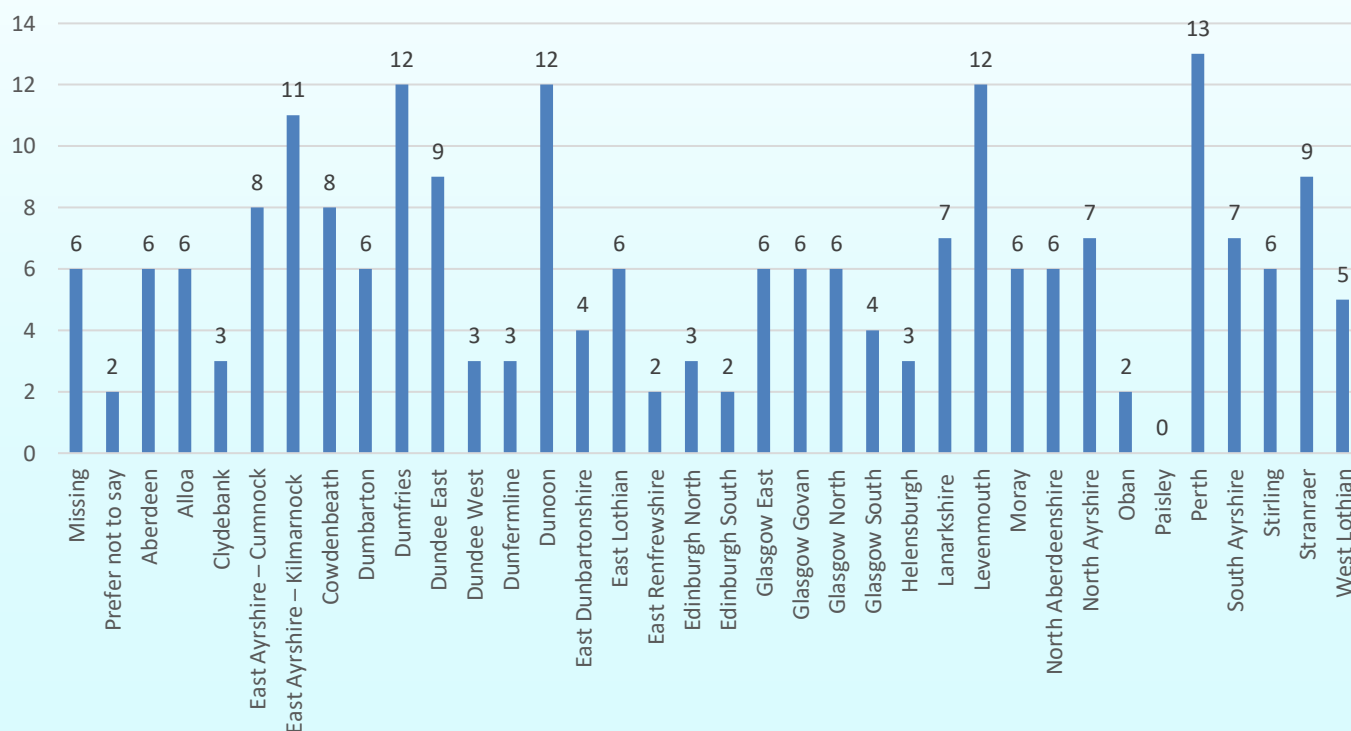


Chapter 3: National Survey of Young People

3.1. Response to the Survey and Demographics

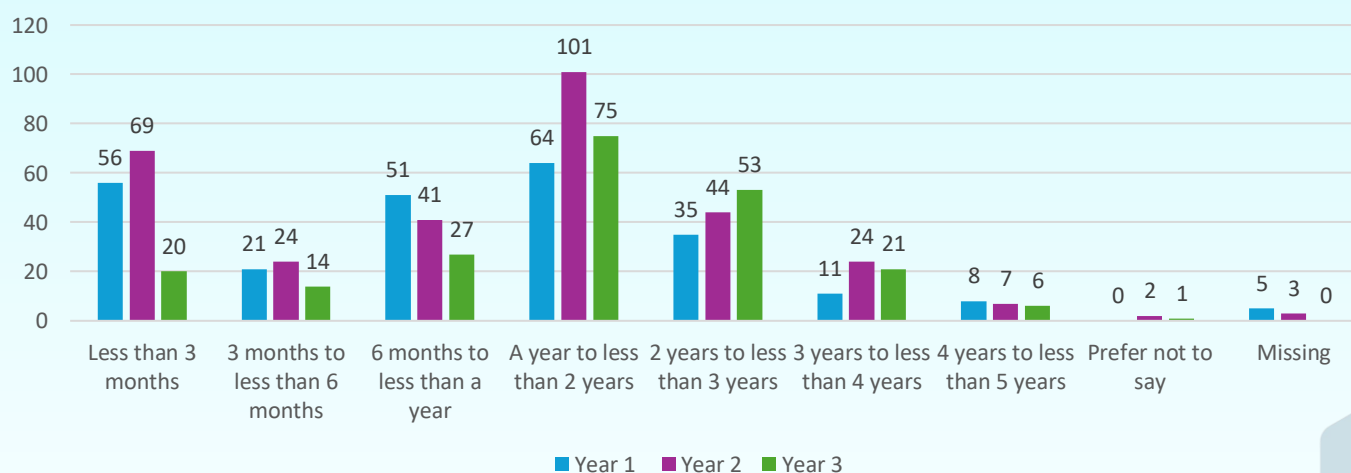
In Year 3, 217 PSYVs completed the survey which is a 31% decrease from the 315 responses last year. Out of 42 groups, responses came from 33 groups demonstrating a range of representation across Scotland. The graph below shows the PSYV groups that the survey respondents were part of and the number of respondents in each group. The ages of the youth volunteers who responded ranged from 13 to 17 years.

Fig 3.1.1 Number of Responses by Unit



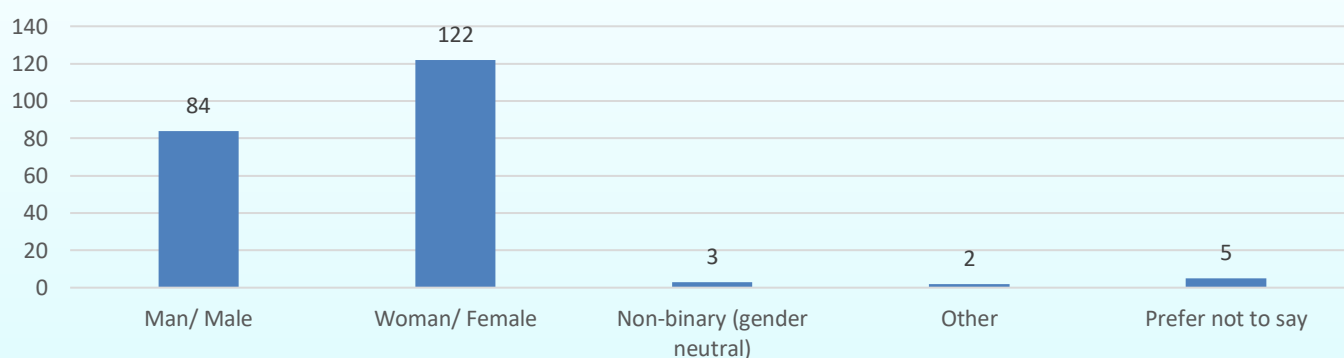
Most young people who responded to the survey in Year 3 had been part of the PSYVs for a year to less than 2 years. The graph below shows a comparison between the Year 1 - 3 responses to their length of time as a PSYV. Most young people in Year 3 who responded were Youth Volunteers (162), (34) were Senior Youth Volunteers and (17) were Head Youth Volunteers.

Fig 3.1.2 Time in PSYV, Year 1-3



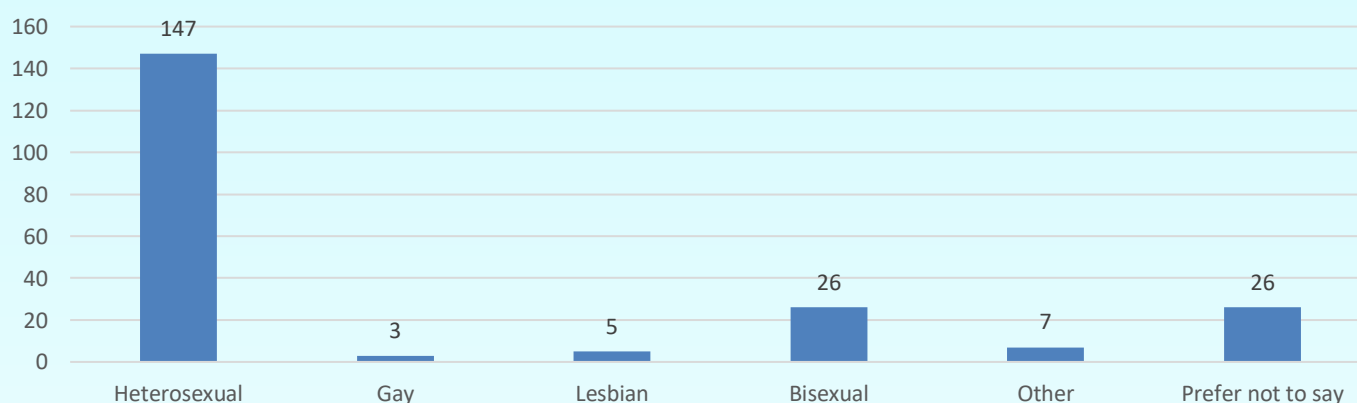
The gender split of those who responded in Year 3 was uneven, with more woman/female responses compared to man/male. This is not representative of the wider demographic population of Scotland, as a recent study involving a nationally representative sample of 5,217 14-year-olds reported 49.8% identified as man/boy, and 49.45% as women/girl (Scottish Government, 2022b). However, as we do not currently have the demographic data on the total PSYV population, this difference may be due to more female Youth Volunteers completing the survey than their male peers. When asked if they would consider themselves to be trans or have a trans history, 7 answered “yes” and 5 “preferred not to say”.

Fig 3.1.3 Which of the following best described your gender identity?



69% of the respondents identified as heterosexual, 12% preferred not to say, 12% identified as bisexual, 3% other, 2% lesbian and 1% gay. The data are not representative in terms of sexual orientation, when comparing this demographic data with the findings from the Annual Population Survey (APS), reporting that in 2022 9.2% of people ages 16-24 years identified as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual compared to 15% within PSYV data (ONS, 2023). It should be noted that this age category is older than most the PSYV respondents but should be more representative than the entire adult population, as younger people are more likely to identify as LGBTQ. PSYV survey responses demonstrate similar findings to the APS, although a larger percentage of PSYVs selected that they ‘prefer not to say’ at 9% compared to 3.7% in the APS (ONS, 2023).

Fig 3.1.4 Sexual Orientation



For ethnicity, of those who responded, most respondents were “White” (89%), the next largest ethnicity was “Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British” (5%) followed by “mixed or multiple ethnic group” (2%). Most volunteers had no religion (65%), followed by Roman Catholic (10%), Church of Scotland (6%), other Christian (7%), Muslim (1%) any other religion, Sikh and Hindu (1%).

The Scottish annual census on pupils, teachers and early learning and childcare (2022) reported on the ethnicity of all secondary school pupils finding that 83.5% of pupils were recorded as being White-Scottish or White-other British, and 3.3% White-other, 2.3% White-Polish, totalling 87% (Scottish Government, 2022a). However, the proportions within the survey data of ‘Asian’ ethnicity at 8% and ‘mixed or multiple ethnic group’ at 3%, are

greater than that of the census data which reported proportions of 4.6% Asian and only 1.5% mixed ethnicity (Scottish Government, 2022a).

Fig 3.1.5 Ethnicity

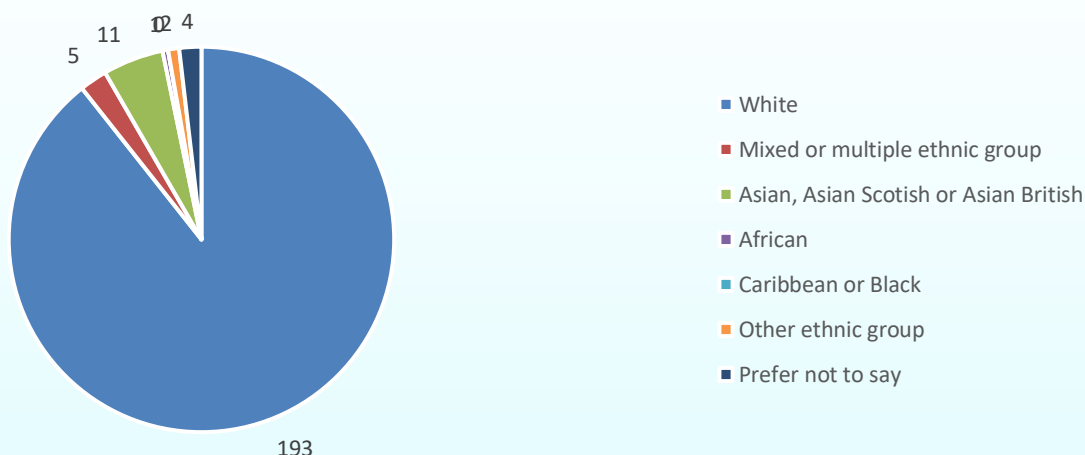
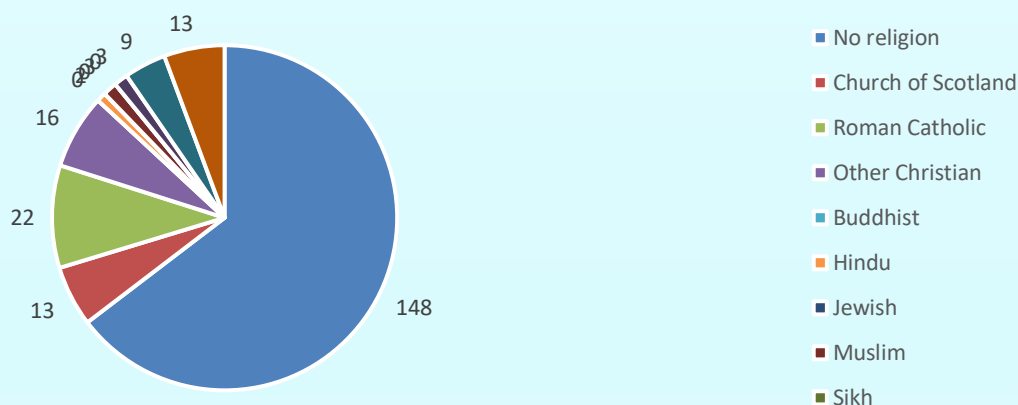


Fig 3.1.6 Religion

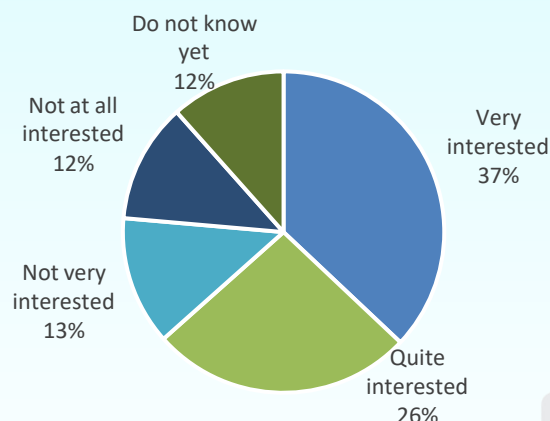


In total, 16 stated that they were part-time unpaid care providers and 7 stated they were full-time unpaid care providers. Additionally, 17 stated they are currently or had been formerly looked after by a local authority. Out of the sample, 31 stated that they had a physical or mental health condition lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. When asked if their condition makes it difficult to engage in any PSYV activities or affects their PSYV experience, 5 out of the 31 stated 'yes'.

3.2. Experiences of Being a PSYV

The main reason given for joining PSYV was to **gain life skills** (98) including confidence, social skills and team working. Following this, the most common response was to **gain policing experience or knowledge** (92), particularly in the hope of a future career in policing. Responses also stated that they joined to **volunteer and help the community** (61). Comments included:

Fig 3.2.1 Are you interested in joining the police when you are older?



“Gain an Insight of what the police do and what they have to offer, as well as help the community and gain life changing skills for my future.”

“I joined the PSYV to help communicate with the public and to follow my passion to join the police.”

“I wanted to try something new and give to my community. I hoped that I would gain skills like communication, team building, and leadership.”

“I joined PSYV because it was something I had wanted to take part in for years but never found the confidence to do so earlier. PSYV helps me to prepare for the police, and it gives me the most amazing life opportunity of working with police officers and other amazing people.”

Further reasons included to **gain new experiences, opportunities or as something to do** (39) and to **meet new people and gain friends** (33). Comments included:

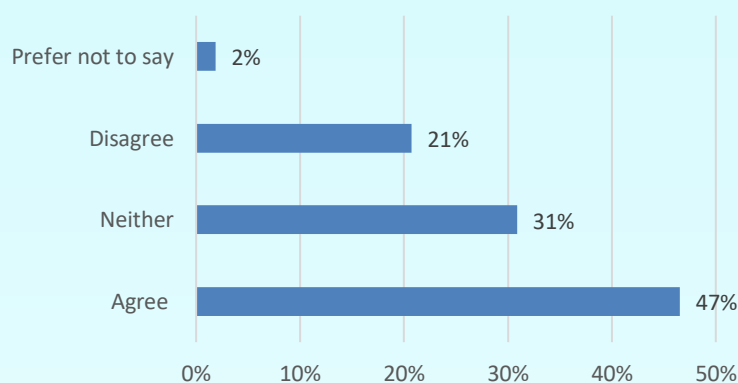
“I wanted a new experience and something to do with my free time that seemed like something I would enjoy and I do.”

“To gain experience, meet new people and make new connections, also to bring some fun and activities into my life.”

One person stated that they were encouraged to join to **improve their mental health** and since joining this has improved and they have gained valuable experiences:

“I was advised by my campus officer to join as at the time I was dealing with severe bullying and severe mental health. He thought it would help me deal with these problems and get out of my comfort zone. Since joining my mental health has become much better I’ve able to meet new people and do something good for my community.”

Fig 3.2.2 There is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run



47% of respondents agreed that there is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run, this is slightly higher than last year’s responses where 43% agreed. When asked ‘What improvements can be made to the PSYV experience?’, most respondents stated that they had **no suggestions on improvements** that could be made to the PSYV experience (32). *“Nothing it’s great.”*

“Nothing at all it’s all very good.”

Some suggested improvements to the **group dynamics** (11). These included issues around the **new restructuring** that has occurred to their group, **wider police recognition** towards PSYV,

better **group equality** and encouragement for **new people to make friends**. Additionally, there were suggestions around **leaders being more receptive towards suggestions**, the introduction of a suggestion box and better communication.

“I believe that senior youth volunteers are sometimes not treated with the same level of respect as a head youth volunteer. I believe this should be changed and everyone should be treated with the same amount of respect.”

“Maybe the adult volunteers could help us more as group get to know each other especially when new YVs start. I felt a bit awkward for a while.”

“Get previous group coordinator back.”

“I absolutely love PSYV apart from the recent event of my group Co-Ordinator no longer being able to be our leader.”

“Making sure each youth is fully listened to and actions are carried out when necessary.”

“Just a better relationship with higher ranking officials as I feel psyv is sometimes looked down upon.”

Additionally, there were suggested improvements to **events** (7) such as more events, better event recruitment and final lists earlier.

“I think more national events similar to the young drivers scheme, where we are encouraged to meet new people while still being with our groups.”

“An annual camp with other PSYV.”

“Evening out who gets picked for events more and create a trip at the end of the year again.”

It was suggested that more needs to be done to **advertise PSYV** to get more people involved (3), and others wanted **more police topics** (3).

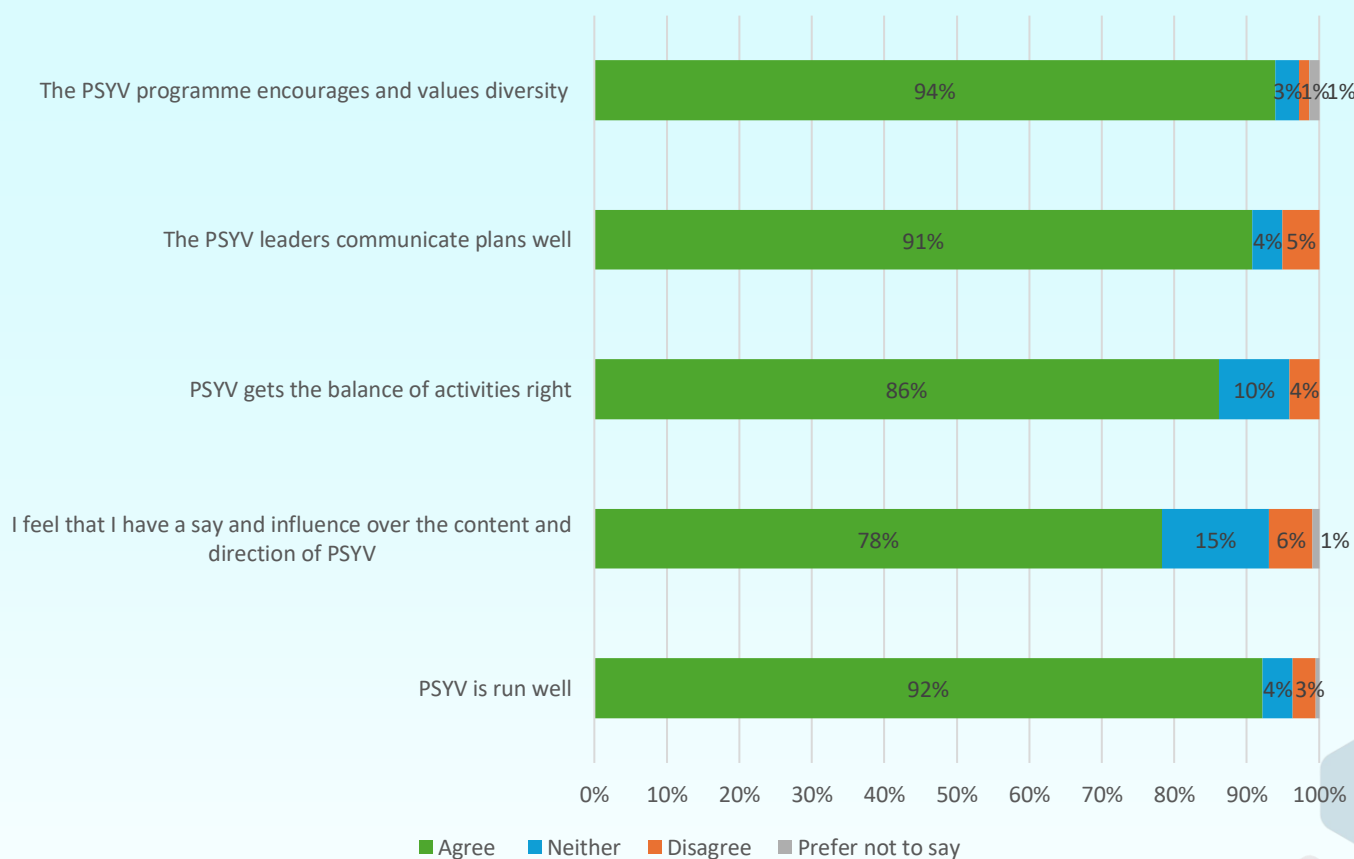
“More advertising and promotion.”

“More people at my group.”

“Maybe more talks from other services/ people in police.”

Overall, the Youth Volunteer views on the PSYV programme are positive with 78%-94% agreeing with the statements.

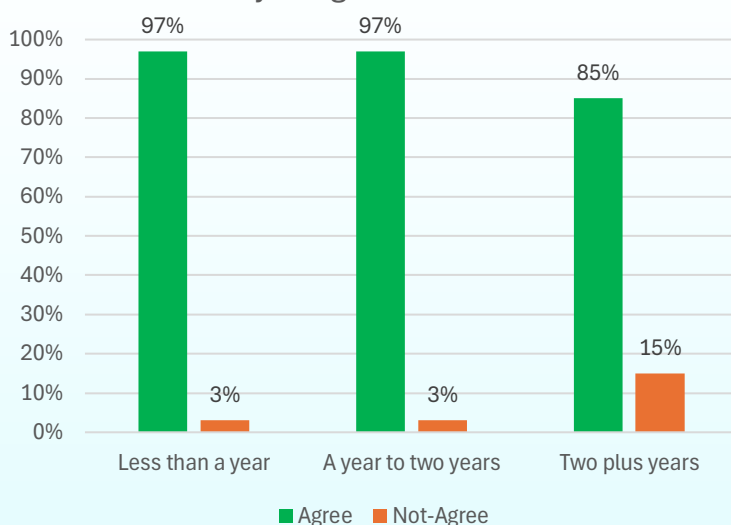
Fig 3.2.3 Views on PSYV



Upon further analysis, statistically significant difference was found for three statements:

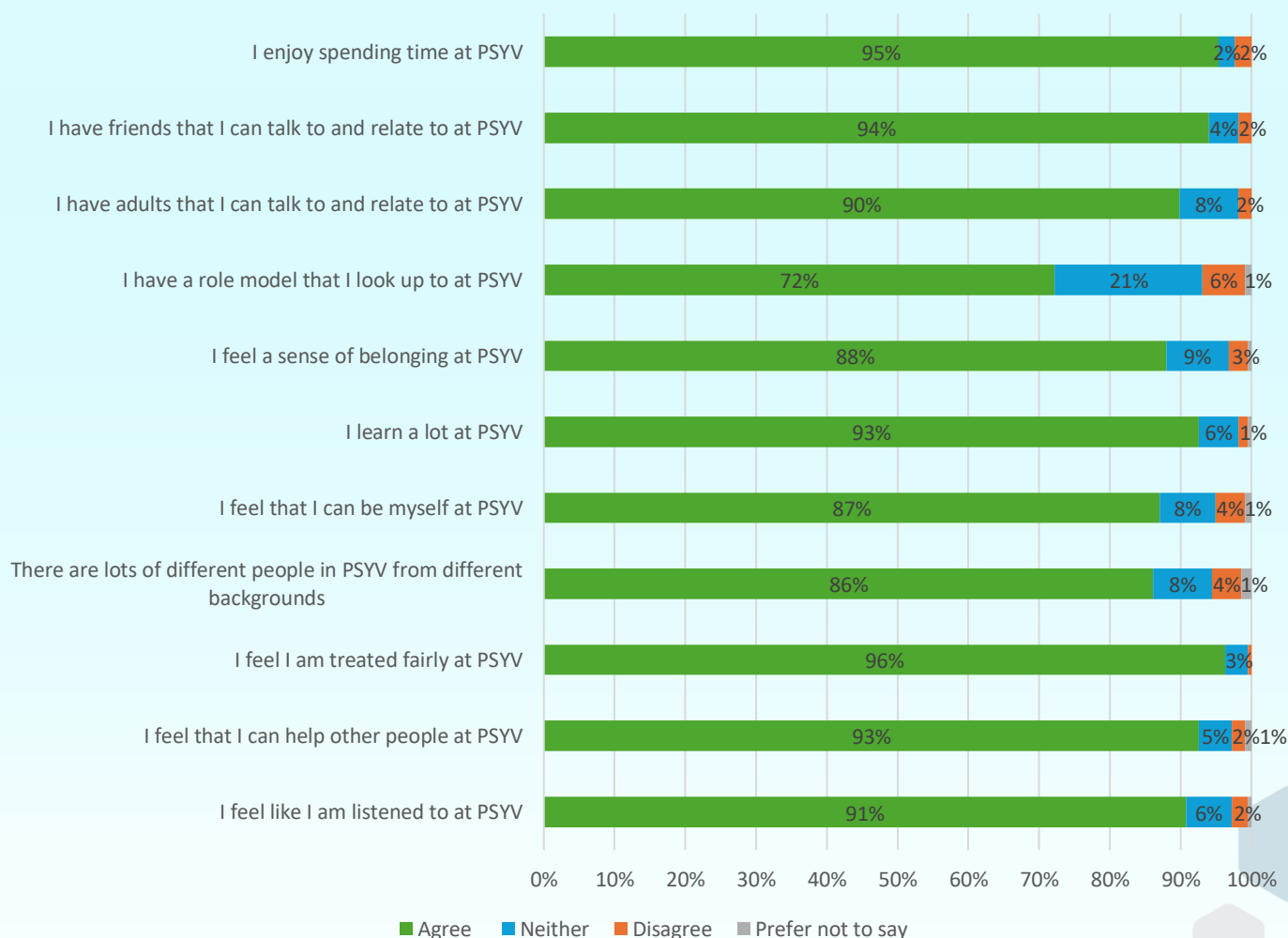
- 11a “*PSYV is well run*” – young people with more than 2-years in PSYV have less agreement
- 11.5 “*There is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run*” – young people with care experience have more agreement
- 11.5 “*There is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run*” – young people with physical or mental health condition or illness that makes it difficult to engage in PSYV activities or that affects their experience of being a PSYV had more agreement

Fig 3.2.4 'PSYV is run well' by time as a PSYV by Length of time in PSYV



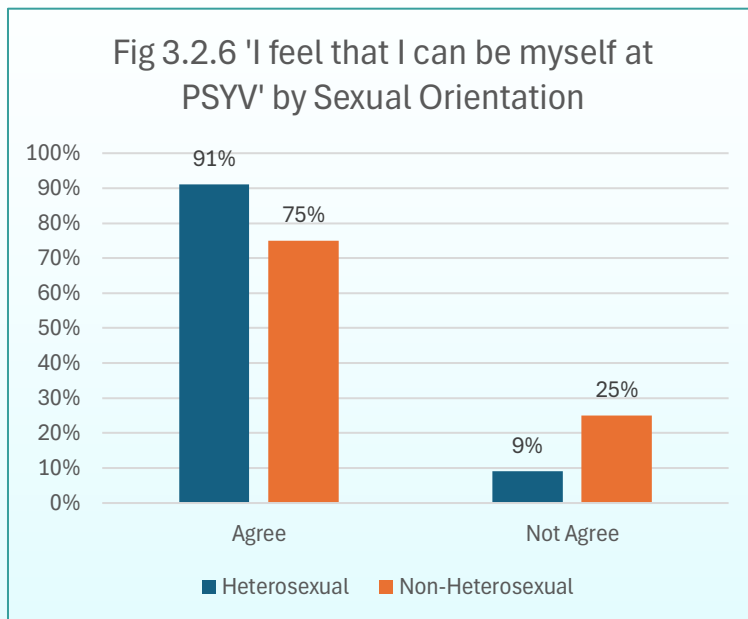
Below is the full breakdown of the responses to other questions on experiences at PSYV. This shows high levels of agreement to the statements ranging from 72% for the statement ‘*I have a role model to look up to in PSYV*’ to 96% for ‘*I am treated fairly at PSYV*’.

Fig 3.2.5 Experiences at PSYV



Upon further analysis, statistically significant difference was found for three statements:

- 24.2 “I have friends that I can talk to and relate to at PSYV” – an increase in agreement from Survey Year 1 (88%) to Survey Year 2 (87%) to Survey Year 3 (94%).
- 24.4 “I have a role model that I look up to at PSYV” – young people with care experience have more agreement
- 24.6 “I learn a lot at PSYV” – an increase in agreement from Survey Year 2 (85%) to Survey Year 3 (93%).
- 24.7 “I feel that I can be myself at PSYV” – young people heterosexual have more agreement
- 24.9 “I feel that I am fairly treated at PSYV” – an increase in agreement from Survey Year 2 (88%) to Survey Year 3 (96%).



3.3. Opinions of Activities and Events

Group Night Events:

When asked “What group night activities do you enjoy doing at PSYV?” the most popular answer was activities involving **games, quizzes and teamwork** (69). This was followed by **police related activities** (48) and **interactive activities** (48) such as scenarios and radios. **External talks** were also popular (39) in addition to **sports and fitness** activities (11). Comments included:

“I like learning about current issues/problems faced by the police and public, as well as talks/presentations from different organisations.”

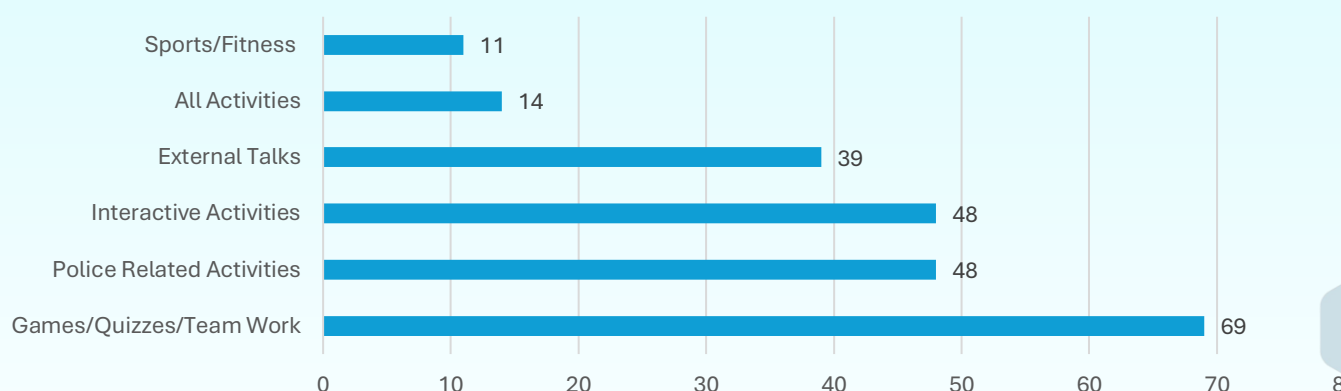
“I enjoy when we get to do team actives as it encourages people to work together and get to know new people.”

“Games night talks with professional officers and other uniformed services. Also the sports we sometimes do are also fun.”

“I loved the raid night where we had to throw sponges at police and get too ride in the riot van.”

“I like them all to be honest feel like they all teach you a lot and it’s very well planned and stuff like that.”

Fig 3.3.7 What group night activities do you enjoy doing at PSYV?



It was stated by participants that they would like to do more **interactive activities** (36), **police related activities** (24), **games** (17), **group work** (17), **community work** (12) and **drill** (11).

When asked 'What group night activities do you not enjoy doing at PSYV?', most respondents stated they **did not know** or there were **no activities that they did not enjoy** (74). Of those who did give responses these included, **drill** (56), **presentations** (15), **written work** (7), **fitness** (6) and **guest speakers** (6). Comments included:

"Getting talks. I don't mind them but sitting for an hour and a half just listening can be repetitive and boring."

"Powerpoints about alcohol units, cyber security and social media are shown to us all the time at my school, so I do not find much enjoyment in learning about these subjects."

"I don't like when we have a night we don't know what to do with so we do nothing."

"Anything that means we have to listen to people talk constantly without having things to do."

"Nothing really I think it's quite balanced and everything you thought it would be upon joining."

Most respondents stated that there were **no activities** they would like to do less of (49) or they were **not sure** (24). Of those who did give activities the most common included **drill** (37) and **PowerPoints or talks** (19).

National Events:

When asked what national events or campaigns they have enjoyed doing with PSYV the most popular answer was the **Edinburgh Tattoo** (60). This was followed by the **Ayr Show** (20), **HMS Caledonia** (14), **golfing events** (13), **Tall Ships** (11) and **sporting events** such as runs (11).

Most stated that there were **no national events that they did not enjoy** (85). However, some did give reasons for not enjoying events. This included having to just **stand around** (4), **not having enough jobs/duties** (3) and some events being **too hectic** (3). Comments included:

"The events that are boring and nothing to do but walk around."

"If not given a proper task at an event it can drag out the time."

"The duty that we were assigned was already being covered by some of the hired staff, so I felt a bit superfluous."

Most respondents had **no suggestions** on how PSYV involvement in these events or campaigns could be improved (35). Of those who did have suggestions, improvements included, more **meaningful duties** (11) and **more events** (5). Less frequent suggestions stated by one person each included, getting the final list earlier, better communication/organisation, fairer recruitment, more information on duties, more encouragement to attend and more national events and more volunteers at events. Comments included:

"Try finding events that are more exclusive in other fields, I know you want most if us to join the police but some are here for fun or how beneficial this programme is down the line so giving us the chance to interact with other professions would be nice."

"To be more active and have more psyv from other groups cause its good to meet people."

"Event organisers to realise we are capable young people and give us good jobs to help with."

"Maybe encourage more of the yvs to participate in them and when I have went to the campaign events there is never many people there compared to other events."

When asked if there are any national events or campaigns they would like to see their PSYV group get involved in suggestions included **sports events** (16), **festivals/music events** (12), **shows** (3), **police events** (2) **national events** (2), and **events with other PSYVs** (2).

Local Events:

Participants were asked “what local events and campaigns have you enjoyed doing with PSYV?” the main answers included **shows/galas/fairs** (48), **sporting events** (47), **campaigns/leaflet drops** (23), **seasonal events** (21), **policing or emergency services events** (21), and **charity events** (12).

Most respondents stated that there were **no local events or campaigns that they did not enjoy** (81). Of those who did give reasons for why they did not enjoy some events these included **not having enough tasks** (3), **not enjoying marshalling** (3), **disorganisation** at the event (2), the event was **too long** (1) and the event was **boring** (1). Comments included:

“Was poorly organised and instructions of duties were unclear from organisers.”

“We were standing for hours, holding up a board also it was quite cold.”

Most respondents had **no suggestions** on how the local events or campaigns could be improved (25). Of those who did give suggestions these included **more involvement** (6), **organised tasks** (4), **more local events** (4) and more **regular events** (2). Comments included:

“More communication between staff and youths when it comes to what is happening at the event.”

“A lot more involvement with the community not just simple little tasks.”

“Be given a specific role so we aren’t doing nothing for a lot of the day.”

Suggestions for local events or campaigns they would like to be involved in included **sporting events** (8), **charity events** (7), **concerts** (6), **community outreach** (4), **schools** (4) and **seasonal events** (3). Comments included:

“Talks in schools to encourage people to join PSYV.”

“More community outreach events.”

“Charity walks, maybe visiting schools or places to promote PSYV better. I'd like to do more with visiting care homes.”

“Anything with sports.”

3.4 Skills, Benefits and Challenges of Being a PSYV

When asked “What, if anything, do you think you gain from volunteering as a PSYV?” most responses related to **skills and attributes**. These included confidence (42), social/communication skills (26), general life skills (22), leadership (8), pride (5) responsibility (4), a purpose/sense of belonging (2), work ethic (2) and maturity (1).

“The confidence to speak up when things bother me or when problems arise.”

“I think I’ve gained numerous team building and confidence skills but more importantly social skills, before I would struggle to order myself a coffee but now I can speak to a room full of people.”

“You would gain a lot of more skills and things you haven’t done before, this varies from deployments and experiences you will probably never get to see again.”

Others mentioned **new experiences** (23), **policing knowledge** (14), **work in the community** (15), **qualifications** (3), **friends and meeting new people** (12) and **qualifications** (3).

“You get experience of the things you might do but you also get to interact with the public.”

“Viewed as really good for employers as shows that you have good responsibility and good communication with the public.”

“I feel like it gives you such a good experience just to learn everything you learn and makes you feel a lot better cause the people you are surrounded by are all very kind.”

Most respondents stated that **there was nothing they found challenging about being a PSYV** (62). Some stated they found **events** (11) and **talking to people** challenging (11).

"Sometimes the event times cause sometimes they can be quite long - which does make it fun but depending on the location you're at it can be quite frustrating when you are on the other half of the city."

"Still fear of talking to people but less scary than it was."

"One thing I have struggled with is speaking to people when on events."

It was also mentioned that the **group dynamics** (5), **drill** (3), **new experiences** (3), finding **time** (3) and **rank structure** can be challenging (2).

"Finding time to volunteer while trying to juggle family things."

"Sometimes the group can be very cliquey."

Some also stated that the **negative association with the police** is a challenge to being a PSYV (5).

"I feel like what is challenging is being slagged for working with police."

"Talking to the public who don't respect the police so therefore don't respect us and are a bit rude."

"Sometimes the look you get when you tell a friend or someone you know like it could be positive but around my age it really isn't and having to have people in your group who just don't actually really care for the group it's just a faff about for them really and it's challenging but there might be people you have to work with like that and you just have to get on sometimes."

"When we go to large scale events and you have some people who know who psyv are and they are not fond of the police they shout things at us."

When asked "How if at all do you think being a PSYV will help you in the future?" the most common answer was for a **police career in the future** (45):

"I think if I apply to be in the police being part of PSYV will make me stand out and already of made me known to what's coming."

"Will show the police I have been volunteering and have a understanding on what it's like."

"I think it was help me as the psyv have taught me lots of skills and I want to join the police hopefully by showing these skills in the future it can help me get in."

"It will help me become a successful police officer and be promoted to higher ranks. And it will help me become an adult volunteer."

Others mentioned gaining **life skills** (37) and **new experiences** (21). Some also suggested it would look good on their **CV** (23) and help with a **future job** (19) or **university** (9):

"Helps me add more things to my CV and experiences and I have gained many skills from it too."

"It will help me hopefully get into university to study Police studies and criminology and help me gain life experience."

"I don't think I'd ever find my voice my confidence in myself if I hadn't joined PSYV so it's already helped me come out of my shell now I probably would've never have gotten my first job without the skills and confidence I've learnt at PSYV."

"Will massively help my social skills, decision making, maturity and the ability to cope when facing adversity."

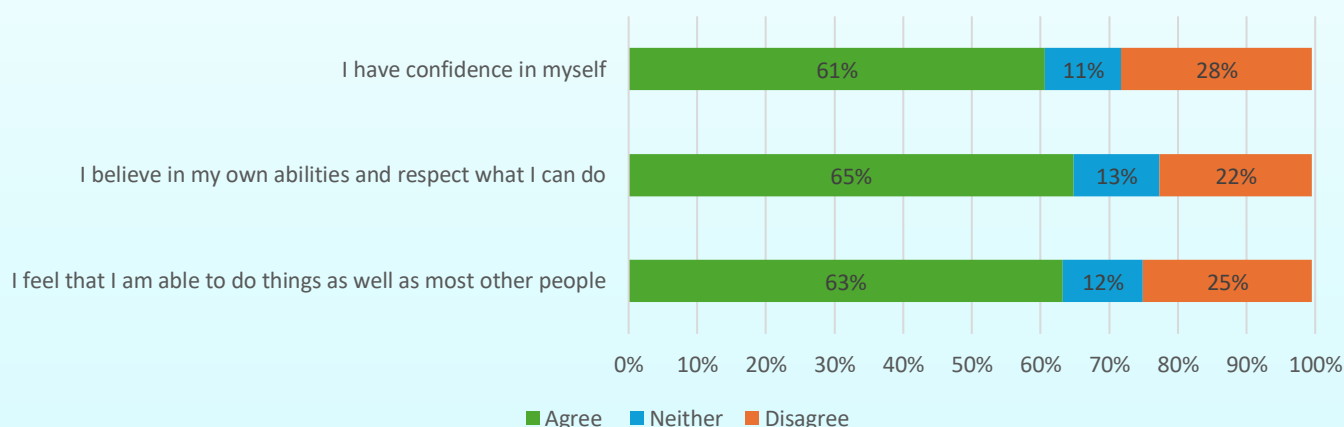
“I think it’s really set me up well for life, it has already helped me get a well paying job and I believe it will help me securing a place at uni. The experience you gain from PSYV is unmatched.”

Perception of Skills:

Just under two-thirds (61%-65%) of those who responded believed that they can do things as well as most other people, believe in their own abilities and have confidence in themselves.

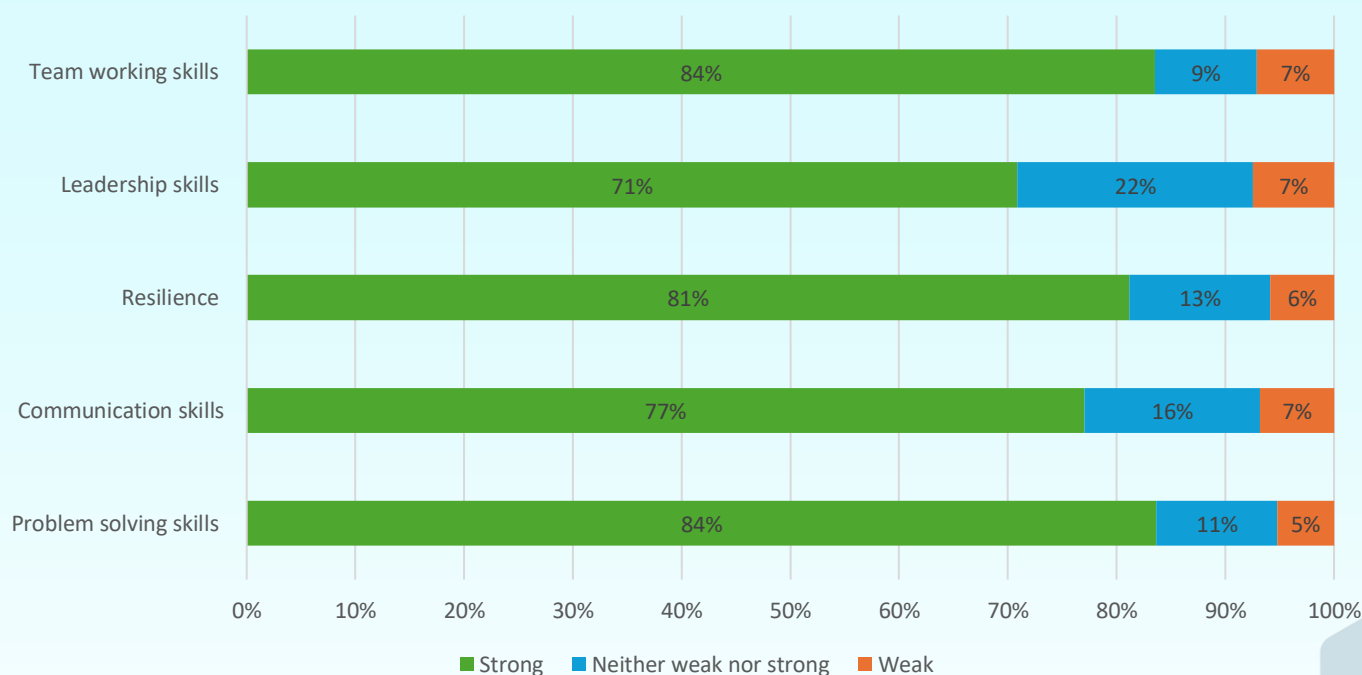
Upon further analysis, there statistically significant difference was found for three statements. Ratings were highest in Year 1 followed by a decrease in Year 2. For each of the variables in Year 3, results have increased compared to Year 2 but not recovered to levels in Year 1.

Fig 3.4.1 Perceptions of Skills



When asked to rate their skills from weak to strong, the majority of Youth Volunteers rated their skills as strong at 71%-84%. Around 7% rated their communication, leadership and teamworking skills as weak.

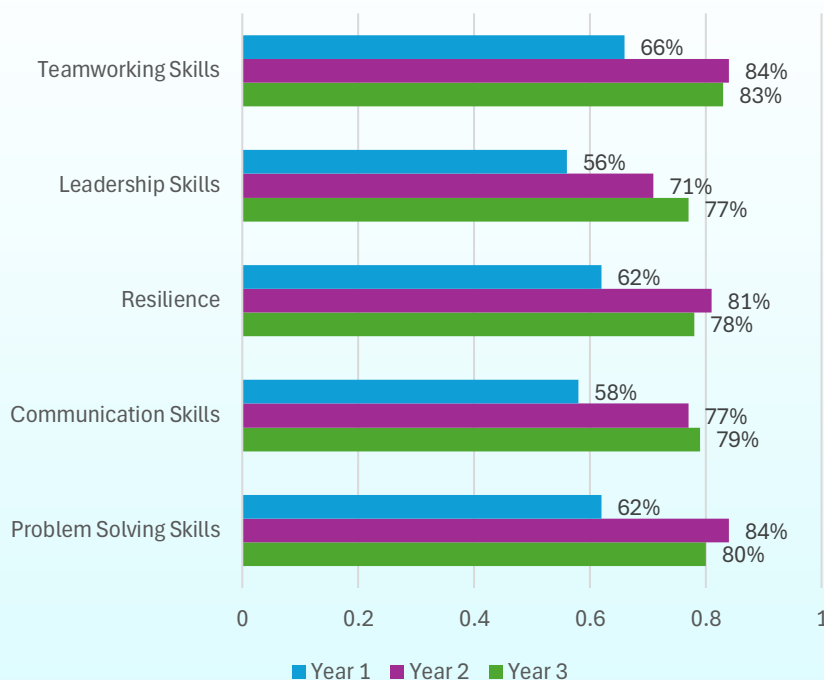
Fig 3.4.2 Self Rated Perceptions of Skills



Upon further analysis, statistically significant difference was found for three statements:

- 26.1 Teamwork – Young people in Year 1 agreed less their teamwork was strong.
- 26.2 Leadership – Young people leadership grows stronger as length of time in PSYV increases
- 26.2 Leadership - Young people over time (Year 1 – 2 – 3) agree their leadership is strong more
- 26.3 Resilience – Young people in Year 1 agreed less their resilience was strong
- 26.4 Communication – Young people in Year 1 agreed less their resilience was strong
- 26.5 Problem solving – Young people in Year 1 agreed less their problem solving was strong

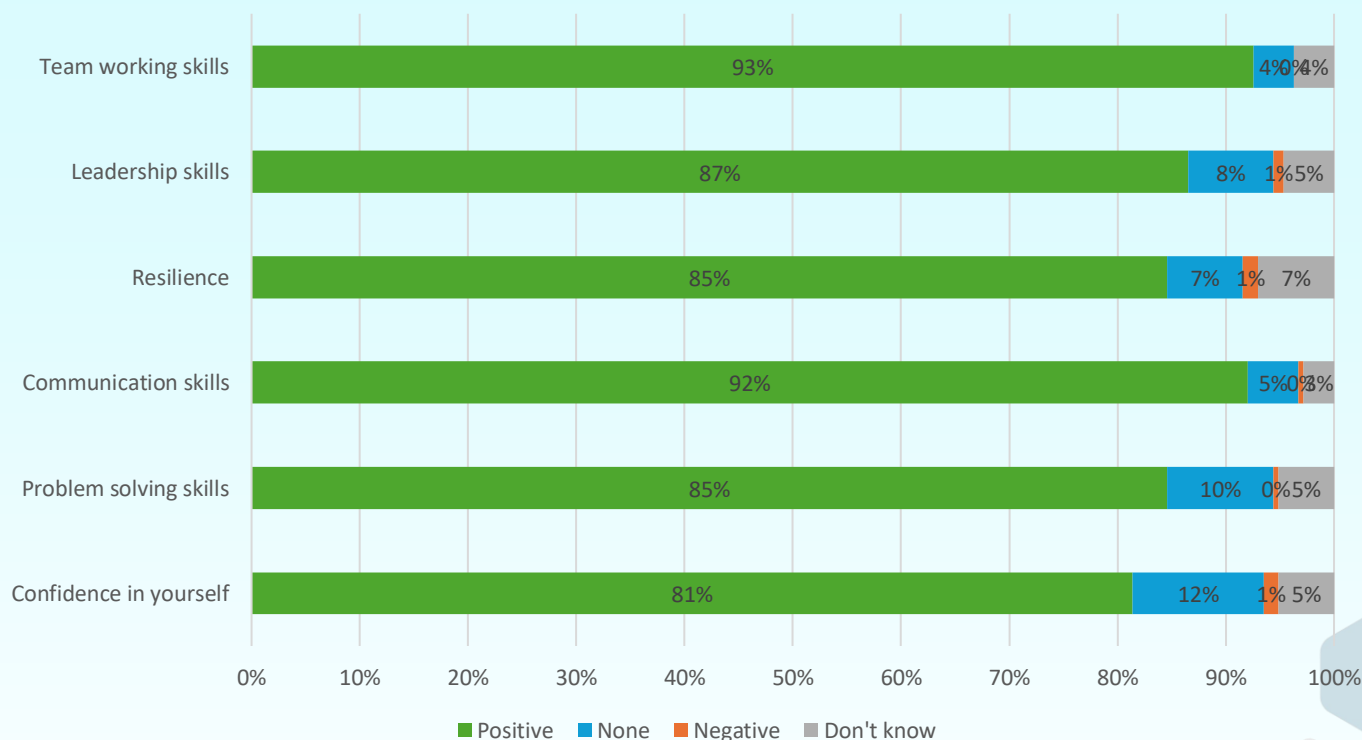
Fig 3.4.3 Self Rated Skills Perceptions of Skills by Year



The Effect of PSYV on Skills and Confidence:

The majority of respondents felt being a PSYV had a positive influence on their skills, particularly their team working and communication skills with 93% and 92% respectively saying PSYV had a positive impact. In comparison to Year 2, there were increases in positive ratings for all variables.

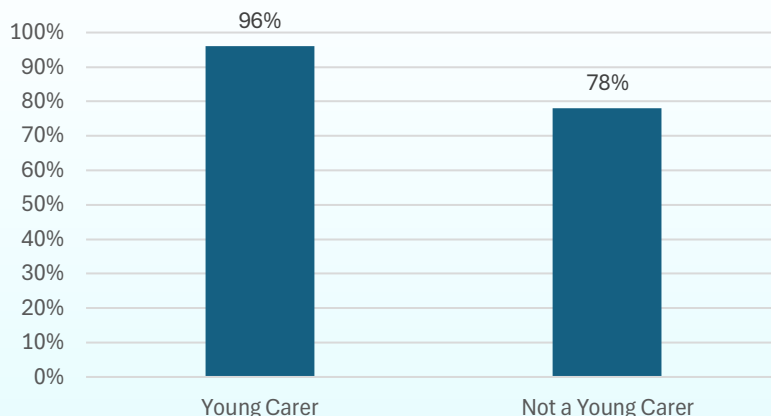
Fig 3.4.4 Effect of PSYV on Skills and Confidence



Upon further analysis, statistically significant difference was found for three statements:

- 28.2 Leadership – Young people rated the positive effect in Year 3 more
- 28.3 Resilience – Young people who were young carers rated the positive effect on resilience
- 28.5 Problem solving – Young people in Year 2 rated the positive effect more

Fig 3.4.5 Percentage that stated PSYV had a STRONG effect on their resilience, Young Carer vs Not a Young Carer



Respondents stated that PSYV had improved their skills and confidence by being in the **PSYV environment** (24), through **public exposure** (23), by **meeting new people** (16), being put out of their **comfort zone and new experiences** (14). Comments included:

“When I joined my social anxiety controlled a large aspect of my life and stopped me from challenging myself and meeting new people, the support within the group really helped to build my confidence and help me to support the public and the team in the most effective way possible.”

“PSYV has shaped me into a much more confident person, it’s a safe environment with the right people to ask for help. I am so so much more confident since being in PSYV than before it.”

“It has I used to be a very shy person I would cry at the slightest bit of having to speak in front of people even in a small group but now I’m a senior youth volunteer I’m able to take drill no problem and I can talk in front of the group without crying without that big anxiety creeping in.”

“Before I joined PSYV, I was very anxious and could not even ordered my own food in a cafe or restaurant. Since joining my confidence has improved significantly and I can easily talk to and present myself to large groups of people.”

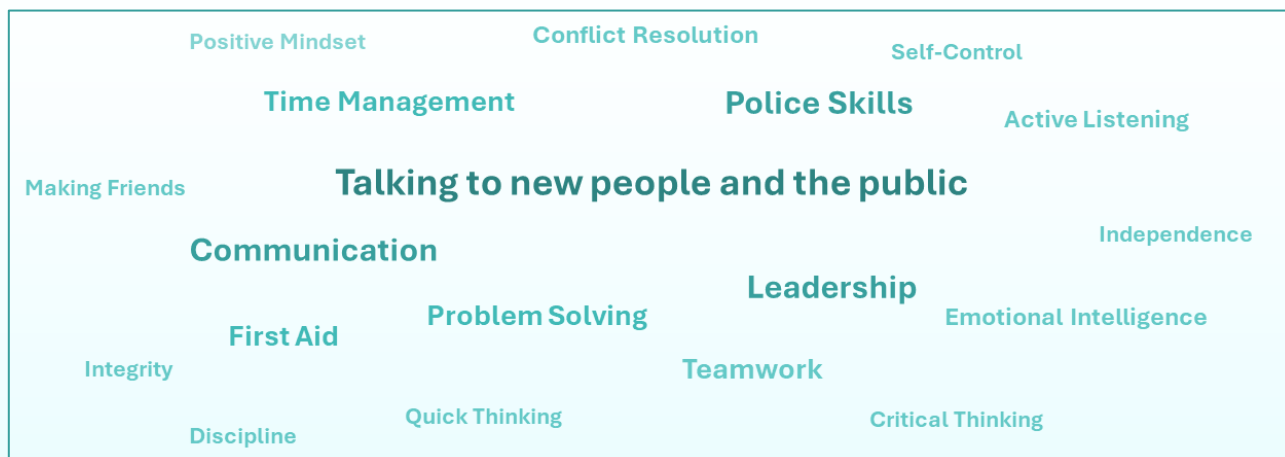
“When I joined psyv I was very nervous to be there as I thought I would be behind everyone else because I joined later. But, everyone warmed up very quickly, teaching me the drills with no problem. It made me realise that psyv is a safe and welcoming place for anyone, and my confidence grew with that fact because I knew nobody would judge me.”

“Made me feel like i belonged there.”

“Made me feel appreciated.”

Participants were asked ‘Are there any other skills that you have gained from being a PSYV or anything else that you have learnt that you would like to mention?’. Below is a word map of other skills mentioned:

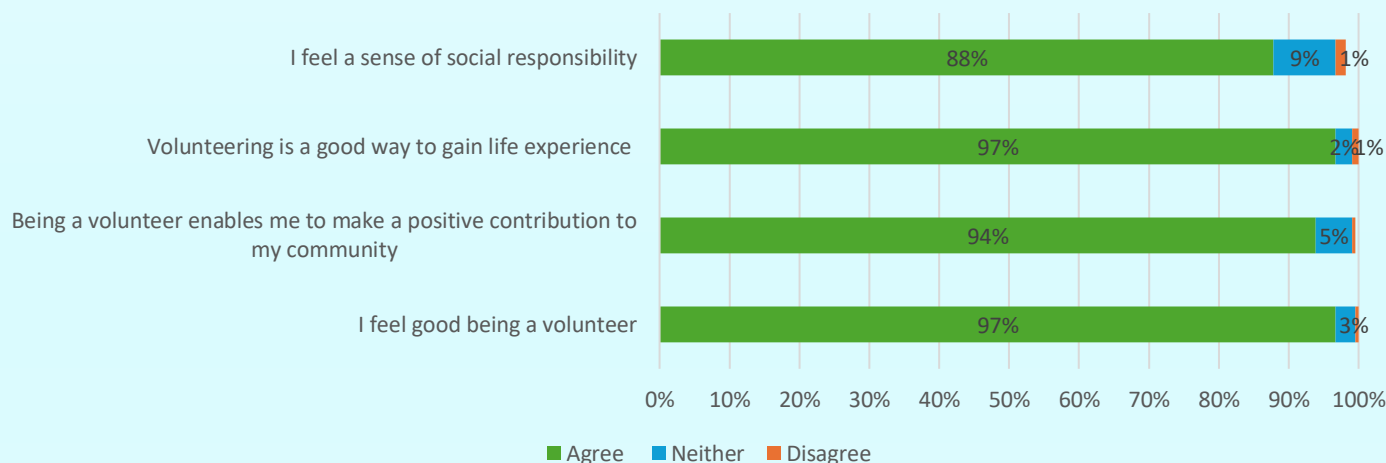
Figure 3.4.6: Word Map of skills gained in PSYV



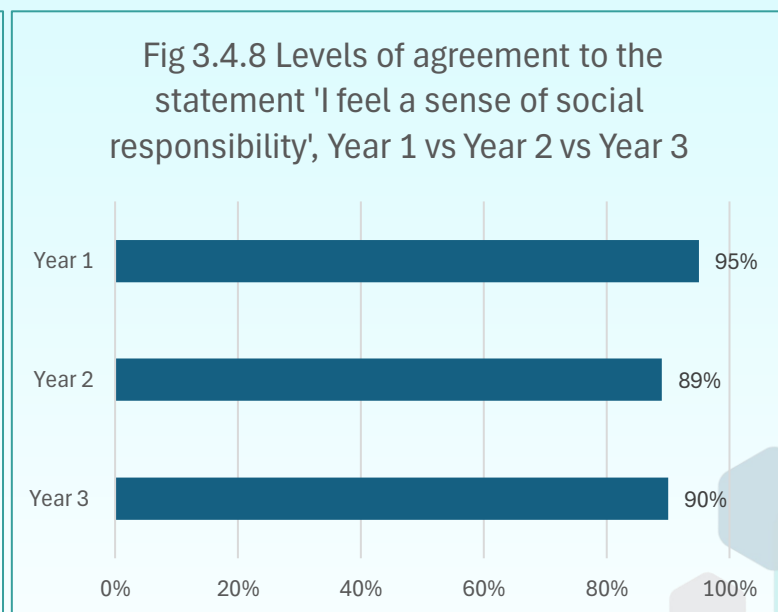
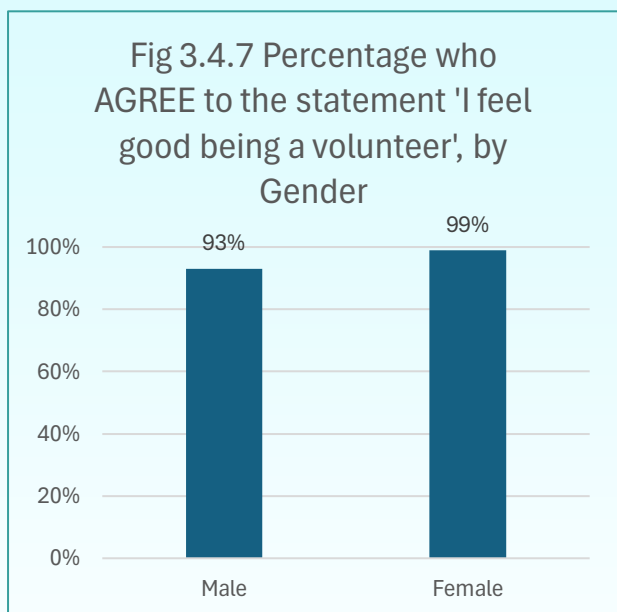
Citizenship and Volunteering:

Out of the sample, 88%-97% of participants gave positive responses regarding being a PSYV and their sense of social responsibility, life experience, being able to make a positive contribution to their community and feeling good being a volunteer.

Fig 3.4.7 Views on Volunteering



Upon further analysis, two statistically significant differences were found within these statements:



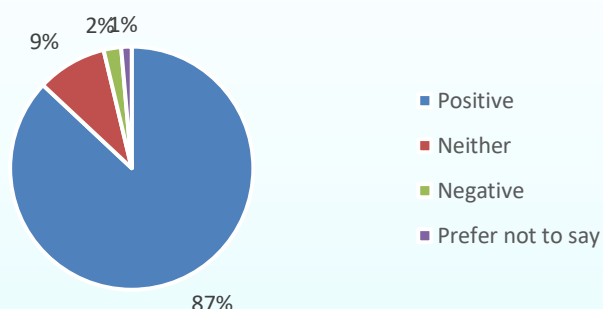
3.5 Perceptions of the Police

Perceived police values:

When asked to rate their overall perception of the police, 86% rated it positively, whilst 2% rated it negatively, 9% rated it neither positive nor negative and 1% preferred not to say.

Upon further analysis, there was a statistically significant difference in the answers to this statement based on ethnicity. With 90% of White individuals rating their perception as positive compared to 74% of Non-White individuals.

Fig 3.5.1 How would you rate your perception of the police?



More than half of the responding participants felt that Police Scotland upholds the values of integrity (64%), fairness (63%), respect (75%) and human rights (76%) 'to a great extent'. 20%-32% stated that the Police uphold the values 'to some extent'. Only a small percentage of participants felt Police Scotland only uphold the values of integrity (1%), fairness (1%), respect (1%) and human rights (1%) 'to a small extent' and only 1% believed that the police do not uphold the values of fairness and protecting human rights.

Some gave reasons for their answers:

"I feel like the media create a false and negative perception of the police. In the end, if you need help you put your faith in them, and they help. I have had prior experience with the police (abusive neighbour) and one of the main reasons I was able to recover was down to the police and to my group coordinator at the time PC Mark Toner."

"I think we get to see a side of police officers that others our age do not. We are able to have a lot more respect for the work they do and can see the effort they put in to keeping us safe."

"I haven't had many dealings with the police, but I know they are there to protect and keep everyone safe. I have also seen upsetting stuff online that police shouldn't do so it confuses things."

"I have put respect at "Some Respect" as senior volunteers are sometimes disregarded and aren't treated as seriously as we should be and are treated with less respect than what I believe we should be."

Fig 3.5.2 To what extent do the police uphold the following values?

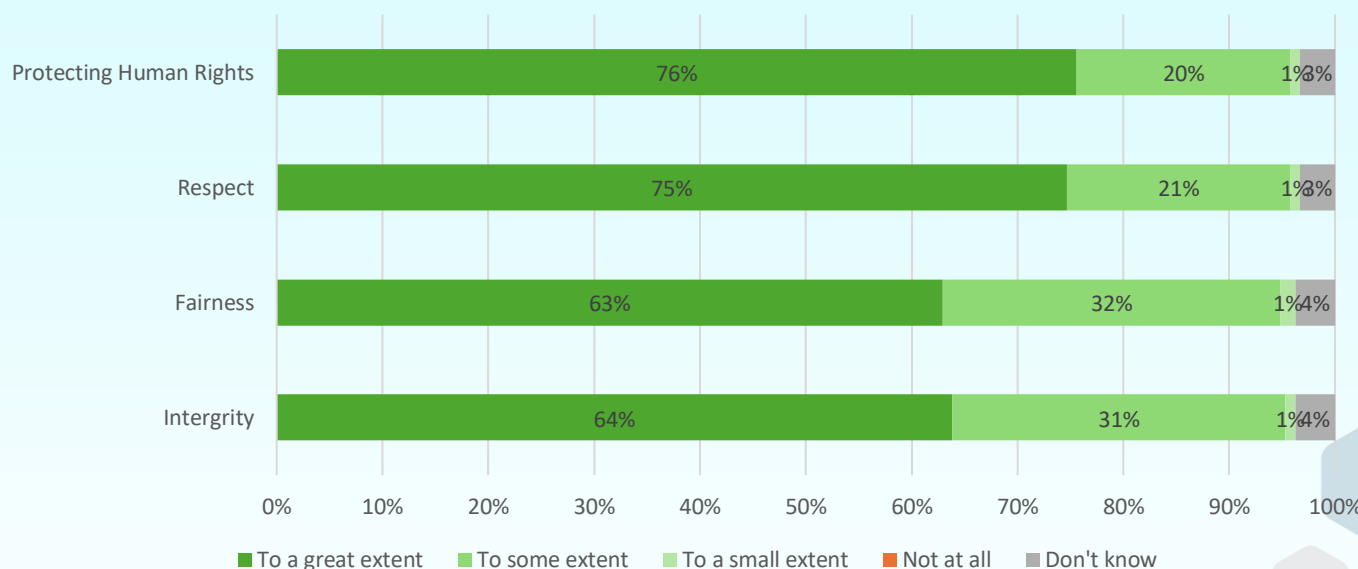
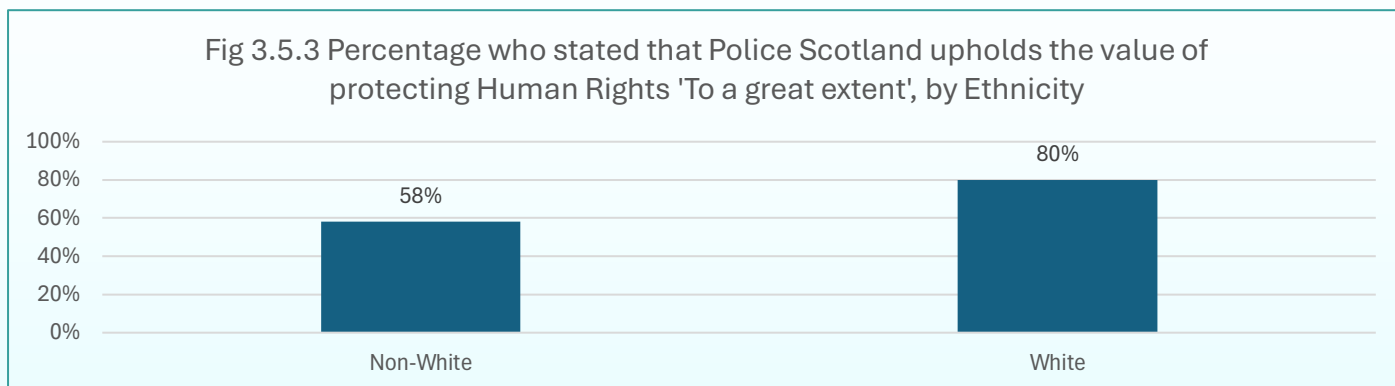
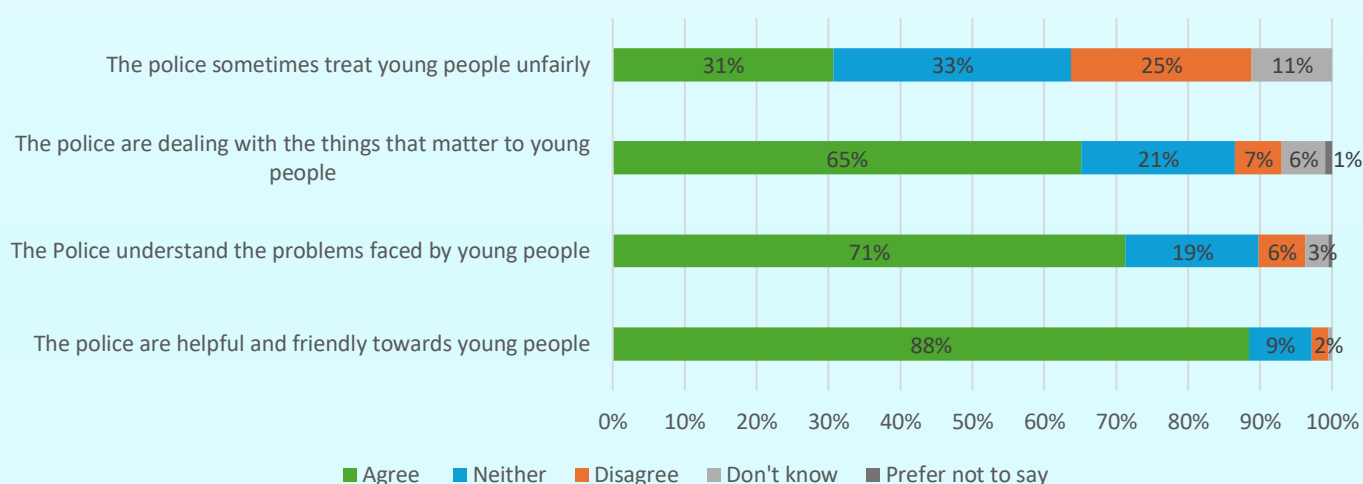


Figure 3.5.3 illustrates the only significant difference identified, which related to ethnicity difference for the statement 'Police Scotland upholds the value of protecting Human Rights'. The results show less Non-White participants rated this as 'to a great extent' than White participants.



Most of the Youth Volunteers who responded agreed that the police are helpful and friendly towards young people (88%), the police understand the problems faced by young people (71%) and the police are dealing with things that matter to young people (65%). When asked their levels of agreement on the statement '*the police sometimes treat young people unfairly*' 31% of the Youth Volunteers agreed, 25% disagreed, 33% stated they neither agreed nor disagreed, 11% did not know and 1% preferred not to say.

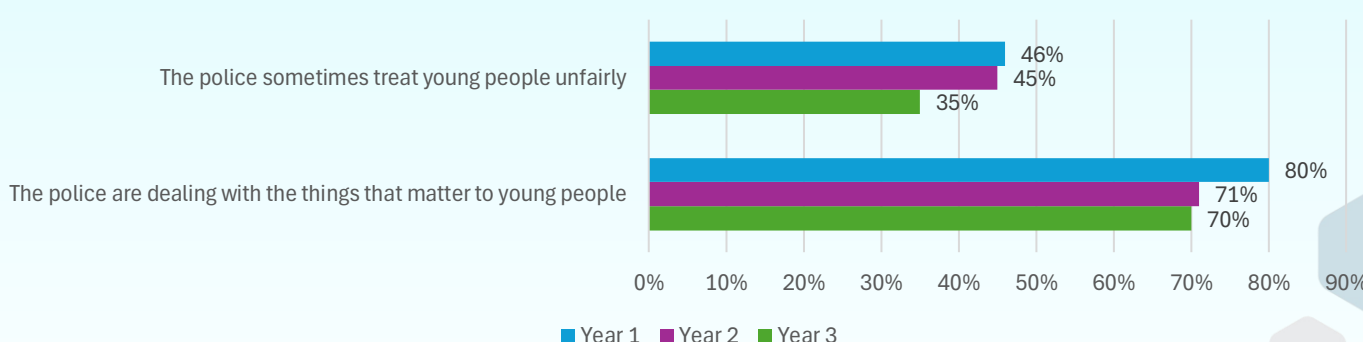
Fig 3.5.4 Perceptions of the Police



Upon further analysis, there statistically significant difference was found for three statements:

- 32.3 Dealing with things that matter to young people – Young people with more time in PSYV less agreed
- 32.3 Dealing with things that matter to young people – Levels of agreement have gone down over time
- 32.4 Police sometimes treat young people unfairly – Levels of agreement have gone down over time

Fig 3.5.5 Levels of AGREEMENT to the statements, Year 1 vs Year 2 vs Year 3



The Youth Volunteers were asked if being in PSYV had changed their perception of the police. 61% stated that it has made it more positive. Reasons given for PSYV making their perception of the police more positive included gaining more **understanding** (35), realising the **work the police do to help** (30), because the police are **friendly** (13), they have **overcome a bad experience** (3), and they have **gained trust** in the police (2). Most reasons given for their perception staying the same was that they have always liked the police. Comments included:

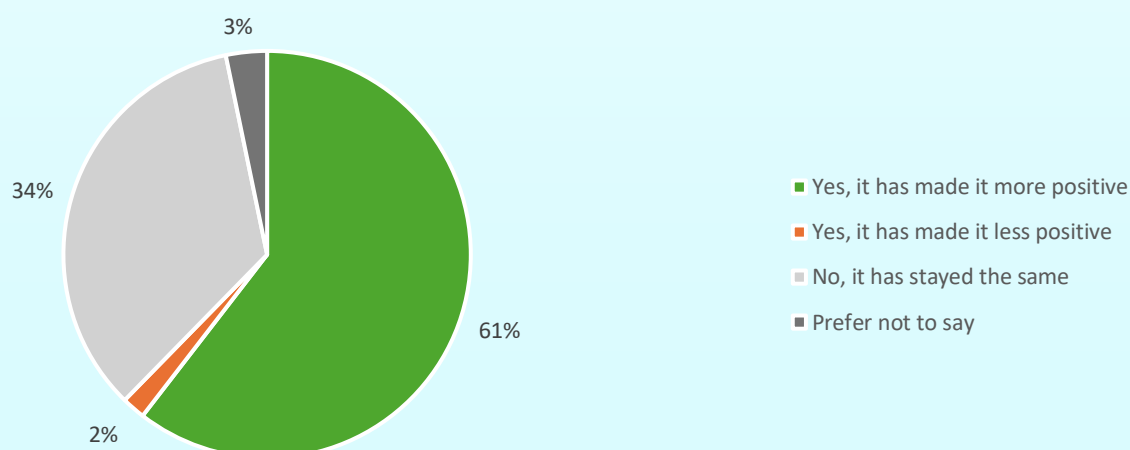
“It has shown them in a different light and shown how hard working the extent of their job is. It has also shown how much work they put in behind closed doors.”

“Before joining, the general stigma of the police in my local area was rather negative, as they were seen as not very respected. but since joining I’ve learned why people may not respect them, and it had since made me respect and view the police in a higher manor.”

“I think PSYV gives you a better understanding of police officers and the difficult job they have. It gives you better insight into why they do what they do and they situations they face.”

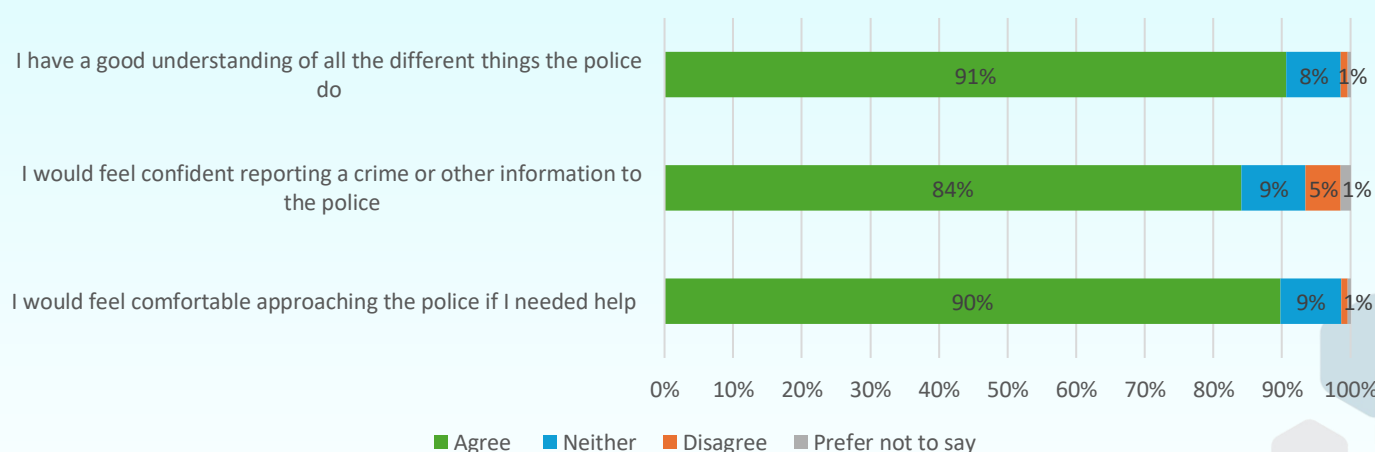
“I had bad experiences with police before but psyv has helped me look past them.”

Fig 3.5.6 Has being in the PSYV changed your perception of the police?



Most respondents indicated they would feel comfortable approaching the police if they needed help (90%), confident reporting a crime or other information to the police (84%), that they have a good understanding of all the different things the police do (91%) and 2-11 respondents disagreed (1%-5%). Additionally, when asked if they have ever had a negative experience with the police, 11 responded yes.

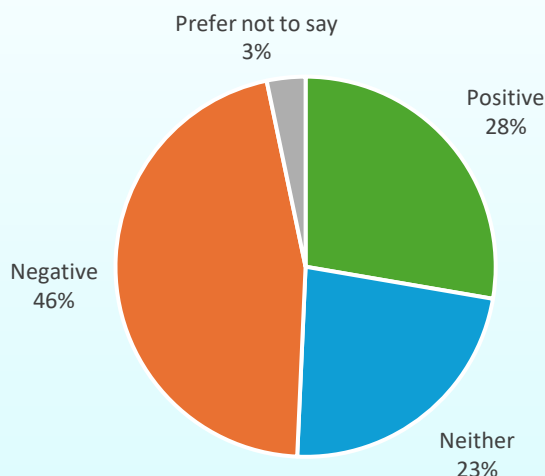
Fig 3.5.7 Feelings towards the Police



Community Perceptions of the Police:

Most (46%) of the youth volunteers responded that they believed the wider community of their age group had a negative perception of the police. 28% stated that the perception was positive, 23% stated neither and 3% preferred not to say.

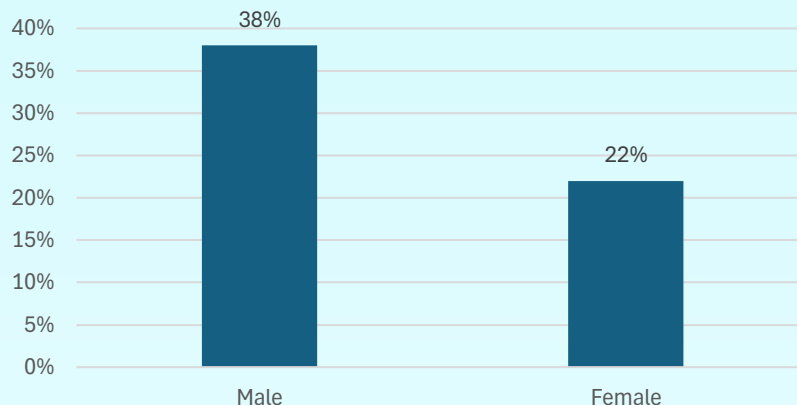
Fig 3.5.8 In the wider community, what do you think the perception is of your age group towards the police?



Upon further analysis, statistically significant differences were found for this statement:

- Length of service played a role in this statement with 38% of those who had been there less than a year stating the perception was positive compared to 18% for those who had been there for a year to two years and 33% for those who had been there for two plus years.
- There was also a difference in gender, with 38% of males stating there was a positive perception compared to 22% of females.

Fig 3.5.9 Percentage who state their age group has a POSITIVE perception towards the Police, by Gender



Most commonly it was stated that young people are often troublemakers so don't like the police as they are seen as *'ruining fun'* (20). Other comments included that people *"just don't like the police"* (19).

"Teens my age aren't the best behaved and can probably be very pestering for the Police."

"There has been a dramatic climb in anti social behaviour withing my age group and younger so it has been a challenging taste for the police force to face."

"I don't know why it just seems like my age group are rude and impolite towards the police."

Some mentioned that young people may have had **bad experiences** with the police (9) and may **be scared of the police** (4).

“View of police can vary from age to age, many are scared of the police.”

“A lot of young people at my age (16-17) have had negative encounters with the police, which had led to the general viewing of the police to go down.”

Others suggested that the **media has an influence** on perceptions (8). There were also suggestions that **prejudices and stereotypes** can come into play on both sides, with the police grouping young people together and young people not trusting the police (8).

“I think sometimes it can be quite negative and they treat all young person the same and put them in the same bracket. Which I don’t think should be the case.”

“People my age have stereotypes of the police.”

“In media that a lot of young people grew up on the police were rarely shown positively. Also, a lot of young people have the view that police are against them due to the small amount of officers that treat young people negatively for no reason.”

“Social media can highlight negative situations of the police.”

Answers also suggested that perhaps **young people don’t understand** what the police do to help (7).

“Some people my age might not like the police as they fully don’t understand what the police is trying to do, the police is trying to help us.”

“People in the community do not really like the police and think they are there to hurt etc, they are here to help.”

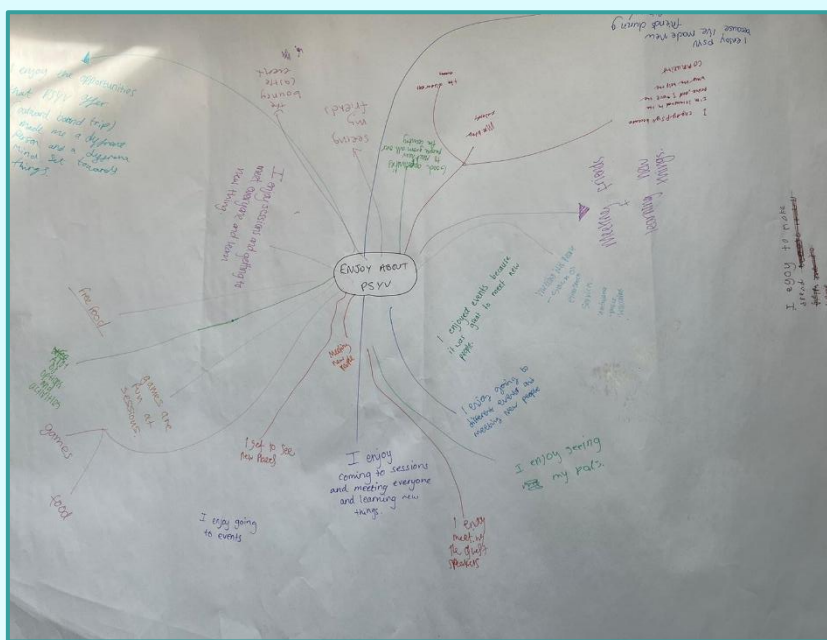


Chapter 4: Youth Volunteer Case Studies

In June 2024, March 2025 and September 2026, researchers visited PSYV groups in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen to conduct qualitative case studies which involved focus groups and creative methods to engage young people in further defining strengths and weaknesses in the PSYV programme and how the programme can be improved. These case studies involved a mind-map activity where Youths answered four separate questions; 'What do you enjoy most about PSYV?', 'What do you gain from PSYV?', 'What do you least enjoy about PSYV?' and 'How can PSYV be improved?'. In addition to this, smaller focus groups were also conducted which involved discussion and interpretation of the survey findings which were previously disseminated to PSYV youths, adult volunteers and staff, and alumni. In these focus groups youths commented on recommendations made based on the survey and formulated further recommendations for the improvement of the PSYV programme.

4.1 Mind-Map Activity Responses

Similarly, to the survey results, when asked about their gains at PSYV, the most popular answers were confidence and gaining new friends. In addition to this a range of skills were identified as key gains from PSYV such as leadership, organisation, communication, and teamwork. Other answers linked in to future prospects and careers, with some identifying the usefulness of gaining police insights and experiences that will be helpful for future jobs, with one youth listing their gains on the mind-map as, *"learnt about the policing career, volunteering hours, new people from different backgrounds, go to different places, helping people out, more motivated towards our career (policing), reduce stress, become a natural leader, improved my time management skills"*. Another popular answer was that the youths are gaining new and valuable experiences from their time at PSYV, either through trying out new things outside of their comfort zone or through their involvement in the community and socialisation with new people at these events.



When asked 'What do you enjoy most about PSYV?', again, similarly to the survey answers, the most popular thing is their 'events' or 'deployments'. A particular favourite event mentioned was their Outward Bound trip to Loch Eil, *"got to meet new people, learned new skills for example camping in the wild. We learnt how to set up our tents, how to cook our food etc. We also got to go out of our comfort zone by doing many activities like jumping in the freezing water of Loch Eil"* and another commented *"I enjoy the opportunities that PSYV offers (Outward Bound trip) made me a different person and a different mindset towards things"*. The opportunity for community engagement at events was also a common

theme in the answers with many linking being active in the community to feeling good about themselves and feelings of self-development and "fulfilment". For example, there were comments such as *"I love the way they help out in the community"* and *"It makes you feel good helping people"*. Another popular thing about PSYV for the youths was meeting new people, in particular *"Having the chance to meet new people from all across Scotland and make lifelong friends"*. It was also positive to see the names of their PSYV leaders mentioned multiple times in this section as some of the things they enjoy most about PSYV. Other things mentioned were the improvement of skills, links to a police career and the games and activities done in sessions.

[illegible]

practical things and activities such as group work, instead of just watching videos and sitting down.

4.2.1 Reasons for Joining:

“For me, I want to join the police so I thought this gives me lots of background information and because there were just lots of opportunities to go out to communities, so I thought this is perfect for me. And the more I do the more I enjoyed it and I got - I always kept going up and I got a reward for my commitment for my hours.”

"I think the reason I joined was because it was a stepping stone into the police, because when I joined PSYV it was pretty much one of the leading reasons to join. But now, even if I didn't want to join the police I feel like I would still join PSYV because it's more than just that."

"I knew I wanted to join the police and then my mum had seen that they were advertising for recruitments in the age gap for that. I was 13 at the time so she was like, 'You can join now', so I just signed up."

"I saw the wide range of deployments they attend and it just seemed interesting to me. Also at the time I was doing my Duke of Edinburgh so I was looking for places to volunteer and I found PSYV."

"I think my Mum put me in touch with this. But over time I have come to enjoy it. It has been enjoyable, I've been more willing to come here than I was originally."

enjoyable,

4.2.2 Gains, Skills and Confidence:

It was clear from the focus groups that many of the PSYVs felt they had gained a lot from their participation. Confidence and communication were the main key skills mentioned by the participants:

"I would say communication is a big one, especially since when you are doing the outside sessions and you are talking to different people and you are talking to groups of people you have to be able to know how to communicate properly and have that confidence to speak to different people."

"I would think one of the biggest skills I would learn here is communication and actual confidence because it takes a lot of courage to go out into public and engage with the community and do what we do."

"I think it's brilliant for building confidence because when I joined I wouldn't talk to anyone; I wouldn't have spoken at this really. But I've really grown just from doing this programme, and making new friends as well."

"I would think one of the biggest skills I would learn here is communication and actual confidence because it takes a lot of courage to go out into public and engage with the community and do what we do."

Additional skills mentioned included decision making, leadership, problem solving, resilience, and teamwork. Some comments included:

"But then there are also a lot more positives in PSYV, especially getting promotions and stuff, that leadership, teamwork, communication."

"Yes, I think decision making is a big one as well, there's not been the opportunity for us to develop decision making skills. And I agree with problem solving as well. Yes, we are focussing a lot more on leadership and communication, which I really appreciate, but it's also about the decision making, which is also really important for day to day."

Others mentioned how they appreciate the life experience they gain from working in the community and the additional benefit for future job applications:

"I think one thing is that it's maybe really good to have on your CV. I got the job I think a lot of it was because I was able to say the difference events and they were quite impressed, I think, that we do sometimes go to more high profile events as well. So I think it is really valuable as well, as a young person, if you've not had a job, to have something like this, that offers you that experience, because it can be really helpful."

"What I enjoy most is being able to be out in the community, giving back to the community in a way. Meeting a lot of people that you wouldn't meet not volunteering, as well."

4.2.3 Youth Voice and Self-Development:

When asked about if they feel they have a say or voice in PSYV one focus group member stated:

"I've been here for about three years, when I first joined it was always about, 'If you want input on this tell us, we'll arrange something'. So it was a lot more open, I think, but they don't mention it as much, as often, now...I'm sure they are still open to it though."

However, one youth stated that although they are open to youth input, the youth don't seem to take advantage of those opportunities:

"I can think of a recent time, I think last year a girl from one of the other groups wanted to give an input on Eid, the festival so they did roll out that input during the weekly sessions. So that has happened before, so I believe they are open to it. But I just don't think we take enough advantage of that if we do want it."

When asked in the focus groups if there are existing mechanisms for them to share their opinions most of the youths didn't feel that they did and suggestions of the usefulness of anonymous feedback methods were made.

"something like this would really let people talk more about what they want because they know that they are not going to be told off because obviously it's anonymous. I think this is a great way".

"I think another thing is though just generally giving feedback, like we are doing now, just saying the things that you think need improvement. And then you were saying the ['we did'], whatever that was, stuff like that. It would just show that there's been a difference from what we've said."

"I think that could be useful though, or a survey like, 'Rank your favourite deployment to least favourite', or something quite similar to that."

Similarly to this, participants were asked if they knew of anything in place to track the development of their skills. Some stated that there was not anything obvious in place, but this would be beneficial:

"Yes, I think it would be good for everyone to almost self-evaluate their skills, even just for ten minutes each session or whatever."

"They must have a broad idea but not homed in or don't know exactly but a general idea I'd say. Also if we deploy more they'll know because you are speaking to them more so they are probably - the more experience people, they'll know more of their skills than people that don't go on a lot of deployments."

Others mentioned the impact of recent changes within their groups:

"We've had a lot of different co-ordinators so they each vary. Our current one, I think she's been the best one but she's only asked us a couple of times about it. A lot of people left, there were really low numbers now. [They were leaving] because we weren't doing anything in group nights and we weren't doing any events."

"Well, I would say there's been a bit of a drop in our group because we've had a few different group co-ordinators, so it's made people leave because for loads of weeks we were just doing nothing. So we've lost maybe five, ten people, just though doing nothing. Everyone was like, 'Oh, it's pointless, we're paying this amount for a quarter of a year and we are doing nothing, so we are paying for no reason'."

4.2.4 Improvements:

When asked to suggest improvements for PSYV, the most common theme was again answers surrounding the events with one youth commenting on the fact that they would like more national events going to different cities.

"Getting to meet other youths different areas, different backgrounds and it's just splitting up, working together is probably the thing that I want."

In the focus groups another youth commented on the limited availability on some of the trips and the need for more funds to enable more spaces.

"I think more funds to help us get - I think more trips would be useful because I know there have been past trips but there's not a lot where I know people learned a lot but there weren't enough spaces because there are not enough funds to send more youths out to have the same experience. So, I think funds need to be increased a lot more."

A focus group member also highlighted a need for more descriptions on what the events/deployments involve to encourage newer members to attend:

"I know a couple of volunteers in our group that haven't been to a single event, and I feel that even the events themselves have not been advertised enough which they wouldn't know what the events are about. Because all we get is what we're doing what our duties are, we're not actually told what the event is fully about. Yes, we get a little bit of a description but the young volunteers themselves, the new ones

especially, they've not been to these types of events so that really discourages them to join. Which really, it takes a toll to their confidence as well."

Additionally, many of the youths stated that they would like to do more practical things and activities such as group work, instead of just watching videos and sitting down.

"I think one of the biggest things that needs to be improved is partly the sessions. There are some times when it just feels kind of repetitive, like you are getting the same kind of talk, which is the same set up, where it's just for three months or whatever it's just people coming in. You are sitting down for the whole two hours, listening to somebody talk and talk and talk. And then every once in a while, you get an event outside or you get a teambuilding or some games and stuff. And I feel we should get more outdoor events where we are engaging more in the local community."

"I was going to say the same thing, just maybe make it more interactive with the youths, which might make them a little bit more engaged or a little bit more comfortable to share it with their companions."

One person also mentioned in the focus groups that sometimes the sessions can be too serious and 'scare' the volunteers:

"Sometimes people get scared of what they hear because I know there are some sessions we'll have where it's really, really serious things, like with police people. I think sometimes people just get really scared and they don't know how to feel. And then they don't really have anyone to speak to because they get nervous because no-one else is showing the same emotion."

4.2.5 Police Activities and Involvement:

In the focus groups when asked about the balance of police activities and involvement, many stated that although they are not interested in a policing career, they would still like more police involvement as they find it interesting.

"Honestly, I know exactly what I want to be in the future and I don't want to be a police officer. But if there is someone doing a police input I just really enjoy it. I like learning about everything like that."

"Although I don't actually want to be a police officer... I'm really interested in the police. And it's great hearing in the inputs."

"For me, I think it should be more policing activities, like more leaflets drops and more inputs from different police roles, for example British Transport Police, Dog Unit, Armed Police, which I think that's interesting. But I think it's got a good balance of non and police activities."

Others had more negative views towards the police involvement in the programme, they stated they felt as if they were just a check box for police Scotland and used by them or see it as a one-way relationship particularly at events.

"I think personally for a police based organisation it's massively lacking. We don't receive enough training, we don't receive enough input...It's a weird way to put it but it feels like we are more just there for the benefit of a check box. Where I've shown up to events, we're not there because they want us there, they are there so they can check a box."

"I think that there's quite a big lack of relationship between serving police officers, group co-ordinators and youth volunteers. We are more seen as just there to [be] workers. They'll have some brief knowledge of us, but generally speaking they have no idea about us. It doesn't really go both ways, in my opinion. I understand that they are serving and they are working but at events they don't seem to be terribly busy and they don't seem to try to interact with us."

"They are almost not willing to be affiliated with PSYV because there's quite a lot of events, police will be there but almost as a separate thing to what we are doing unless one of the group co-ordinators is there and obviously they are police themselves, so they bring them in. It's almost a case of police that are there

don't even look at us. Sometimes they do but sometimes they are just going about, getting on with it and they are not even taking time."

Some of the volunteers also mentioned some negativity from other people when they find out that they are involved in PSYV and as such, they often hide it from their peers.

"A wee bit but I don't really care anyway, it doesn't really matter because you just kind of know. But you keep it private as well, I suppose."

"I just keep it quite private but I don't do it because of other people because I don't really care what other people think. But I don't like openly display it everywhere."

"Only my friends know, random people know."

"You are always going to get a reaction like that, it's just what it is."

"They just kind of made - not 'made fun of me' but just slagged me off a wee bit, just because I've joined this."

4.2.6 Views Towards Deployments and Events:

As with other findings, the views towards deployments and events were mixed. Some had positive views, feeling well prepared and aware of what would be involved.

"Yes, I haven't really been to an event where I have not known what I was doing or even come close to it. I've pretty much known how to do it, when to do it, where to do it pretty much all the time."

"I would say beforehand, when we actually sign up to an event, there's usually a list of duties on the PSYV page so we know beforehand what we're going to do. And then when we get to the event we'll have a meeting with everyone and the group co-ordinator and they will tell us what we're doing. So for example, when I went to the Race for Life event we had to give out water, snacks, medals. And then we'd be separated into groups and put at stations. So I thought it was quite well structured that way because we knew exactly what we were doing and it was easy to follow."

Others had more negative views towards deployments and events. Some mentioned having boring or tedious duties:

"I was at an event before, it was a racing one, I can't remember its name. We were pretty much just standing there the entire time. We were supposed to tell people where to go but everyone pretty much knew where they were going already so we were just standing there, doing nothing because everyone knew already what to do. Yes, in some deployments it feels like our attendance is unnecessary."

"There are some community engagement events where you just find that one or two people are helping at a booth or something and everybody else is just standing around. I get sent to pick up trash"

"I think a lot of the time some of the things we do feel a bit tedious, like not necessary, what we are doing. And it's like we're a but useless at some events. We don't have as much responsibility as we could and you don't get as much out of it as you would at other events."

Others mentioned not having enough events or not having enough information on events:

"I think for our group, since we are so rural we don't get as many events, so we don't get as many opportunities as the city groups."

"Maybe further notice on events. For events you will get told what the event is but not what the details are, and we only get told a couple of days beforehand what we are actually doing. So maybe two weeks' notice beforehand to get the full details."

“At some events we don’t get told everything we should need to know. So if people ask us stuff we just don’t know what to tell them.”

4.2.7 Advertisement/Selling PSYV:

In the focus groups many of the youths outlined the lack of awareness of what PSYV is.

“I think it could use a bit more advertisement to begin with because sometimes you could be going to a deployment or something and then either somebody is going to give you a whole load of questions because they’ve no clue what it is or just assume that you are going to a work or something. Somebody once asked me if I was military.”

“But I think there’s definitely not enough awareness on what PSYV is as a whole. It’s a really great thing to be part of but I think more people need to be aware of it.”

When asked what they would say to promote PSYV to other people, some of the answers are as follows:

“If you were down in the dumps, you are stuck in a hole, I suppose that’s one way to put it, one of the phrases they say, then PSYV can help you get out of that hole and find people who are in similar situations and connect with others.”

“I just think it’s a very good programme and there are a lot of people that I know, and myself, that would turn out differently if it wasn’t for PSYV as it was so young that you were brought in and then you’ve grown into it. I just think yes, it’s a very, very good programme.”

“it’s an amazing programme. When I joined, I’ve really, really enjoyed it so far. I’d always be looking forward to the sessions and to events and seeing everyone, it’s just really fun and builds a lot of confidence. That’s probably one of the main things, I would say.”

“It’s just an amazing experience to have and it’s completely unique. Whenever people find out that you do it they ask you so many questions and you get to tell so many stories about it. It’s just a completely extraordinary thing to do.”

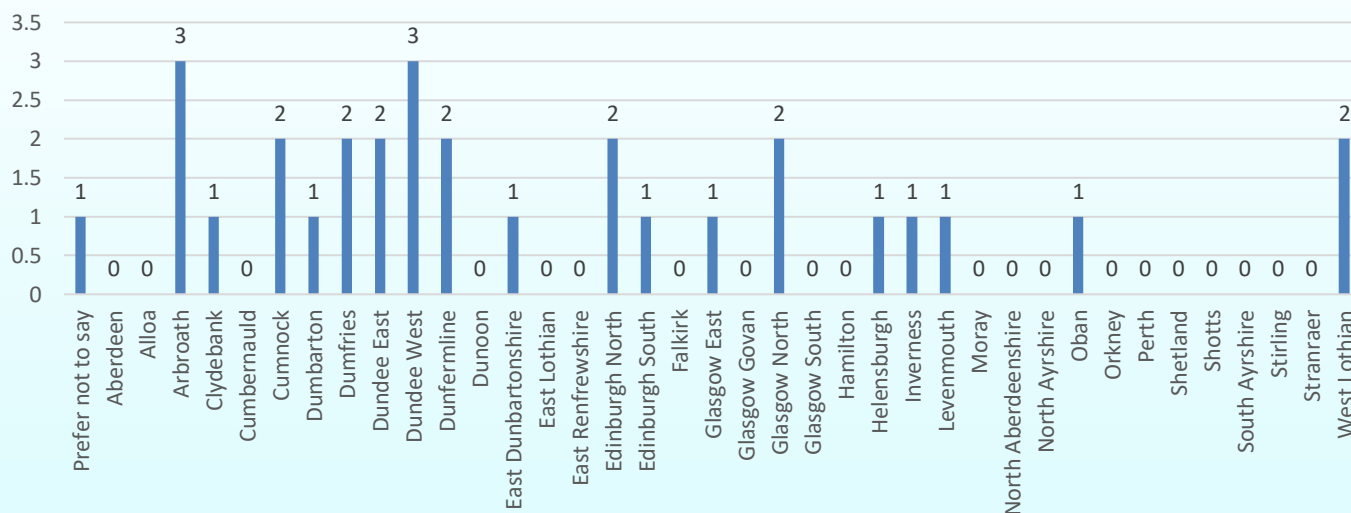
“It’s literally the best thing I’ve ever done. If I knew about it earlier I would have definitely put my name down. I’m kind of glad but it’s not as well-known but it’s amazing.”

Chapter 5: Leavers and Alumni Surveys

5.1 Alumni Survey:

Overall 42 alumni completed the alumni survey, of which 30 gave the area in which they were a PSYV.

Fig 5.1 Alumni PSYV Area



Most commonly, 30% had been a PSYV for 4 years to less than 5 years and 28% had left PSYV for 6 months to less than a year at the time of completing the survey. Additionally 20% of the alumni that completed the survey volunteered with PSYV as an Adult Volunteer.

Fig 5.2 How long were you a PSYV?

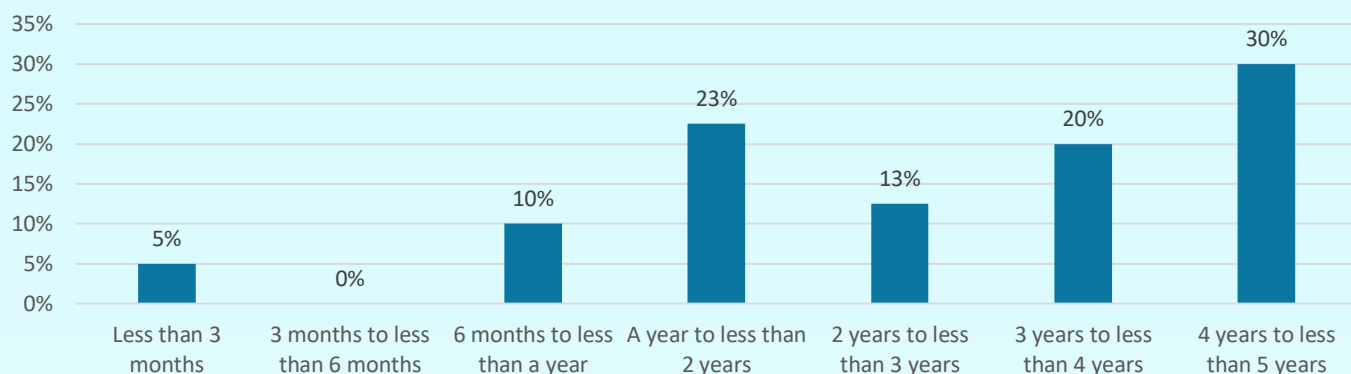
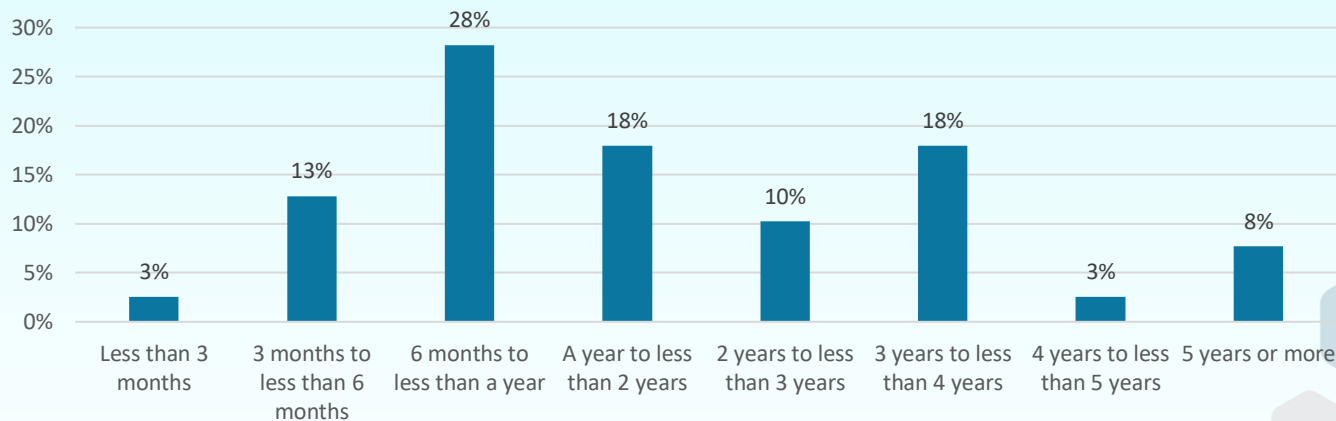
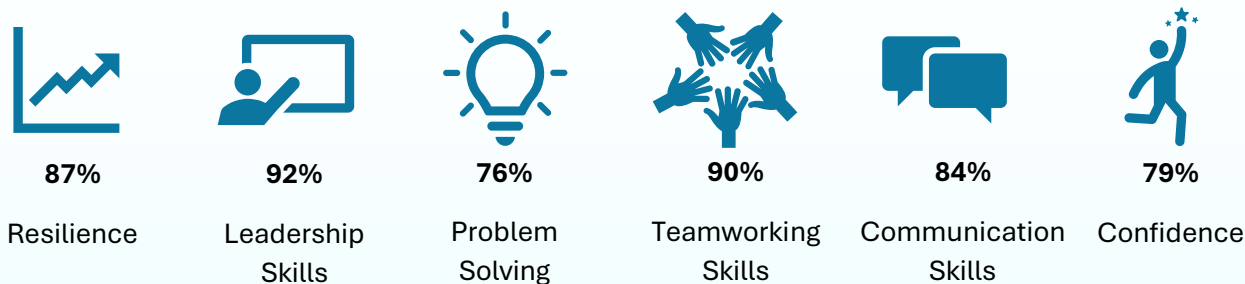


Fig 5.3 How long ago did you leave PSYV?

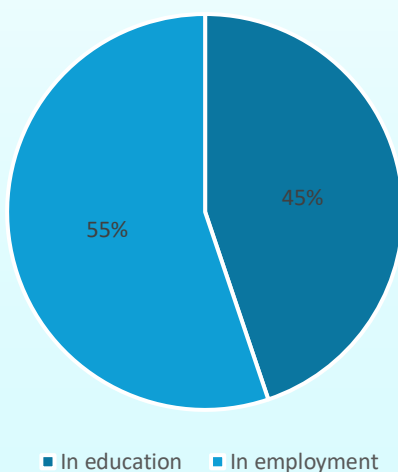


Overall, 79%-92% stated that PSYV had a positive impact on their skills and confidence.



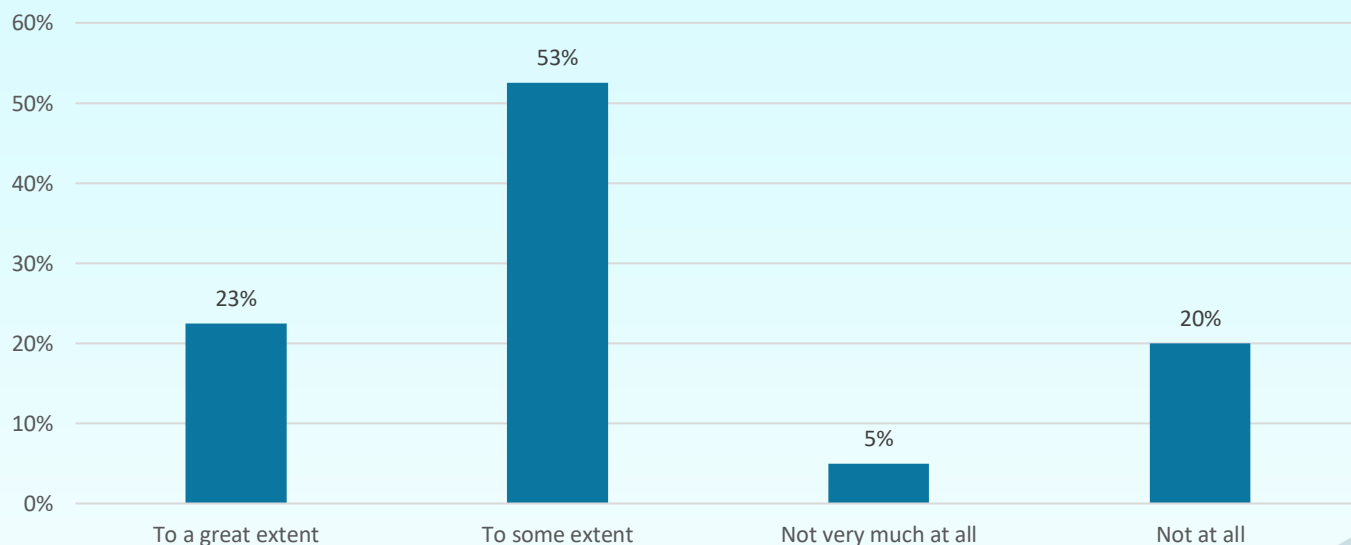
When asked 'What are you doing now?', 55% stated they were in employment and 45% were in education.

Fig 5.4 What are you doing now?



In total 75% stated that being in PSYV influenced their decision making in terms of what they wanted to do in life.

Fig 5.5 Did being in PSYV influence your decision making in terms of what you wanted to do in life?



Comments included:

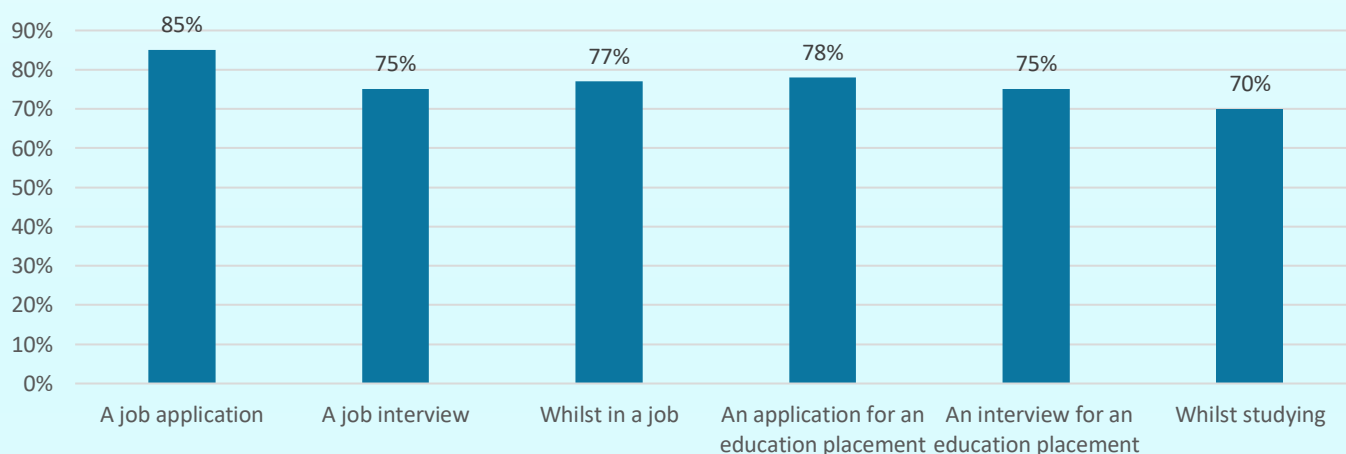
"I always loved volunteering but didn't know where that would take me but through No Knives, Better Lives I knew that community work was something I was interested in. Then it was an adult volunteer who suggested Community Education at Dundee University to me and now I'm in my 4th year. All because of the volunteering from PSYV."

"PSYV is an excellent organisation. I have just left after 4 years and now commenced University studying Forensics. I hope to join Police Scotland when my studies are finished. Also to return to PSYV as an adult volunteer or Special Constable."

"Helped me establish strengths within myself which altered the trajectory of my career."

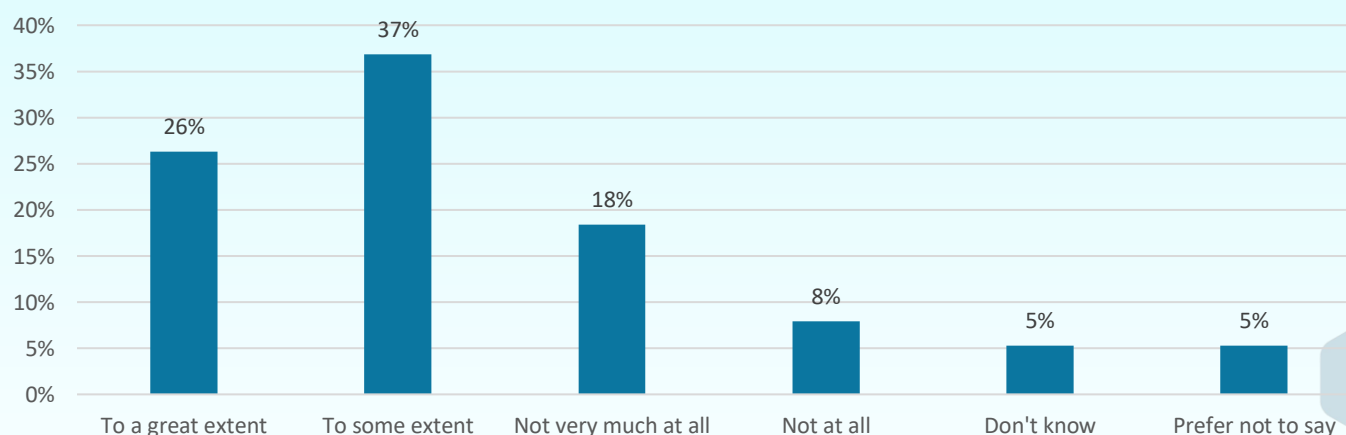
The majority of alumni who participated in the survey sated that, where applicable, their experience as a PSYV helped them in situations such as a job application (85%), job interview (75%), whilst in a job (77%), in an application for an education placement (78%), in an interview for an education placement (75%) and whilst studying (70%).

Fig 5.6 Percentage of those who felt their PSYV expeerience has helped them in the following situations.



Overall, 65% stated that their experience in PSYV has helped them since they left and 25% stated it had not helped very much or at all.

Fig. 5.7 To what extent do you think your experience as a PSYV has helped you since you left?



For those who stated that it had helped, further comments included:

“PSYV gave me confidence in myself. It also taught me skills to interact with the public at such a young age.”

“The skills and experience I gained from PSYV has had an effect on all aspects of my life. I use these skills daily and can use my past experiences working with members of the public in any capacity.”

“It has taught me skills and qualities that I can use for the rest of my life and no matter the career or position in the career. It has also helped my confidence in going for promotions or talking in front of groups of people.”

The alumni were asked **‘Looking back at your experience as a PSYV do you have any suggestions for how the PSYV programme could be improved?’**. Comments were varied with stating that *“It was perfect”* or they had no suggestions. Others suggested improvements such as having a bigger variety of national events or more community engagement:

“PSYV should continue to contribute to the communities they serve. PSYV should consider that not all participants wish to pursue a career in policing and activities such as ‘drill’ should not be practised by YV’s. This was a waste of time and did not benefit YV’s. YV’s should also be heavily involved in the selection of deployments.”

“Arbroath didn’t have as many opportunities for events as the bigger city groups did so was often the same kinds of events eg. Running races etc.”

Other suggestions included more focus on different job roles. However, others suggested more police related activities:

“More focus on job routes - not everyone joins because they want to go into the police. So important to have weekly sessions and get different organisations in.”

“Sessions should be to do with actual police volunteering things.”

Further improvements included more approachable staff and signposting for help if needed:

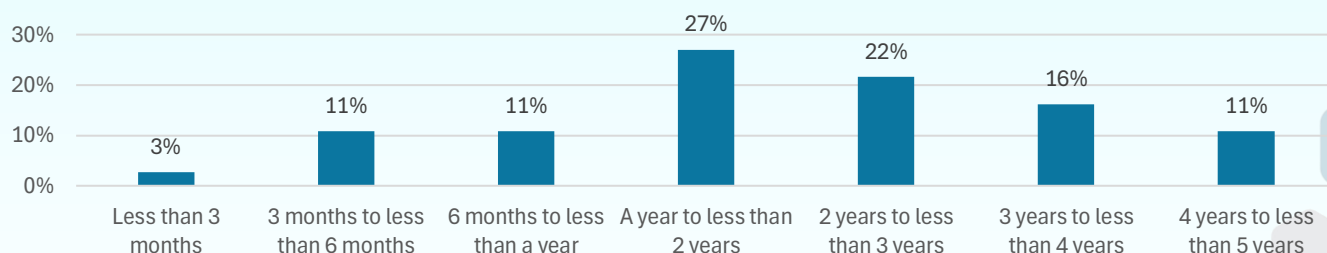
“There shouldn’t be a fear of the adult volunteers as a youth volunteer, they should be easily approachable.”

“It would be useful to have a bigger ratio of adult volunteers in a group since I regularly saw adult volunteers get overwhelmed with the work load and management of a big group of teenagers. It would also help if any of the kids had concerns that they wanted to speak to a police officer about they’d have more signposting and people to go to that they trust.”

5.2 Leaver’s Survey

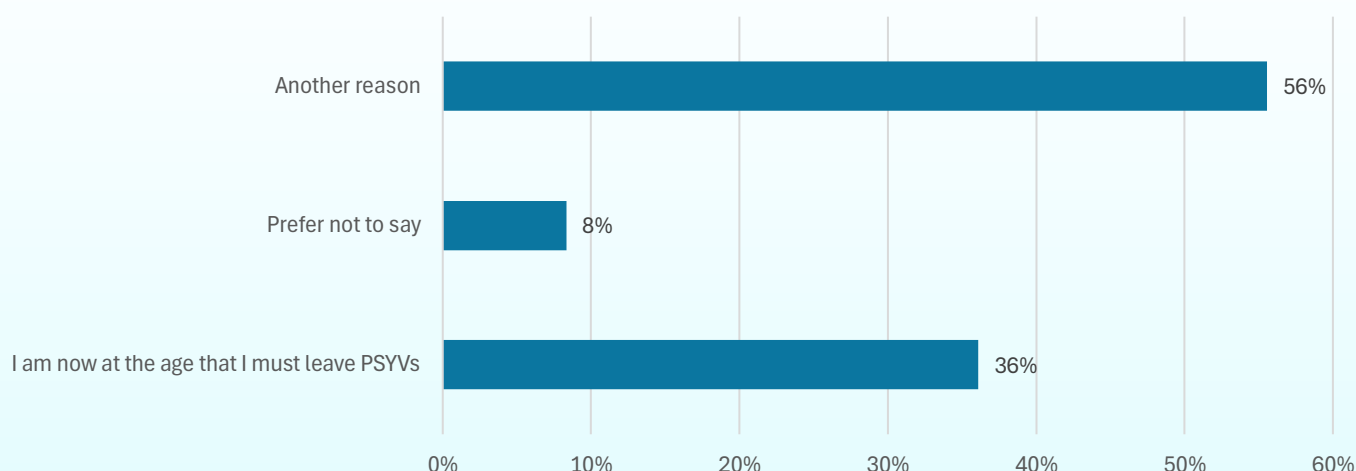
In total, 37 leavers completed the survey. Of these participants, the majority (27%) had been a PSYV for a year to less than two years. Below is a breakdown of how long the participants had been a PSYV.

Fig 5.8 How long have you been a PSYV?



The participants were asked why they left PSYV. 36% left because they had aged out of the programme, 56% for another reason and 8% preferred not to say.

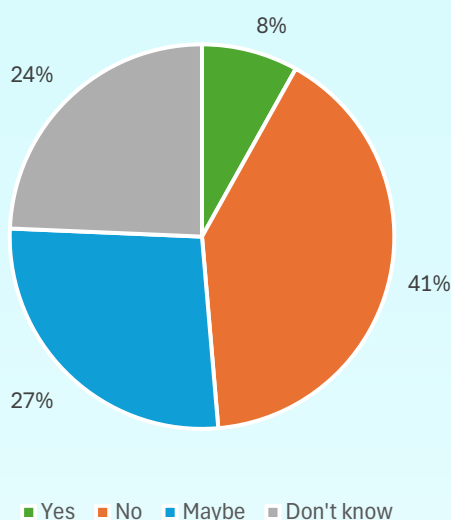
Fig 5.9 For what reason are you leaving PSYV?



Participants who left for another reason were asked what this reason was. Some reasons related to the conduct of other PSYV members. The national team were made aware, if not already aware, of these cases to address these incidents whilst keeping the anonymity of the participant. Other reasons included having other commitments, groups closing or moving and not having a nearby group to attend.

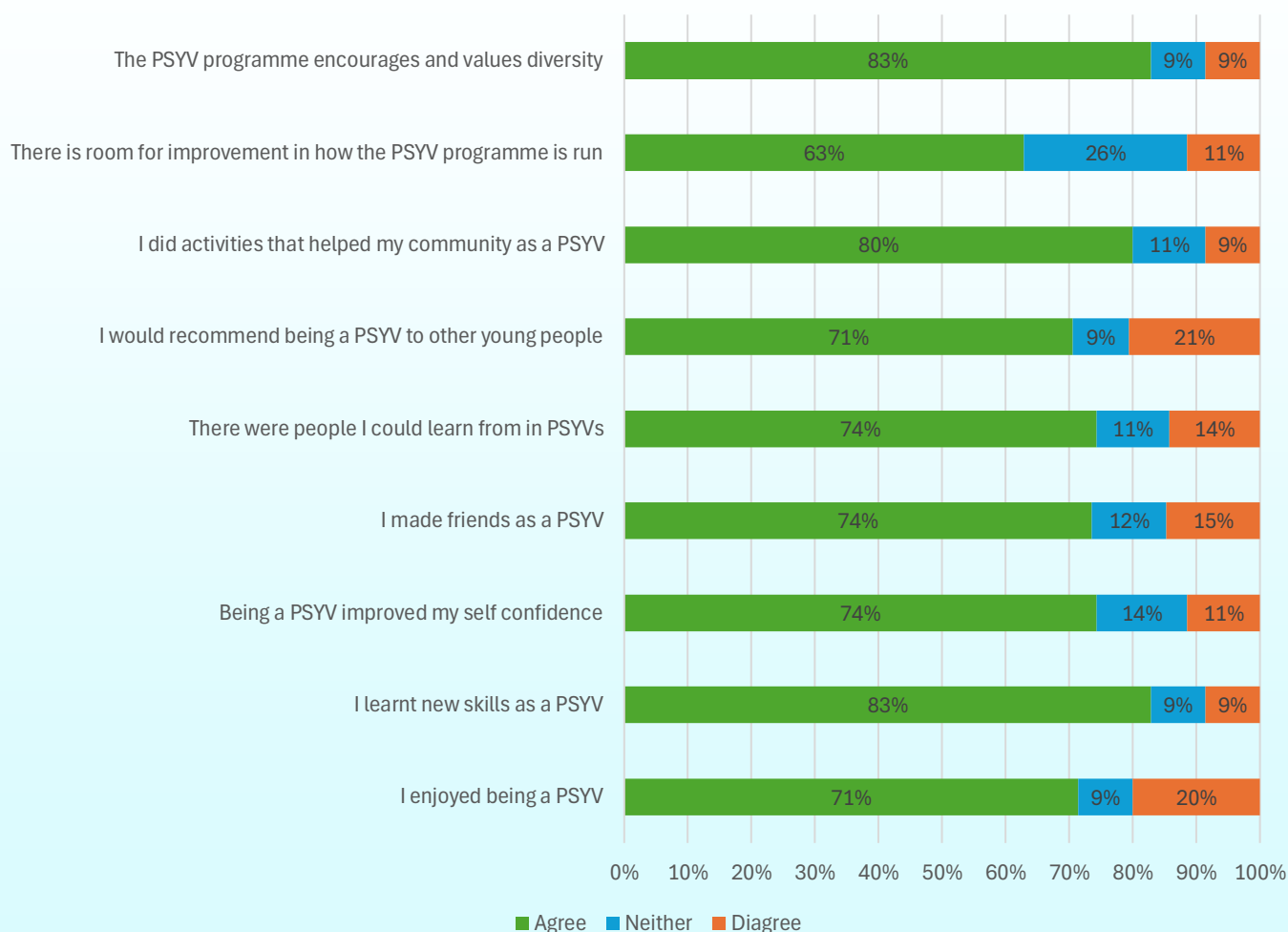
8% stated that they intend to volunteer at PSYV as an adult volunteer, 41% stated they do not, 27% selected maybe and 24% did not know.

Fig 5.10 Do you intend to volunteer with PSYV as an adult volunteer?



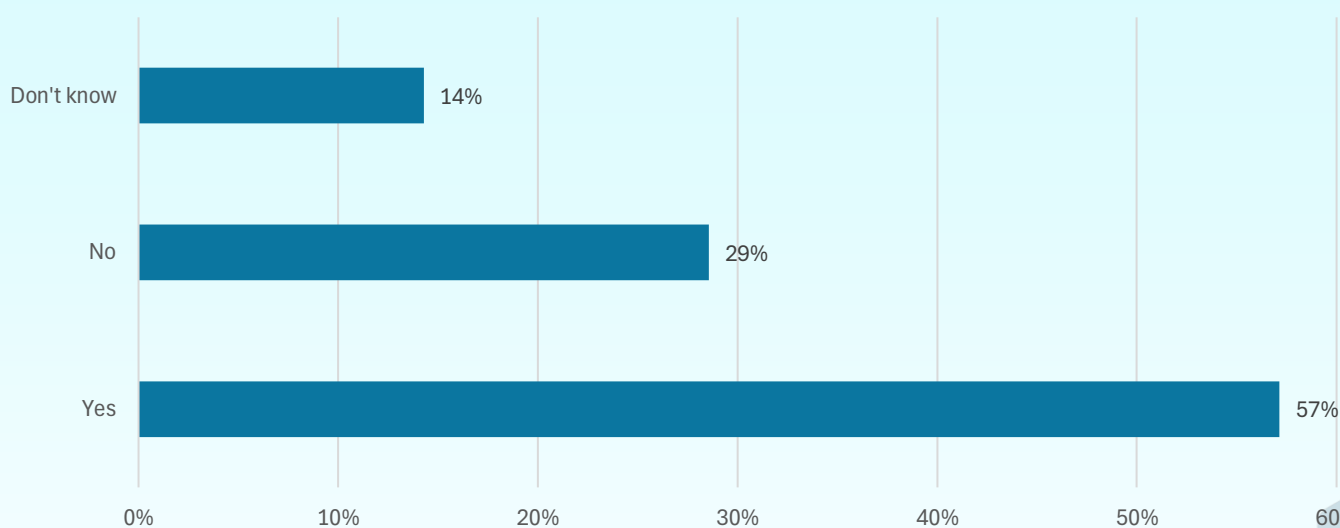
Participants were asked to rate their agreement to the following statements relating to the PSYV programme. The statements with the highest level of agreement was *'The PSYV programme encourages and values diversity'* and *'I learnt new skills as a PSYV'* with 83% agreeing. The statements with the highest disagreement, although still low, were *'I enjoyed being a PSYV'* (20% disagreed) and *'I would recommend being a PSYV to other people'* (21% disagreed). For the statement *'There is room for improvement in how the PSYV programme is run'*, 63% agreed, 26% neither agreed nor disagreed and 11% disagreed.

Fig 5.11 Leaver's Views on the Programme



Overall, 57% stated that they think young people have enough say into the activities on the PSYV programme, 29% stated no and 14% did not know.

Fig 5.12 Do you think young people have enough say into the activities on the PSYV programme?



Leavers were asked **‘What, if anything did you learn from being a PSYV?’**, comments included:

“As a Police Scotland Youth Volunteer, I learned the importance of teamwork and collaboration by working closely with other volunteers, police officers, and community members to achieve common goals. Engaging with the community taught me the value of empathy, respect for diversity, and civic duty, while also improving my communication and interpersonal skills. Additionally, I became more aware of various social issues and gained a strong sense of responsibility, discipline, and resilience, all of which have contributed to my personal growth and development.”

“I learned the importance of community, and volunteering. I gained a lot of communication skills and self confidence that I would not have without the PSYV.”

“During my time at PSYV, I learnt about the role of individual responsibility in life. Often in school settings you were told what to do but at PSYV we were equipped with the right skills and encouraged to learn and use our own judgement to make decisions. I learnt basic policing and had visits and talks from various departments. I improved my leadership skills as head youth volunteer and I also increased my confidence when dealing with the public as a result of marshalling.”

Leavers were asked **‘What did you most enjoy about being a PSYV?’**, comments included:

“I enjoyed the weekly meetings. Have a place to go every week to learn and experience new different things and meet new people from your area who were not just in your school. I also enjoyed all the different events we got to attend.”

“The range of opportunities I was given and the events I was offered to help at.”

“I enjoyed being given a lot of responsibility during events and helping people.”

Leavers were asked **‘What did you least enjoy about being a PSYV?’** comments included:

“When I was there (about 2018-2020) there wasn't much diversity amongst the group, I know it was very early days at the time but would've been nice to meet people from all different backgrounds, including adult volunteers.”

“I didn't enjoy how our group seemed forgotten. Our coordinators tried to run the group seamlessly but they weren't sometimes assigned or paid to do it. Eventually the group was disbanded due to a lack of ownership and support from the volunteer coordinator in my opinion which means it is not an option for people anymore or for me as an adult.”

“Some training nights as some felt extremely pointless and boring.”

“There were no aspects of the PSYV I didn't enjoy. There were challenges along the way but I always enjoyed the PSYV.”

Leavers were asked **‘What could be improved about the PSYV experience for other young people?’**, comments included:

“I think that all groups should be given equal opportunities as some PSYV groups get to do massive and major events, whilst others just do things like leaflet drops and helping at community fairs.”

“For there to be an assigned adult leader who is regularly able to run the meetings and events paid/unpaid and for the training and education system for youth volunteers to be accessible by group coordinators who may not be a serving member of Police Scotland. Also, similar to in England Police Cadets can study during their time as cadets to become Police Officers and it would be good to see a similar learning and development system in PSYV to ensure people could graduate and become police officers (considering the fact a few Youth Volunteers want to be Police Officers).”

“Need more interesting and going out activities as there are a lot of admin classes and they don’t keep your attention.”

“Maybe having a buddy when you start as not that easy to make friends and integrate.”

“A consistent group coordinator.”

“I think there could be some more organisation with events and charity work. We often discussed working with local charities but found we never did.”

Leavers were asked **‘How do you think being a PSYV might help you in the future?’**, comments included:

“It’s made me more confident in myself, helped me get into university and put myself forward for opportunities I never would have applied for, if it wasn’t for PSYV.”

“I’ve found that having the PSYV on my CV has impressed interviewers, it definitely shows I have experience in working with people.”

“It will help me to get a job but also help me to communicate in a working environment and work with many others. It will also make me think twice before I do something.”

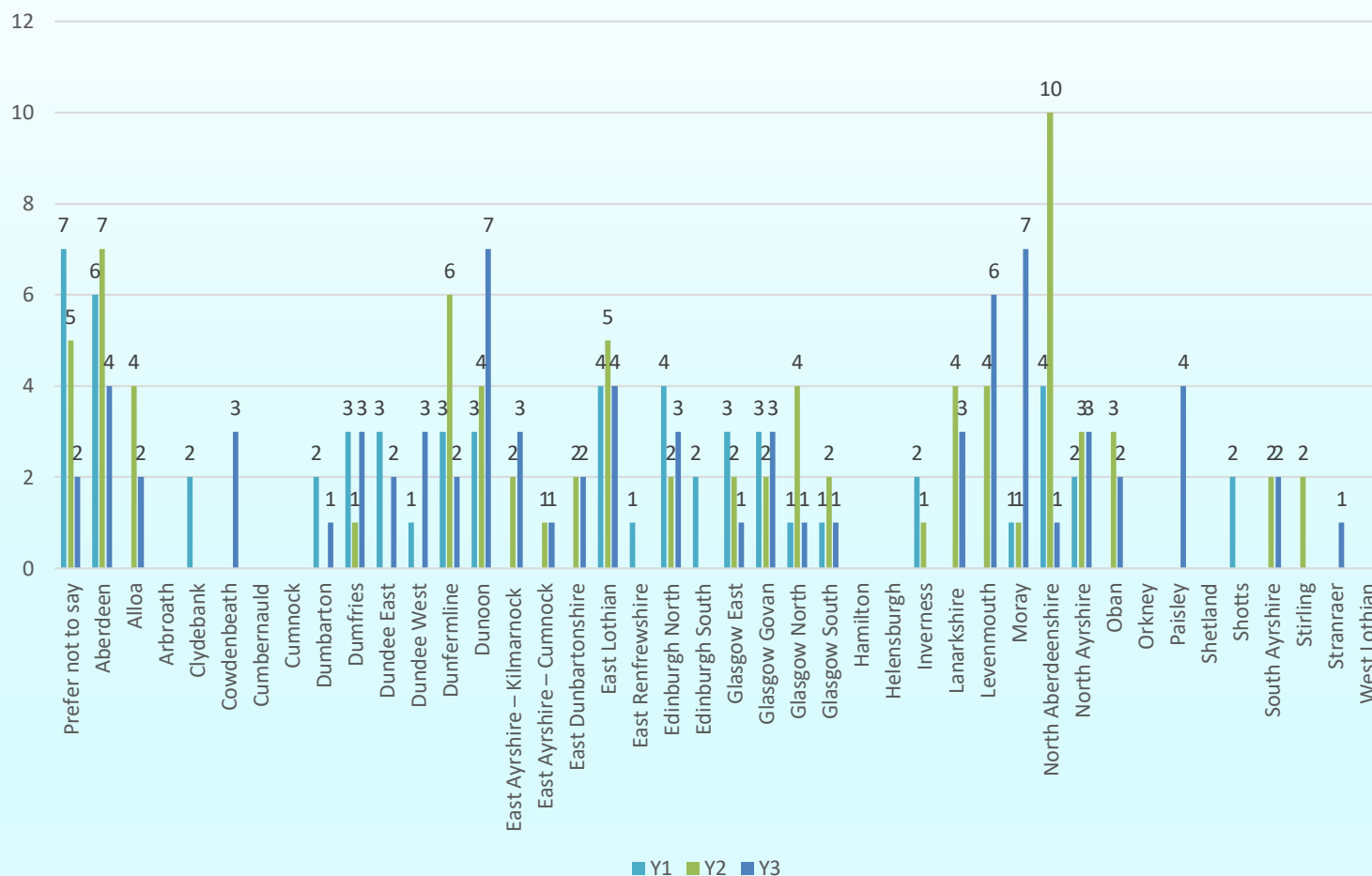
“PSYV helped me gain new skills and gave me the chance to experience things I would otherwise not be able to outside of PSYV.”

Chapter 6: National Survey of Adult Staff and Volunteers

6.1 Demographics of the Sample

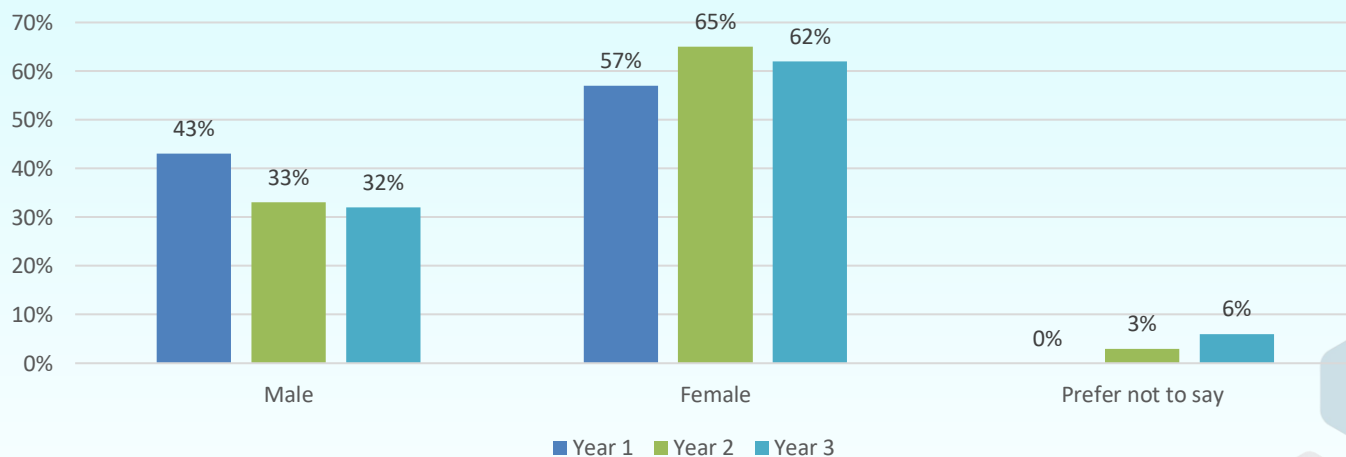
In Year 3, 80 adult staff and volunteers completed the survey. The graph below shows the PSYV groups that the survey respondents were part of and the number of respondents in each group for all three of the surveys.

Fig 6.1.1 Area of Adult Staff Responses



In Year 3, 62% of the respondents were female, 32% were male and 6% preferred not to say. Over time there has been a slight increase in the proportion of female adult staff or volunteers.

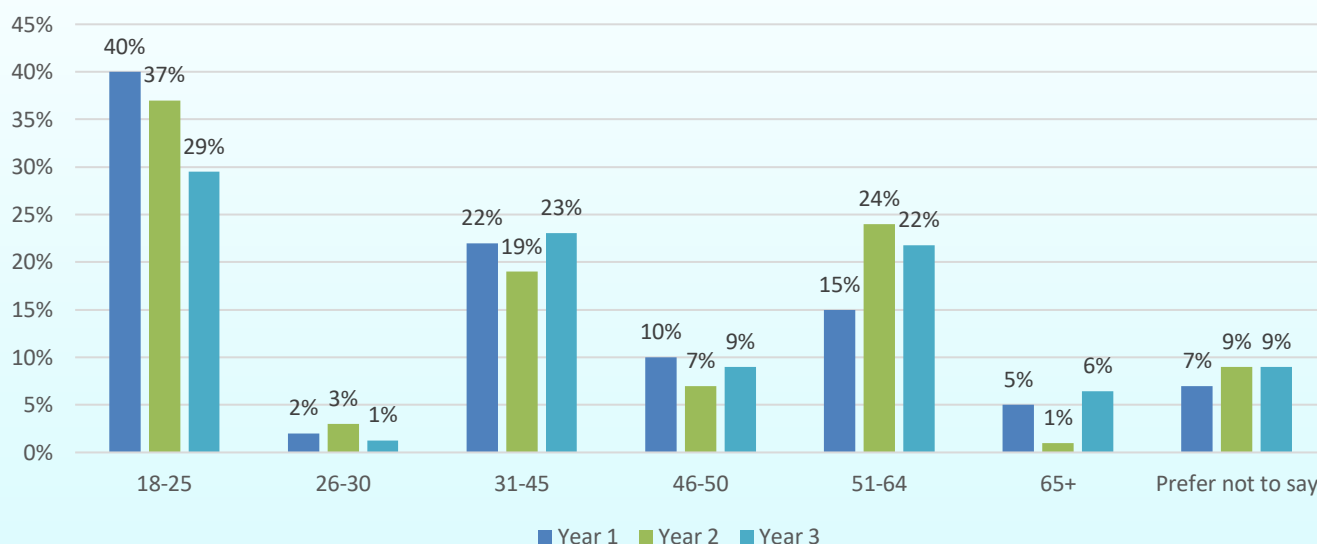
Fig 6.1.2 Gender



When asked about their ethnicity 5% selected 'prefer not to say'. Of those who did provide their ethnicity, 91% identified as 'White', 3% as 'Mixed or multiple ethnic group' and 1% as 'Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British'.

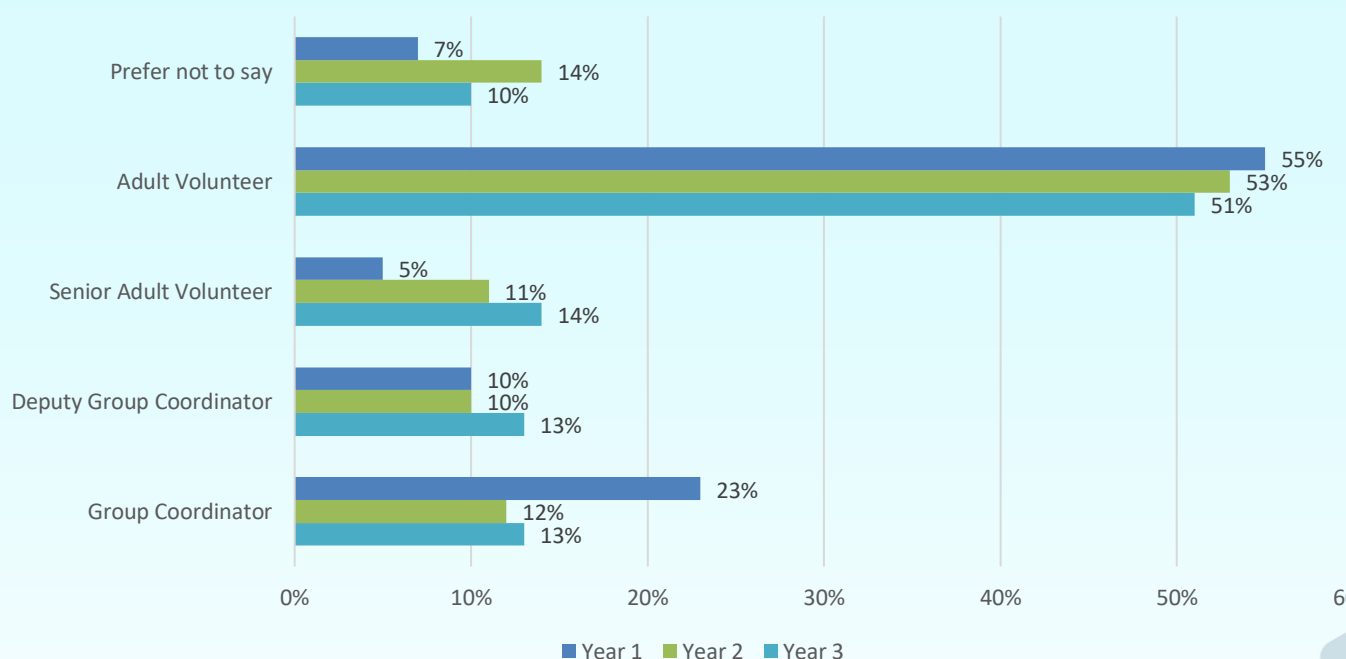
In Year 3, most respondents were aged between 18-25 (29%). However data shows that the proportion of adult staff and volunteers aged between 18 to 25 is steadily decreasing, as it was 40% in Year 1. Interestingly there is also a very low proportion of 26-30 year olds, with only 1% in Year 3.

Fig 6.1.3 Age



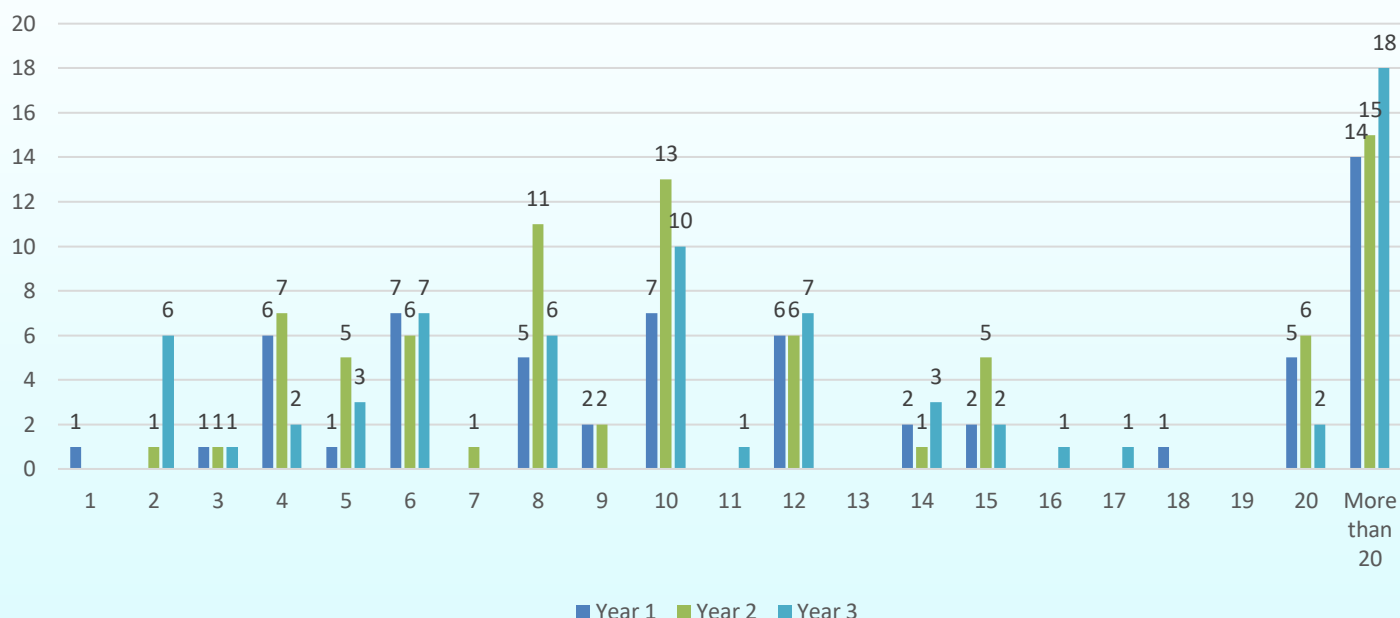
Similarly to previous years, the majority of respondents were an Adult Volunteer (51%). This was followed by Senior Adult Volunteer (14%), Group Coordinator (13%), Deputy Group Coordinator (13%) and 10% preferred not to say. In this years survey, there is a slight increase in Senior Adult Volunteers and Deputy Group Coordinators in the survey demographics.

Fig. 6.1.4 Role



In Year 3, there has been an increase in individuals working more than 20 hours a week from 14 in the survey Year 1 to 18 in Year 3. Data shows that of those who provided how many hours they work, 64% of individuals are working over 10 hours a week at PSYV in Year 3.

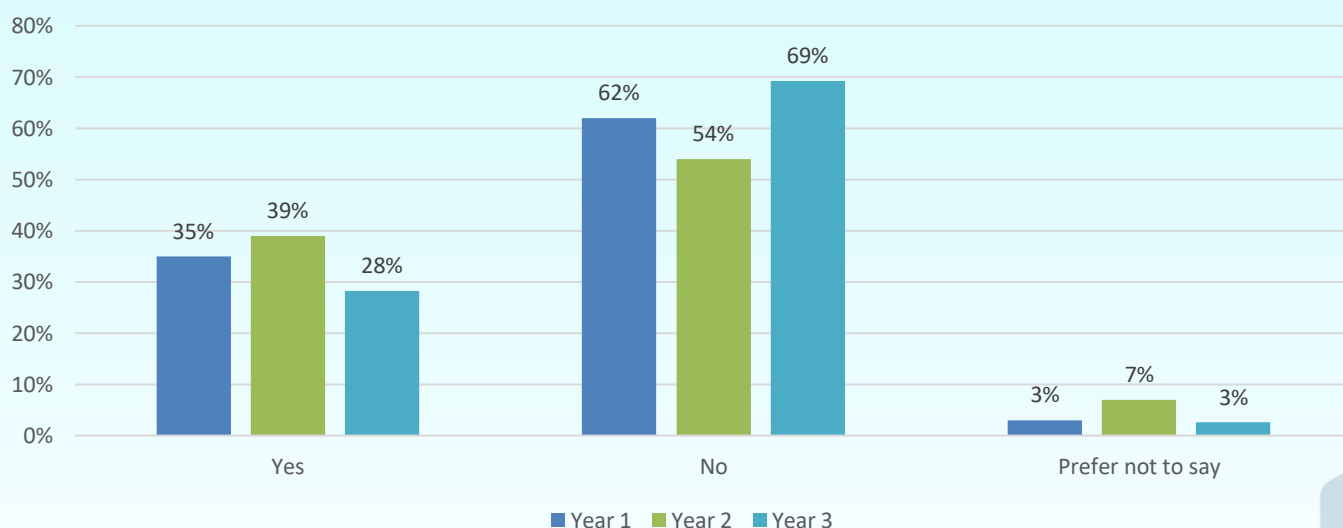
Fig 6.1.5 Hours



When asked 'Were you a PSYV yourself?' in Year 3, 69% stated that they were not, which was a 15% increase from the previous year. Of those who stated they were a PSYV (28%) when asked about their experience as a PSYV, all of the responses were extremely positive with one individual stating:

"As an individual who was going through a difficult time when they first began volunteering as a youth volunteer, PSYV gave me an escape and a place where I was able to be myself without the fear of being judged. PSYV also helped me build up my self esteem and provided me with a sense of purpose and belonging. Due to the experience I had as a youth volunteer, this is what made me realise that I wanted to continue my journey with PSYV in order to provide youth volunteers with the same support/ opportunities that I received when I was in their position."

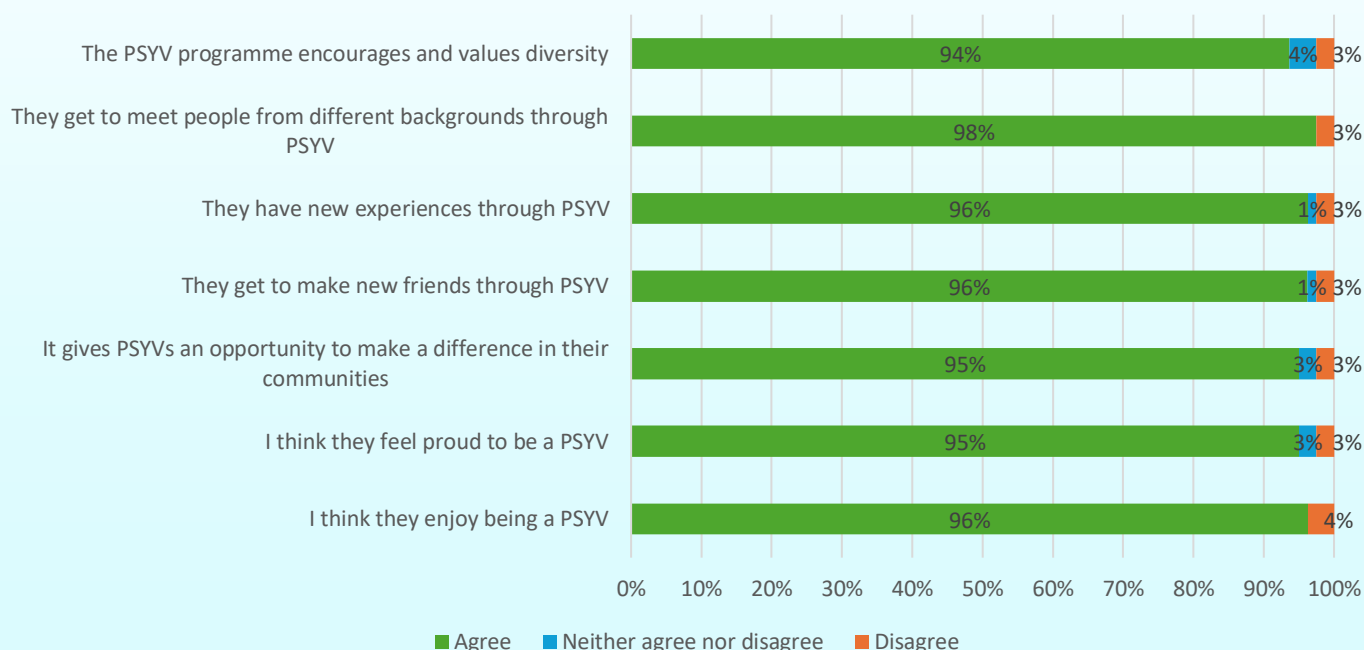
Fig 6.1.6 'Were you a PSYV yourself?'



6.2 Percieved Benefits of PSYV for Young Volunteers

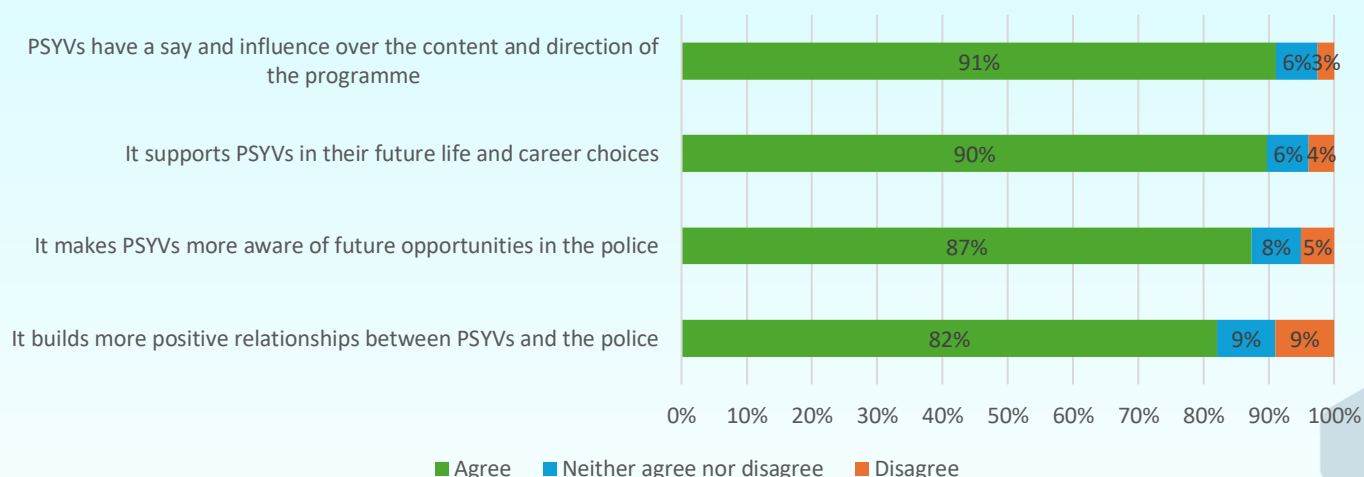
Overall the adult staff and volunteers were extremely positive towards the benefits of PSYV for the Youth Volunteers with the majority (94%-98%) agreeing with the statements. The most positive statement with 98% agreement was *'They get to meet people from different backgrounds through PSYV'*. The statement with the least agreement was *'The programme values and encourages diversity'* with 94% agreeing (still very high), 4% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 3% disagreeing. The statement with the highest level of disagreement, although still very low at 4%, was *'I think they enjoy being a PSYV'*.

6.2.1 Percieved Benefits of PSYV for Youth Volunteers



The majority of adult volunteers and coordinators agreed to the following statements (82%-91%). The statement with the most agreement was *'PSYVs have a say and influence over the content and direction of the programme'* with 6% stating neither agree nor disagree and 3% disagreeing. The statement with the least agreement was *'It builds a more positive relationship between PSYVs and the police'* with 82% agreeing, 9% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 9% disagreeing.

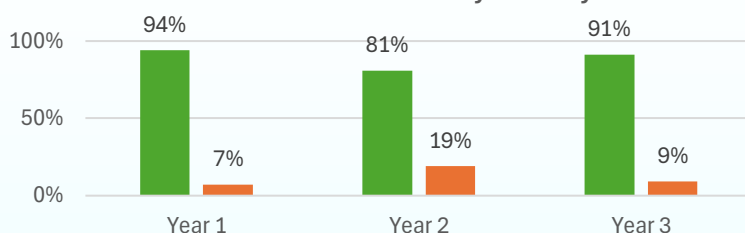
Fig 6.2.2 Further Percieved Benefits of PSYV for Youth Volunteers



Upon further analysis, a statistically significant difference was found for one of the statements when comparing **survey years**:

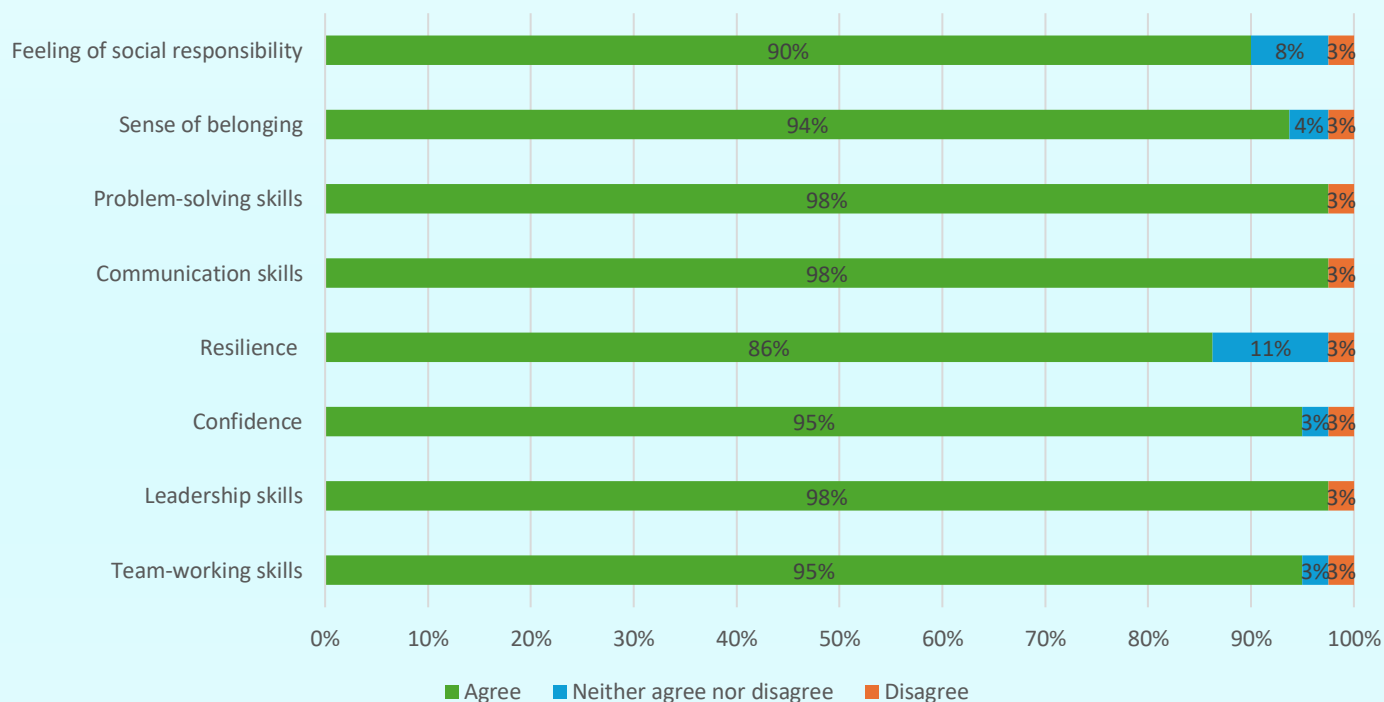
- It was found that there was a dip in agreement in Year 2 to the statement 'It supports PSYVs in their future life and career choices', however, in Year 3 the agreement level has increased to 91%.

Fig 6.2.3 'It supports PSYVs in their future life and career choices' by Survey Year



In Year 3, the majority of respondents agreed that PSYV has a positive impact on young people's skills (86%-98%). Leadership skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills were all rated the highest with 98% agreement and only 3% disagreeing that PSYV has a positive impact on these skills. Resilience was rated the lowest with 86% agreeing, 11% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 3% disagreeing. Additionally, 8% neither agreed nor disagreed that PSYV has a positive impact on young people's feeling of social responsibility.

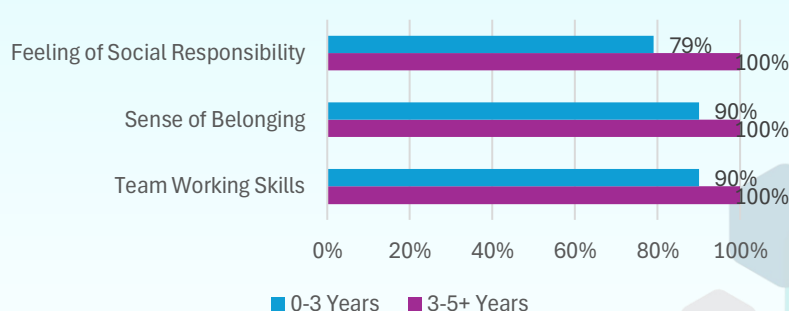
Fig 6.2.4 'Does PSYV have a positive impact on the skills of young people?'



Upon further analysis there were three statistically significant differences found when looking at the **length of service** for the adult volunteers or coordinators:

- Those who had been a volunteer or coordinator for 3-5+ years all agreed that PSYV positively impacted feelings of social responsibility, sense of belonging and teamworking skills of PSYVs. Those who had less time volunteering were less likely to agree.

Fig 6.2.5 Levels of Agreement by Length of Service as an Adult Volunteer or Coordinator



Adult Volunteer and Staff written responses for key benefits of being a PSYV for young people included gaining new **life skills** (20) and **confidence** (29). Other responses included having **new experiences and opportunities** (15), **community involvement** (12) and **police interaction and knowledge** (10). Additional benefits listed included gaining **friendships** (12), a feeling of **belonging, self-worth and value** (12), learning **discipline and respect** (5) and **help for the future** (5). Comments included:

“The youths gain essential life skills and grow in confidence the longer they are with the program. They are taken out of their comfort zone which can only be a good thing. Positive relationships are formed and in a lot of cases, long lasting friendships. The relationship with the police improves which results in positive results all round. The skills the young people gain are used when they move into the world of work or applying for university / college etc.”

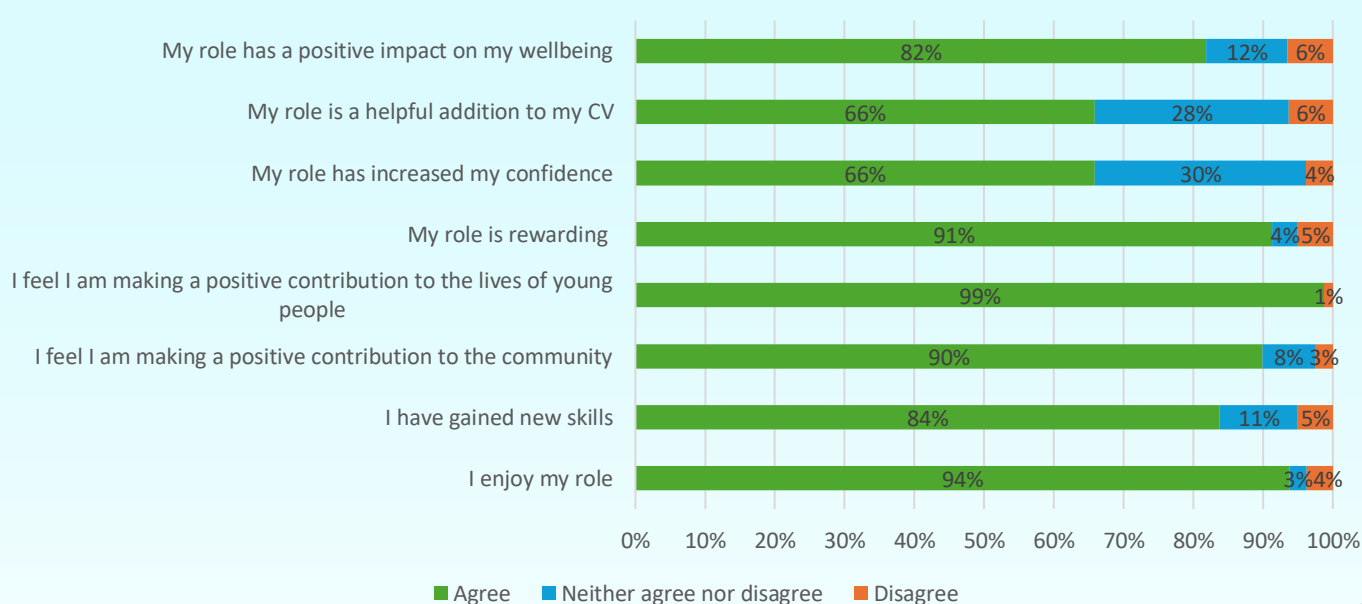
“Confidence building, making friends, getting to participate in things that they probably wouldn’t have done before. Supporting the local community. Getting to meet different people from Police Scotland and finding out about the work they do.”

“Build their confidence, make them feel they are worth something, nothing is impossible if you put your mind to it, give them life skills, let them know we are there to talk to if needed.”

6.3 Gains of the Role for Adult Staff and Volunteers

When asked to rate their levels of agreement to statements relating to the personal gains of the role most respondents agreed (66%-99%). The most positive statement was ‘I feel I am making a positive contribution to the lives of young people’ with 99% agreeing to the statement. Other highly rated statements were ‘I enjoy my role’ with 94% agreeing and ‘My role is rewarding’ with 91% agreement. Statements with slightly lower levels of agreement (66%) and higher levels of neither agree nor disagree were ‘My role is a helpful addition to my CV’ and ‘My role has increased my confidence’. The statement ‘My role has a positive impact on my wellbeing’ had one of the highest levels of disagreement at 6%.

Fig 6.3.1 Benefits of Being a PSYV Coordinator or Adult Volunteer



Upon further analysis statistically significant differences were found for three of the statements:

- Being a PSYV Coordinator or Volunteer is rewarding:

Length of service: 100% of those with 3-5+ years of volunteering agreed compared to 79% of those with 0-3 years volunteering.

- Being a PSYV coordinator or volunteer has increased my confidence:

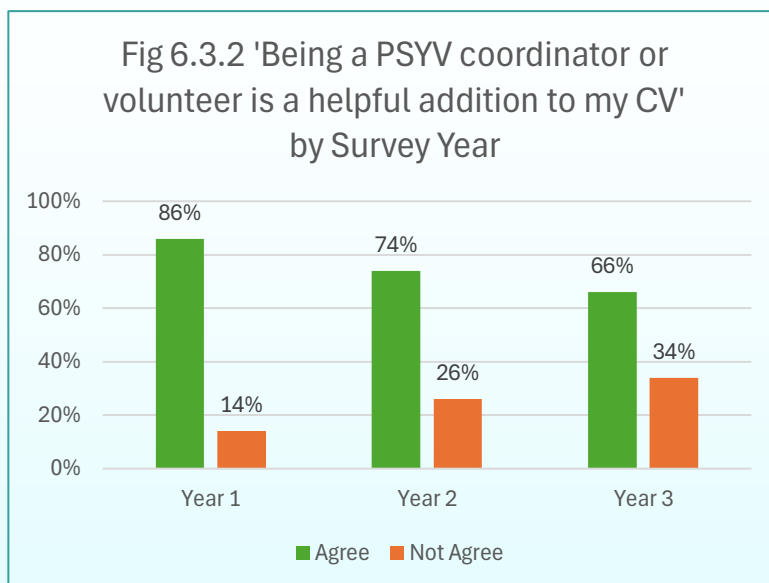
Age: Those aged between 18-25 were more likely to agree (91%) compared to those aged 26-49 (61%) and 50+ (54%).

- Being a PSYV coordinator or volunteer is a helpful addition to my CV:

Age: Those aged between 18-25 were more likely to agree (91%) compared to those aged 26-49 (79%) and 50+ (33%).

Hours: Those who volunteer for 11 or more hours were more likely to agree (79%) compared to those who volunteer for 10 or less hours (57%).

Survey Year: Agreement has decreased over time with 86% agreeing in Year 1, 74% agreeing in Year 2 and 66% agreeing in Year 3.



When asked 'What do you think are the key things that you gain from the role of PSYV coordinator or volunteer?' the most common answer was having a **positive impact on young people** (26). Comments included:

"I find the role so rewarding as you are in a privileged position by helping the PSYVs grow to be the best version of themselves and positive role models for their peers."

"The feeling of helping YV's and seeing them improve and gain confidence is the most beneficial part of my job."

"I enjoy seeing the young people develop especially those who are quiet and shy to what they can become."

"I do feel as though being a positive role model for the youth is incredibly important and that alone makes it worthwhile."

Other common responses were **improvements to their own skills** (22), **giving back to the community** (7), being **part of a team** (5) and **new connections** (5). Comments included:

"It has increased my leadership skills dramatically and I feel I am a positive role model to the youths. Wanting to join the police in the future it has given me different contact within the police and i feel i have made good friends with the other adult volunteers."

"People management skills and organisational skills as well as knowing I am helping make a difference to young people. I also think it shows the young people and their families that there is more to police than a uniform, and we get to show our 'human' side."

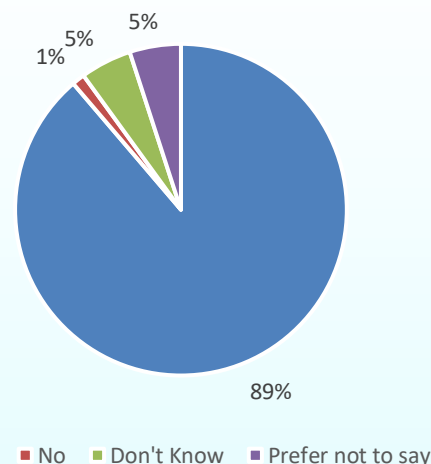
When asked 'Would you recommend being a PSYV coordinator or Volunteer to others?' 89% stated 'Yes', 5% did not know or preferred not to say and 1% said 'No'. The majority of those who gave an answer to why they would recommend the role to others stated that it is because **it is a very rewarding role**:

"I have been part of PSYV for 7 years now, and it honestly has been the best thing I've done. it has increased my confidence immensely, and i really feel PSYV makes a difference and has a positive impact to the YV's lives."

"It gives immense satisfaction seeing youths turn into young adults and move on to careers/jobs that they might not have had the opportunity to do before joining PSYV."

"It is so rewarding and the relationships you build are priceless."

Fig 6.3.3 Would you recommend the role?



Some gave answers on why they did not state they would recommend the role:

"Difficulties juggling work commitments and PSYV, no real training for AVs or structured sessions for YVs."

"I am recovering from major surgery and there has been no enquiries or any apparent concerns about my recovery. It's very disappointing."

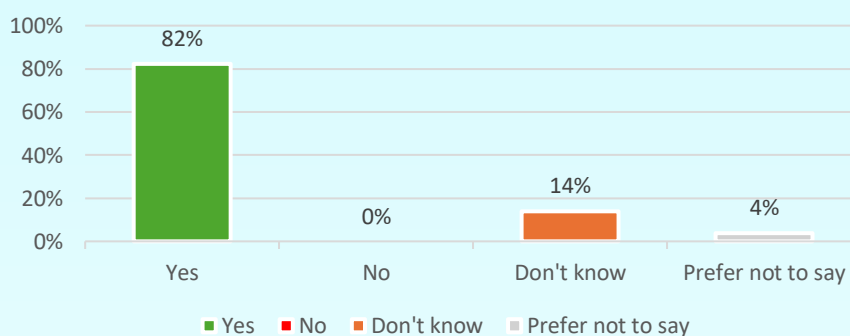
"I am personally having a bad experience as given that I enjoy doing PSYV stuff I am feeling overwhelmed by my day job right now which is impacting my ability to do PSYV effectively. I also have a major shortage of adult volunteers, and I work in an area where the demand on policing is at breaking point."

82% stated that they intend to stay in their role in the foreseeable future, 14% stated they did not know and 4% preferred not to say. For those who did give a reason for staying comments included:

"The reward of seeing youths growing to become a police officer with assistance of the PSYV."

"Enjoy working with youths and the help building their confidence."

Fig 6.3.4 'Do you intend to stay on as a PSYV coordinator or volunteer for the foreseeable future?'



Some gave reasons for not knowing if they would stay these included:

"Change recently which we were made aware of however, no one has spoken directly to the adults at either Stirling or Alloa to introduce us he new officers in charge. The groups have ground to a halt."

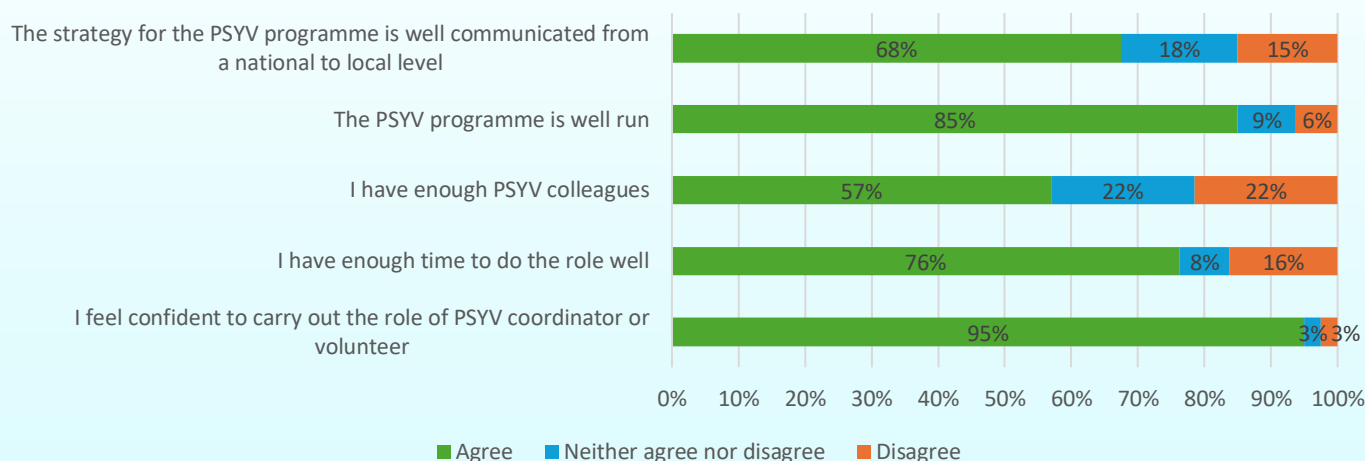
"I enjoy my time at the group but due to my work feel I can't be relied upon"

"Not planning to leave at the moment but actively looking for other daytime volunteering opportunities which I could be involved in more regularly."

6.4 Training, Support and Operations

Responses towards the PSYV programme were overall positive. 95% of respondents stated that they feel confident to carry out their role and 85% stated that the programme is run well. Statements with less agreement were 'The strategy for the PSYV programme is well communicated from a national to local level' with 15% disagreeing and 'I have enough time to do the role well' with 16% disagreeing. The least positive statement was 'I have enough PSYV colleagues' with 22% disagreeing.

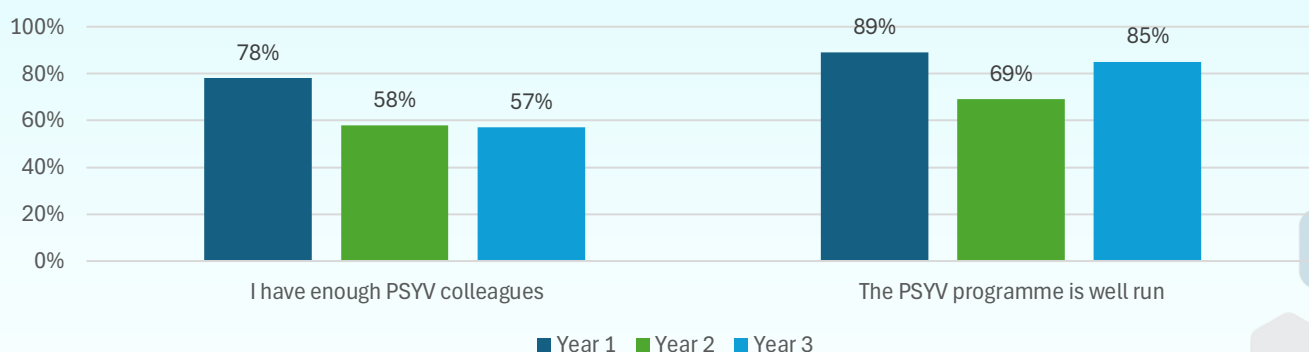
Fig 6.4.1 The PSYV Programme



Upon further analysis statistically significant differences were found for four of the statements:

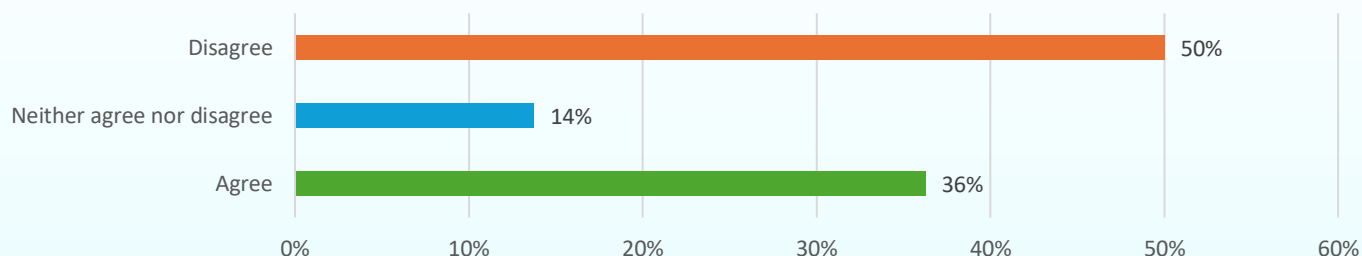
- The PSYV programme is well run:**
Survey Year: Agreement had decreased from 89% in Year 1 to 69% in Year 2 but has now risen to 85% in Year 3.
- I have enough PSYV colleagues:**
Survey Year: Agreement has decreased over time from 78% in Year 1 to 58% in Year 2 and now sits at 57% in Year 3.
Hours: Those who volunteer for 11 or more hours were more likely to agree (71%) than those who volunteer for 10 hours or less (46%).
- I have enough time to do the role well:**
Length of service: 90% of those with 3-5+ years of volunteering agreed compared to 61% of those with 0-3 years volunteering.
- I feel confident to carry out the role of PSYV coordinator or volunteer:**
Length of service: 100% of those with 3-5+ years of volunteering agreed compared to 90% of those with 0-3 years volunteering.

Fig 6.4.2 Levels of AGREEMENT to the statements by Survey Year



Half of the participants (50%) disagreed with the statement ‘I find it difficult to fit the role of PSYV coordinator or volunteer into my life’, with 36% agreeing and 14% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Fig 6.4.3 'I find it difficult to fit the role of PSYV coordinator or volunteer into my life'



Upon further analysis a statistically significant difference was found for age:

- Agreement decreased with age with 52% of those aged 18-25 agreeing, 46% of those aged 26-49% agreeing and 13% of those aged 50+ agreeing.

Respondents listed some of the barriers they face in their role, most commonly, these included **establishing a work / life balance** (9), **high workloads** (7), **lack of a structured curriculum to follow** (7), and **travel** (5). Other barriers listed were **needing more good quality Adult Volunteers** (4), adapting to **new changes** (3), **communication** (2), **national team consultation** (2), lack of local **policing support** (2) and Youth **Volunteer turnover** (2). Comments included:

“A lack of a structured program to deliver and follow. Lack of support from police officers to support the program especially when there are YV’s who aspire to be a future police person. They need role models to look up to. Sharing of real life experience particularly from officers who are enthusiastic about their role would and could be advantageous.”

“In recent years there has been a reduction in consultation from national team / Group Coordinators at local level and adult volunteers. Having New group coordinators, new senior management and moves within the police often disrupt the programme at local level. Each time new person's take on senior role at local level, they promise the world and often don't deliver.”

“Struggling to get other adult volunteers, meaning sessions often have to be cancelled or I have to be relied upon for many events, which can be difficult to manage, especially when I have university work or placement to manage.”

“I struggle to find things to do with the group, once I have had people in to talk to them from other organisations and departments in the police, there's only so many team building games I can do and it concerns me that the youths will get bored and leave.”

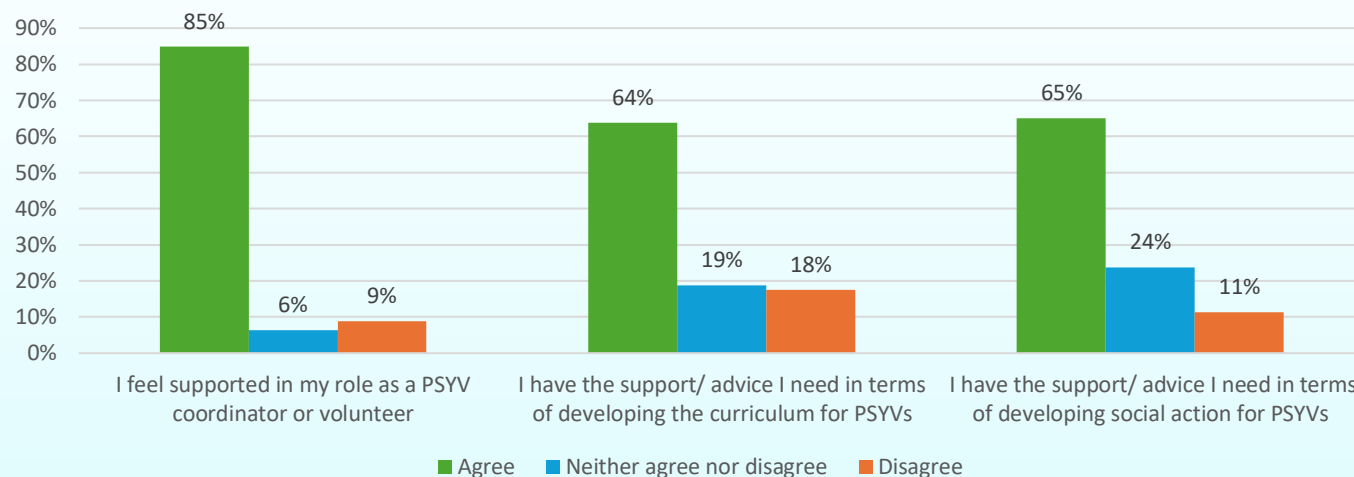
“My day job. The role was until recently a full time job, now I am expected to do the job alongside a hugely demanding community policing role which regularly involves abstractions elsewhere, inhibiting my chance to shine in the role.”

One participant also mentioned how they felt they **lacked support when they first joined** the programme:

“My disability. I have ... and was very clear about that on my application forms. My application was handled badly, my initiation was handled badly, and I wasn't supported when starting within the programme. Thankfully, since my GC has changed, things have been handled far better. I now have access to training and know exactly where I stand from the standpoint of my disability.”

On questions surrounding support the most positive statement was ‘I feel supported in my role as a PSYV coordinator or volunteer’ with only 9% disagreeing. 11% stated they don’t have the support they need in terms of developing social action for PSYVs and 18% stated they don’t have the support they need in terms of developing a curriculum for the PSYVs.

Fig 6.4.4 Support



When asked ‘What support, advice or training would you like to receive in the future?’, for those that gave a response, the most common answer was **new lesson plans** (11). Others mentioned more **regular training and support** (10) and **safeguarding training and refreshers** (6). Comments included:

“I would say that the biggest challenge is planning what to do at sessions. There are some aspects of the Initial Training Programme that are great but some of it not great. I think this could be improved and much more ideas for sessions after the ITP would be much appreciated.”

“Trauma informed practice due to the range of individuals PSYV has that all come from different backgrounds”

“More frequent evening safeguarding courses, it was nearly 4 months before I could do an evening course and I work during the day”

“I would like training in how to work effectively with young people who have additional support needs, ADHD, autism etc. Also, some new training packages would be useful, and more Peer Education topics such as First Aid/CPR for example.”

“More welfare support in times of serious health problems.”

Other suggestions included **more local police support** (2), **meetings with other groups** to share ideas (2) and **event related** support (2). Comments included:

“I think to be able to meet with other groups and volunteers would be great. Swap ideas and knowledge.”

“I would like to see where the programme is going. The national team to show that the programme is progressing and what it is aiming to achieve.”

“It would help if it was easier for regular police officers to come into psyv and deliver a talk or presentation on their respectful jobs such as fire arms officers, Cid forensics, and some officers from the recruitment side of things.”

“Awareness when events are being resourced, more access to transport for events.”

When asked ‘How could you be better supported in your role?’ many respondents stated that they are **already well supported in their role** (13):

“I do feel that we are supported through are sergeant and inspector, and the national team are always just a phone call away.”

“I’m happy with the support I receive from a divisional level as well as a national level.”

Some did suggest improvements which included **better resources** (4), **better group communication and utilisation** (3), **more Adult Volunteers** (3), **more time** for the role (2) and more **funding** (2). Comments included:

“I think set times for the group coordinator and adults to meet a few times a year would be beneficial. To talk over ideas, plan sessions and to ensure enough Adults are able to attend the sessions in advance.”

“There should be an accessible hub for non-coordinators to allow them to get ideas and run sessions in the absence of leader.”

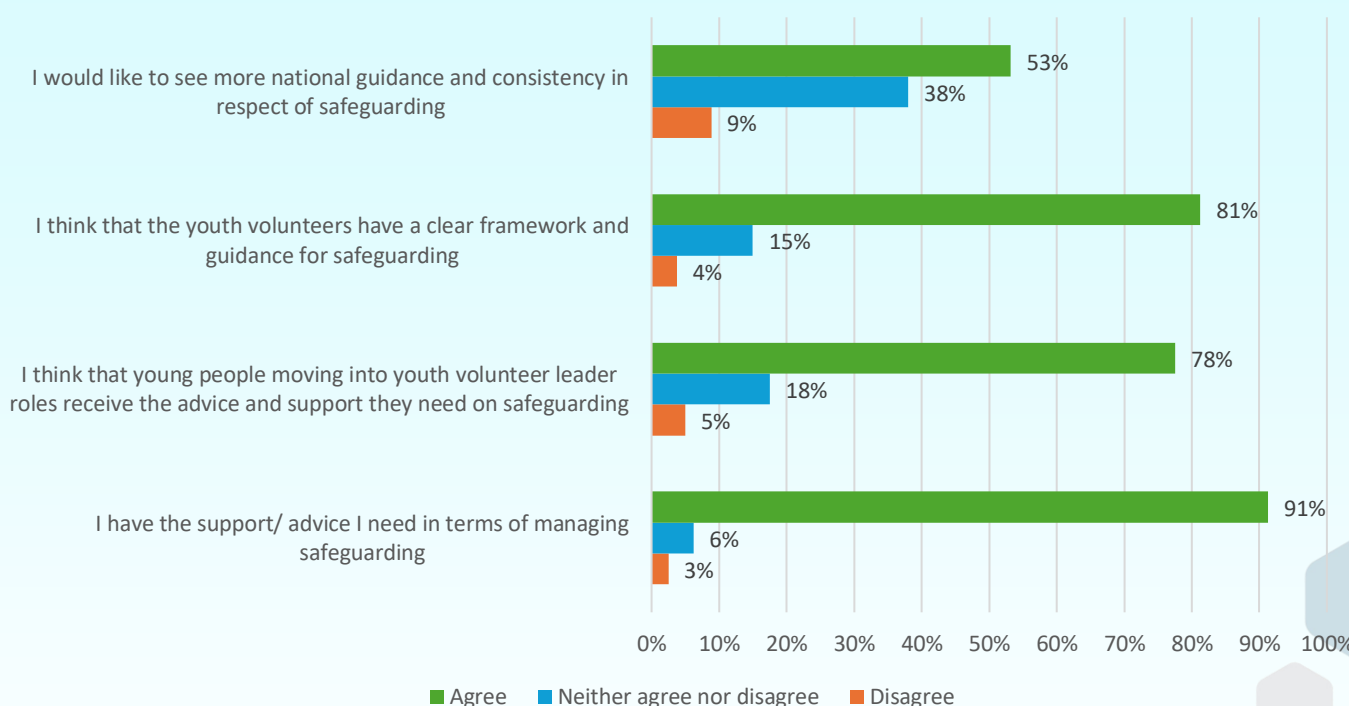
“Funding has been cut over the past few years. I understand that the police are facing deeper financial challenges, but PSYV really makes a difference when it comes to positive relationships between the police and young people which possibly will stay with them for life.”

“Have more time/ more volunteers.”

“I’ve been attending weekly sessions for a year. I have no designated role, no responsibility, no input in the groups. My GC changed and things have since improved, but the officer in the role is split between 4 groups. My transferrable skills that I brought to PSYV have not been utilised which is a shame.”

Questions on safeguarding were answered positively. 91% stated they have the support or advice they need in terms of managing safeguarding, 81% think the youth volunteers have a clear framework and guidance for safeguarding and 78% stated they think YVs moving into the role of Avs get the advice and support on safeguarding that they need. However, when asked if they would like to see more national guidance and consistency in respect of safeguarding, 53% agreed with the statement.

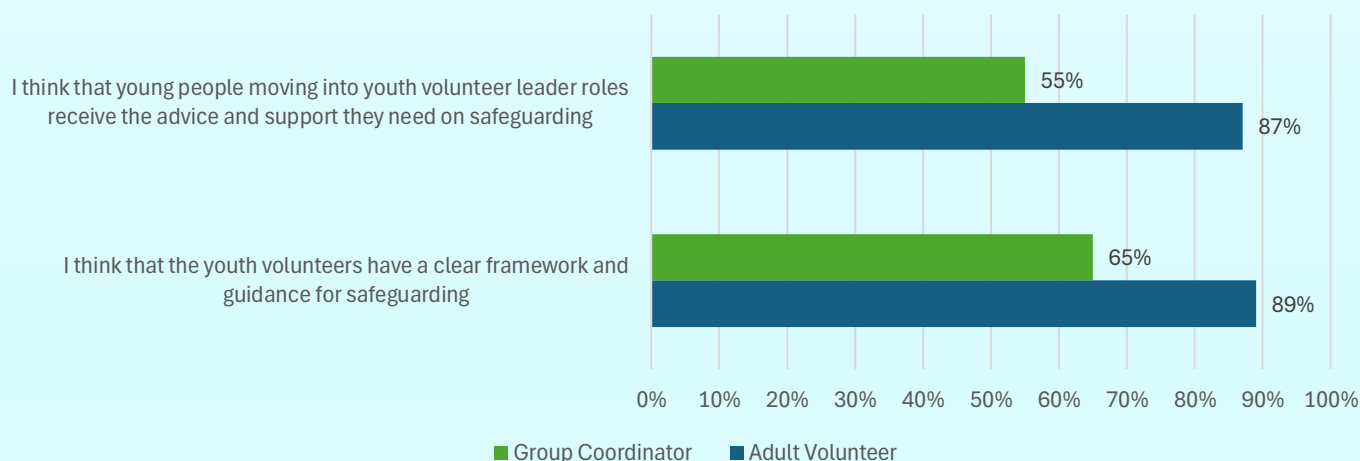
Fig 6.4.5 Safeguarding



Upon further analysis statistically significant differences were found for three of the statements relating to safeguarding:

- I think that the youth volunteers have a clear framework and guidance for safeguarding:
Role: Adult volunteers were more likely to agree (89%) than group coordinators (65%).
Length of service: 90% of those with 3-5+ years of volunteering agreed compared to 71% of those with 0-3 years volunteering.
- I think that young people moving into youth volunteer leader roles receive the advice and support they need on safeguarding:
Role: Adult volunteers were more likely to agree (87%) than group coordinators (55%).
Length of service: 93% of those with 3-5+ years of volunteering agreed compared to 63% of those with 0-3 years volunteering.
- I have the support/ advice I need in terms of managing safeguarding:
Length of service: 98% of those with 3-5+ years of volunteering agreed compared to 84% of those with 0-3 years volunteering.

Fig 6.4.6 Levels of AGREEMENT to the statements by Role



6.5 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Participants were asked 'What, if any, do you think are the key strengths of the PSYV programme?'. Answers included **youth development** (23), **community work** (15), **opportunities and experiences** for young people (12), building **the relationship of the police and young people** (8), giving young people **policing information** (6) and the **positive environment** (5). Comments included:

"It gives the youth volunteers the opportunity to learn discipline, build their confidence and develop skills, build positive relationships both with their local communities and with police officers. Working with the public at large scale public events is a valuable experience for the youth volunteers."

"All person's views/opinions heard and discussed".

"Building confidence, breaking down barriers, volunteering in the local community and to be seen and recognised."

"Makes a difference in young people's lives giving them an understanding of what the police do as well as making them good citizens. The work PSYV does really assists the community and local policing."

Participants were asked 'What, if any, do you think are the key weaknesses of the PSYV programme?'. Weaknesses included, a lack of **resources** (including lesson plans) (7), **funding** (6), **local policing support and knowledge** (5), **events** (4), **general support** (3), **volunteers** (3), and **training** (3). Comments included:

"The key weaknesses of the PSYV programme are the having to 'wing it' most of the time at sessions. A more structured programme would be great!"

"Our group coordinator whilst doing an excellent job is spread too thinly and is overworked."

"Sometimes I've found that local divisional management support depends on the interests and agendas of individuals in positions at the time. This has not been an issue lately though."

"Constant change in terms of coordinators and senior management. Lack of knowledge from police of what actually PSYV is. A large proportion of police officers do not know what PSYV is despite it running for over 10 years. The word police features prominent in PSYV however it seems to be low priority with the service and those who serve."

"Training materials. I feel that Adult Volunteers are kept at arm's length. I understand we are not police officers, but it would be nice to feel more trusted and valued especially given our commitment of time and effort"

One participant shared concern over the move to more online resources for the Youth Volunteers:

"The IT side of things - not every young person has access to hardware and software. We're seeing more resources moving online which proves difficult for those from low-income families. I'm not saying we remove online work completely, but there should be more understanding that there are challenges in this area."

When asked 'What do you think are the opportunities for the PSYV programme going forward in terms of how it can develop and improve?' responses varied. Some stated that they would like **more national group meets** (7), **more support** (4), more **promotion** of what PSYV is and **recruitment** (4), a **curriculum** to follow (3), more **national events** (3). Comments included:

"Protect GCs from dual roles and numerous abstractions so they can carry out their duties and have a work life balance. Understand that it is not a Monday to Friday job it varies at short notice especially in relation to FMM which will not work with GCs as already work on weekends."

"I think the structure needs to be clearer. The roles for AV should be clearer. The skills of AV could be better utilised. There is no way to develop ideas or generate fresh lesson plans. I think more training should be available for AV who are willing to undertake it."

“Get back to basics. The programme seems to have changed its priority over the years and person's have moved on to whom the programme meant everything. Its like the programme has served its purpose. With police recruitment being criticised from the inside out, the programme has a perfect opportunity to recruit from PSYV and improve the quality of police recruit.”

“Inter-group events are always good as it allows for youths to work with people they may not be familiar with which itself is a skill. It also allows for them to make friends with people from different backgrounds.”

Main threats to the programme included, **lack of funding and support from Police Scotland** (11), lack of **adult volunteers** (8), lack of **Youth Volunteers** (4), **group co-ordinations not given enough time** for the role (4), and a **lack of events** (3). Other suggestions included **lack of police awareness** (2), **demand on policing** (2), **keeping YVs interested** (2), and people being **unaware of what PSYV is** (2). Comments included:

“The group coordinators are all police officers which can result in them being abstracted to front line duties when national events are running eg Donald trump visit. I feel they are just taken away with no regard given to their actual role and plans/events that maybe in place. These are then at risk of cancellation - I also think sometimes it's forgotten that the adult volunteers are working full time elsewhere and can't drop everything to support an event because the coordinator has been removed to front line duties.”

“A lack of understanding by police of what the programme is. Senior management having the remit of the PSYV however not knowing what it means and not knowing what impact it can actually make to the lives of youths.”

“Policing resources are lacking, lack of awareness by management of the amount of work that goes into each group.”

“Lack of awareness from police staff about the value of the programme. You also need to have enough Adults to ensure the groups can run and you want to make sure that the weekly sessions are going to be worthwhile.”

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Police Scotland commissioned the IPSCJ to undertake research to review the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers programme, to build an evidence base and make recommendations to improve the programme. Throughout this three-year evaluation, research has been conducted to understand the views of youth and adult volunteers, including their experiences, views towards PSYV and their development and learning opportunities. Research has explored how PSYV enables positive transitions as young people grow up and explored the longer-term impact of what happens when people leave PSYV and if they are likely to secure positive destinations as a result of their involvement within the programme. Additionally, this evaluation has assessed the extent to which PSYV contributes towards strategic outcomes such as the Joint Strategy for Policing (2023-2026) and key skills which are listed in the national Youth Work Outcomes for Scotland.

Findings have overall been extremely positive with high engagement across most surveys, interviews, and case studies. Several outputs have been produced throughout the review, with evidence-based recommendations made to address gaps and improve outcomes.

The conclusion for this report revisits the primary research objectives of the review and provides headline findings.

7.1 Revisiting Research Objectives

1. To understand the views of youth and adult volunteers, including experiences, views towards PSYV and their development and learning opportunities.

This research demonstrated a mostly positive view of PSYV, with participation in the programme having statistically significant benefits for young people. Key benefits of participation in the PSYV programme were increased confidence, skills, communication, police perceptions and feelings of social responsibility.

Key findings from young people included:

- 92% agreement that PSYV is run well
- 94% agreement PSYV encourages diversity
- 91% agreement that PSYV leaders communicate well
- 95% agreement enjoy spending time at PSYV
- 93% agreement that learn a lot at PSYV
- 91% agreement that I am listened to at PSYV

Positive effects from being in PSYV included:

- 93% had improved team working skills
- 87% had improved leadership skills
- 92% improved communication skills
- 81% improved confidence

The research has also uncovered the views of adult volunteers, again revealing positive views on the added value of the programme for young people. The findings show how being a coordinator or adult volunteer can be challenging but professionally and personally rewarding.

Key findings from adults included:

- 99% agreement that they are making a positive contribution to the lives of young people
- 82% agreement that their role has a positive impact on their wellbeing
- 91% agreement that their role is rewarding
- 84% agreement that they have gained new skills
- 94% agreement that they enjoy their role
- 90% agreement that they are making a positive contribution to the community

2. Transitions are key stages in young people's life where a change takes place. Changes can be small or big, but individual young people can be affected by changes in different ways. For some young people this can be easy to navigate, for others it can be less so. We are keen to explore whether PSYV enables positive transitions as young people grow up.

The research has revealed how young people in general experience positive transitions in PSYV, developing new skills and strengthening existing skills.

Through the longitudinal matched cases, the research has demonstrated improvements in skills and opinions:

- The matched case analysis provides particularly important evidence of skills progression of cases from Year 1 to Year 2, with between 38%-47% of PSYV rating each of the skills higher in Year 2 as compared to Year 1.
- Additionally, there is strong evidence that PSYVs believe that the programme has influenced changes in their skills sets from both their responses in Year 1 and Year 2 and that the programme has had a particularly strong impact on their confidence.

Further analysis will be conducted on the life cycle of PSYV developing in the programme and will be presented in a policy brief.

3. Explore the impact of PSYV over the longer term; understanding what happens when people leave PSYV and if they are likely to secure positive destinations as a result of their involvement with the programme.

The young people who completed the alumni and leavers surveys provide positive and compelling accounts of having previously been a member of the programme:

- Alumni of PSYV stated that PSYV had a positive impact on their resilience (87%), leadership skills (92%), problem solving skills (76%), teamworking skills (90%), communication skills (84%) and confidence (79%).
- In total 75% of alumni stated that being in PSYV influenced their decision making in terms of what they wanted to do in life.
- The majority of alumni who participated in the survey stated that, where applicable, their experience as a PSYV helped them in situations such as a job application (85%), job interview (75%), whilst in a job (77%), in an application for an education placement (78%), in an interview for an education placement (75%) and whilst studying (70%).
- Overall, 65% of alumni stated that their experience in PSYV has helped them since they left.
- A participant of the leavers survey stated *"During my time at PSYV, I learnt about the role of individual responsibility in life. Often in school settings you were told what to do but at PSYV we were equipped with the right skills and encouraged to learn and use our own judgement to make decisions."*

Accounts from the Youth Volunteer Survey demonstrate how PSYV has helped them secure jobs and University places:

"I don't think I'd ever find my voice my confidence in myself if I hadn't joined PSYV so it's already helped me come out of my shell now I probably would've never have gotten my first job without the skills and confidence I've learnt at PSYV."

"I think it's really set me up well for life, it has already helped me get a well paying job and I believe it will help me securing a place at uni. The experience you gain from PSYV is unmatched."

4. Assess the extent to which PSYV contributes towards Strategic Outcomes (Joint Strategy for Policing (2023-26)) and the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework for Scotland.

The outcomes identified in the youth work are presented alongside evidence from this study below:

Outcome 1: Young people build their health and wellbeing

Outcome 2: Young people develop and manage relationships effectively

Outcome 3: Young people create and apply their learning and describe their skills and achievements

Outcome 4: Young people participate safely and effectively in groups and teams

Outcome 5: Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control

Outcome 6: Young people grow as active citizens, expressing their voice and enabling change

Outcome 7: Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

YW Skills & Outcomes	Evidence form PSYV Review
Looking after myself	93% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed that they learn a lot at PSYV and 93% feel they can help other people. 84% agreed that they would feel confident to report a crime or other information to the police and 90% agreed that they would feel confident to approach the police if they need help.
Creating Change	88% stated they feel a sense of social responsibility and 94% stated they are able to make a positive contribution to their community.
Decision Making	75% of Alumni indicated that PSYV influenced their decision making in terms of what they wanted to do in life.
Problem solving	85% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed PSYV improved their problem solving skills.
Communication	92% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed being in PSYV improved their communication skills.
Relationships	94% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed that they have friends they can talk and relate to; 72% have a role model they can look up to; and 88% feel a sense of belonging.
Confidence	81% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed that being in PSYV had improved their confidence.
Leadership	87% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed that being in PSYV improved their leadership skills.
Teamwork	93% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed that being in PSYV improved their teamwork skills.
Resilience	85% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed that being in PSYV improved their resilience.
Organisation and Planning	78% of young people surveyed in Year 3 agreed that they have a say and influence over the content and direction of PSYV.

7.2 Overall Comments

Youth Volunteer Research Activities:

- Overall, the Youth Volunteer views on the PSYV programme are positive with 78%-94% agreeing with the statements relating to the programme.
- Opinions on group night activities and events have been consistent over the three years with a want for interactive activities and organised group nights and a need for more meaningful duties at some events.
- Just under two-thirds (61%-65%) of those who responded believed that they can do things as well as most other people, believe in their own abilities and have confidence in themselves. When asked to rate their skills from weak to strong, the majority of Youth Volunteers rated their skills as strong at 71%-84%.
- For self-rated perceptions of skills, statistically significant differences have been found based on the survey year. In Year 1 56%-66% rated their skills as strong, in Year 2 of the survey this significantly increased to 71%-84%, in this year's survey (Year 3) the proportion of those who rated their skills as strong has slightly dipped for some statements (78%-83%) but still remains higher than the ratings in Year 1. For the skills of leadership and communication, ratings have continued to increase each survey year, with the highest proportion rating their skills as strong in the Year 3 survey.
- The majority of respondents felt being a PSYV had a positive influence on their skills, particularly their team working and communication skills with 93% and 92% respectively saying PSYV had a positive impact. In comparison to Year 2, there were increases in positive ratings for all variables.
- Out of the sample, 88%-97% of participants gave positive responses regarding being a PSYV and their sense of social responsibility, life experience, being able to make a positive contribution to their community and feeling good being a volunteer.
- More than half of the responding participants felt that Police Scotland upholds the values of integrity (64%), fairness (63%), respect (75%) and human rights (76%) 'to a great extent'. A significant difference identified for the statement 'Police Scotland upholds the value of protecting Human Rights' with less non-white participants rating this as 'to a great extent' than white participants.
- 61% stated that being in PSYV has made their perception of the police more positive. Reasons given for PSYV making their perception of the police more positive included gaining more understanding, realising the work the police do to help, because the police are friendly, they have overcome a bad experience, and they have gained trust in the police. Most reasons given for their perception staying the same was that they have always liked the police.

Adult Volunteer Research Activities:

- Overall, the adult staff and volunteers were extremely positive towards the benefits of PSYV for the Youth Volunteers with the majority (94%-98%) agreeing with the statements.
- In Year 3, the majority of respondents agreed that PSYV has a positive impact on young people's skills (86%-98%). Leadership skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills were all rated the highest with 98% agreement and only 3% disagreeing that PSYV has a positive impact on these skills.
- When asked to rate their levels of agreement to statements relating to the personal gains of the role the majority of respondents agreed (66%-99%). The most positive statement was 'I feel I am making a positive contribution to the lives of young people' with 99% agreeing to the statement.
- Responses towards the PSYV programme were overall positive. 95% of respondents stated that they feel confident to carry out their role and 85% stated that the programme is run well. Statements with less agreement were 'The strategy for the PSYV programme is well communicated from a national to local level' with 15% disagreeing and 'I have enough time to do the role well' with 16% disagreeing.

- The least positive statement was 'I have enough PSYV colleagues' with 22% disagreeing. No responses to this statement have become more negative over time. Agreement has decreased over time from 78% in Year 1 to 58% in Year 2 and now sits at 57% in Year 3.
- Questions on safeguarding were answered positively. 91% stated they have the support or advice they need in terms of managing safeguarding, 81% think the youth volunteers have a clear framework and guidance for safeguarding and 78% stated they think YVs moving into the role of Avs get the advice and support on safeguarding that they need. However, when asked if they would like to see more national guidance and consistency in respect of safeguarding, 53% agreed with the statement.
- Participants were asked 'What, if any, do you think are the key strengths of the PSYV programme?'. Answers included youth development, community work, opportunities and experiences for young people, building the relationship of the police and young people, giving young people policing information and the positive environment.
- When asked 'What do you think are the opportunities for the PSYV programme going forward in terms of how it can develop and improve?' responses varied. Some stated that they would like more national group meets, more support, more promotion of what PSYV is and recruitment, a curriculum to follow and more national events. Main threats to the programme included, lack of funding and support from Police Scotland, lack of adult volunteers, lack of Youth Volunteers, group co-ordinations not given enough time for the role, and a lack of events.

7.3 Recommendations and Next Steps

In the Year 1 Interim Report, there were several recommendations made to support the development of the PSYV programme. In Year 2 an additional recommendation was made. Below the recommendations are set out with Police Scotland's responses to these recommendations from this year and the previous year:

R1. It is recommended that Police Scotland consider conducting a short demographic census of their PSYV population on a yearly or two-yearly basis as well as consider the introduction of an Equality and Diversity Form for new entrants.

2024 Police Scotland Response: The existing EDI Form has been updated and circulated to all Group Coordinators. To ensure consistency, this form will now be completed annually, with compliance checks incorporated into the Yearly Audit for local line managers.

2025 Police Scotland Response: The annual EDI Form has been recreated on Microsoft Forms. This platform is more accessible for completion on mobile devices. The VCU will now capture individual responses annually, sharing volunteer data with Group Coordinators. The current EDI information has assisted in shaping ideas around an educational pathway, which has a tiered approach for accessibility and achievement for all.

R2. It is recommended that the National PSYV team review the communication strategy to disseminate information about PSYV to Police Scotland colleagues to raise awareness as well as consider the inputs from different policing teams into the programme.

2024 Police Scotland Response: A new weekly email update has been introduced for all Group Coordinators, containing key updates and training opportunities. This update is now also shared with Local Line Managers to enhance awareness. Additionally, the VCU has been working closely with Police Scotland's Children and Young Persons Team to develop a suite of training and resources for Group Coordinators.

2025 Police Scotland Response: The weekly email providing key updates and training opportunities is now fully embedded and shared to Group Coordinators and Local Line Managers. The VCU continues to work closely with Police Scotland's Children and Young Persons Team in the development of training resources. A new learning pathway is currently in development.

R3. It is recommended that for all external activities, a standard pro forma be developed with PSYVs input which outlines the nature of the activity, roles and responsibilities for PSYVs as well as benefits/value of the activities for different participants/recipients (e.g. PSYVs, Community, etc.).

2024 Police Scotland Response: This is currently in development. To ensure transparency and parental oversight, we have requested that BAND be updated with full details of deployments, including comprehensive risk assessments for all events and activities.

2025 Police Scotland Response: A new Risk Assessment proforma has been created in conjunction with Police Scotland's Health and Safety team. This is now edited and shared by Group Coordinators across Band pages for all PSYV deployments and sessions to allow full transparency with volunteers and parents/carers.

R4. It is recommended that a youth voice strategy be developed, establishing mechanisms for young people to consistently have a voice and say into how the programme is run and their participation in different activities.

2024 Police Scotland Response: Youth Forums have been created on BAND to include all PSYV Head and Senior Youth Volunteers. The launch of this initiative is pending the appointment of an additional officer to strengthen the VCU portfolio.

2025 Police Scotland Response: The development of the Youth Forum continues Band with promoted Youth Volunteers. Opinions have been sought regarding the new learning pathway and national events.

R5. It is recommended that enhanced safeguarding training is made available to all adult staff and volunteers to enable further understanding and knowledge on important safeguarding topics, including explicit procedures for both adults and young people to report safeguarding issues.

2024 Police Scotland Response: In November 2024, the VPC Safeguarding Training was launched. This includes a mandatory two-hour online Introduction to Safeguarding course for all Adult Volunteers, alongside a Managing a Safeguarding Concern course for Group Coordinators. Completion of this training is now a prerequisite for all PSYV adult volunteers before they are permitted to work with young people.

2025 Police Scotland Response: New safeguarding training, delivered through the Volunteer Police Cadets, Safeguarding and Standards Team is now fully embedded for all Adult Volunteers and Group Coordinators with a 100% completion rate. The VCU work and safeguarding Governance, through the Safe to Operate Standards and are audited annually.

R6. It is recommended that regular training sessions on content and group management is also made available so that the adult staff and volunteers can feel even more supported and confident in their role.

2024 Police Scotland Response: This work is being encompassed into our revitalised education package.

2025 Police Scotland Response: A new learning pathway has been developed with schemes of work currently being created for Group Coordinators and Adult Volunteers. Regular training and development opportunities are shared with Group Coordinators in the weekly update email.

R7. It is recommended that a national audit is undertaken to assess the participation of groups with events/campaigns.

2024 Police Scotland Response: Quarterly updates are taken from the PSYV Deployment calendar, this provides us with information on how many events and campaigns each group are participating in as well as the number of Adults and Youths taking part and how many volunteering hours are completed for each group. This information is shared on a Newsletter which is shared with all the groups and stakeholders.

2025 Police Scotland Response: Deployment statistics continue to be pulled from the PSYV Deployment Calendar and are quarterly. This information is highlighted on a Newsletter which is shared with all the groups and stakeholders.

R8. It is recommended that national team, working with adult volunteers and young people, develop a curriculum for the programme that supports development across at different levels of experience and stages in the programme.

2025 Police Scotland Response: A new learning pathway has been created that celebrates the achievements of our young people and encourages self-development through volunteering. The programme encourages volunteer retention by allowing award continuation from Youth into Adult Volunteering.

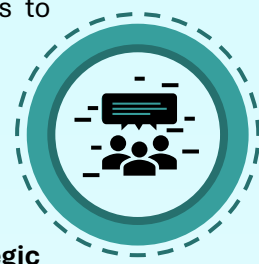
Further Considerations



The vulnerabilities exercise has revealed important information to develop the programme and better support young people at risk. The Volunteer Coordination Unit would benefit from better defining what is understood as vulnerability in relation to defined risks, aligning the programme to specific strategic objectives. This may have implications for what data is captured across the programme and presented in business cases.

R. It is recommended the VCU review the vulnerability data and disseminate to adult coordinators and volunteers, considering the importance of protective factors in mitigating identified risks.

The report, alongside previous reports, illustrates how the PSYV programme continues to occupy a precarious position within Police Scotland. The data from young people is relatively volatile and the findings from the adult surveys demonstrates how many volunteers and coordinators are experiencing pressure. Whilst there has been a strategic mandate for PSYV, there is a need to consolidate and strengthen its position.



R. It is recommended that this report supports ongoing dialogue with corporate and executive staff in Police Scotland to reinforce and align its strategic importance to wider Police Scotland strategies.

Next Steps

This evaluation has been conducted during a period of notable programme change, where the results from the surveys have been influenced. It will be important to continue to monitor the views of young people over the next 2-3 years to assess the impacts of such changes. The introduction of a renewed curriculum and achievement record is particularly important to assess.

The focus of the review this far has been to generate an evidence base for the programme, focussing on the benefits for young people. The review has revealed a series of areas for programme improvement and there are opportunities to collaborate with adult volunteers in the introduction of new initiatives.

The review has demonstrated that the PSYV programme is beneficial for young people, providing evidence to further justify its continuation. The focus going forwards should be on good practice and the development of adult volunteers to enhance outcomes.



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