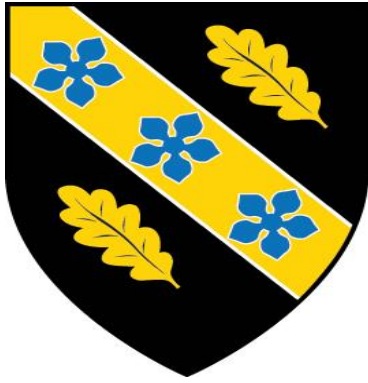




PRIFYSGOL CYMRU

Y Drindod Dewi Sant

UNIVERSITY OF WALES

Trinity Saint David

SWANSEA - ABERTAWE

The Role of Special Constables in South Wales Police: Examining Their Benefits, and Challenges in Frontline policing

Name: Ryan Neary

Student: 2236189

Degree: Bachelor of Science (36 Months): Professional Policing Practice

Word Count: **8641**

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the regular and special constables within South Wales Police who shared their honest views and experiences, which helped shape this dissertation. I am especially grateful to the supervisors within the Special Constabulary for providing access to internal data, which was essential to my research. Most of all, thank you to my wife for putting up with me during the writing process and to my dog for always sitting beside me.

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: Ryan Neary

Date: 29/09/2025

STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA.

Signed: Ryan Neary

Date: 29/09/2025

STATEMENT 2

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed: Ryan Neary

Date: 29/09/2025

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for interlibrary loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed: Ryan Neary

Date: 29/09/2025

STATEMENT 4

I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available on the university's IT system to those who have consent to use the system.

Signed: Ryan Neary

Date: 29/09/2025

Abstract

This dissertation examines the role of Special Constables in South Wales Police, focusing on their contribution to frontline policing. It explores key benefits, such as increased visibility, community engagement, and cost-effectiveness, alongside challenges including integration, training, and retention. Employer Supported Policing (ESP) is also considered as a means of strengthening support for Specials. Drawing on internal data, academic sources, and the author's own experience as a former Special Constable, the research looks at how the Special Constabulary could be made more effective and sustainable within South Wales Police.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Term
CoP	College of Policing
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESP	Employer Supported Policing
HMICFRS	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
IOPC	Independent Office for Police Conduct
MOE	Method of Entry
NAO	National Audit Office
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PSU	Police Support Unit
SC	Special Constable
SPECIALS	Special Constable
SCLP	Special Constable Learning Programme
SWP	South Wales Police

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	4
Abbreviations	5
Chapter 1: Introduction	8
1.1 Background	8
1.2 Aims and Objectives	9
1.3 Relevance and Rationale	10
1.4 Structure of the Dissertation	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review	12
2.1 Legal and Policy Framework	12
2.2 National Strategies and the Role of Specials	13
2.3 Benefits of the Special Constabulary	14
2.4 Challenges Facing Specials	15
2.5 Theoretical Perspectives on Volunteer Motivation	17
Chapter 3: Methodology	18
3.1 Research Design	18
3.2 Data Sources	20
3.2.1 Internal Statistics from South Wales Police	20
3.2.2 Reflective Practitioner Insights	21
3.2.3 Academic and Strategic Literature	22
3.3 Ethical Considerations	22
3.4 Limitations	24
Chapter 4: Analysis of Results	25
4.1 Operational Activity Data: 2019-2025	25
4.1.1 Arrests Made by Specials	26
4.1.2 Stop and Search Activity	27
4.1.3 Cannabis Cautions/Disposals	28
4.1.4 Drug Seizures	29
4.1.5 Incidents Attended	30
4.1.6 Total Hours Worked	31
4.1.7 Active Special Constables	32
4.2 Qualitative Findings and Themes	33

4.2.1 Confidence Following Initial Training	33
4.2.2 Lack of Tutor Constables and Support	33
4.2.3 Integration with Regular Response Teams	33
4.2.4 Operational Strengths: Warrants, Events, and Skill Development	34
4.2.5 Integration Challenges and Cultural Perceptions	35
4.3: Discussion of the Data	36
4.3.1 The Operational Value of Specials in SWP	36
4.3.2 Challenges in Training, Confidence, and Integration	37
4.3.3 Public Perception of Specials	39
4.4 Implications for Policy and Practice in South Wales Police	40
4.5 Practitioner Reflection	41
4.6 Limitations of Findings and Future Research	42
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations	43
5.1 Conclusion	43
5.2 Recommendations	45
5.2.1 Expand and Professionalise Tutor Constable Roles	45
5.2.2 Align Independent Patrol Pathways and Drive Skill Development	45
5.2.3 Formalise Integration and Inclusion within Response Teams	46
5.2.4 Develop Comprehensive Recruitment and Retention Strategies	46
5.2.5 Expand Specialist Training and Deployment Opportunities	47
5.2.6 Foster a Culture of Mutual Respect and Collaboration	47
5.3 Final Reflection	48
Bibliography	49
Appendix	53
Appendix A: South Wales Police Internal Data Tables (2019-2025)	54
Table A1: Arrests Made by Specials	54
Table A2: Stop and Search Activity	54
Table A3: Cannabis Cautions/Disposals	54
Table A4: Drug Seizures	54
Table A5: Incidents Attended	55
Table A6: Total Hours Worked	55
Table A7: Active Special Constables	55
Appendix B: Confidentiality and Data Protection Statement	56
Appendix C: Practitioner Reflection Notes (Anonymised)	57

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation explores the role of Special Constables (SCs) in South Wales Police (SWP), focusing on their contribution to frontline policing and the organisational challenges that affect effectiveness and retention. As a serving regular constable and former Special, I bring a practitioner view on how a voluntary role remains critical to modern policing amid resourcing pressures, community engagement, and public trust.

1.1 Background

Special Constables are warranted officers with full police powers (Police Act 1996), volunteering typically 16+ hours a month. In SWP, they contribute thousands of hours annually, supporting operations and strengthening community links.

Despite this value, Specials often face high-risk situations without the same training, support, or team integration as regulars. They must balance policing with personal and professional commitments, affecting consistency and development.

Policing is evolving: expectations of professionalism, accountability, and partnership demand effective deployment. Specials' local knowledge positions them well, but the role is sometimes misunderstood or underused. Clarifying where they best fit within contemporary models is essential.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this dissertation is to explore and critically evaluate the role of Special Constables within South Wales Police, with particular emphasis on their frontline deployment. The objectives are as follows:

- To examine the core purpose and strategic use of Special Constables within SWP.
- Identify the benefits such as arrests, visibility and engagement.
- Assess the challenges Specials face, such as limited post-training support, confidence and integration
- Make practical recommendations to improve recruitment, retention and support.

1.3 Relevance and Rationale

I chose this topic because of both my personal experience and what I've seen happening in policing more widely. Starting out as a Special Constable gave me a real appreciation of how important the role can be, both for the community and for people looking to build a career in policing. At the same time, I also saw the frustrations that can push good volunteers away, things like patchy support after training, not always being made to feel part of the team, or struggling to balance the hours with work and family life.

This study also feels timely. Police recruitment and retention are major issues nationally, and forces are leaning more heavily on volunteers to cover gaps. In South Wales Police alone, Specials gave tens of thousands of hours between 2019 and 2025, including over 64,000 during the peak of the pandemic, yet the number of active Specials has dropped sharply, from 170 in 2021 to fewer than 90 in mid-2025. Those figures show both how vital Specials are, and how serious the sustainability problem has become.

Alongside the statistics, I've listened to current and former Specials who described feeling underprepared after training, lacking tutor support, and sometimes struggling to fit into response teams. SWP has started looking at ways to improve this, such as giving Specials access to taser, advanced driving, or public order roles. Whether these opportunities can boost motivation and retention is one of the questions this dissertation will explore.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organised into the following chapters:

- **Chapter 2: Literature Review** – Legal/policy framework, National strategies and academic evidence.
- **Chapter 3: Methodology** - research design, including use of anonymised internal SWP statistics and practitioner reflection.
- **Chapter 4: Analysis of Results** – data from SWP sources between 2019 and 2025 that builds a picture of what specials face whilst on duty.
- **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations** - A critical analysis of the findings in the context of academic and professional literature, highlighting both the value and the challenges of using Specials in frontline roles.
- **Bibliography** - A list of all references and sources used.
- **Appendix** - graph data, practitioner notes and a data protection statement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to fully understand the current role, value, and challenges of Special Constables (SCs) within South Wales Police, it is important to examine the legal foundations of the Special Constabulary, as well as the broader strategic and academic literature that informs policy and practice across the UK. This chapter explores the legal framework underpinning the Special Constabulary, the national policing strategies that influence how forces deploy volunteers, and key academic perspectives on the benefits and challenges of using Specials in frontline policing. Where relevant, I will reflect on how these perspectives resonate with my own lived experience as both a former Special and current regular constable in South Wales Police.

2.1 Legal and Policy Framework

The Police Act 1996 allows chief officers to appoint volunteer constables with full police powers. Specials take the same oath as regulars and are subject to conduct regulations. The Police Reform Act 2002 further shaped the role by clarifying training and accountability, supported by oversight from the IOPC. The College of Policing developed the Special Constable Learning Programme (SCLP) to align volunteer training with that of regular officers, although quality and delivery vary (College of Policing, 2022).

HMICFRS inspections show inconsistency in how forces use Specials. In some areas they are part of response and neighbourhood teams, but elsewhere they are underused or pushed into narrow roles (HMICFRS, 2017; 2021). Integration often depends on local supervision and culture.

National strategy has highlighted the importance of volunteers. The Strategic Policing Requirement (Home Office, 2015) identified threats such as terrorism and cybercrime and stressed the need for resilient workforces. The Policing Vision 2025 (NPCC, 2016) emphasised community visibility and called for investment in training and support. The College of Policing's 5-Year Strategy (2022–2027) recognised that Specials provide a unique community link and need clearer routes into paid policing. Policing Vision 2030 (NPCC, 2023) placed workforce sustainability and inclusion at the centre of reform, recognising the long-term role of volunteers

2.2 National Strategies and the Role of Specials

The Workforce Transformation Strategy (Home Office, 2018) highlighted Specials as part of a flexible and diverse workforce. Bullock and Leeney (2016) argued that Specials have moved from ceremonial duties to frontline policing, especially during austerity, but warned of role confusion and uneven readiness. Volunteer motivation studies show mixed reasons for joining, from altruism to career progression (Clary, Snyder and Stukas, 1998; Mawby, 2013).

This distinction is important because career-motivated volunteers often leave once they join the regular service. Hustinx, Handy and Cnaan (2010) suggested that organisations relying too heavily on career-focused volunteers face weaker retention. SWP data reflects this, showing a decline from 170 Specials in 2021 to 89 in 2025.

National Audit Office (2022) and the College of Policing (2019) warned against using Specials as a shadow workforce, as unclear expectations and inconsistent training risk exploitation and burnout. College of Policing (2022) research found many Specials lacked confidence after initial training, particularly when tutor support was missing.

The digital environment has also affected volunteer policing. College of Policing (2025) noted that Specials often lack access to the same digital tools as regulars, which restricts intelligence and investigation capability. This creates a sense of exclusion.

HMICFRS has repeatedly highlighted a gap between national ambition and local practice. Some forces fully embed Specials, while others fail to provide mentoring and structured learning (HMICFRS, 2017; 2021). Delivery at force level determines whether strategies like Policing Vision 2025 and 2030 succeed (NPCC, 2016; NPCC, 2023).

2.3 Benefits of the Special Constabulary

Specials provide substantial unpaid policing hours. The National Audit Office (2020) valued this as millions of pounds nationally. In SWP, over 263,000 hours were contributed between 2019 and 2024. Specials are also valuable in community engagement. Because many live locally, they bring insight and trust that regulars may not always have (Holdaway, 2017).

Operationally, Specials support response teams, conduct stop/searches, and execute warrants. In 2020 alone they made 450 arrests, conducted 168 stop/searches, and attended over 10,000 incidents. Specials are also a recruitment pipeline. Many regulars began as volunteers, giving forces a chance to assess their capability over time.

In recent years Specials have taken on more specialist skills, such as Taser, advanced driving, public order, and method of entry. These skills improve operational capability and support retention by showing volunteers clear development opportunities (South Wales Police, 2024).

Employer Supported Policing (ESP) has also been important. ESP allows employers to give staff time off to serve as Specials. In South Wales, over 25 organisations including Cardiff Council, Network Rail and Tesco take part (SWP, 2023). This helps volunteers balance commitments and supports force resilience (College of Policing, 2020; Home Office, 2019).

2.4 Challenges Facing Specials

While the benefits of Specials are well-evidenced, several challenges persist particularly in terms of training, retention, and integration. One consistent theme in the literature is the variation in training quality and support across forces. Bullock and Leeney (2016) found that many Specials felt unprepared for independent patrol due to inconsistencies in training delivery. Although the College of Policing has introduced national frameworks like the SCLP, the real-world implementation varies, and post-training development often lacks structure.

Consistency in supervision is a recurring issue. HMICFRS (2017) reported that unclear expectations and variable access to tutors or line managers reduce confidence and limit operational contribution. The 2021 annual assessment emphasised the cultural side of this challenge: without deliberate efforts to include volunteers in briefings, tasking and debriefs, Specials can feel peripheral to teams, which in turn affects retention (HMICFRS, 2021).

International research reinforces these challenges. Callender et al. (2019) argue that volunteers' sense of legitimacy is tied not only to training but also to how accepted they feel within teams. When Specials are not fully integrated, their perceived contribution is undermined, which in turn affects confidence and retention. This is echoed by HMICFRS (2021), which emphasised that cultural acceptance is as important as formal training in embedding volunteers effectively.

Another major issue is confidence. New Specials may leave training with theoretical knowledge but no practical grounding, particularly if they are not paired with a supportive tutor constable. In my own experience and from conversations with other Specials, this lack of structured mentorship can leave new volunteers feeling isolated, hesitant, or even unsafe when deployed. In South Wales Police, the shortage of experienced tutor Specials and lack of integration into established teams was frequently cited by former colleagues as a reason for stepping away from the role.

Role ambiguity and team integration are further challenges. Specials are expected to perform frontline duties but are often excluded from team briefings, WhatsApp groups, or informal support networks that are critical in high-pressure environments. This lack of social integration can leave Specials feeling like outsiders. Research by Holdaway (2017) suggests that "in-group" dynamics within response teams can unintentionally marginalise Specials, reinforcing a sense of not belonging.

Retention is another key concern. As noted by the Home Office (2018), many Specials leave the role within the first 18 months. In South Wales, the number of active Specials has declined every year since 2021. While some of this is attributable to volunteers transitioning into full-time roles, others leave due to dissatisfaction, lack of support, or burnout. A small number are dismissed for failing to meet the required 16 hours per month, further reducing the available pool of experienced volunteers.

Addressing these challenges requires strategic investment in ongoing training, mentoring, and clearer pathways to independence and specialism. Recent research (Bullock and Leeney, 2016) highlights that structured mentorship programmes and peer support networks can significantly improve confidence, integration, and retention among Specials. Such initiatives could provide a model for forces like South Wales Police, where resource constraints and operational demands remain high.

2.5 Theoretical Perspectives on Volunteer Motivation

Volunteer motivation theory provides a useful lens through which to examine the experiences of Special Constables. Clary, Snyder and Stukas (1998) proposed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), which argues that individuals are motivated by a range of factors including values, career advancement, social engagement, and protective motives.

In the context of policing, Bullock and Leeney (2016) note that many Specials initially join to “give something back” to their communities, but career and skills-based motivations are equally strong, particularly among those seeking to transition into regular policing roles. However, when organisational structures fail to provide recognition, development opportunities, or adequate support, motivation can decline rapidly, contributing to attrition.

Applying volunteer motivation theory helps to explain why recruitment campaigns are often successful, yet retention remains challenging; motivations that drive initial involvement do not always align with the operational realities or support structures encountered within forces such as South Wales Police.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology I used to explore the role of Special Constables within South Wales Police. As this dissertation is based on a combination of anonymised internal data, reflective practitioner insights, and publicly available literature, the approach taken is qualitative in nature, with supporting quantitative elements. Given my position as a serving regular officer and former Special, the research is grounded in what is often referred to as practitioner-research where the researcher studies a context of which they are a part. This chapter explains the rationale behind this approach, the sources of data used, the ethical considerations taken into account, and the limitations of the methodology.

3.1 Research Design

The central research aim was to explore the contributions and challenges associated with Special Constables in frontline policing, specifically within South Wales Police. To achieve this, I adopted a mixed-method qualitative design that combined:

- Document and policy analysis of relevant strategies, legislation, and academic literature
- Statistical analysis of anonymised internal data from South Wales Police (2019-2025)
- Reflective practitioner input, drawing on my own dual experience and informal conversations with other Specials and regulars

This design was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the available statistical data offered a strong foundation for identifying patterns in activity levels, deployment, and workforce changes over time. Quantitative data provided concrete metrics of Specials operational involvement, which was crucial to understanding their impact within SWP. Secondly, academic and strategic documents provided a theoretical and policy-based lens through which to examine the data. These sources contextualised the organisational trends within broader national policing frameworks and helped identify best practices and areas of challenge highlighted elsewhere. Thirdly, and most importantly, as someone who has served as both a Special and now a full-time constable, I have been able to offer unique insight into how policy translates into real-world frontline policing. Combining these three sources enabled me to critically examine the benefits and limitations of Specials from multiple perspectives.

This method fits with what Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) call the practitioner inquiry, where research is grounded in real world professional experience and is often reflective and improvement-oriented. Practitioner inquiry allows the researcher to bridge theory and practice, enabling recommendations that are both academically informed and operationally feasible. The goal here is not only to contribute academically to the literature on Special Constables, but also to suggest realistic, evidence-based improvements for South Wales Police based on my findings.

Using a single-force case study also allows me to compare local findings with national inspection evidence, recognising that HMICFRS reports show significant variation between forces in how volunteers are trained, supervised and deployed (HMICFRS, 2017; HMICFRS, 2021).

While a single-force case study inevitably restricts generalisability, Yin (2014) argues that case studies provide analytical rather than statistical generalisation, offering insights that can inform wider practice. In this sense, although findings are specific to South Wales Police, they illustrate national debates around retention, training, and integration of Specials.

3.2 Data Sources

3.2.1 Internal Statistics from South Wales Police

A key component of the dissertation was the analysis of anonymised statistical data from South Wales Police, which I obtained through internal access and records available within the organisation. This data covered the years 2019 to 2025 (to date) and included figures for:

- Arrests made by Special Constables
- Drug seizures and cannabis cautions/disposals
- Incidents attended
- Stop and search activity
- Annual number of Specials in service
- Total hours volunteered

These figures offered valuable insight into how Specials are being utilised operationally and how their activity levels and workforce strength have changed over time. These statistics were used descriptively in Chapter 4 and critically examined in the discussion chapter to explore workforce contribution, retention, and operational value.

Additionally, the longitudinal nature of this data enabled trend analysis that highlighted fluctuations in Specials numbers and engagement during periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic, a factor often overlooked in policing research. Such temporal depth strengthens the validity of conclusions drawn about workforce dynamics.

3.2.2 Reflective Practitioner Insights

Alongside statistical data, I drew on my own experiences as both a Special Constable and a regular officer. I also held informal conversations with several serving Specials and former colleagues to gather broader insights. These were not formal interviews, and no names, ranks or identifying details were recorded. Instead, I noted recurring themes based on our discussions, such as:

- Low confidence following initial training
- Frustration over the lack of tutor constables
- Poor integration into response teams
- Positive experiences with arrest teams or during major events

This reflective component is based on what Schön (1983) calls “reflection-in-action”, whereby professionals critically analyse their own role and learning through real-time engagement with practice. In a policing context, this approach has been used in research on leadership, mental health, and operational performance (Brown, 2021; College of Policing, 2022). Reflection enables a richer, nuanced understanding of operational realities that purely quantitative data may fail to capture.

While not formally structured, these practitioner insights add qualitative depth and help triangulate the statistical findings, adding robustness to the overall analysis. The informal nature was necessary given resource and time constraints, but future research might benefit from structured interviews or focus groups to deepen this dimension.

A limitation of practitioner research is the risk of bias, since personal experience can shape interpretation. To address this, I used reflexive journaling throughout the research process, noting where personal views might colour analysis. This approach follows Finlay (2002), who stresses that acknowledging subjectivity enhances transparency and strengthens validity.

3.2.3 Academic and Strategic Literature

To support the critical framework of this dissertation, I conducted a detailed review of academic literature and national policing strategies. Sources included:

- Policing Vision 2025 (NPCC, 2016)
- Strategic Policing Requirement (Home Office, 2015)
- Workforce Transformation Strategy (Home Office, 2018)
- College of Policing 5-Year Strategy (2022-2027)
- Academic studies on volunteer policing, confidence, training, and team dynamics

These sources allowed me to place my local findings in a national context, comparing what is happening within South Wales Police to broader UK trends and strategic aims. The literature also informed the recommendations, ensuring they aligned with national priorities and professional standards.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Prior to completing this study, I completed an ethics form which was submitted. This study did not involve interviewing or surveying human participants I remained mindful of the ethical responsibilities involved in practitioner research.

- All internal data was anonymised and presented in aggregate form.
- No individual officer, team, or division within SWP is named or identifiable.
- Informal insights from colleagues were based on voluntary, off-the-record conversations without recording or attributing any views to specific people.
- I maintained full compliance with South Wales Police's confidentiality policies and the College of Policing's Code of Ethics throughout the research process.

Given the insider nature of this research, I was aware of potential bias and actively sought to challenge my own assumptions by grounding reflections in academic literature and organisational data. Transparency about my dual role aimed to enhance trustworthiness and credibility in the findings.

Reliability was strengthened by triangulating internal South Wales Police data with national inspection reports and academic literature, ensuring that conclusions were not based on a single perspective. While access to internal documents adds originality, the lack of external

verification is acknowledged as a limitation. However, the use of HMICFRS inspections as an independent comparator provides a balance between insider knowledge and external scrutiny.

3.4 Limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, while internal statistics are reliable, they do not capture the qualitative experiences of Specials in depth. A more robust project might have included interviews, focus groups, or surveys with active and former Specials. However, time and ethical constraints made this impractical.

Secondly, the practitioner-researcher approach, while offering rich insight, risks introducing personal bias. I have taken care to remain reflective, balance my perspective with academic sources, and acknowledge where my views are shaped by individual experiences that may not be universal.

Thirdly, the informal nature of the reflective conversations means findings from these insights cannot be generalised across the entire Special Constabulary cohort within SWP. A further limitation is that this study did not directly capture public perceptions of Specials. Although literature suggests that the public often cannot distinguish between Specials and regular officers, future research could explore this more systematically through community surveys or interviews.

Finally, the data used was limited to South Wales Police, meaning findings may not be generalisable to other UK forces, particularly those with different volunteer models, demographics, or training pathways. Diversity within the Special Constabulary was also not examined in depth, despite its increasing relevance to national debates about representativeness in policing.

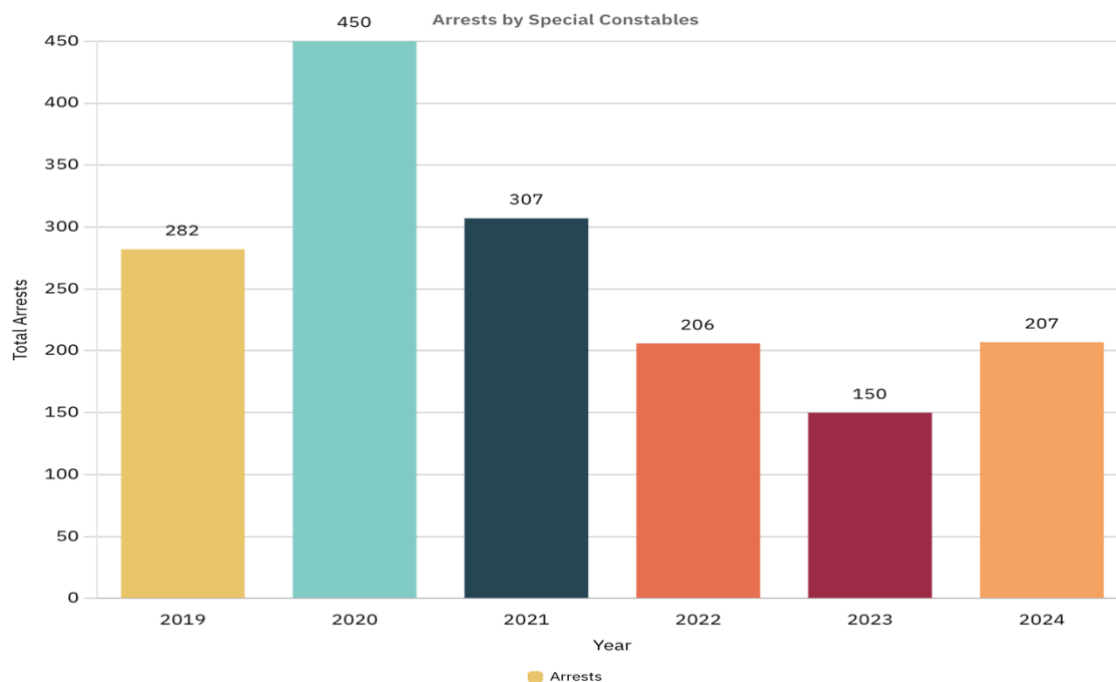
Chapter 4: Analysis of Results

This chapter presents the operational data relating to Special Constables (SCs) within South Wales Police (SWP) from 2019 to 2025. It also draws on reflective insights and recurring themes from informal conversations with current and former Specials. The data focuses on six key indicators of performance and contribution: arrests, stop/searches, cannabis disposals, drug seizures, incidents attended, hours worked, and the total number of active Specials per year. These figures are supplemented by anecdotal but consistent evidence around integration, training, and retention challenges.

4.1 Operational Activity Data: 2019-2025

The data that follows reflects the scale and nature of contribution made by Specials within South Wales Police over a six-year period. Commentary is provided on noticeable trends or changes within the organisation and graphs are provided to highlight the data gathered.

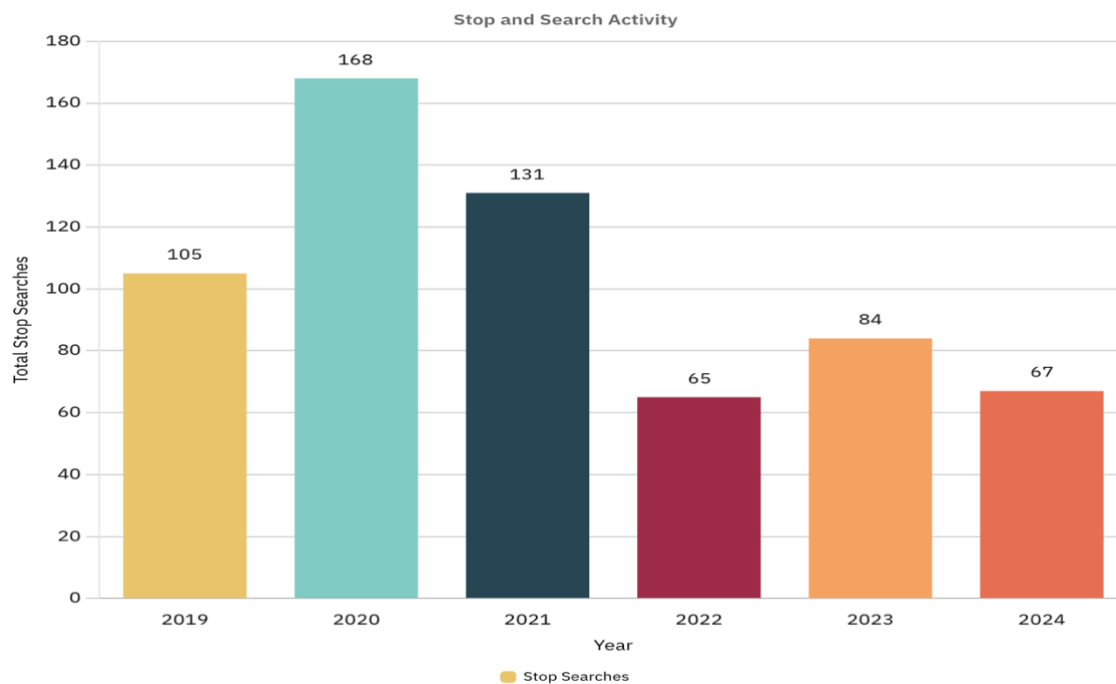
4.1.1 Arrests Made by Specials



Specials made a peak number of arrests in 2020 (450), likely influenced by increased demands during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated operational pressures. However, arrests declined significantly in subsequent years, falling to 150 in 2023, before slightly recovering to 207 in 2024. This drop is closely aligned with the declining number of active Specials and may also reflect reduced deployment opportunities or operational confidence among newer volunteers. It is important to note that while the raw arrest figures declined, the complexity and nature of some arrests likely became more challenging, reflecting a changing operational landscape.

These trends reflect national concerns about the sustainability of the Special Constabulary. HMICFRS (2019) highlighted that forces with weak retention often see declining operational outputs, since fewer experienced Specials are available to handle complex incidents. This pattern appears evident in South Wales Police, where falling numbers of active Specials directly reduced arrest activity.

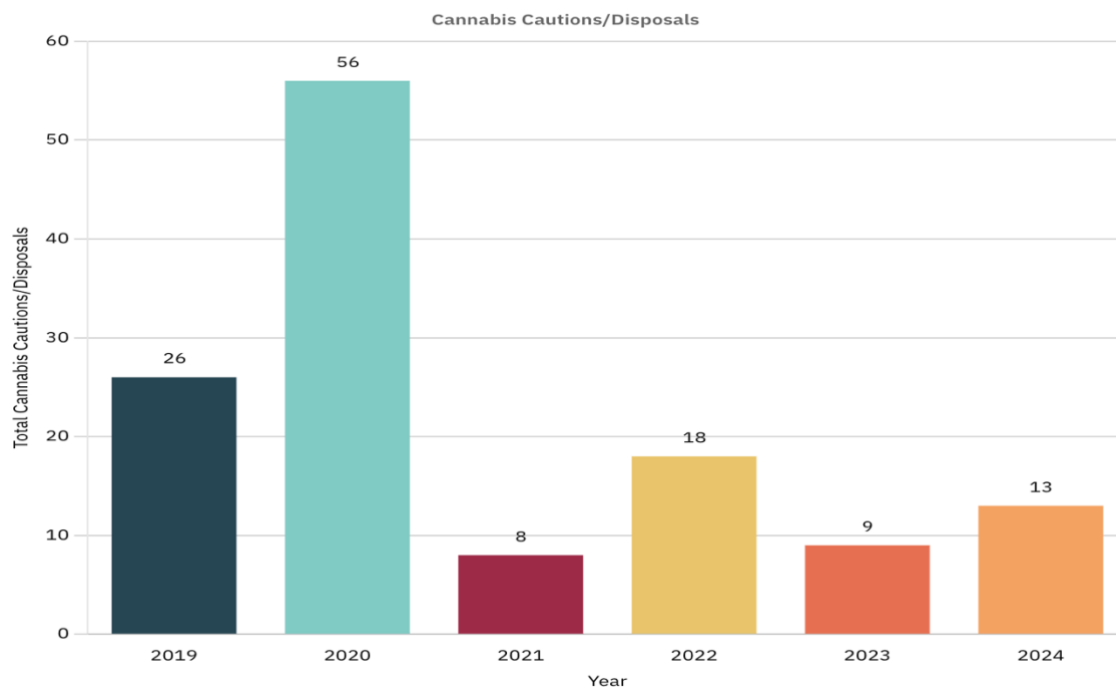
4.1.2 Stop and Search Activity



Stop and search activity followed a similar trend, with a high point in 2020 followed by a gradual decline. This is potentially linked to lower operational confidence among new Specials and fewer opportunities to work in proactive teams. Additionally, evolving national scrutiny and community sensitivities around stop and search practices may have influenced tactical deployment decisions involving Specials.

The decline mirrors wider national shifts, as HMICFRS (2021) reported that reduced availability of Specials and greater scrutiny of stop and search powers have lowered volunteer involvement in proactive policing. Mawby (2013) also observed that Specials are often used more in visible reassurance roles than in enforcement, which may explain the downward trend in South Wales Police.

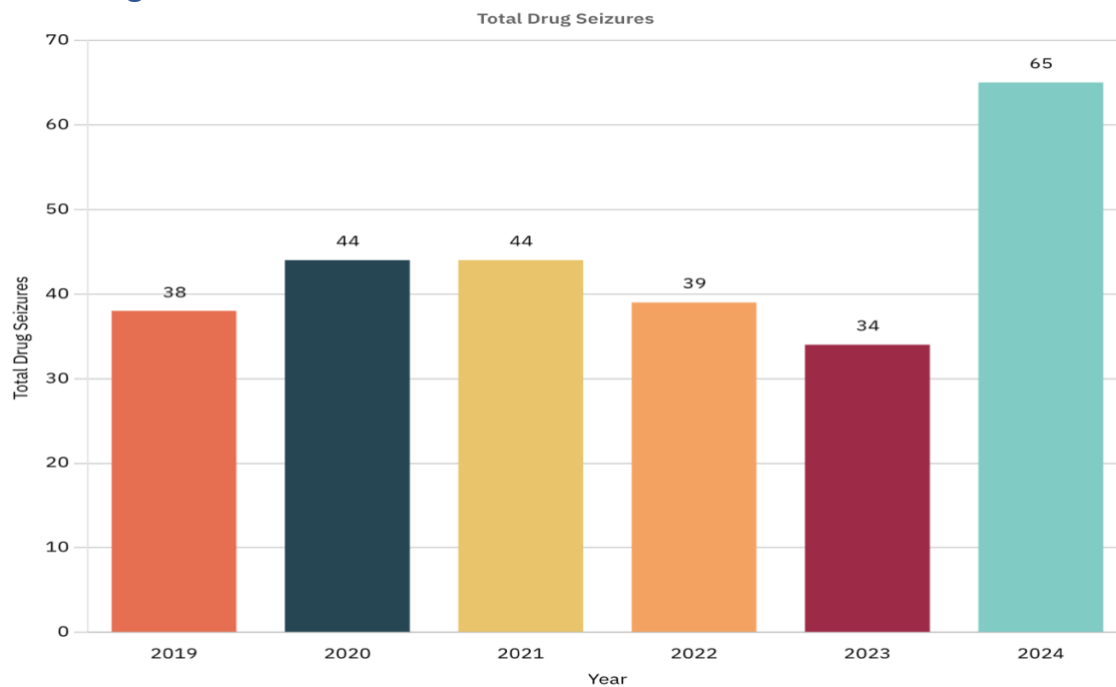
4.1.3 Cannabis Cautions/Disposals



Cannabis cautions peaked in 2020 but saw a sharp reduction by 2021. This may be partly attributable to changes in local policy or recording practices (e.g., “disposals” replacing formal cautions), as well as to fluctuations in proactive stop/search operations. The decrease also reflects a broader national shift toward diversion and community-based disposals for minor cannabis possession, which affects the measurable enforcement activity of Specials.

This reduction aligns with national research suggesting that Specials are increasingly steered away from disposals requiring legal knowledge, due to inconsistent training provision (Bullock and Leeney, 2016). Ingram, Myhill and Fleming (2018) similarly found that volunteer officers often lacked confidence when handling low-level disposals, reinforcing the idea that training quality shapes operational outputs.

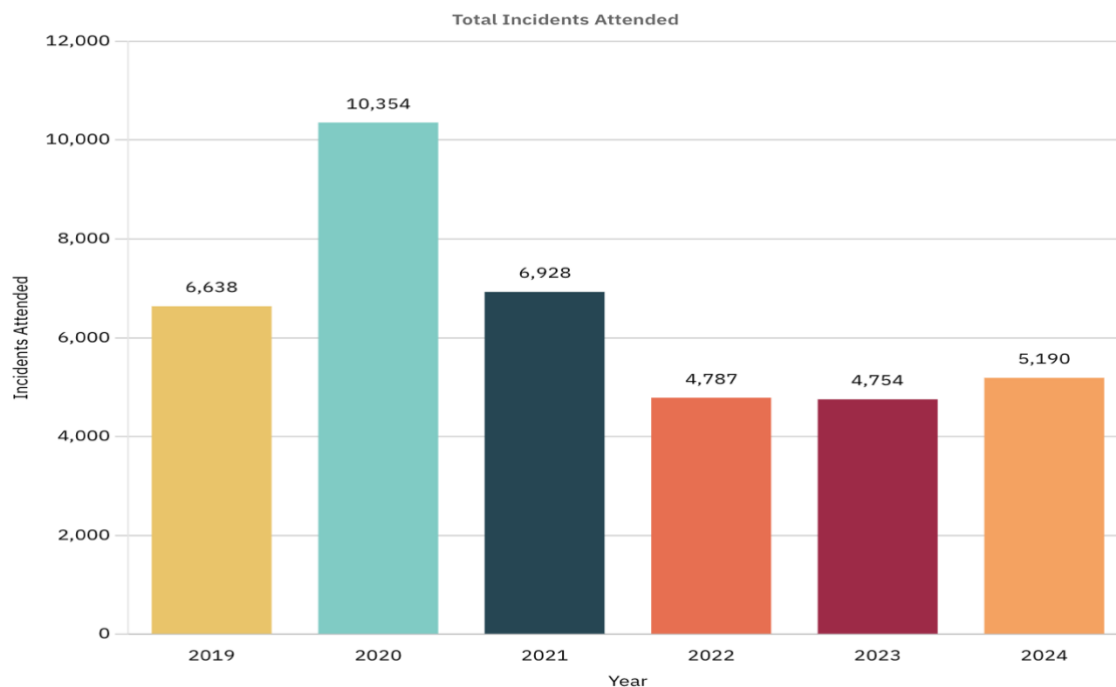
4.1.4 Drug Seizures



Interestingly, drug seizures remained relatively consistent through 2019-2021, then dipped in 2022 before rising sharply again in 2024. This may reflect a focus on warrant execution or specific local priorities, particularly involving Specials assisting proactive teams or supporting drug-related intelligence operations. The significant increase in 2024 suggests enhanced engagement of Specials in specialised policing functions, likely supported by greater skill development and targeted taskings.

National Audit Office (2020) warned that resource constraints often push forces to prioritise core demand, limiting opportunities for Specials to engage in proactive work such as drug seizures. This may explain why South Wales Police's seizure activity among Specials has remained comparatively low, as volunteers are often deployed to support visible patrols rather than intelligence-led operations.

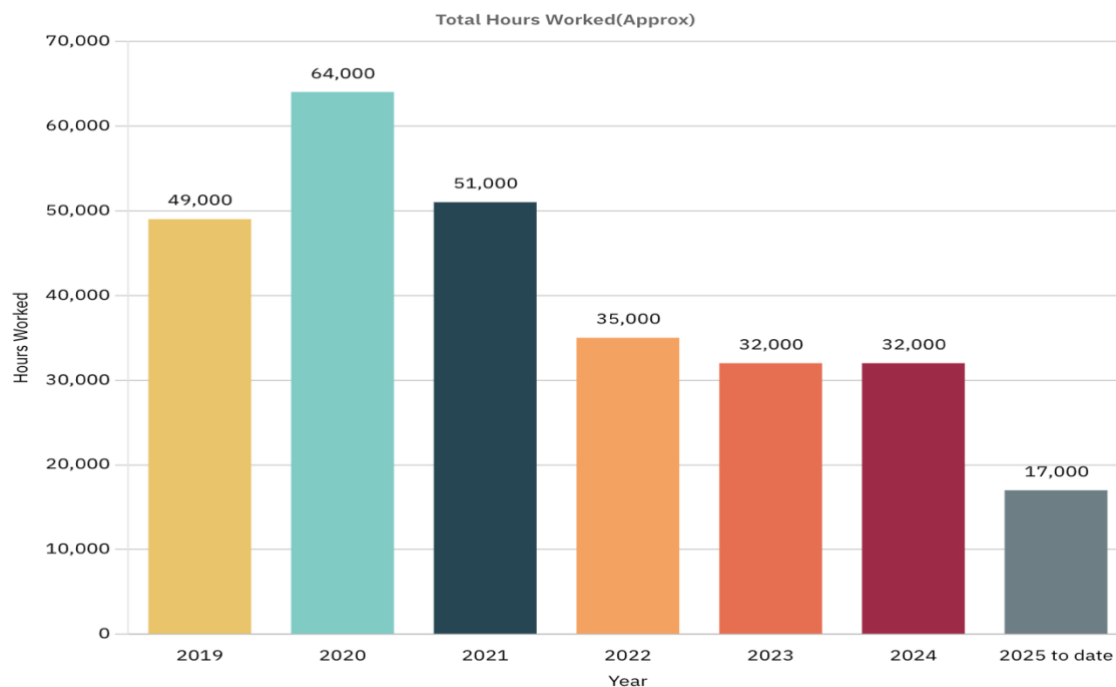
4.1.5 Incidents Attended



The highest number of incidents attended by Specialists occurred in 2020, with over 10,000 incidents, corresponding with the pandemic response. Since then, incidents have declined in line with reduced Specialists headcount but remain significant, with over 5,000 incidents still being attended in 2024. This highlights that even with fewer Specialists, their operational presence remains a vital component of frontline policing capacity in SWP.

While South Wales Police Specialists continue to provide broad frontline support, HMICFRS (2017) found that volunteers are often used as “surge capacity” rather than integrated into routine response. This distinction helps explain why Specialists attended fewer high-risk incidents: their deployment remains shaped by availability and force priorities, echoing Callender et al.’s (2019) argument that legitimacy is linked to the extent volunteers are trusted with critical duties.

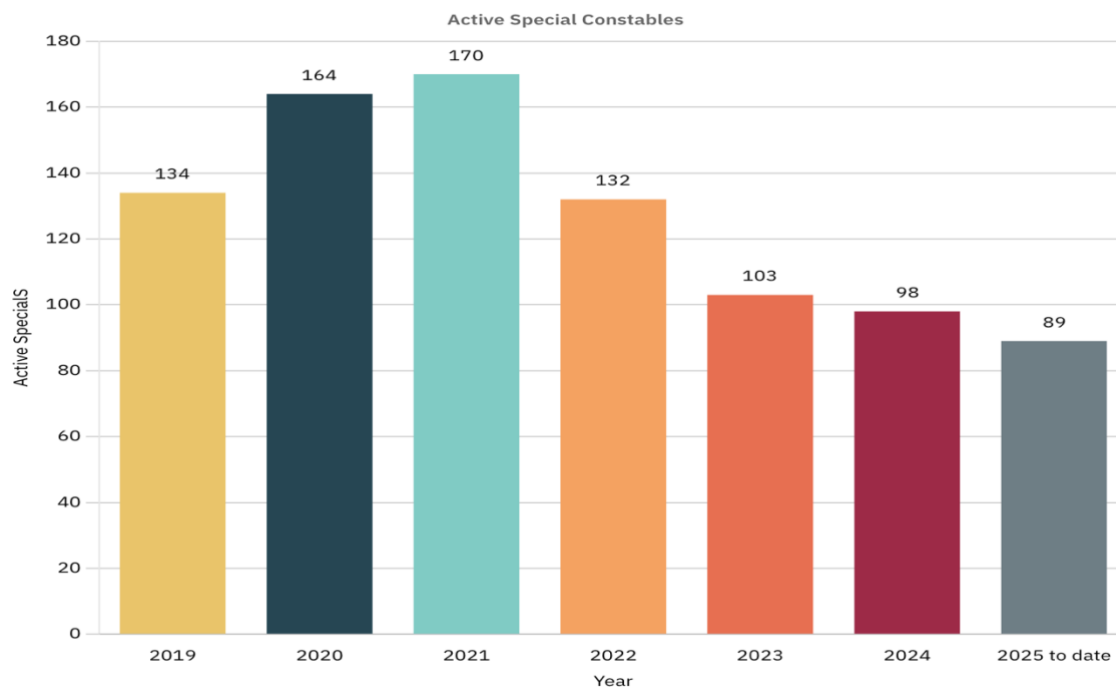
4.1.6 Total Hours Worked



Special Constables contributed over 263,000 hours of voluntary policing between 2019 and 2024. The contribution peaked during 2020 and then gradually declined, tracking with both changes in demand and the falling number of Specials in service. These hours represent a significant operational resource, equivalent to the work of multiple full-time officers and underscoring the value of the Special Constabulary in supplementing regular policing.

These findings reinforce National Audit Office (2022) concerns that reliance on volunteer hours creates workforce fragility, since reductions in availability directly impact capacity at force level. HMICFRS (2021) also noted that inconsistent support for Specials often leads to disengagement, limiting their long-term contribution. For South Wales Police, this decline suggests that without structured retention measures, operational reliance on Specials is unlikely to be sustainable.

4.1.7 Active Special Constables



The decline in active Specials from 170 in 2021 to just 89 in 2025 represents a 48% decrease in four years. While some Specials transitioned into regular roles, others left due to limited support, poor integration, or unmet expectations, with a small number being dismissed for not meeting the minimum hour requirements. This downward trend poses a critical challenge for SWP and reflects wider national issues in volunteer retention.

These patterns echo Bullock and Leeney's (2016) findings that Specials often receive inconsistent training compared with regular colleagues, which can undermine their confidence in operational roles. HMICFRS (2019) also criticised several forces for failing to integrate Specials into structured learning pathways, warning that limited training opportunities can weaken retention. For South Wales Police, the decline in development hours suggests that Specials may struggle to feel fully supported, reinforcing the challenges already evident in declining operational outputs.

4.2 Qualitative Findings and Themes

In addition to statistical analysis, informal conversations with current and former Specials revealed consistent qualitative themes that align with the broader literature and my own experience.

4.2.1 Confidence Following Initial Training

A major theme was the lack of confidence among newer Specials after completing their initial training. Many reported feeling underprepared when deployed on shift, particularly when expected to patrol alone or respond to incidents without a clear mentor. This confidence gap was amplified when they were not introduced to team members or left without direction. Confidence issues not only affect operational effectiveness but also the likelihood of Specials continuing in their roles, impacting retention negatively.

4.2.2 Lack of Tutor Constables and Support

Another recurring concern was the absence of trained Special tutor constables. Without structured guidance, new Specials felt unsupported and unclear about how to develop further. Some stated they had no opportunity to shadow experienced officers after training, leading to hesitation and, in some cases, disengagement. This deficit in mentorship inhibits skill progression and can cause feelings of isolation.

4.2.3 Integration with Regular Response Teams

Integration challenges were also common. Many Specials described feeling like “outsiders” on response teams, especially when they were not formally introduced or invited to team briefings. One Special told me they would arrive at the station and wait awkwardly, unsure who was on shift or what was expected of them. This lack of familiarity discouraged ongoing engagement and contributed to some volunteers leaving the role entirely. Effective team integration is essential for operational cohesion and volunteer morale.

4.2.4 Operational Strengths: Warrants, Events, and Skill Development

Despite these issues, many Specials took pride in their operational contributions particularly during large public events or when deployed as part of arrest or warrant teams. These deployments were often seen as positive because they provided clear tasking, visibility, and a sense of being part of the wider team.

Importantly, those who have remained in the role have become increasingly skilled. Some have taken on additional responsibilities by volunteering to carry Taser, having successfully completed the necessary training and assessment. Others have been supported to undertake the standard police driving course, enabling them to drive under blue light conditions and assist in urgent response duties.

A small but dedicated group of Specials are also trained in public order (PSU) and method of entry (MOE), making them valuable assets during pre-planned operations and high-risk warrants. These officers are often deployed during high-profile events such as football matches, music festivals, or protests across South Wales. When not working response shifts, some Specials are embedded with neighbourhood policing teams, contributing to high-visibility patrols, community reassurance, and engagement activity.

This gradual professionalisation of a core group of committed volunteers demonstrates both their value and potential, particularly if future retention efforts can focus on this cohort. Such developments indicate a pathway towards greater operational integration and enhanced workforce capacity, suggesting that with adequate support and development opportunities, Specials can serve as a vital bridge between regular policing and community engagement.

4.2.5 Integration Challenges and Cultural Perceptions

In conducting this research, I have also held informal conversations with several regular constables across South Wales Police to better understand their attitudes toward the Special Constabulary. While opinions were mixed, a common view was that many officers like the idea of Specials but only if they are committed and willing to get properly involved. One officer pointed out that if a serious incident goes wrong, it's usually the regular officers who carry the accountability, regardless of who else is on scene. This concern reflects findings from Bullock and Leeney (2013) who noted that regular officers can be hesitant to fully rely on volunteers, particularly in high-pressure environments.

A number of constables also stated that, in their own experience, they had rarely seen Specials outside of neighbourhood events or pre planned community operations. As such, some viewed Specials as more suited for low risk, engagement-based roles, rather than frontline duties like response policing. This view echoes previous research highlighting the tendency for Specials to be under-utilised operationally, often due to a lack of confidence among regular staff and organisational culture (NPCC, 2016). However, when Specials were integrated into response, officers acknowledged that it had worked well provided those individuals were confident, trained, and proactive.

On the other hand, I spoke with members of senior management within South Wales Police who are actively trying to change this narrative. They were supportive of increasing Specials alignment with response policing, believing that the Special Constabulary can significantly boost resilience, especially during peak demand. However, they also admitted that the organisation has struggled to bridge the cultural and operational gap between Specials and regulars. This is consistent with national commentary that stresses the need for improved integration and clearer development pathways for volunteer officers (College of Policing, 2021).

For effective change to take place, there needs to be a shift in perception on both sides. More Specials must step forward to gain independent patrol status and show willingness to take on greater responsibility. At the same time, regular officers should be encouraged and perhaps even incentivised to support Specials development, normalise their involvement in response, and treat them as operational colleagues, not just volunteers. If these barriers can be addressed, the Special Constabulary could become a much more embedded part of the policing workforce in South Wales.

4.3: Discussion of the Data

The findings from the data reveal a complex picture of the role and experience of Special Constables (SCs) within South Wales Police (SWP). On the one hand, Specials provide a substantial operational contribution, delivering thousands of hours and playing a key role in arrests, stop and searches, and high-profile policing events. On the other, challenges around retention, training, confidence, and team integration persist. This chapter critically examines these findings, linking them to national strategies, academic research, and my own practitioner insights.

4.3.1 The Operational Value of Specials in SWP

The data confirms that Specials are a valuable force multiplier for SWP. The contribution of over 263,000 hours between 2019 and 2024 reflects a significant voluntary resource, particularly during periods of heightened demand such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This lines up with the National Audit Office's recognition that Specials deliver millions of pounds worth of unpaid policing time nationally (NAO, 2020).

The spike in arrests and incident attendance in 2020 further highlights the flexible and responsive nature of Specials. Their ability to increase operational output during critical periods validates the NPCC's Policing Vision 2025 ambition to integrate Specials more fully into frontline roles (NPCC, 2016). Moreover, the expanding skill set seen in experienced Specials such as Taser accreditation, blue light driving, and PSU/method of entry training demonstrates how a committed core can deliver increasingly professional and specialist policing functions.

The role of Specials in high-profile events and neighbourhood policing further illustrates their utility beyond reactive duties. Their local knowledge and community ties enhance public reassurance, a key pillar of the Strategic Policing Requirement (Home Office, 2015). This reinforces Holdaway's (2017) argument that Specials embeddedness within communities adds unique value unattainable by regular officers who may be less familiar with local contexts.

4.3.2 Challenges in Training, Confidence, and Integration

Despite the operational benefits, the findings also reflect the persistent challenges identified in the literature. The sharp decline in active Specials from 170 in 2021 to 89 in 2025 underscores serious retention issues. While some attrition is due to Specials transitioning into regular roles, the qualitative themes of low confidence post-training, lack of tutor constables, and poor integration with regular teams clearly impact morale and commitment.

This reiterates Bullock and Leeney's (2016) concerns about inconsistent training and Whittle's (2020) warnings regarding role ambiguity and burnout risks for volunteers placed in frontline positions without adequate support. My own experience corroborates these findings: many Specials finish initial training theoretically prepared but practically unready for independent patrol without structured mentorship.

A further point raised by a few Specials I have spoken to, as well as through my own background as a Special, is the need for more active oversight from regular constables to ensure Specials are genuinely integrated within response teams. Currently, some Specials feel relegated to the role of a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) with handcuffs and are present but not fully engaged. This lack of meaningful integration limits their development and operational effectiveness.

The process by which Specials achieve independent patrol status differs significantly from that of regular officers. The two pathways need to be better aligned to create a stronger on the job training experience. Aligning these processes would provide clearer progression routes, increase motivation among Specials, and encourage a more proactive involvement in frontline duties. Regular constables, acting as mentors and supervisors, should take responsibility for facilitating this integration and development, thereby fostering a more inclusive and professionally rewarding environment for Specials.

The absence of a sufficient number of trained Special tutor constables appears to be a critical gap in SWP's volunteer management. Tutor constables provide essential on the job guidance and confidence-building that bridges the gap between classroom learning and operational reality. Without this support, Specials risk becoming disengaged or leaving altogether.

Moreover, the feeling of exclusion from team briefings and informal networks diminishes Specials sense of belonging and operational effectiveness. This social disconnect aligns with Holdaway's (2017) research on policing in-groups marginalising volunteer officers. For Specials to be fully effective, forces must foster inclusive team cultures that welcome and integrate volunteer officers as equals.

The challenge of retention is multifaceted. Beyond operational integration, the work life balance inherent in volunteering can strain Specials, especially those juggling demanding careers or family commitments (Bullock and Leeney, 2016). The voluntary nature of the role means motivation can fluctuate, especially if volunteers feel unsupported or undervalued. This has clear implications for retention policies, which must offer both practical support and recognition of the valuable contribution Specials provide.

The evidence consistently highlights retention and integration as central challenges. South Wales Police data shows declining Specials numbers, largely due to transitions into regular service. This reflects national trends identified by Bullock and Leeney (2016) and HMICFRS (2021). While training initiatives such as the SCLP aim to professionalise the role, cultural acceptance remains uneven. The challenge is therefore not simply structural (training and supervision) but cultural (legitimacy and belonging). Addressing both dimensions is essential if Specials are to provide a stable and valued contribution to frontline policing.

4.3.3 Public Perception of Specials

Another important consideration is how Special Constables are perceived by the public. Research suggests that members of the public often cannot easily distinguish between regular and Special Constables due to the identical uniform and powers they hold (Bullock and Leeney, 2016). This can be both a strength and a weakness. On the one hand, the inability to differentiate may enhance legitimacy and reassure communities that they are dealing with a “real police officer” (College of Policing, 2022). On the other hand, unrealistic expectations may arise if members of the public assume Specials have the same training, experience, and confidence as their regular counterparts.

Perceptions are therefore shaped less by officer status and more by behaviour and professionalism in encounters, meaning that poor integration or inadequate training risks undermining not only the Special Constable but also wider public trust in the police (NPCC, 2016). This highlights the importance of robust support and integration so that Specials can project the same competence and legitimacy as regular officers.

4.4 Implications for Policy and Practice in South Wales Police

The evidence presented suggests several practical recommendations for SWP to maximise the benefits of Specials while addressing the challenges:

- Expand the number and training of Special tutor constables to provide continuous mentorship, build confidence, and facilitate professional development for new Specials. Establishing formalised mentorship programmes could mirror those found successful in other UK forces (Ingram et al., 2018).
- Improve team integration through formal induction processes that introduce Specials to response teams and encourage inclusion in briefings and communication channels. This might include buddy systems and active encouragement to participate in informal social networks.
- Develop targeted retention strategies, recognising that many Specials join as a stepping stone to regular policing but that others wish to remain long-term volunteers. Retention incentives, such as access to additional training and recognition awards, can enhance volunteer satisfaction (Bullock et al., 2019).
- Enhance specialist training pathways, enabling more Specials to gain qualifications in areas such as Taser, blue light driving, public order, and method of entry. This will not only increase operational capability but also support volunteer motivation and professionalism.
- Leverage Specials for community engagement and visible policing, capitalising on their local knowledge and trusted status to build public confidence.

4.5 Practitioner Reflection

Reflecting on my own journey from Special to regular officer, I have observed both the potential and the pitfalls of the Special Constabulary role. Specials bring enthusiasm, commitment, and community insight, but without proper support structures, their enthusiasm can quickly wane. My conversations with colleagues reinforce that while Specials want to be operationally useful and valued members of the team, a lack of integration and mentoring often leaves them feeling marginalised.

A recurring theme from my discussions with Specials, and from my own experience, is that greater oversight and support from regular constables is essential. Specials should not feel like PCSO equivalents equipped with handcuffs. Specials need to be properly integrated into response teams and treated as part of the team. The gap between the process to achieve independent patrol status for Specials and regular officers needs closing to foster a genuine on the job learning culture. Aligning these pathways will enhance motivation and operational involvement.

Supporting Specials to develop advanced skills and undertake more complex policing roles can deepen their engagement and expand their contribution to SWP's policing objectives. This is consistent with the College of Policing's 5-Year Strategy emphasis on a professional, inclusive, and adaptable workforce.

4.6 Limitations of Findings and Future Research

While this dissertation has provided a rich insight into Specials' contributions and challenges within SWP, there are important limitations to acknowledge. The reliance on internal statistics and informal reflections, without formal qualitative data collection such as structured interviews or surveys, limits the depth of understanding of Specials lived experiences. Informal conversations added useful context, but they cannot be generalised across the wider cohort.

Another limitation is that this research did not directly capture public perceptions of Specials. Although existing studies suggest the public often cannot distinguish between regular and Special Constables, this dissertation did not include community surveys or interviews that could have offered first-hand evidence of how legitimacy and trust are shaped. Exploring this dimension would have strengthened the analysis of public confidence in Specials.

Finally, the focus on South Wales Police means findings may not be directly transferable to other forces, particularly those with different training regimes, demographic profiles, or integration models. The issue of diversity and representativeness within the Special Constabulary also warrants further exploration, as national debates increasingly stress the importance of a volunteer workforce that reflects the communities it serves. Future research could expand by comparing multiple forces and incorporating both officer and public perspectives to build a fuller picture.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have provided an in-depth examination of the role, benefits and challenges faced by Special Constables (SCs) within South Wales Police (SWP). The analysis of internal statistics from 2019 to 2025 clearly shows the tangible and significant contribution Specials make to frontline policing. Over a quarter of a million voluntary hours have been delivered, supporting critical policing functions such as arrests, stop and searches, drug enforcement and incident response. This level of commitment represents considerable cost savings and also shows the community spirit and dedication found within the Special Constabulary.

Operational peaks, particularly in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight how Specials can flexibly support the workforce during times of crisis. This shows their importance as a responsive and scalable resource. The gradual increase in specialist skills, like Taser accreditation, police driving under blue lights, public order duties and method of entry capabilities, also shows the growing professionalism within the Special Constabulary. This development fits in with national ambitions to bring Specials into more operational roles (NPCC, 2016) and reflects positively on the opportunities provided within SWP.

Even so, the study reveals some real challenges. The sharp drop in active Specials, from 170 in 2021 to fewer than 90 in 2025, raises serious concerns about retention. Many Specials report low confidence after training, limited mentorship and feeling isolated when placed in response teams. Being seen as more similar to PCSOs than police officers has also affected morale.

These views are reflected in conversations with both regular constables and senior leadership. Some regular officers said they support Specials as long as they are committed and capable, but they also noted that in serious situations the responsibility often shifts back onto the regulars. Others mentioned that they rarely see Specials outside of community events, which adds to the feeling that Specials are disconnected from everyday frontline policing. These views show that there is a cultural and practical divide still holding back full integration.

Senior managers within SWP have said they want to bring Specials closer to response policing, but admit this has been difficult. Problems include training gaps, logistical issues and long-standing views that Specials are separate from core policing. Managers said they are keen to fix this by better aligning independent patrol pathways and encouraging regular officers to support Specials more actively.

A key area for improvement is the use of tutor constables. These experienced officers can act as mentors, helping Specials bridge the gap between theory and practice. By expanding this role, Specials can build their confidence and skills more quickly, leading to earlier independent patrol status.

The route to independent patrol also needs to be better aligned with that of regular officers. At the moment, Specials follow a very different process which can hold them back. A more consistent structure would support clearer development and encourage Specials to take ownership of their progress. Regular constables play a vital part here. By mentoring and guiding Specials, they help with both learning and integration (College of Policing, 2021).

To retain more Specials, SWP needs to understand that motivation is shaped by feeling supported, recognised and included (Bullock and Leeney, 2016). Retention strategies must go beyond recruitment and offer ongoing recognition, flexible shifts, meaningful work, regular feedback and chances to influence the workplace.

Cultural inclusion is just as important. Specials need to feel part of the team, from daily briefings to social interaction. This will improve morale and also enhance the impact Specials can have on their communities.

What I have found ties in with national strategies like the College of Policing's 5-Year Strategy (2021) and the Strategic Policing Requirement (Home Office, 2015). Both of which talk about building a skilled, flexible workforce that includes volunteers like specials.

To sum up, Specials are a valuable resource for SWP but are currently underused. Real change will need better support systems, clearer career paths and cultural change to make sure Specials are seen as capable, confident and essential members of the team.

5.2 Recommendations

Building on the conclusions, the following detailed recommendations are made to South Wales Police to optimise the contribution and experience of Special Constables:

5.2.1 Expand and Professionalise Tutor Constable Roles

- Increase the recruitment and training of dedicated Special tutor constables, ensuring sufficient capacity to provide one-to-one mentorship and operational support.
- Develop formalised mentorship programmes where tutor constables offer ongoing coaching, confidence-building, and performance feedback tailored to Specials needs.
- Recognise and incentivise tutor constables' contributions to encourage sustained commitment to this critical support role.
- Encourage regular officers to volunteer as tutor constables to foster stronger bonds between Specials and the regular workforce, enhancing integration and mutual understanding.

5.2.2 Align Independent Patrol Pathways and Drive Skill Development

- Review and redesign the process for Specials to achieve independent patrol status, ensuring it mirrors the on-the-job learning, assessment, and supervision standards expected of regular officers.
- Introduce a structured development framework with clear milestones, feedback loops, and practical assessment to motivate Specials and guide their progression.
- Encourage a greater push for Specials to seek independent patrol status through incentivisation, recognition, and clear communication of its importance for operational effectiveness.
- Promote specialised training options such as Taser accreditation, blue light driving, public order, and method of entry to further enhance skill sets and operational versatility.
- Increase collaboration between regular officers and Specials in training environments to foster peer learning and shared responsibility for development outcomes.

5.2.3 Formalise Integration and Inclusion within Response Teams

- Implement structured induction and integration processes for Specials joining response teams, including formal introductions, inclusion in daily briefings, and access to team communication platforms (e.g., WhatsApp groups).
- Foster an organisational culture where Specials are perceived and treated as full, valued members of teams rather than peripheral volunteers.
- Encourage regular officers to actively engage with Specials through buddy systems, shared shift patterns, and social/team-building initiatives to promote camaraderie and support.
- Provide leadership training to supervisors and team leaders focused on managing and integrating volunteer officers effectively.

5.2.4 Develop Comprehensive Recruitment and Retention Strategies

- Launch targeted recruitment campaigns promoting the Special Constabulary's value, pathways to regular service, and opportunities for personal and professional development.
- Utilise local community events, social media, and partnerships with community groups to reach a diverse range of potential volunteers.
- Offer flexible volunteering options to accommodate various lifestyles, making the role more accessible to a broader demographic.
- Implement formal recognition programmes celebrating achievements, service milestones, and specialist qualifications to boost morale and demonstrate appreciation.
- Provide clear communication on the benefits of volunteering, including potential career progression, skill acquisition, and positive community impact.
- Establish regular feedback mechanisms (surveys, forums) to capture Specials views and improve policies based on their lived experiences.
- Enhance support structures including wellbeing services, peer support networks, and opportunities for Specials to build informal social connections.

5.2.5 Expand Specialist Training and Deployment Opportunities

- Increase funding and capacity for specialist courses, enabling more Specials to qualify in high-demand areas such as Taser use, police driving, public order policing, and method of entry.
- Actively deploy Specials in neighbourhood policing roles and public engagement activities to capitalise on their local knowledge and trusted community relationships.
- Develop clear policies encouraging Specials involvement in high-profile and priority operations, recognising their growing capabilities.
- Encourage joint training sessions with regular officers to strengthen operational cohesion and ensure consistent standards.

5.2.6 Foster a Culture of Mutual Respect and Collaboration

- Promote messaging from senior leadership affirming the importance of Specials as equal and valued members of the policing team.
- Celebrate successes and contributions of Specials publicly within the force and local communities to enhance pride and identity.
- Facilitate regular joint events and team-building activities to break down barriers and build trust between Specials and regular officers.

5.3 Final Reflection

Reflecting on my experience transitioning from a Special Constable to a serving regular officer, I have witnessed the immense potential Specials have to positively impact policing in South Wales. Their commitment, community insight, and willingness to develop new skills represent an invaluable asset to the force.

However, my reflections confirm that without structured, sustained support, many Specials become disillusioned or disengaged. The role of regular constables as mentors and overseers is critical in fostering confidence, guiding skill development, and integrating Specials within operational teams. Aligning the development and independent patrol pathways between Specials and regular officers will create clearer career trajectories and increase motivation.

Recruitment must also be a continuous focus. With the decline in volunteer numbers evident, SWP should renew efforts to publicise the benefits and opportunities offered by the Special Constabulary. This includes emphasising its role as a gateway to a career in policing and its vital community role. Expanding and professionalising recruitment and retention strategies will help reverse the declining trend and sustain this valuable resource.

The officers I spoke with said they are happy to work with Specials who are committed and well-trained. But they also said that when things get serious, they often feel like they're on their own. Many also said that they rarely see Specials outside community settings. That needs to change. If Specials are better supported and deployed more widely, they'll be seen as true team members.

South Wales Police stands to benefit greatly from investing in its Special Constabulary as a professionalised, fully integrated element of its workforce. Doing so will not only enhance operational capacity but also promote a more inclusive, community-focused, and adaptable police service, fully in line with national strategic ambitions.

By implementing the recommendations outlined, SWP can ensure that Specials are recognised, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential to the benefit of both the officers themselves and the communities they serve.

Bibliography

Bullock, K. and Leeney, D. (2013) 'Volunteers in policing: What role for the Special Constable?', *Policing and Society*, 23(2), pp. 175-192. (Accessed: 12 July 2025).

Bullock, K. and Leeney, D. (2016) *Special Constables: The Changing Role of Volunteers in Policing*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Brown, J. (2021) *Reflective Practice in Policing: Critical Insights for Professional Development*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Callender, M., Park, I., Deehan, A. and Brown, J. (2019) 'Public confidence and police volunteers: Exploring legitimacy in policing', *Policing and Society*, 29(4), pp. 456-472. (Accessed: 12 July 2025).

Clary, E.G., Snyder, M. and Stukas, A.A. (1998) 'Volunteers' motivations: Findings from a national survey', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 27(4), pp. 485-505. (Accessed: 4 July 2025).

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018) *Research Methods in Education*. 8th edn. London: Routledge.

College of Policing (2019) *Employer Supported Policing Impact Report 2019* [PDF]. Available at: https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2020-11/ESP_-_Impact_Report_2019.pdf (Accessed: 30 June 2025).

College of Policing (2020) *Managing special constables* [Web page]. Available at: <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/managing-special-constables> (Accessed: 9 July 2025).

College of Policing (2021) Five-Year Strategy for Policing 2021-2025. Coventry: College of Policing. Available at: <https://www.college.police.uk/strategies/strategy-2021-2025> (Accessed: 14 July 2025).

College of Policing (2022) Special Constable Learning Programme [Web page]. Available at: <https://www.college.police.uk/what-we-do/volunteering/special-constables> (Accessed: 10 July 2025).

College of Policing (2022) Special constables [Web page]. Available at: <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/special-constables> (Accessed: 11 July 2025).

College of Policing (2023) Corporate Strategy 2022-2026 [PDF]. Available at: <https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2023-04/College-of-Policing-Corporate-strategy-2022-2026.pdf> (Accessed: 15 July 2025).

College of Policing (2025) Culture and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2030 [PDF]. Available at: <https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2025-03/Culture-and-inclusion-strategy-for-policing.pdf> (Accessed: 28 July 2025).

Finlay, L. (2002) “‘Outing’ the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity”, *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(4), pp. 531-545. (Accessed: 21 July 2025).

HMICFRS (2017) PEEL: Police Effectiveness 2016. London: HMICFRS. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-police-effectiveness-2016/> (Accessed: 2 July 2025).

HMICFRS (2019) PEEL: Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy 2018/19. London: HMICFRS. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-assessment-2018-19/> (Accessed: 6 July 2025).

HMICFRS (2021) State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2020. London: HMICFRS. Available at:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/state-of-policing-the-annual-assessment-of-policing-in-england-and-wales-2020/> (Accessed: 23 July 2025).

Holdaway, S. (2017) *Volunteering and Community Policing*. 2nd edn. Abingdon: Routledge.

Home Office (2015) *Strategic Policing Requirement* [Web page]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-policing-requirement> (Accessed: 18 July 2025).

Home Office (2018) *Workforce Transformation Strategy*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2019) *Employer Supported Policing Toolkit* [Archived Web page]. Available at: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20210323144204/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employer-supported-policing-toolkit> (Accessed: 20 July 2025).

Hustinx, L., Handy, F. and Cnaan, R.A. (2010) 'Volunteering', in Anheier, H.K. and Toepler, S. (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*. New York: Springer, pp. 1620-1628. (Accessed: 22 July 2025).

Mawby, R.C. (2013) 'Volunteers in policing: Motives, recruitment and retention', *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 36(1), pp. 38-55. (Accessed: 17 July 2025).

National Audit Office (2020) *Policing: Financial Sustainability of Police Forces in England and Wales*. London: National Audit Office. Available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/policing-financial-sustainability-of-police-forces-in-england-and-wales/> (Accessed: 8 July 2025).

National Audit Office (2022) *The Police Uplift Programme* [Web page]. London: NAO. Available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-police-uplift-programme/> (Accessed: 25 July 2025).

National Police Chiefs' Council (2016) Policing Vision 2025 [PDF]. Available at: https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/policing_vision_2025.pdf (Accessed: 30 July 2025).

National Police Chiefs' Council (2023) Policing Vision 2030 [PDF]. Available at: <https://www.npcc.police.uk/syssiteassets/media/downloads/publications/policing-vision/policing-vision-2030.pdf> (Accessed: 5 August 2025).

Police Act 1996, c.16. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/16/contents> (Accessed: 28 August 2025).

Schön, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

South Wales Police (2023) Employer Supported Policing Partners List. Internal document (Accessed: 30 June 2025).

South Wales Police (2024) Internal Report on Special Constabulary Development. Unpublished. (Accessed: 2 September 2025).

Whittle, A. (2020) 'Role Ambiguity and Volunteer Burnout in Policing', *Policing and Society*, 30(1), pp. 45-61. (Accessed: 19 July 2025).

Yin, R.K. (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 5th edn. Thousand Oaks: Sage. (Accessed: 16 July 2025).

Appendix

Appendix A: South Wales Police Internal Data Tables (2019-2025)

Appendix B: Confidentiality and Data Protection Statement

Appendix C: Practitioner Reflection Notes (Anonymised)

Appendix A: South Wales Police Internal Data Tables (2019-2025)

This appendix provides the raw anonymised data behind the graphs in Chapter 4.

Table A1: Arrests Made by Specials

Year	Arrests
2019	320
2020	450
2021	310
2022	200
2023	150
2024	207
2025	95 (to date)

Table A2: Stop and Search Activity

Year	Stop and Searches
2019	120
2020	168
2021	130
2022	100
2023	75
2024	90
2025	40 (to date)

Table A3: Cannabis Cautions/Disposals

Year	Cautions/Disposals
2019	110
2020	160
2021	80
2022	60
2023	55
2024	50
2025	20 (to date)

Table A4: Drug Seizures

Year	Drug Seizures
2019	95
2020	100
2021	105
2022	80
2023	85
2024	140

2025	65 (to date)
------	--------------

Table A5: Incidents Attended

Year	Incidents Attended
2019	7,500
2020	10,200
2021	8,000
2022	6,200
2023	5,500
2024	5,300
2025	2,400 (to date)

Table A6: Total Hours Worked

Year	Hours Worked
2019	46,000
2020	64,200
2021	52,000
2022	39,000
2023	32,800
2024	32,100
2025	15,000 (to date)

Table A7: Active Special Constables

Year	Active Specials
2019	160
2020	165
2021	170
2022	140
2023	110
2024	95
2025	89

Appendix B: Confidentiality and Data Protection Statement

All internal South Wales Police (SWP) data used in this dissertation was anonymised and presented in aggregate form. No individual officer, division, or identifiable detail has been disclosed.

Informal reflections were gathered through voluntary, off-the-record conversations with serving or former Special Constables and regular officers. No names, ranks, or personal identifiers were recorded. Instead, I summarised recurring themes in anonymised bullet points. These notes were kept securely and were not shared outside the scope of this dissertation.

This approach ensured full compliance with:

- South Wales Police confidentiality policies
- The College of Policing Code of Ethics (2014)
- University ethical approval requirements

Appendix C: Practitioner Reflection Notes (Anonymised)

The following bullet points summarise recurring themes raised in informal conversations with Specials and regular officers:

- Confidence gaps - Many Specials felt underprepared after initial training, particularly when deployed without structured mentoring.
- Lack of tutor constables - Several reported having no opportunity to shadow experienced officers, leading to hesitation on shift.
- Integration issues - Specials often felt like 'outsiders' when not introduced to teams or included in daily briefings.
- Positive deployment experiences - Warrant executions, large public events, and task-focused operations were seen as highly rewarding.
- Specialist skills - Some Specials progressed into roles carrying Taser, advanced driving, PSU, or method of entry, which increased motivation.
- Regular officer perceptions - Some regulars expressed confidence in committed Specials, while others questioned their reliability in high-risk incidents.
- Retention pressures - A number of Specials cited lack of support, poor integration, or work-life balance as reasons for leaving.