



# An evaluation of the MiniPolice project in Reading

*Primary schoolchildren's views, trusts and aspirations in the police*

July 2018<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To cite: Wong, B., Copsey-Blake, M., & Walters, T. (2018). An evaluation of the MiniPolice project in Reading. Reading: University of Reading & Thames Valley Police

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## **Foreword**



It is a great pleasure to receive analysis of the impact of our MiniPolice programme in Reading. The Thames Valley Police and Crime Plan contains a clear and evidence-based statement “police legitimacy and compliance with the law can be enhanced by improving the quality of everyday officer-citizen relationships”.

The Police and Crime Commissioner, Anthony Stansfeld, goes on to state “I applaud any initiative that brings officers into non-confrontational contact with the younger community”.

In support of this the Chief Constable, Francis Habgood QPM, has given a commitment to “Working together to build stronger, more resilient communities”. It is against this background that we launched our MiniPolice programme; we believed that it had the potential to deliver on these perspectives and provide an opportunity for a greater level of engagement from our neighbourhood policing teams in schools than previously available.

I have been very impressed at the commitment given to this programme by the MiniPolice themselves, and by their teachers, their families, my staff, and the wider community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those involved, including the evaluation team at the University of Reading.

**Superintendent Stan Gilmour  
LPA Commander – Reading**

Watch a video summary of this evaluation here:  
<https://youtu.be/I6leTHjifUs>

## **Executive summary**

The MiniPolice project aims to offer primary schoolchildren (aged 9-11) first-hand experiences and engagements with their local community to develop a stronger sense of citizenship and responsibility, as well as a greater understanding of police work. This report is an evaluation of the MiniPolice project in Reading, focusing on three cohorts of MiniPolice students (n=60) in *Katesgrove* and *Alfred Sutton* primary schools.

We found that young people are generally positive and trusting of the police. Yet, popular representations of the police, especially in movies and the news, can be narrow or even negative, which can limit children's understanding. Through their engagement in the MiniPolice, students seem to command a richer disposition around community responsibility, citizenship and their knowledge of the police, with a greater recognition and appreciation of police work. MiniPolice officers appear to be proud of their role and identity as ambassadors of their school, local community and the police. They value the MiniPolice programme as a learning opportunity outside of the classroom. Whilst aspirations to work in the police remain modest, their participation in the MiniPolice have undoubtedly developed their personal acumen, community identity, civic responsibility and citizenship.

MiniPolice parents agreed that regular communications with and exposures to the police have improved their views and trusts of the police, who are now considered more approachable. The initiative also seems to have promoted family conversation, learning and practice about citizenship. The schools (including SPOCs) and police officers involved consider the programme a success and our evaluation, drawing on a range of views and experiences, has enabled us to offer some insights into the potential opportunities and challenges that could be considered going forward, especially in the expansion of the project across Thames Valley Police (TVP) regions. We make five recommendations:

1. The current recruitment procedures in the selection of the MiniPolice officers should be retained. Whilst we acknowledge the potential benefits of a whole year group engagement, there are also pragmatic challenges.
2. There is a potential for the school to consider a stronger integration of the activities of the MiniPolice into the curriculum. Lessons could be provided on pertinent topics and the learning disseminated to other students via the MiniPolice officers.
3. We suggest that the TVP (or schools) could offer certification for MiniPolice students at the end of their tenures, akin to a 'graduation' ceremony.
4. We believe there is scope for the TVP and schools to explore the possibility of drawing sponsorship from local communities or organisation, including the University, as part of any plans for future expansion.
5. The TVP could make greater use of existing volunteers working with the police. In particular, the TVP could explore the possibility of involving Volunteering Police Cadets (VPC) to support the running and expansion of the MiniPolice programme.

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## **1. Introduction**

The MiniPolice project initiated in the Durham Constabulary<sup>3</sup>, with the aim to provide 'a fun and interactive volunteering opportunity for 9 to 11-year-old children ... through participation in community engagement events'. The main objective is 'to introduce these children to a positive experience of policing and to get them involved in the local community' (see Durham Agency Against Crime, DAAC). The programme was set up to provide young people the opportunity to gain an interest in the police, and subsequently support force priorities, through participation in community engagement events. Children who become part of the programme help to tackle local issues as highlighted by their own communities. By assisting the police service and partner agencies, they can take away with them that ownership of responding to local issues and take pride in the community they live in. In other words, MiniPolice aims to offer participants valuable experiences and engagements with their local community to develop a stronger sense of citizenship and responsibility. An intrinsic goal, understandably, is to promote the work of the police, as an aspiration for a future career, as well as contributing to 'lower future demands' of the police through stronger civic engagement and participation.

The programme is becoming national, with around 10 police forces currently trialling the scheme, including Thames Valley Police, where a small number of Reading primary schools have been engaged since May 2017. The project addresses a range of priorities for the police and wider community. These include:

- To ensure children's first contact with the police as an organisation is positive and exciting and has the ability to shape their attitude in the future.
- Increase trust between officers and families within the community, as well as directly with the teachers/school and the young people themselves.
- Strengthen the link between the police, schools and local area.
- Offer pupils a unique and extra-curricular activity without any additional budgeting for the school.
- To reach different areas of society, particularly areas which have been traditionally difficult to reach, including those with social deprivation, low employment, high crime and those which are culturally diverse.

This report is an evaluation of the MiniPolice project in Reading. We aim to explore:

- 1) The extent to which the MiniPolice project shapes children's trust, perception and aspiration in the police.
- 2) The views and experiences of adult stakeholders in the MiniPolice project (e.g., parents, teachers/school liaisons, the officers).
- 3) The opportunities and challenges to upscale the MiniPolice project in Reading and Thames Valley Police regions more generally.

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<sup>3</sup> The MiniPolice project was created & developed by PC Craig Johnson, @MinipoliceR

## **2. The MiniPolice in Reading**

The importance of positive encounters between police and young people remains at the forefront of policing agendas and the policies and practices promoted by politicians. As the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPGC) noted in their report on building relationships between children and the police: ‘children’s first encounter with police officers can have a lasting effect on how they view them as adults’ (2014, p. 2). One of the recommendations of the report was to encourage police forces to work with the National Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) to extend the reach of the VPC programme to a greater number of children and young people, including through a junior programme for 10-13 year olds.

In the Reading provisions, MiniPolice students will help with ‘events such as community speed watch, representing the force at community events and have the opportunity to gain an insight into the work of the police... such as visiting the police dog kennels’ (see [news.reading.gov.uk/MiniPolice](http://news.reading.gov.uk/MiniPolice)). The aim is to build and develop young people’s trust, understanding and (potentially) aspirations in the police. MiniPolice students are considered to be ambassadors of their school, as well as the MiniPolice programme, where it is hoped that they will ‘spread the word among their school friends about the work they are involved in, helping to build relationships between the force and children’ (*ibid.*). In other words, whilst MiniPolice students are the direct beneficiaries of the project, it is hoped that other pupils in the class will also profit from the schools’ greater exposure to and engagement with their local police.

### *2.1 The pilot schools*

Launched by PC Laura Wilson, three primary schools in Reading were selected for the trial:

- *New Town* (small school with one class per year group)
- *Park Lane Junior* (medium school with two classes per year group)
- *Katesgrove* (largest school in Reading with at least three classes per year group)

The decision to select the above schools was based on a number of factors. These included the diversity of the schools – all schools were selected in areas of Reading which are ethnically diverse, and where a variety of religions are practiced and languages spoken. The schools selected also had a relatively large number of Gypsy Roman Traveller (GRT) students and it was hoped that with MiniPolice selected in these schools, opportunities will arise to engage with this particular community – a long term and expected ongoing force priority. These schools were also selected due to the previous partnership work with PCSO’s who have highlighted the schools as having a firm grounding in the local community and showing willingness to engage with police and partner agencies. Finally, these schools were identified as having a large number of pupils with special education/social needs who were likely to especially benefit from involvement.

Following the selection of schools, a contract setting out the responsibilities of both TVP and the schools involved were signed by a Specific Point of Contact (SPOC) for each school. A short presentation was then provided to Year 5 classes at the schools on the MiniPolice initiative. Pupils interested in being a MiniPolice officer were asked to submit a short

application detailing their interest in the initiative and what they could bring to the role. These were assessed by the SPOC and the PCSOs/PCs. Pupils who were successfully shortlisted were then invited for a short interview. According to one SPOC, a number of considerations were taken into account, including the quality of application, school attendance, whether the child was on pupil premium, the child's effort at school, whether there were any family/home issues and whether the programme could have an disproportionate impact on the individual child – for example, due to lack of opportunity or lack of confidence. In other words, the selection of the MiniPolice students included considerations of diversity in relation to social and economic factors. As revisited in section 6.3, although SPOCs recognised the possible benefits associated to involving a larger group of younger people in the programme, the impact on the young people and the wider benefits were not as likely to be as powerful, feasible nor as long-lasting in this format.

As such, 20 MiniPolice students were selected for each school. The MiniPolice pilot was designed to ensure the students had an opportunity to take part in 3 different categories of events. These include:

1. A community engagement event (e.g. a Community Speedwatch)
2. A force-led event, representing TVP (e.g. Remembrance parade)
3. A reward event (e.g. a visit to Sulhampstead to visit the police dogs)

It was expected that pupils at each school would take part in at least one of all the categories of events per term. Each cohort of MiniPolice students in Reading is enrolled for three academic terms, starting in the summer term of Year 5 and concludes in the Spring of Year 6. The aim is to provide at least three events per term, in recognition of the importance of prolonged and continuous engagement.

## *2.2 Methodology of the evaluation*

Initiated by PC Tom Walters in late 2017, Dr Billy Wong from the University of Reading was invited to develop and lead an evaluation of the MiniPolice pilot project in Reading, with Meggie Copsey-Blake joining as a student researcher funded for six weeks by the University's 'Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme'. Data collection began in February 2018 and concluded in July 2018<sup>4</sup>.

This evaluation report draws on data from three cohorts of MiniPolice students (60 students in total, with 20 students in each cohort): two from Katesgrove and one from Alfred Sutton primary schools – two of the largest primary schools in the area. Alfred Sutton joined the pilot in May 2018 as one of the newest MiniPolice schools in Reading.

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<sup>4</sup> We are aware that this evaluation has limitations. In particular, the data collected could be more substantial, especially the comparison of student data before and after taking part in the MiniPolice. However, this evaluation work was largely unfunded. Ideally, the evaluation would also start at the beginning of the MiniPolice pilot in Reading, in May 2017. The conclusion of this evaluation coincides with the departure of Tom in the police force. As such, Tom's involvement in this evaluation and his critical and constructive reflections of the MiniPolice project is highly valuable.

We spoke to and observed one cohort of students from these two primary schools, who were at the beginning of their MiniPolice tenures (May 2018-present), as well as the first cohort who just completed their journey as a MiniPolice officer (May 2017-April 2018). More specifically, we conducted 5 focus groups with MiniPolice students (n=22), as well as 2 focus groups with non-MiniPolice students (n=10) for comparison. Students were asked to discuss and reflect their views and understanding of the police, especially around trust. We then probed discussions on the representation and diversity of the force. MiniPolice students also recounted their experiences of participating in the various activities of the project.

We also interviewed the ‘School Point of Contact’ (SPOC, n=2) for their views and experiences of working, organising and liaising with the demands of the MiniPolice project, as well as 8 parental interviews of MiniPolice students, for added insights into the supportive role and influence of family members in young people’s participation in the MiniPolice project. The officers involved (n=2) in the MiniPolice also offered their reflective accounts of their experiences in their roles. Furthermore, we conducted in-depth participant observation of 7 MiniPolice events, which provided rich descriptions of student interactions, engagements, behaviours and impromptu comments during these activities. Each observation lasted at least an hour, with over 15,000 words in field notes.

We also collected survey data from Year 6 students in April 2018, which included 61 responses<sup>5</sup>, with MiniPolice and non-MiniPolice participants from the first cohort of the project which started in May 2017. Of the surveys completed, 45 self-selected as a non-police student whilst 16 pupils categorised themselves as a MiniPolice officer. The questionnaire asked students to rate statements in relation to their trust, confidence, perceptions and aspirations in the police. The questionnaire was inspired by the Greater Manchester Police’s ‘Young people’s police and crime study’ in 2014, which included 25 items. We adopted some of these items but included new statements to gauge possible family viewpoints. The questionnaire was deliberately short for easier completion (see Appendix 1).

A brief review of existing research into young people’s trust and perceptions in the police is presented below, followed by the findings, which is explored in three key themes (section 4, 5 and 6). We also include a short reflection of the police officers in the MiniPolice project before we conclude with our overall evaluation of the project. Selected stories on the activities MiniPolice students undertook is presented to appreciate the dynamics of these events.

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<sup>5</sup> We also collected another 71 responses from Year 5 students in June 2018, which is designed for comparative use in the future after the current Year 5 cohort of MiniPolice concludes their tenures.

### **3. A brief review of the literature**

Improving police-youth relations has gained more prominence in recent years as research suggests it will increase public engagement, and improve young people's perceptions, trusts and aspirations in the police (Flexon, Lurigio & Greenleaf, 2009; Pepper & Silvestri, 2016; Walmsley, 2015). In their inquiry into young people, trust and the police, the APPGC (2014, p. 9) also reported that 'children often first come into contact with the police in 'crisis situations' and at the time of producing their report, stated there 'appeared to be a lack of opportunities for children to meet and communicate with the police in positive, non-conflict environments'.

Studies of procedural justice and police legitimacy suggest young people's perceptions of the police are largely rooted from experience (Clayman & Skinns, 2012; Crawford, 2009; Gau, 2010; Murphy, 2013; Norman, 2009). According to Hinds (2007), procedurally just police-youth interactions will improve attitudes towards police legitimacy and subsequently, increase compliance with laws and commitment to social norms. Hinds describes the maturation process during adolescence as the period where 'social norms and values, including perceptions of law enforcement and legal institutions, are challenged and subject to change'. She argues that this is because personal experiences, as well as the 'opinions and beliefs of friends, peers and others in the wider community', exert a greater impact on young people's perceptions than their families (p. 196). It is therefore necessary to explore pre-existing research into young people's experiences with the police and the beliefs they share with others, in order to improve police-youth relations.

Clayman & Skinns (2012) found young people are reluctant to cooperate with the police as a result of unfair police-youth interactions. Their study was motivated by the homicide investigations involving victims and suspects aged under 20 years old; in particular, the murder of 15-year-old Adam Regis, who was stabbed in the chest in March 2007 in East London. No witnesses came forward at the time of the murder enquiry, illustrating young people's reluctance to cooperate with the police, or in the words of the authors, 'to snitch'. The authors conducted 24 interviews with young people between the ages of 13 and 15; and two focus groups, one with teachers, and another with police officers and youth workers from the borough. They found that interviewees did not understand the reasoning for stop-and-searches, as it was rarely explained to them. This, along with perceived sarcastic responses from police officers, left them feeling criminalised and unjustly targeted. When asked what could be done to improve cooperation with the police, participants felt there should be more input from police officers with young people in groups or one-to-one, as well as clear communication about law enforcement at the right level.

Crawford (2009) also draws on young people's attitudes towards antisocial behaviour legislation in her study of criminalising sociability. Focusing on the impact of dispersal orders, she found they 'exacerbate fragile police-youth relations and encourage stigmatization, social exclusion and unfair treatment among local young people' (p. 13). Participants also reported feeling labelled as 'trouble makers', and as though they were judged for their clothes and demeanour. Crawford concludes that the nature of the steps taken to combat antisocial behaviour is usually considered antisocial in itself. Similarly, Norman (2009) found in her study of young people's perceptions of the police that participants felt labelled as a 'problem' because they felt they were persistently assumed as

'guilty' by police officers. Stop-and-searches were perceived as an abuse of power, and attitudes towards dispersal orders were generally negative because participants felt unsafe in the areas they had been dispersed. The effect of procedural justice on youth policing is also explored by Murphy (2013). He found young people are more sensitive to procedural justice than adults and considers age group to mediate the likelihood that the public will cooperate with the police. He therefore considers procedural justice a 'useful tool for police to use when dealing with youth', rather than 'high rates of arrest, use of force interactions and disproportionate contact' that has often been reported (p. 71).

Other studies have found young people's perceptions of the police to be affected by social influences. Cook et al. (2009) found juveniles to have a more negative view of the police than their adult counterparts. They describe police contact as significantly related to youth attitudes and those who had been arrested, had less positive views of the police. They therefore consider peer pressure as a factor in young people's participation in antisocial behaviour. They found the behaviour of 11 to 14-year-olds was more often influenced by their peers than their parents. However, after four years, they found parental influence increased. Social influences are also explored by Clayman & Skinns (2012), who found young people are reluctant to engage with the police because they fear repercussions for those close to them. During interviews, participants agreed that they did not cooperate with the police unless it involved a family member or if they were guaranteed anonymity; they abided by 'the code of silence', which deters people from cooperating with the police because it is viewed as socially unacceptable (Elster, 1995 cited in Clayman & Skinns, 2012). The authors also found that participants cooperate with friends and family before turning to the police, and rather look up to their elder relatives. In the US, Flexon, Lurigio and Greenleaf (2009) explored how social factors influence trust in the police among Chicago juveniles. They found that youths who aspired to be like their fathers rated police higher on dependability than those who did not. The authors emphasise that police officers are the 'first and only contact that young people have with the juvenile justice system' (p. 188); their association with the law leaves a lasting impression on how youths perceive the legal authorities. The authors suggest that negative attitudes towards the police 'weaken youths' ties to school and strengthen their ties to gangs' (p. 188).

Procedurally just police-youth interactions and early, educational intervention with social groups is therefore necessary to improve youth perceptions. In the UK, Pepper and Silvestri (2016) explore the Volunteer Police Cadet (VPC) Programme, run by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), and its capacity to improve police-youth relations. The VPC is a 'fully inclusive uniformed youth group' and encourages, in particular, young people who feel disadvantaged as a result of crime or social exclusion (see <https://vpc.police.uk/>). The programme is split into two age groups, 10 to 13-year-olds and 13 to 18-year-olds. A few of its aims are to form new friendships among the cadets, support the community through volunteering and social action projects, and provide an insight into British policing. Pepper and Silvestri found that the VPC enhanced personal development, as well as positive perceptions of the police. Cadets reported an increased sense of belonging, especially when family life was strained; they also referred to each other and staff as family. This level of membership exerts a sense of discipline and structure, and cadets reported it had been beneficial in terms of their behaviour. Positive police-youth interactions therefore improve perceptions of police legitimacy; they increase cadets' exposure to procedurally just actions

and, subsequently, improve their attitudes towards law enforcement. Similarly, Norman (2009) explores the Safer Neighbourhood (SN) Programme, also run by the MPS. SN has developed a ‘customer-led’ approach and therefore relies on the public to effectively engage with the community to identify the crimes and disorders that are important to them. The study investigates young people’s perceptions of the police in order to understand ‘how the MPS currently engage with young people; what informs young peoples’ perceptions of the police; and, what constitutes effective engagement to benefit the delivery of policing young people in London’ (p. 366). The authors emphasise the importance of having a consistent approach from all police officers, so to demonstrate positive engagement through both formal and informal contacts. They conclude that this will likely improve young people’s perceptions of the police as a whole, as opposed to a few individual officers. Walmsley (2015) also investigates the impact of positive engagement on police-youth relations by evaluating the Police and Young People Together (PYPT) project in Bristol. The PYPT presents an opportunity for PCSOs to work with young people in order to build trust and improve their relationships in schools. The study involved semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a small sample of young people, from various areas in England. Participants reported higher levels of trust in the police and PCSOs who were based at their school, and also described them more positively than police officers based elsewhere. Fun, informal conversations and interpersonal activities were similarly reported to improve perceptions of the police, and those involved with the project demonstrated lower levels of antisocial behaviour.

Police-led initiatives therefore expose young people to procedurally just policing, as well as positive police engagement with the wider community. This therefore improves perceptions, trusts and aspirations in the police, and increases the likelihood of effective public engagement. Sections 4, 5 and 5 below present the findings of our evaluation.

#### **4. Young people's trust and perceptions of the police**

The MiniPolice project aims to enrich young people's trust, perception and aspiration in the police. Whilst not every child is involved as a MiniPolice, it is hoped that their experiences will radiate to others in the classroom.

Our survey data seem to support this. For example, when asked, 'I have confidence in the police in my local area', 43.75% of MiniPolice respondents 'Strongly Agreed' compared to 40% of Non-MiniPolice pupils. Interestingly, a higher proportion of Non-MiniPolice 'Agreed' (46.67 %) in comparison to the MiniPolice (31.25 %), which means, overall, 75% MiniPolice students agreed/strongly agreed with the statement and a higher percentage of 86.67% for Non-MiniPolice students (see [Appendix 2](#) for full details of all responses). Such positive views from young people about the police is consistent with existing studies (Pepper & Silvestri, 2016).

Our conversations with MiniPolice students also revealed overwhelmingly positive views about the work of the police. Most MiniPolice students reflected on their better knowledge and understanding of the breadth of policing, beyond their previous belief (which were popularly held by non-MiniPolice students) that being a police officer means 'chasing robbers' and 'arresting people', or that police presence necessarily constitutes trouble, something bad and is therefore best avoided. MiniPolice students seem to have a great respect for the police, probably in recognitions of the demands, dangers, dedications and challenges of the role.

As part of the emergency service, our MiniPolice students appreciate that being a police officer is not easy ('it's a very hard job, I think it takes a lot of time, training and stuff like that') and that it can entail unfriendly and unstable working hours ('it could be one o'clock in the afternoon, it could be midnight') and conditions ('risking your life for someone and you can die'). Being in the police is therefore a big commitment, so much so that one student believed that the police will 'still try and solve the problem even if... something happened out of work'. In other words, the role does not always have an 'off' switch, which means, as one student put it, 'they have to sacrifice their family, all their love and stuff'. As another MiniPolice student summarises:

[The police] have got a lot of responsibility on their shoulders and when they are doing the job they have like duties [and] people are expecting a lot of things [from] a police officer so it is a hard job.

One of these responsibilities, according to one student, is to 'teach children things you should do in life so when they grow up they will be wise and mature'. This could mean, as discussed separately by another student, 'if a crime is happening or if you are worried about something that is happening, you can always like tell them [the police] and they will try their best to solve it and not just leave it undone'. It is interesting to note of the educational role of the police being mentioned here, given these students are participants in the MiniPolice project. These comments suggest that children seem to value police input as part of their life learning in citizenship and responsibility. It is also no surprise that students feel warmer towards the police when there are regular contacts or communications. One MiniPolice student reflected that:

By seeing what they [the police] are doing and seeing they are doing the right thing, it gives you more confidence and like, not really confidence but believing they are trustworthy.

Survey data also seem to suggest that MiniPolice respondents feel they have a greater understanding of the police and the role of police officers. A larger proportion of MiniPolice students 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'I feel I know a lot about the different type of work of the police' in comparison with Non-MiniPolice students (43.75% vs 24.44%).

In children's perceptions of the police, it is almost inevitable that their views, images and imaginations of the police are influenced by the media, including news channels, movies and social media. In movies, portrayals of the police are often more dynamic, dramatic and ambiguous than other sectors of the emergency services, such as the ambulance services or the fire brigade (whom, arguably, are mostly presented in a positive or heroic light). The police, however, can be represented as 'the good guy' and 'the bad guy', and there are certainly movies where the police are scripted as dishonest and shady. This is also recognised by some MiniPolice parents. Beyond the theatres, students are also exposed to the news, which has highlighted, especially from the US, episodes of police failures, discrimination and brutality. One MiniPolice student admitted that 'I don't trust the police... all the time' and referenced a programme they watched which apparently documented a housebreak even though the family was reassured by the police that 'they will look after the house' during their holiday. While the accuracy of this story is questionable, this account highlights the power of the media in shaping public views, including those of young people.

It is not difficult, therefore, to anticipate that perceptions and trusts in the police may start at a negative or suspicious, rather than a neutral or even positive, point. Perhaps more concerning, negative views rarely reflect personal experiences, but rather, constructed through hearsay and media representations. For example:

It is not like I have experienced this, but sometimes I have this feeling that if people have given information to the police and... the police haven't done what they expected from the police they will do... [then] they may then start thinking like they did not take enough action towards the problem being done.

Similarly, the next excerpt is illustrative of these presumptions, however, as our student explains, a better understanding of the police and a personal connection with police officers can potentially break down negative perceptions of the police:

- STUDENT1: Nowadays, you don't really get the impression of a good police officer, because all you know is that they arrest people and sometimes have to shoot people, you don't know what it is like to be a police officer because you don't see the good side, and that is why most people don't like being a police officer.
- ALL: [Murmuring of agreement]
- STUDENT1: (continue) But if you actually get to know the police officers, you see a good side and you know they help a lot of people.

Similar conversations were made in other student focus groups, where there seems to be a shared belief that police actions are not always reasonable or justified ('I don't think it happens often but it does happen'). Despite these challenges, when our students were asked about their own trust in the police, the general response was positive:

STUDENT1: Yes, I do generally trust them because I think they are an important part of the community. Most of them, the majority of them do the right thing.

INTERVIEWER: Why are they an important part of the community do you think?

STUDENT1: Because they keep people safe in certain types of jobs, and yes, they do good things to help people.

As already mentioned, the MiniPolice project aims to reduce barriers and increase trust between young people and the police. One aim of the programme is to ensure that the police is approachable to young people. Our survey data suggests that MiniPolice participants are less likely to 'view the police as scary or aggressive' (75% vs 51.11%, who strongly disagreed/disagreed) than Non-MiniPolice students. Whilst 51.11% is just over half among the Non-MiniPolice respondents, the APPGC (2014, p. 8-9) reported that the campaign group, StopWatch from London, found 'when we spoke to a group of under-12s they were saying that when the police approach them, their heart starts beating fast and they can't breathe because they don't know what they're going to do to them'. Our focus group data suggest that the MiniPolice programme provides an opportunity for those involved to see a different side to the police, as well as to develop their trust and appreciations of the breadth of police work.

In summary, young people generally see the police as authoritative and trustworthy figures. However, these constructions are sometimes tainted by media stories and movies, which include negative representations of the police. Whilst it is difficult to confidently ascertain or isolate any direct impact of the MiniPolice project on participants' perceptions and trusts in the police, our data suggest that MiniPolice students do command a broad understanding of police work and that their regular encounters with a police officer seem to be supporting their development as responsible young citizens.

#### Introduction session at Katesgrove

*Field observation by Meggie*

Soon after arriving at Katesgrove and meeting PC Tom Walters and SPOC Bob Burrowes, Tom heard on his radio that there was a man on the run outside the school. He jumped up and hurried downstairs. I observed him from the window of the staff room running away from the school towards a nearby residential area. Tom was gone for around twenty to thirty minutes.

When Tom arrived back, Bob collected the MiniPolice pupils from their classes. A male student, Tyrone, immediately asked Tom if he was hot. Tom explained that he had to run to catch a criminal, before kickstarting the input by asking the MiniPolice to take it in turns to say their names. A female student, Liola, was too shy to answer. In response, Tom

introduced himself and repeated his question, ‘what’s your name?’. Liola’s friend then answered for her. Tom softened his tone and said, ‘Hi Liola, nice to meet you’. He then asked the next pupil her name.

During the presentation, Tom asked the children a series of questions about their thoughts of the police and what they do, as well as their roles as MiniPolice students. He then referred to the code of conduct, asking the group what they thought the word ‘leadership’ meant, followed by ‘fairness’ and ‘respect’. He skipped over ‘integrity’ but asked the pupils about their thoughts on ‘selflessness’. They found this difficult to define, so Tom used the community-based activities, such as speed check awareness and litter picking, as examples of being selfless because they are in the best interest of others.

After the talk, Tom informed the children that they should ‘be proud because this [MiniPolice initiative] is something that is going on around the country’. I observed Liola acting excited with her friend, before building up the courage to raise her hand and ask a question. Bob then led the children back to their classes and we waited by the playground.

Tom approached a male pupil in Year Six, who was a member of the MiniPolice last year. He claimed that he witnessed Tom’s chase earlier that day. I finally asked Tom how he felt about the session. Tom explained, ‘the students seem like a really nice group’ and that it was encouraging to see those pupils, who were too shy to contribute their names at the beginning of the talk, ‘later raising their hands and speaking confidently’.

## **5. Is police me?**

Whilst our students appear to construct the police as a noble and admirable profession, these attributes can also discourage children to develop aspirations in the police. When asked to talk about the prospect of themselves working in the police, few students considered it as viable. One student did say, ‘I think I would want to be a police officer because that feeling when you help somebody would be really good’. However, dominant perceptions of the police as a difficult, dangerous and demanding job, as mentioned earlier, have meant that being a police officer is not readily seen as for ‘people like me’. One student admitted that ‘I am not sure to be honest because it might be dangerous’ before jokingly adding ‘I don’t want to get killed.’

While the ongoing ‘beginner’ MiniPolice students were very enthusiastic about the prospect of becoming a police officer, especially after just two events, the data from the first cohort of MiniPolice students seems to offer a more realistic assessment of their aspirations. Some of these ‘experienced’ MiniPolice students did not rule out working for the police, albeit *after* they have accomplished their career goals, such as in law, medicine or business. These students do not aspire to be a police officer, but rather, as one student said, ‘I would also like to be a Special [Constable] because I would like to have another job as well’. The prospect of being a Special was appealing to a few MiniPolice students, who expressed an interest to support their local community in their later lives, but without the need to forgo their careers. Similarly, another student was keen to continue some form of police work after MiniPolice, possibly as a Volunteer Police Cadet (VPC), during compulsory education, before ‘I would leave it because my dream is to be a doctor, so I will fulfil my dream’. With an increased understanding of the police service and a greater knowledge of the different roles available, our data suggest that some MiniPolice participants are seriously considering some form of role within the police, even though 50% of MiniPolice survey respondents were unsure about ‘joining the police in the future’ as shown by them ‘neither agreeing nor disagreeing’.

Yet, we note that when the question, ‘who wants to be a police officer?’, was also asked to one MiniPolice cohort during a visit to a local fire station, 11 out of 19 raised their hands, which was one less than those who wanted to be a firefighter. Of course, we recognise these ‘in the moment’ views are likely to be inflated and temporary, but nonetheless a valuable experience for children to better understand the work of the emergency services. It is possible that events such as this will represent a ‘key moment’ for children and contribute to the formation of their future aspirations.

From our focus groups, we found evidence to suggest that being a police officer commands less status (or symbolic capital) than other, high-earning careers. Our students have attributed their parents as key influencers. Below are excerpts from two MiniPolice students:

STUDENT1: I actually want to be a doctor when I am older because it is my mum and dad’s wish to be but I don’t know why I don’t want to be a police officer but it is just a feeling I don’t want to be one.

STUDENT2: For me personally it is about my mum and dad, they want me to have like err, they want me to be like a high person, and they want me to be and I don't think err they will be very impressed if I was to become a policeman.

The views above not only highlight the parental and family influence on future decisions surrounding career choices, but it also underlines the reduced standing of the police as a profession/occupation in some communities.

In our conversations with parents, they were relatively open about the prospects of their children working in the police. A few said they have reservations, with concerns such as safety as well as financial returns, but most agreed that it is ultimately their children's choice ('if he does not have any concerns, I do not have any concerns'). Whilst there are risks working in the police, one parent said that 'I think every job has a risk to some extent'. Like students, parents also considered the police to be a 'very responsible job' that demands one to be 'physically and mentally active all the time', as well as having 'no holidays, no personal life'. In other words, it is also seen as a challenging job. Given parents play a central role in shaping children's views, knowledge and perceptions of the world, it is important to have the parents on-board in these outreach activities. As we elaborate in section 6.2, parents are overwhelmingly positive about the MiniPolice project.

However, our survey data with MiniPolice and Non-MiniPolice students revealed an unexpected pattern on the statement, 'My Family and I Talk About the Work of the Police'. Although only 29% of Non-MiniPolice students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, just 19% of MiniPolice students agreed that they talk with their family about police work. Whilst it is an aspiration of the MiniPolice project to increase home discussions of policing and civic responsibility, it is possible that conversations about MiniPolice activities are not considered to be 'the work of the police'. Data from our focus group and parental interviews seem to offer a different account where MiniPolice students do talk about police work at home (see section 6.2 on parents).

To better understand students' identification with the police, we also explored briefly children's views of the police under the lenses of gender and ethnicity, in recognition of the dominant profile of a police officer as being a white male. Data from [police.uk](#) (2017) shows that females and ethnic minorities are proportionally underrepresented in Thames Valley Police, compared to Thames Valley's population, especially at the higher ranks.

While our students, as typical of young people, did offer egalitarian views about being a police officer, especially in relation to gender ('it is a job that is open to all genders really'), there seems to be an underlying recognition that the default sex of a police officer is male. These views, unsurprisingly, may also reflect traditional constructions of female roles where, as one student states, 'women have a lot of time to take care of their children and things', whilst another student reflected that:

Most police officers I have seen [are male], in my whole life time, I have only seen a few police officers that are girls, and everywhere I go, there is always a police officer walking and it is always a man.

While the involvement of female police officers in the MiniPolice project does provide our students with a reference point or even a role model, our MiniPolice students generally recognise that ‘there are more men in the police than women’. That said, some students also shared their experiences of seeing a gender-balanced police force, with one stating that ‘I see a lot of female officers around town, I also see males but I mostly see females’. Another student also made a comparison to football and how female footballers are now on the rise and anticipated the same for female police officers.

Our initial probe into students’ views of racial representation in the police proved more difficult than gender, simply because the term is more complex. Once an understanding is established, their views are mixed. On the one hand, we had admission that ‘I don’t actually see many police from non-white backgrounds, most of them are white’. On the other hand, some students were keen to point out that one should ‘not judge a book by its cover, people should not be judged by their skin colour’. As with gender, one student stated that:

There isn’t much difference if you are white or not, but you can be the police if you really want to, if it is your dream and you train hard, you could be anything.

It is important that perceptions of and identifications with the police are not seen as exclusive or a barrier for any gender, ethnicity and backgrounds. While MiniPolice students are chosen to be in the MiniPolice project in an application process where candidates must write a short supporting statement to explain their interest in the police, we are pleased to report that students in the MiniPolice project come from a diverse range of backgrounds, across gender, ethnicity as well as recipients of the pupil premium. We emphasise that MiniPolice students seem to take extra pride in their role because it was competitive selection process (see [section 6.1](#)).

<b>Speed check awareness at Alfred Sutton</b>
<i>Field observation by Meggie</i>
All those involved with the MiniPolice initiative (the MiniPolice students; myself; PCSO Kevin Willis; PCSO Hannah Swaine; SPOC June Mills; and a male photographer from the local newspaper, ‘Reading Chronicle’) made our way to the reception foyer. The MiniPolice appeared excited, as did Alfred Sutton’s younger pupils, who were fervently knocking on the glass and waving through their classroom windows. Students from years two and below were observed approaching members of the MP, all keen to know about their uniform and what they were doing. One of the younger students ran across the playground to see June. She was then approached by Kev, who asked, ‘alright Deena?’. To our amusement, she responded by giggling and asking, ‘why have you not got your hat on?’.

Kev began the session by explaining the speech check activity to the MiniPolice students. He emphasised the importance of wearing police uniform and encouraged the children to stay on their best behaviour, because they were ‘about to represent the Thames Valley Police, as well as their school’. The children seemed happy about having this responsibility, with some of them whispering and smiling at each other. Kev and Hannah proceeded to show the children the speed equipment. Kev told the children that their participation in the MPI will

feature in the 'Chronicle' newspaper, and said it was important that they look after each other and the cameras (which, to the children's astonishment, cost around £1000 each).

Before leaving, Kev reinforced his point about representing the police and the school. When describing the speech check activity, he told the children it was just as important to work as individuals as it was in a team. He also explained the procedure to the female staff at reception, stating that those who were caught speeding would receive letters home to remind them to keep an eye on their speed, especially outside of a school. The children then got into groups of around 5 or 6 and left the school grounds, enthusiastic and ready for their turn on the speed cameras.

## **6. Views of stakeholders in the MiniPolice project**

The range of activities arranged as part of the MiniPolice project has offered students unprecedented insights into community responsibility and citizenship, as well as first-hand experiences of working with the police. These are made possible by the commitments of various stakeholders in the MiniPolice project, especially students, parents, the ‘School Point of Contact’ (SPOC) and the police officers involved. Of course, support from local partners (e.g., local court, fire station, mosque, police dog training centre, shopping centre) and other school staff are also critical in its success. Here, we primarily focus on the reflections of MiniPolice students and parents. Views from our MiniPolice SPOCs and police officers are also included.

### *6.1 MiniPolice students*

The MiniPolice project has provided our student participants a great sense of pride and prestige, which is partly due to the process of application for students to participate ('only 20 of us got picked and it was actually a very special feeling') as well as the MiniPolice uniform that children must wear during their engagement with project activities. Wearing the uniform in public certainly appears to support the perceptions of those involved in the programme that they were respected for being in the MiniPolice, part of Thames Valley Police and representing their school. For example, one group recalled their participation in the Remembrance Sunday Parade in Reading Town Centre, which evoked feelings of self-respect.

- STUDENT1: On Remembrance Sunday, it made me feel like being a police officer
- STUDENT2: I also felt very proud, like people look up to us and I felt really proud walking
- STUDENT3: Well it felt like people like respected you more, it is not like people don't respect you but there was also like a crowd of people and they let you go through - like see you in your uniform and let you go through.

As evidenced above, wearing the uniform and being seen to be respected whilst in the public space have prompted feelings of pride as well as the development of self-esteem and confidence. Several students mentioned that the MiniPolice project allowed them to learn outside of ‘normal’ lessons, including the opportunity to skip certain subjects. From the public, MiniPolice students appear to be valued by the community. As one student said:

We saw people like, go past and say to like police officers that were with us, ‘you are doing a very good thing, this is helping us in a really good way’ and we have had people go past and say ‘hi’.

Another MiniPolice student also spoke of the praise received from members of the public, especially during their litter picking activity:

I think they are like proud of us for doing it. Yeah because we are the residents of Katesgrove and even though we are meant to be doing like school, we are helping the community as well.

It is interesting to note that litter picking was mentioned by some students as their favourite activity, mainly due to the communal good of a clean neighbourhood for safety and the environment. One student said that 'I was really happy... we were keeping it safe because dogs and animals eat that rubbish and then they die'. Another conversation, extracted below, highlights the development of community citizenship among MiniPolice students:

- STUDENT1: Yeah, usually it is something like that [litter picking] I wouldn't like but when I realise that I am helping the community. I find it more fun.
- STUDENT2: Yeah, if you are with your friends doing it, it kind of makes it more fun not to do it on your own.
- STUDENT3: Mine was also litter picking because it is fun and because you are helping the local community and you feel proud because you are doing something good.
- STUDENT4: They, my mum thought it was really good that we were helping the community, but you probably see people like drop litter every day, like I know I have seen someone in this school drop their litter across the playground.
- STUDENT2: Helping the community is also very important because you are also helping yourself in a way, being a brighter person, doing the right thing when you are older.

The conversation above demonstrates the value MiniPolice students place on community responsibility, a key aim of the MiniPolice project. It appears that participation in activities in the local community has not only had an impact on MiniPolice students in terms of encouraging them to continue in civic participation as they grow older, but their participation also promotes the importance of inspiring others to become involved. While litter picking, admittedly, may not be the most exciting event in the MiniPolice calendar, the values of citizenship and community responsibility are clearly promoted and received. As one student said:

If someone is doing a bad thing... [I will want to] just tell them to stop it, because this would actually save the police officers' time.

Some MiniPolice activities are more specific to the work of the police or the emergency services, where students also learn about their roles and responsibilities as young citizens, such as 'the different things you could get arrested for' and information about securing one's own property (e.g., 'have really good locks... so [your bikes] could not get robbed easily').

When we asked our first cohort of MiniPolice to reflect on their experiences, the students were grateful for the opportunity. The substantive quotes below provide rich reflections of just how highly regarded the project was for these students:

- STUDENT1: I feel like I am doing a good job and I feel like a real police officer... I thought it was going to be a one day thing, but it is all the time, and I really really really like it and I am really grateful that it have got it, and

I feel really happy and I feel confident now because before I felt scared of the police officers , before, but now I feel confident to say 'hi hi', I really do and it has actually changed my personality, it has made me more confident and I like talking in front of people now that I am a MiniPolice.

STUDENT2: I think MiniPolice is a good thing because... we can teach other kids that are younger than we are now, help teach them and help them to understand how to be a better person if they were to do anything wrong in the future.

STUDENT3: I want to keep going with MiniPolice because it is the best, and because we actually get to help people and it is not just about ourselves, it is about keeping the town safe.

STUDENT4: The feeling you get when you have helped [others], that feeling always stays with you and then you feel really proud. Yes, and you feel if you don't do anything else in the future, at least you have done this, so it feels like a big pleasure to have that opportunity to feel like that.

Furthermore, there is a renewed sense of respect and appreciation for the work of the police:

STUDENT1: I now realise the police officers have a very special job because if we did not have police officers in this country it would be a free for all.

STUDENT2: I always thought being a police officer was all about arresting people, but what I now realise is that since I have been in MiniPolice, actually they go around and they try and see if everyone is safe, they put effort into it and make sure everyone is safe and if it does not go well they will keep going and keep trying.

STUDENT3: Now I feel that yeah, to support the police, I would say hi and stuff that will keep a smile on their face every day and smiling that would keep a police officer's day good.

Perhaps more importantly, the experiences of the MiniPolice project also seem to have provided students with the opportunity for personal development. The influence and impact varies among individuals, which revolves around a greater commitment to be a responsible citizen, for themselves but also for others:

STUDENT1: When I go to secondary, I would definitely like to spread the thought that you should not litter. You should not make the environment worse or don't do any crime when you get older.

- STUDENT2: I would like to do the alcohol thing again so if one of my family members did that, I can stop them and give all the reasons why they should not do it.
- STUDENT3: I would like to be someone who helps the community, even if it is for free so even if I don't make money, I don't actually really care, when I am free and I feel like going out, I would go and help other people.
- STUDENT4: I have seen, once my aunty, she errm, a crisp packet accidentally fell out of her pocket and I just threw it in the bin but I errm before, I usually don't do that, I used to just leave it.

## 6.2 Parents

Parents of MiniPolice students generally have a lot of praise for the project. A common theme which came out of the interviews with parents was their agreement, similar to MiniPolice students, that the programme supported the building of confidence in their child and that it improved their awareness of civic responsibility. Parents feel that the MiniPolice project has not only promoted community responsibility and citizenship within their children, but has also facilitated and encouraged family learning and dinner conversations. As one parent said about an event they attended:

It encourages the family to go as well and we saw things we would not see otherwise, I mean if it was just advertised, we would not have gone, but because of her [MiniPolice student] we felt the obligation to go and be part of it and learn a lot of things that we did not know... we all did go as part of a family.

Furthermore, participation in MiniPolice events has also allowed children to be 'experts' and in turn teach family members in light of their newly acquired knowledge:

The other day she went down to the court, and that experience on its own, seeing what the jury was like, and you know she came out with a lot of information, and we ourselves did not have it, she became a teacher to us to what she had learnt on the day.

Another parent also recalled that their son has 'educated' them about the importance of wearing their seatbelts correctly, or would risk of being 'reported to the police', by their child himself. This example implies that participation in the MiniPolice project can help to raise awareness of the law and the responsibilities of lawful citizens. In contrast to the student survey data as reported earlier (see section 5), our parents suggest that young people involved in the programme are indeed discussing their activities with families and friends, which highlights the wider impact of the MiniPolice project.

In general, MiniPolice parents agreed that the MiniPolice project has been a very positive experience for themselves as well as for their children, as it is seen to be supporting their children's personal development, especially confidence, with an increased awareness of their responsibilities as young citizens:

I think it has enhanced her general awareness of what is right and what is wrong and the responsibilities of us as citizens, what is expected of us and how we should behave, which she does when she is with her friends ... Little things like that you can see that ok she is really appreciating what she is learning from the MiniPolice sessions.

Leadership, relating to confidence, was a specific skill one parent felt had been developed through his daughter's participation in the programme.

Very much, I think it has developed her leadership skills as well because when she is with others she takes a leadership role and she tends to have a general awareness of what is wrong and what is right, I think now if she sees something she says look you know I think we need to get the police involved. I think it is part of her learning in how accessible the police are. It is not something that is just there.

Whilst again mentioning that the programme has developed his daughter's moral compass, it is positive to see that parents feel the programme can develop their children's ability to take a leadership role at a young age, at the same time having the confidence to raise awareness of an issue or contact the police if something is wrong.

The MiniPolice project has increased the presence of police officers in schools, which, over time, has become a more common sight for parents. The development of this familiarity seems to have promoted the image of the police as more approachable and friendly – another aim of the MiniPolice project, which are essential for the development of trust between local communities and the police.

Most parents were also positive and open about the prospect of their children working for the police, should the child wish to do so. Whilst the longer-term impact of the MiniPolice project on young people's police career aspirations cannot be determined yet, parents believe that the experience has promoted a more positive perception of the police, for themselves as well as their children. Commenting on her daughter:

I think she now has a friendlier and more admiring view towards the police itself which I think is, you know in the future, it might influence her decision in terms of job choices.

When asked for suggestions going forward for the MiniPolice project, one comment referred to the MiniPolice uniform, in that further attention could be given to a broader size range to ensure all MiniPolice students feel comfortable in their role. Furthermore, it was also suggested that MiniPolice could explore topics that are more 'difficult to talk about... as a parent', such as child abuse and shoplifting, where the message could potentially be more powerful if coming from the police. According to a MiniPolice parent:

I think the police officers are the best people to handle the society, how to face the problem, how to take up responsibilities, not to get frightened from the responsibilities, especially from the dangerous situations.

Here, the educational value of the police is recognised, especially on individual and community responsibility. Of the scheme itself, the feedback is generally positive in that the project should continue to build on its success, although the dilemma of being a selective programme is also acknowledged. As one parent commented:

I think they should include many more students, not just this limit. If they can come on a monthly basis or a quarterly basis to the school, they can take them in batches and show them how they are working. I think children are quite interested in how the police work. I think the uniform, how they work, how they move around, that fascinates the students.

It is worth noting that the MiniPolice format in Reading is consistent with other MiniPolice projects nationally, which adopts the model of a prolonged range of enrichment activities for the same small group of students. There are pros and cons of this approach, which is commented by our other adult stakeholders below. We conclude this section with two parental endorsements of the MiniPolice project:

I think it is a very brilliant idea... [for] creating that general awareness of what the police are for, what they do and being able to know as well what is going on within the community... and you are able to pick on things before they go too far and before they escalate.

Just to MiniPolice, thank you, it has brought a lot of changes to my son.

### *6.3 School Point of Contact (SPOC)*

The School Point of Contact (SPOC) is the key individual who represents each school in the MiniPolice project and their views, experiences and efforts are pivotal in understanding the opportunities, challenges and successes of the MiniPolice. Throughout this evaluation, we have had various informal conversations as well as a formal interview with the school liaisons about their thoughts on the MiniPolice project. The school liaisons at Katesgrove and Alfred Sutton were interviewed separately to reflect on their experiences of the MiniPolice initiative. Mr Bob Burrowes and Mrs June Mills described having similar roles: as pastoral/family support officers and safeguarding leads, they both work alongside members of the Thames Valley Police (TVP) to coordinate the MiniPolice project within their schools.

When asked about their prior knowledge of the MiniPolice, Bob explained he was an ex-police officer for 15 years, before starting this role at Katesgrove two years ago. He was therefore familiar with the MiniPolice and was eager to take part when he was contacted by TVP. June also described her enthusiasm for the MiniPolice project, having discussed it with PCSO Kevin Willis during one of his regular visits to Alfred Sutton. Bob and June said they discussed the MiniPolice project with the headteacher first, then the Year 5 teachers, before finally pitching the scheme to the Year 5 pupils during an assembly with the TVP. June emphasised the importance of presenting the MiniPolice effectively, using ‘pictures and noticeboards’ because ‘that’s where [pupils] will apply and stay committed’.

Both Bob and June highlighted not only the positive impacts of the MiniPolice on the school and community, but also on individuals. Bob said: ‘it is a good opportunity for young people’ and ‘it breaks down some stereotypes’; ‘[it also] combats challenging behaviour’ and ‘benefits those who come from less privileged backgrounds’. Bob continued, ‘pupils learn what is expected of them in terms of how they behave, present themselves and take on responsibility’. Similarly, June reported the positive effects of the MiniPolice on behaviour, which ‘has generally improved’ because the MiniPolice presents pupils with ‘an opportunity to do something positive within the community’, to engage with emergency services, and to ‘learn about different cultures’. She also stressed that the MiniPolice has improved individuals’ ‘confidence and self-esteem’ and she hoped the pupils ‘will go on to police cadets or try other activities’. She expressed fondness for their enthusiasm: ‘MiniPolice children catch me in the playground and they ask me, “When’s our next event? When’s our next event?”’. She elaborated, ‘the events are always educational’, yet the children ‘are learning without realising’ and ‘having fun’.

When asked about the recruitment process, both Bob and June described a similar basis that the MiniPolice students were selected: the quality of their application, which asked for their name, age and interests; whether they have additional needs and/or have pupil premium status; their behaviour in and outside of school; their engagement in other extracurricular activities; and how passionate they are about the scheme. According to Bob, ‘there is a lot of pressure from the school and nationally to enhance opportunity for children from underprivileged backgrounds’. In particular, Bob highlighted that the MiniPolice can represent an opportunity for young people who either have challenging behaviour or who come from families or communities less likely to engage with authorities to have a positive interaction with the local policing team. As mentioned in section 2.2, applications required pupils to write letters about why they wanted to be in the MiniPolice, followed by interviews with representatives from the TVP. Bob emphasised that the selection process ‘had to be fair’ because, otherwise, ‘you will just get no end phone calls and complaints’. Commenting on diversity, Bob described the MiniPolice students to speak ‘fifteen/sixteen languages’ between them, which is ‘representative of the diverse school’. He added, ‘it is natural, so it feels really really good’. Likewise, June described the MiniPolice to ‘come from either ends of the scale’, highlighting ‘ethnic minorities get the same experience out of it as everyone else’.

When asked about how the unsuccessful applicants responded, Bob reflected on a time a parent approached him and expressed disappointment about her daughter being rejected from the MiniPolice, stating she ‘would have preferred [Bob] had let everyone have a go at it’. However, Bob argued that the MiniPolice is ‘a role, a little club, [...] a group of activities, rather than a one off’. June also acknowledged that unsuccessful applicants ‘would have been upset’, whereas others ‘would have been unbothered as they were just signing up because their mate wanted to be in it’. However, Bob stressed that ‘20 is a good number because it is dependent on how many police officers are available’ and suggested two PCs or PCSOs, as well as one school liaison, were present for every session. Considering numbers, he described a moral dilemma for the police officers involved: ‘when you are a copper, you want to do your policing thing if people see a crime being committed; but you

also want to get the children to a place of safety, so that is why we need that bit of resilience in terms of numbers<sup>6</sup>.

Both school leads note how MiniPolice has become an integral part of their school's outreach to the local community. Bob implies that the initiative is perhaps the sole way it engages with the local population apart from welcoming them to school fêtes. Indeed, during Katesgrove's Ofsted inspection in 2017, external assessors of the school were impressed by their efforts to engage with the local community through the MiniPolice initiative. This was highlighted in their final report which noted how the programme provided the opportunity for children at the school to make a difference locally. Similarly, June described the MiniPolice as a responsibility and a privilege that should be earned, adding: 'it is good for the school' and 'reflects well for Ofsted'.

We also enquired about the effects of the MiniPolice project on class teachers. Bob explained that 'the MiniPolice requires a teacher who does not already have a Year 5 class, like a TA [teaching assistant]'; 'it is too much to ask a class teacher to give up time or add things onto their schedule'. He continued, 'not all staff will be happy to come in evenings or weekends to help organise events' and 'not all staff know about it'. Those that did know about it, however, were described as 'relieved' when 'challenging pupils were not in class for the afternoon'. June's response was more positive, she reported: 'other teachers think it's a good thing to do and I've had feedback from Year 5 teachers who were very supportive'. This contrastive feedback from Bob and June questions the most suitable time to run MiniPolice sessions: during school hours or after. Bob argued that the best time, from staff's perspective, is during school hours and highlighted that this was also better for getting parental permission. He continued that from a pupil's perspective, holiday and weekend activities are good for building self-esteem; they also 'take the pressure off the school because they are police-led as opposed to school-led'. He reflected, 'there is a slight dip in attendance for weekend activities because they will usually be smaller groups'. June also favoured school hours because 'it means parents do not have to commit to outside of school'; she continued, 'some parents are willing but equally some are not'. When asked why, June explained, 'it would be something for the parent to do and they don't always think about meeting their child's needs'.

Speaking of parents, Bob argued that the MiniPolice positively affects their relationship with the police and their engagement with the community: 'they get to speak to police officers who they may not have spoken with' and 'sometimes they help out at events'. He continued, '[parents] need to see Tom [the police officer] a couple of times to break down barriers for community engagement to work'. He added, 'they like seeing their children in uniform' and reported having a 100% take up of parental permission forms for the MiniPolice. Indeed, as parents often attended MiniPolice events held outside of school hours and in other locations away from the school itself, they will inevitably meet police officers, PCSO's and volunteers. Bob believes this provides an opportunity for parents to

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, in the first MiniPolice session with the Katesgrove cohort that started in May 2018, Tom had to leave in the middle of the talk due to a nearby incident which demanded his immediate attention. His departure, and subsequently interpreted by students as 'chasing a criminal', generated a buzz and a talking point for the MiniPolice and non-MiniPolice students.

have informal contact with the police which may contribute to more positive views of the service influenced by positive personal experiences. June described the MiniPolice to filter positive messages through to their parents; however, ‘some parents are not as willing as others’. We recognise, however, that the MiniPolice project has only started for a few months at Alfred Sutton at the time of this evaluation.

Our final question asked Bob and June about the challenges and benefits involved with upscaling the MiniPolice. Bob raised a few points:

Parents from affluent areas work 9-5 and there isn’t so much parent engagement at the start and end of the school day ... so, you instantly lose some of that contact. Some schools might find ... that one or both parents are working and that the child is either collected from child minders or they go to after school clubs.

Bob also highlighted that commitment from the school liaison is needed to continue and build the MiniPolice. He suggested, ‘10 schools is reasonable – you need to be realistic in terms of finance and financial partners, to cover costs such as kit’<sup>7</sup>. He explained that resources are often ‘snacks, orange juice, biscuits, paper resources, printing, things like that’<sup>8</sup>. However, Bob argued that while ‘money could be spent on more police officers, so little money is spent relatively’. Nonetheless, he warned that if the MiniPolice expanded, people ‘would say the money could be spent elsewhere’. He also argued that taking large numbers of pupils out of school at the same time would result in the head teacher asking, ‘why has the whole of year five just left the school?’. June raised the issue of recruitment. She explained that when ‘targeted pupils applied, [she] encouraged them because [she] knew they didn’t always get the support at home’. She argued that pupils did not ‘always feel they could apply because they didn’t have the resources they needed’. However, she was very positive about the MiniPolice overall, and claimed, ‘I can’t find anything negative to say about why any child should not be involved in the scheme’. Moving forward, she added, ‘I would like to see schools in the future come together to share experiences of the MiniPolice, such as a picnic at the park during summer’.

#### *6.4 The officers*

It is important to consider the views and experiences of the police officers involved in the Reading pilot of the MiniPolice project. Below, we present the autobiographic narrative of PC Tom Walters, who has predominantly been working with Katesgrove, and our summary of the experiences of PCSO Kevin Willis, who has been working with Alfred Sutton.

##### **PC Tom Walters (a self-reflective narrative)**

Firstly, I think it is important to mention my role in the police. I am a neighbourhood police officer in Reading and currently on an attachment with the Stronghold team. My previous role however was a neighbourhood officer for the neighbourhood of Katesgrove. I got involved with MiniPolice right from the off when it was launched by my colleague PC Laura

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<sup>7</sup> We understand that the cost of kit for each cohort (n=20) is approximately £1,000. The kits are likely to last for several years.

<sup>8</sup> For some events, food was sponsored by local supermarkets.

Wilson in Reading in May 2017 and I was responsible for overseeing the initiative in Katesgrove school, which sits in the middle of my neighbourhood.

I enjoyed working with Mr Bob Burrowes, the safeguarding and pastoral worker at the school, who I had met at the start of the year through some engagement work I was conducting with local schools. Mr Burrowes and I worked to select the pupils who had applied and I enjoyed sitting down with Mr Burrowes and discussing some of the events we would conduct in the area. I enjoyed looking at community concerns surrounding litter (particularly drug litter which was evidenced in the press) and speeding and working out how we could use the MiniPolice to tackle these. Some of the other events I conducted with Katesgrove during my time as coordinator for the school included a bike security operation with Oracle security around the Oracle Riverside, a visit to South Street Mosque and inputs on Alcohol Awareness with the Reading Community Alcohol Partnership Team, part of Reading Borough Council. I encouraged one of my Police Officer colleagues to support me in the activities I conducted with the MiniPolice and later got a PCSO on board who will be looking after Katesgrove after I leave.

I have really enjoyed seeing the young people develop an awareness of how they can support local community problems and it was really great to see them take such an interest in activities such as the litter picks and speed operations. I also really enjoyed seeing the young people develop confidence, which I think in part was supported through involvement in the MiniPolice initiative – for example, standing up and speaking in front of the Katesgrove Neighbourhood Action Group in regard to the work they had done was certainly a challenging occasion for the young people but also an excellent experience. I have also built a rapport with the parents of the young people which has been really great whilst my relationship with the school has developed considerably which has helped me in some of my own work in the neighbourhood, for example holding the Neighbourhood Action Group at the School and advertising events run by the police and council to the parents and teachers at the school thus raising awareness of the work the police are doing.

In November 2017 I was asked to oversee the MiniPolice initiative by PC Wilson who was moving to a different station. Although I have enjoyed this opportunity, I feel a more experienced officer and perhaps one of rank who could ask other officers to support would be useful. Having said this, I have been grateful for the support of other TVP officers and staff who have supported me greatly in terms of organising events and building relationships with the schools involved in the programme. I have found it difficult to find the time to build the relationships with the other two schools, one in the East and one in the West of Reading due to other commitments so have thus looked to support the PCSO's looking after these schools in organising events and compiling the necessary paperwork/risk assessments etc.

Certainly, working shifts where few hours fall in line with the school day means planning is crucial in terms of running events and keeping up correspondence with the school leads. Notwithstanding this, I have enjoyed working to run events collaboratively with children from all of the schools, for example the Remembrance Sunday parade whilst I have been supported by my sergeant and neighbourhood inspector in terms of changing my shifts to accommodate the role.

Going forward I think from a policing perspective, it is important to put some responsibility back on the schools to support in meeting some of the objectives of the MiniPolice programme. For it to have a wider impact, the MiniPolice need to feed back their learning to their classes and if possible their year group. This can be supported by the school pushing this and providing dedicated slots in assembly/class time for this to occur and ensuring the children complete the homework asked of them by the police/partners. I would also advocate the police and partners providing more lessons and inputs on particular topics such as hate crime, cyber bullying, drugs and knife crime to have a larger impact on the children and again for this to be fed back to other pupils.

I fully support the programme and believe that it is successful in:

- Building the confidence and widening the experiences the young people have the opportunity to take part in.
- Improving trust in the police (both parents and young people).
- Building lasting relationships with the schools which often sit at the hearts of communities.
- Ensure demand reduction by having a positive impact on the children themselves.
- Encourage a display of civic responsibility from the children involved.

#### **PCSO Kevin Willis**

PCSO Kevin Willis was interviewed about his reflection of the Mini-Police initiative, which he coordinates with the school liaison, June Mills, at Alfred Sutton primary school.

Kevin explained that his role as a neighbourhood PCSO requires him to ‘visit all the schools in the area plus Reading college’, where he has coordinated other projects such as recruitment drives. He described Reading as a ‘diverse area’, where there are a ‘lot of people that are hard to reach’. However, by virtue of Kevin’s regular visits to schools, ‘the kids get to know [him], and then through the kids, [he] get[s] to know the parents’. Specifying on Alfred Sutton, he explained that he has ‘been in the area ... more so in the last couple of years, due to issues within the school which [he’s] happened to help with’. He continued, ‘I come and speak to the classes about various different subjects, especially Year 6 as they’re going up to secondary school’.

Kevin, or Kev as he is commonly known, explained that his familiarity with the staff and pupils at Alfred Sutton, and his former relations with the headmaster, enabled him to get the MiniPolice started. Kev was very knowledgeable of the scheme and he explained his motivation for starting it in Reading. Whilst acknowledging the success of the MiniPolice across the country, Kev explained that antisocial behaviour ‘in the age group [Year 5] up north had dropped dramatically’; he also claimed to know of ‘at least two [pupils] who actually joined to become regular police officers’. He therefore ‘went to [his] bosses at TVP’ and ‘put the scheme forward’.

Kev described the MiniPolice to benefit police-youth relations, as well as young people’s engagement with the community. When asked if he believes the scheme has changed pupils’ perceptions of the police, Kev agreed and added this was also down to him ‘coming to the school prior to the MiniPolice on a regular basis’, which has ‘[broken] down barriers’.

As well as improving attitudes, Kev explained that the MiniPolice reflects well on the school, as well as having a positive impact on the wider community: ‘with something like this attached, the school is doing something right’; he continued, ‘it’s not only to get figures correct with Ofsted ... it’s building trust for the community ... [if they] see they’ve got MiniPolice here, [they’ll say] very good school, let’s try and get our kids in there’. When referring to the Sikh temple visit, he informed us that he ‘knows the Gurdwara people’ who are ‘mostly Indian’, and he described them as ‘more than happy to open arms’ in welcoming the school to the temple. He argued this was the same for the ‘Islamic centre [and] the fire brigade’ and concluded, ‘it’s just good that everyone is getting together and showing what we can achieve’.

On the recruitment process, Kev described the letters some of the pupils wrote in their applications. Having asked them to explain why they should be chosen, Kev was surprised at the outcome: it was as if ‘they were applying for the police in general’. Kev also informed us that the scheme ‘runs for a year, but if anyone mess[es] up ... inside or outside of school ... they may be taken off the scheme ... for good’. He then confirmed that this would leave positions open for applicants who wanted to join the scheme but did not apply or were unsuccessful. Commenting on diversity, Kev described the MiniPolice as ‘quite a mixture’, emphasising the number of cultures and ethnicities ranging between them. He reported that ‘they all get on’ and ‘are becoming friends as well’.

Kev also explained that the MiniPolice recruitment procedure required parental permission. He added, ‘allowing kids to participate is a good step for [the parents] in the first place’; ‘that’s where you build the bridges from thereon’. Elaborating on his point, he reported the MiniPolice initiative has benefitted his relationship with parents. He explained: ‘[they] can come to speak to me about anything’; ‘they have a laugh and a joke’ and ‘speak to me in general about everyday life, which you don’t usually get’; he continued, ‘I’m building trust with them’.

Asked about his thoughts on parental engagement and pupil attendance if the MiniPolice ran outside of school hours, Kev raised a couple of points: ‘on the odd occasion, perhaps ... on a Saturday morning or a Sunday afternoon, [we] get the kids involved in their community at a local event or fete’. However, he agreed ‘it’s better during school hours because at first, the [pupils] would think they’re getting out of class’.

When considering upscaling the MiniPolice, Kev reflected on his experiences: ‘since we’ve done it in Reading, a lot of primary schools want to come on board. We just haven’t got the staff at the moment to cater for that’. However, he argued that he ‘does not want it to get too big or part of the curriculum’ because the MiniPolice should be considered a ‘treat’ and a ‘privilege’. Throughout the interview, Kev was very positive about the MiniPolice, mentioning that he ‘can’t think of any challenges’ but believes it is necessary to ‘reward the kids for the time and effort they’ve put in’ at the end of the academic year. Visioning the MiniPolice in the future, Kev explained: ‘I’m just that one voice from a group of TVP, but these little guys, they can spread the word’; ‘what they’re doing and what they’re saying is spreading out already, which is what we want’.

### **Visit to the fire station – Alfred Sutton**

*Field observation by Meggie*

At the fire station, one of the firefighters, Jo, showed the pupils around. During the tour, a male pupil asked if he could slide down the pole. Jo apologised and said this was not safe but asked her colleague to do a demonstration. As we gathered round, the MiniPolice collectively called out, ‘1... 2... 3... SLIDE!’. The fireman flew down the pole before a female student, Justina, turned to me and exclaimed, ‘that was so cool!’. Jo asked the MiniPolice a series of questions about what firefighters do and who to call in case of an emergency. During the discussion, the MiniPolice were told to run around as if they were all on fire, before carrying out the stop, drop and roll procedure. Everyone was laughing.

During a first aid demonstration, a male pupil, Ryan, led down on a stretcher board, while another boy held his head ‘so to avoid injuries’. The group lined up either side. They crouched down and waited for Ryan to give his instruction. Darren explained the direction: ‘prepare to lift, lift’. This was repeated by Ryan and the group lifted the boy on the stretcher. They carefully placed him back down and gave themselves a round of applause. Darren praised the MiniPolice, ‘well done [...] you should be really proud of yourselves’. Meanwhile, Jo’s group then took it in turns to throw the safety ropes into buckets. She joked, ‘we’re not going anywhere until someone gets it in’. After a few attempts, a female student, Millie, got the target. Everyone cheered as she looked around in amazement.

The MiniPolice later lined up behind a white line and the fire engine reversed out of the station. Everyone was watching and waiting. Once the fire engine was in position, the MiniPolice ran towards it, collectively shouting, ‘yeah its squirty time!’. The children then prepared to use the hose, under the supervision of a female firefighter. They each took it in turns to spray the water and knock a series of cones over. One male pupil accidentally squirted Jo, to which she laughed and played along... she was very quickly soaked.

When we arrived back, June said the trip was ‘absolutely fantastic’. She praised the MiniPolice for their behaviour and rewarded them with ten minutes extra for lunch.

### **Alcohol awareness talks at Katesgrove**

*Field observation by Meggie*

During the first talk, the MiniPolice appeared excited about seeing Tom again. Numerous children approached him to say hello, most notably Janeer, who tried to hug him as he passed. The MiniPolice were given their uniforms and they seemed happy to wear them, in spite of a few minor complaints about the sizes of the polo shirts. On our way to the ICT suite, Janeer held the door open for the group. We thanked him, then Tom reminded him to put his hat on.

Tessa, Community Alcohol Partnership officer from Reading council, asked the MiniPolice if they knew what ‘underage drinking’ meant. A female pupil answered, ‘drinking under an age restriction[,] I think it might be 25’. Tyrone then raised his hand and said, ‘no it’s 18’. Tessa then explained that the purpose of the talk was to give the MiniPolice enough

knowledge about alcohol so that they feel able to make their own choices about drinking. She said her aim was to teach them how alcohol impacts the human body and its relation to the law.

She then set them a challenge: 'our challenge is to match up the food with the alcohol based on the number of calories they contain'. She joked that this activity always makes her hungry. The pupils started to guess where to stand and Tessa stood in front of the group to see how they had done. She read out who was paired with who and praised those who were correct or 'nearly there'. The pupils seemed excited that some of them were allowed to stand at the front and I observed a number of them smiling at their friends who were still sat down. Tessa concluded the activity by saying, 'well done guys[,] you were great'.

The second alcohol awareness talk (a week later) began with a presentation created by a female student, Zaahra. She made PowerPoint slides about alcohol and the law. Bob put it on the projector screen and Tessa read aloud from the slides. They were very well constructed with impressive editing skills and animations. Some of the points Zaahra made were inaccurate, such as, 'you have to be 25 or over to drink alcohol' and 'alcohol will make your throat explode' (which I imagine is a hyperbole for Tessa's previous points about alcohol and its relation to throat cancer in the first session). She did, however, make many accurate points and Tessa congratulated her, stating: 'this is great because you've got a lot of great information'. Tom then arrived and I observed the MiniPolice smiling excitedly. He asked whose presentation that was, to which Zaahra raised her hand. Tom was impressed and exclaimed, 'rock star!'.

Tessa then explained many aspects of alcohol awareness, including 'the triple technique': 'no', 'no again' and 'leave the situation'. Tyrone raised his hand and added, 'if you give in to peer pressure then they will probably think you'll back down again'. Tessa finally handed out leaflets. She told the MiniPolice to take them home to their parents/guardians/siblings and to talk to them about alcohol and its effects. Bob quickly added, 'not because we think your parents are alcoholics, but so they can see what we do in the MiniPolice'.

## **7. Conclusion and recommendation**

This report is an evaluation of the MiniPolice project in Reading, drawing on empirical research evidence from two Reading primary schools. We focus on the views and experiences of MiniPolice students and the key stakeholders, namely their parents, the School Point of Contact (SPOC) and the police officers. The data collected provides us with an opportunity for some tentative conclusions about objectives of the MiniPolice project. As already mentioned, while the evaluation has its limitations (see Section 2.2), we hope to have provided an evidence-based approach in understanding of the experiences of those involved in the programme. In this section, we summarise key findings evaluation with a focus on the opportunities and challenges ahead for the MiniPolice project in Reading. We offer our recommendation as the programme aspires to expand in other primary schools in the TVP regions.

### *7.1 Young people's trust, perception and aspiration in the police.*

Our evaluation shows that the MiniPolice initiative builds trust and confidence in the police, as well as improving perceptions. Whilst perhaps not encouraging the police service to be seen as a career option to the extent which may reasonably have been expected, the data shows those who take part in the programme are inspired by the work of the police and show a motivation to support the police either in a professional domain or through civic responsibility. We found that:

- Young people in our evaluation are generally positive and trusting of the police. These views were expressed by MiniPolice and non-MiniPolice students, which may reflect the wider impact of the MiniPolice programme. Our findings suggest that MiniPolice students seem to command a broader disposition around community responsibility, citizenship and their knowledge of the police than their non-MiniPolice counterparts do.
- The job of the police is widely constructed to be a dangerous, difficult but noble profession, which can create a dilemma for young people who want to help others, in a safer working environment. We found few students, MiniPolice or not, to aspire working in the police, even though first-hand experiential visits can raise aspirations, albeit temporary.
- We should not underestimate the importance of these potential 'key moments', which can form the basis of future goals. The desire of some MiniPolice students wanting to do further community work because of their MiniPolice experience is illustrative of such possible impact.

### *7.2 Stakeholders in the MiniPolice project*

The success of the MiniPolice depends on various stakeholders, including MiniPolice students, their parents, the 'School Point of Contact' (SPOC) and the police officers. Whilst support from local partners are also important, we focused on the views and experiences of the abovementioned personnel. We found that:

- MiniPolice students are proud of their role and identity as ambassadors of their school, the police and local community. They value the MiniPolice programme as a learning opportunity outside of the classroom and participants appear to develop a stronger sense of civic responsibility and citizenship through their engagement with the activities.
- Parents of MiniPolice students are overwhelmingly appreciative and supportive of the MiniPolice programme, which offers a unique opportunity for personal development for their children, such as leadership skills and self-esteem. Parents agreed that regular communications with and exposures to the police have improved their trust and accessibility of the police. The MiniPolice programme seems to have promoted family conversation, learning and practice about citizenship.
- The School Point of Contacts (SPOCs) are very positive about the MiniPolice programme and were keen for their schools to be involved from the outset. They value police-led activities for taking the pressure off the school and agree that it is a positive opportunity for all students, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds and those with special education needs. The initiative also appears to have strengthened the relationship between SPOCs and police officers, as well as increasing police engagement within the two schools.
- The police officers and PCSO's involved in the programme found the experience enjoyable and certainly worthwhile in terms of supporting with tackling neighbourhood issues. They built meaningful relationships with the young people, their parents and staff at the schools, further adding to their positive experience of implementing the programme.

### *7.3 Opportunities, challenges and recommendations going forward*

Our evaluation has offered us some insights to think about the potential opportunities and challenges that could be considered going forward.

#### **Opportunities**

The MiniPolice programme has provided a platform which brings together students, parents, teachers and police officers. The development of such a community is central in the building of trust and communication within the locales of participating school. An expansion of the MiniPolice has the potential to support the growth of these communities. Praise and recognition from Ofsted also serve as an added motivation for schools to take part. Another opportunity is the potential to incorporate more lessons into the implementation of the initiative. Examples of appropriate lessons which meet policing priorities and the school curriculum may be inputs on hate crime, knife crime and domestic abuse. The MiniPolice programme provides an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and the projects likely to have a wider impact if the information learned by the MiniPolice was subsequently disseminated to the rest of the school. There is also an opportunity to run more MiniPolice sessions during school holiday times or weekends. This could include other schools involved

with the MiniPolice programme and could provide members of the MiniPolice an opportunity to share their experiences and beliefs with each other.

## **Challenges**

There are also challenges to which the MiniPolice programme should be aware of. Our data suggest that there needs to be a firm commitment to the programme from the school's involved. The individual school's ethos should fit in with the aims and objectives of the programme and they should see it as an integral part of their role in the local community, as well as personal development of their pupils, and not simply an extra-curricular activity to be run and organised by the police actioned occasionally. The MiniPolice scheme has a very positive impact on the selected young people who are MiniPolice, but one of the biggest challenge is to be able to scale up and to offer such opportunity to more people (either within school or in a greater number of schools). Due to the cost of MiniPolice uniforms and reduced police officers across TVP, it would be necessary to look for sponsorship for the programme, and perhaps encourage volunteers to support in the running of events and activities. Alternatively, the schools themselves could contribute to the costs associated with running a successful programme, whilst schools that are committed to the programme will need to provide volunteers for activities, particularly when travelling away from the school. Another key challenge of the programme is to ensure that the key stakeholders, especially police officers, PCSOs and school liaisons are given the appropriate time and resources to run the programme to ensure the maximum possible benefit of the programme.

## **Recommendations**

1. We recommend that the current recruitment procedures in the selection of the MiniPolice officers should be retained. Whilst we acknowledge the potential benefits for opening up the programme for the whole year group, there are pragmatic challenges as well as a reduction in the prestige of the programme for the individuals involved.
2. We feel there is a potential for the school to consider a stronger integration of the activities of the MiniPolice into the curriculum. Lessons could be provided on pertinent topics and then the learning disseminated to the rest of the year group via the MiniPolice officers, thus widening the impact of the programme and further developing skills of the participants as well as to broaden children's learning about citizenship through the experiences of MiniPolice students.
3. We suggest that the TVP (or schools) could offer certification for MiniPolice students at the end of their tenures, akin to a 'graduation' ceremony, which could also include other MiniPolice cohorts in nearby areas.
4. We believe there is scope for the TVP and schools to explore the possibility of drawing sponsorship from local communities or organisation, including the University (e.g., students in school scheme at the University of Reading), as part of any plans for future expansion.

5. We think there is a potential opportunity for the TVP to make greater use of available existing volunteering that are already working with the police. In particular, the TVP could explore the possibility of involving Volunteering Police Cadets (VPC) to support the running and expansion of the MiniPolice programme.

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## Appendix 1: Student survey



### Student survey on the police

This survey wants to understand a little more about your views about the police. There are no right or wrong answers and we just want you to tell us what you think. Please ask your teacher if you are unsure about any of the questions.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being 'strongly agree' and 1 'strongly disagree', please respond to the following statements with a tick, ✓:

	1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither dis/agree	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree
I have confidence in the police in my local area					
I feel comfortable in reporting a crime to the police					
If I was not happy with something the police did, I will make a complaint					
I feel I can rely on the police in my local area to be there when I need them					
I know at least one police officer or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in my local area					
The police in my local area treats everyone fairly regardless of whom they are					
The police in my local area understand the issues that matter in the community					
The police is doing a good job in my area					
The police in my area listens to young people					
I am interested in the work of the police					
I feel I know a lot about the different type of the work the police does					
I would like to work for the police one day					
I feel the police is scary or aggressive					
My family and I talk about the work of the police					
My family does not really like the police					

### About you (Please tick, ✓)

Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Opt out
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Opt out	
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Arab	<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed
	<input type="checkbox"/> White British/Irish		<input type="checkbox"/> White European		<input type="checkbox"/> Opt out

Did you apply to the MiniPolice initiative?  Yes  No  
 Did you take part in any MiniPolice initiative?  Yes  No

## Appendix 2: Survey results with Year 6 student

MiniPolice (n=16) Non-MiniPolice (n=45)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
I have confidence in the police in my local area	0% <b>0%</b>	12.5% <b>6.7%</b>	12.5% <b>6.67%</b>	31.25% <b>46.67%</b>	43.75% <b>40.00%</b>
I feel comfortable in reporting a crime to the police	12.5% <b>0%</b>	0% <b>0%</b>	18.75% <b>17.78%</b>	43.75% <b>40%</b>	25.00% <b>42.22%</b>
If I was not happy with something the police did, I will make a complain	6.25% <b>6.67%</b>	25.00% <b>8.89%</b>	18.75% <b>28.89%</b>	31.25% <b>33.33%</b>	18.75% <b>28.89%</b>
I feel I can rely on the police in my local area to be there when I need them	0.00% <b>4.44%</b>	6.25% <b>0%</b>	37.5% <b>6.67%</b>	31.25% <b>44.44%</b>	25.00% <b>44.44%</b>
I know at least one police officer or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in my local area	25.00% <b>28.89%</b>	6.25% <b>17.78%</b>	0.00% <b>6.25%</b>	50.00% <b>24.44%</b>	18.75% <b>22.22%</b>
The police in my local area treats everyone fairly regardless of whom they are	6.25% <b>0%</b>	6.25% <b>6.67%</b>	25.00% <b>22.22%</b>	31.25% <b>33.33%</b>	31.25% <b>37.78%</b>
The police in my local area understand the issues that matter in the community	0% <b>0%</b>	18.75% <b>2.22%</b>	12.50% <b>15.56%</b>	43.75% <b>48.89%</b>	25.00% <b>33.33%</b>
The police is doing a good job in my area	0% <b>0%</b>	12.50% <b>8.89%</b>	12.50% <b>17.78%</b>	37.50% <b>28.89%</b>	37.50% <b>44.44%</b>
The police in my area listens to young people	6.25% <b>4.44%</b>	12.50% <b>8.89%</b>	12.50% <b>22.22%</b>	43.75% <b>24.44%</b>	25.00% <b>40.00%</b>
I am interested in the work of the police	18.75% <b>8.89%</b>	0.00% <b>6.67%</b>	25.00% <b>24.44%</b>	18.75% <b>24.44%</b>	37.78% <b>37.50%</b>
I feel I know a lot about the different type of the work the police does	6.25% <b>6.67%</b>	0.00% <b>8.89%</b>	31.25% <b>31.11%</b>	18.75% <b>28.89%</b>	43.75% <b>24.44%</b>
I would like to work for the police one day	18.75% <b>17.78%</b>	6.25% <b>33.33%</b>	50.00% <b>28.89%</b>	18.75% <b>4.44%</b>	18.75% <b>17.78%</b>
I feel the police is scary or aggressive	75.00% <b>51.11%</b>	12.5% <b>20.00%</b>	6.25% <b>22.22%</b>	6.25% <b>2.22%</b>	0.00% <b>4.44%</b>
My family and I talk about the work of the police	50.00% <b>24.44%</b>	0.00% <b>13.33%</b>	31.25% <b>33.33%</b>	12.50% <b>11.11%</b>	6.25% <b>17.78%</b>
My family does not really like the police	50.00% <b>62.22%</b>	25.00% <b>20.00%</b>	0.00% <b>0.00%</b>	0.00% <b>0.00%</b>	12.50% <b>0.00%</b>

### **Appendix 3: Example of a field note for a MiniPolice event**

*By Meggie*

**Visit to the fire station** with Alfred Sutton on Thursday 28th June 2018

#### **9.15am**

The MiniPolice arrived and got changed into their uniforms. 19 MiniPolice attended.

#### **9.20am**

'Justina' sat with myself and Hannah while the others finished getting changed. She asked Hannah about what her walkie-talkie does. Hannah explained she can hear if there is an emergency and whether she is needed elsewhere. 'Justina' then asked if she would have to leave if she heard something and asked her to expand on what was meant by 'emergency'; she queried whether a missing person would be considered an emergency. Hannah confirmed that it would be, as would other incidents, such as road accidents. 'Justina' appeared very interested, comfortable and engaged with what Hannah was saying.

#### **9.25am**

Kev conducted a head count and debriefed the MiniPolice on the imminent visit to the fire station: 'around eleven o clock [1] can anyone tell me what an MP is'. One girl (white ethnicity) answered: 'is that like a president'; another girl (Asian ethnicity) answered, 'it means member of parliament'. Kev praised both pupils on their attempts to answer his question and explained that Lisa Haig, Shadow Secretary for Policing and Crime, would be attending the visit. He informed the pupils that Lisa Haig was born in Sheffield, is a member of the labour party and is interested in seeing the work that the police and MiniPolice are doing for the community.

Kev told the pupils to be on their 'best behaviour at the station', to 'not touch anything when [they're] there unless [they] are given permission' and informed the pupils that the firefighters 'had to sign off the road for 2 hours so [the pupils] could visit [their] station'.

The MiniPolice all appeared fully engaged, with numerous pupils whispering excitedly amongst themselves.

#### **9.30am**

The MiniPolice were told by Kev and June to walk in twos and to stay on the left-hand side so to leave enough space for pedestrians to pass.

As we waited for June to return, Kev began asking members of the MiniPolice what they enjoy doing. One girl answered, 'swimming', to which Kev asked questions about where she went swimming and why she enjoyed it.

I observed a group of girls (mixed ethnicities) acting excited and they all appeared very happy and confident speaking to Kev.

Kev joked with 'Justina', saying 'cheer up' and 'smile'. 'Justina' responded with a big grin.

Kev reminded the MiniPolice to tie their laces, so they do not trip on the way. He also checked that everyone had water and joked that he would hose them all down if they did not.

As the MiniPolice were preparing to leave, Kev adjusted one male pupil's uniform.

The MiniPolice, Kev, Hannah, June, a male teacher and myself made our way out of the classroom.

#### **9.35pm**

The MiniPolice lined up outside the reception foyer, ready to leave.

Kev adjusted a female pupil's uniform.

As we exited the school grounds, Kev started chatting to some male members of the MiniPolice about the football.

#### **9.40pm**

As we approached crossings, Kev stood in the road to control the traffic and to ensure it was safe to cross.

A member of the public, a male adolescent (white ethnicity), approached the crossing on his bike. Kev hurried him along, saying 'come on fella'. Once he had passed, the MiniPolice crossed the road safely.

As we continued our walk to the fire station, Kev addressed a group of girls who were in the way of pedestrians, 'ladies move to the right-hand side please'.

He then reminded the pupils who had removed their hats, 'hats on!'.

He put his arm around one male pupil and they both laughed.

#### **10am**

We arrived at the fire station and Kev let the firefighters know we were there.

We made our way round to the back of the station where we were greeted by a male firefighter, 'Darren'.

He addressed the MiniPolice, saying: 'morning everyone, my name's Darren'.

The MiniPolice responded with a quiet 'morning'.

Kev then called out, 'come on guys [...] you can do better than that'

The MiniPolice then responded with an upbeat, much louder 'good morning Darren!'.

Darren began debriefing the MiniPolice in case of an emergency. He said they would be given the opportunity to 'look around the station', 'look inside the fire truck' and 'squirt water with the hose'.

The MiniPolice all responded extremely excitedly, collectively shouting, 'yay!'. Kev responded by joking, 'only if you're good'.

The MiniPolice were then addressed by a female firefighter, 'Jo'. She asked, 'right then [...] who wants to see the fire station?'. I observed every member of the MiniPolice raise their hand. After another quick explanation of what the visit would entail, 'Jo' began showing the MiniPolice around.

'Jo' firstly led the group towards the bedroom area and asked the pupils if they knew what the lockers were. She explained that some officers must stay at the station for up to fifteen hours a night.

One male pupil (white ethnicity) asked if he could slide down the pole. 'Jo' apologised and said this was not safe; she did, however, ask a fireman (also called 'Kev' and referred to throughout this report as 'fireman Kev'), to do a demonstration.

As we gathered by the pole, the MiniPolice collectively called out with 'Jo', '1... 2... 3... SLIDE!'. 'Fireman Kev' went down the pole. 'Justina' turned to me and exclaimed, 'that was so cool!'.

#### **10.20am**

The pupils then took a seat in the TV room upstairs. The group from Alfred Sutton were accompanied by numerous policemen who were gathered round to watch Jo's input, as well as two female photographers from a local paper.

Numerous pupils yelled, 'TV!'; Jo replied, 'you're not gonna watch TV [...] you're gonna watch me!'.

I observed all the MiniPolice acting very excitedly.

'Jo' asked the pupils, 'how many people have you got in your family'. They responded by calling out. 'Jo' then said, 'we at the fire station are just like a little family'.

She then asked the pupils, 'what do you think we do?'. One girl (Asian ethnicity) responded, 'you help people from drowning'; another girl (mixed race) claimed, 'fire people save people's lives'; a boy (white ethnicity) raised his hand and answered, 'when people are high up'; and a final girl (mixed race) answered, 'when there are car crashes'.

'Jo' congratulated the children on their knowledge of the firefighters' work and added that they also save people's houses and their belongings. She claimed, 'you guys are really good [...] we don't often get people who know all the answers'.

'Jo' then asked, 'what if your dog's head is stuck in a railing?'. One girl (Asian ethnicity) raised her hand and then claimed she had forgotten. I observed 9 hands raised. Numerous pupils shouted out, 'you save them!'.

'Jo' agreed and asked, 'what else?'

One girl (white ethnicity) answered, 'you save the environment'; to which 'Jo' responded, 'yes! She's good [...] everyone give her a round of applause'. The MiniPolice clapped and 'Jo' continued with her talk.

### **10.25pm**

'Jo' continued to ask the MiniPolice, who were still sat in the TV room, 'what do you do if there is a fire in the kitchen [...] someone who's not answered yet'. One boy (white ethnicity) raised his hand and said, 'get out'. 'Jo' praised him for his correct answer and explained why it is important not to run back into a burning building, even if close family/friends are inside.

'Jo' then asked, 'what is our phone number if you need us?'. The group collectively responded, '999' other than one pupil who said, '911'. 'Jo' then explained that it is also possible to call '112' anywhere in Europe. One boy (white ethnicity) joked, '666'; to which 'Jo' jokingly responded, 'shut up you!'.

'Jo' continued, 'what about the police?'. The group collectively responded, '999'; and called out the same answer again when Jo asked what the phone number was for the police and the coast guard.

'Jo' questioned, 'who's the first person you talk to on 999?'. I observed numerous hands raised. One girl (Asian ethnicity) called out, 'you'. 'Jo' smiled and replied, 'no [...] not me'. One boy (mixed race) then answered, 'a receptionist'.

'Jo' then explained the process of dialling 999 and the signals which are transferred to the fire station. She reassured the MiniPolice that all emergency services communicate with each other, so not to worry if they are put through to the wrong service. She also explained that multiple services are sometimes needed and used a road accident as an example.

She asked the MiniPolice if they knew their address. She said, 'how does [fireman] Kev know where to drive his engine?'. 'Fireman Kev' then joked, 'because you're in the back' and everyone laughed. 'Jo' then asked all the MiniPolice to say their address aloud.

Another fireman, 'Al', then did a demonstration of the alarm which is sounded in the fire station when there is an emergency. I observed many hands raised and the majority of the MiniPolice asking questions.

'Jo' then questioned whether the MiniPolice knew if they were able to smell fire in their house if it was burning down, especially at night. She used this to emphasise the importance of a fire/smoke alarm. She then asked the children, 'which way does smoke go up?' and directed them to point. I observed all the MiniPolice smiling and acting very excitable; they all pointed up. 'Jo' used this to motivate emphasis on the importance of why smoke alarms should be high up and not on the floor. She asked the MiniPolice, 'does anyone think its funny to dial 999 when there's not an emergency?'. The children collectively responded, 'no'. She then explained why it's not funny, highlighting that false calls will prevent emergency services from reaching those really in need.

'Jo's' next question was, 'is fire always bad?'. The MiniPolice had a mixed response, with some answering 'yes' and the majority answering 'no'. Jo responded by asking, 'why no?'. One girl (mixed race) said, 'you can have BBQs' and one boy (mixed race) said fire can be used for camping and sparklers. Another boy (white ethnicity) called out, 'to keep your food warm!'

'Jo' then asked, 'what do you do if your shirts on fire?'. I observed 14 hands raised. The children collectively called out, 'STOP DROP AND ROLL'. This motivated fireman, 'Al', to do a demonstration. The MiniPolice were then told to run around as if they were on fire before carrying out the stop, drop and roll procedure. I observed all the children, except 2, follow these instructions. Everyone was laughing.

### **10.35am**

As we left the TV room to look around the fire station, a male pupil held the door open for everyone coming down the stairs. Kev smiled at him and said, 'thanks fella'.

'Jo' then split the MiniPolice into one group of ten and one group of nine. 'Jo's' group were predominantly female, while 'Darren's' group was mixed. 'Jo' showed the children the pump and asked them, 'what's this?'. They collectively replied, rather excitedly, 'it's a hose!'. 'Jo' assured them that they would find things to squirt. The children collectively responded, 'YES!'.

'Jo' then showed the group the carbon dioxide extinguisher and explained to them what to do if there is a fire caused by electric. I observed everyone fully engaged.

### **10.40am**

I then observed Darren and his group.

He showed them around the gym and explained the importance for firefighters to keep fit.

He then explained why it is important to sit properly in a car and he gave some pointers about car safety. I observed the MiniPolice were not as excitable as 'Jo's' group but they were fully engaged and listening carefully.

'Darren' then showed the group hydraulic rescue and first aid equipment. He asked the MiniPolice if they knew about CPR and questioned the male teacher whether first aid is taught at Alfred Sutton. The teacher replied, 'they may touch on it next year'.

'Darren' proceeded to show the MiniPolice bandages and oxygen masks.

This led to a demonstration of the stretcher. One boy, 'Ryan', lay down on the board while another boy (black ethnicity) held his head 'so to avoid injuries'. The group then lined up either side of the stretcher. They crouched down and waited for 'Ryan' to give his instruction. 'Darren' explained the direction: 'prepare to lift, lift'. 'Ryan' called out this direction and the group lifted the boy on the stretcher. They carefully placed him back down and gave themselves a round of applause. 'Darren' praised the MiniPolice, 'well done [...] you should be really proud of yourselves'. Everyone was happy. 'Darren' then asked whether the MiniPolice knew what an 'incident' means. He explained the importance of not jumping into a cold river. 'Millie' stepped forward and told 'Darren' that '[she's] done that before'. 'Darren' described cold water shock and told the MiniPolice to never go into water unsupervised.

He then showed the group orange rings and catch lines. He asked them, 'who wants a go at using a safety rope'. I observed the MiniPolice raising their hands excitedly. He told them to 'take it in turns to throw the rope in the bucket'.

We were then reminded by Kev that the MP was arriving at 11am.

### **10.45am**

I quickly observed 'Jo's' group getting into the fire truck to look around. 'Jo' showed the children a mask while they guessed what it was.

'Darren's' group proceeded to throw the safety rope into the bucket. One girl (mixed race) tried winding the rope up after taking her turn but appeared to struggle. 'Darren' asked, 'are you alright [...] do you need a hand?'. The girl replied, 'yes', and the other children rushed to help her.

I observed one boy (white ethnicity) wearing his police cap to the side of his head. He took his turn and wound the rope up, telling his friends, 'that was so cool'.

Another boy (Asian ethnicity), however, informed me that it was 'cringe to wind the rope up'.

'Millie' then took her turn and got the target. Everyone cheered while she looked around in amazement.

'Darren' then asked the children if they needed their bottles filling up. They responded, 'no [...] we're just waiting for the finale'. The adults looked confused, but I later learned that the 'finale' would be using the hose from the fire truck...

'Darren' asked the MiniPolice if they knew what the 'H' sign was. He explained it is where firefighters get water to fill the fire engine up.

'Jo's group then took a look at the safety ropes. 'Jo' joked, 'we're not going anywhere until someone gets it in the bucket'. I observed some of the female pupils encouraging each other, while others were debating who should stand at the front. One girl (Asian ethnicity) sharply told another female pupil, 'wait your turn [...] you just had a second go!'.

'Darren' showed his group the hose and asked them about the weight of water.

#### **11am**

The two MiniPolice groups then came together and were each handed a piece of fire equipment. 'Jo' showed the children how to fill the engine up. Everyone was fully engaged and excited. The water squirted from the tap in everyone's direction. The MiniPolice screamed!

The children line up behind a white line. The fire engine reverses out of the station. Everyone was watching and waiting. Once the fire engine was in position, the MiniPolice ran towards it, collectively shouting, 'yeah its squirty time!'.

The children then lined up by a cone, ready to take it in turns to use the hose. They were supervised by a female firefighter.

They each took it in turns to spray the water and knock a series of cones over. Everyone was smiling. One male pupil squirted 'Jo', to which she laughed and played along.

'Jo' was very quickly soaked.

'Jo' ran over to the children and shook her wet t-shirt at 'Justina'. 'Justina' screamed, laughed and ran away. Fireman Kev then joked, 'you want some shower gel Jo?'.

Some of the children lined the other end of the court yard behind the cones to watch. 'Al' attempted to keep them behind the white line, but they excitedly ran forward and get their heads wet.

'Jo' then picked up a hose and pointed it at the sky. There was water everywhere while the children screamed and laughed, shouting 'MAKE IT RAIN!'.

#### **11.30am**

Louise Haig, and local MP, Mark Rodder, arrived, accompanied by two chief constables and a few others who work for the labour party.

I observed Kev speaking to them while the MiniPolice played in the court yard.

Louise and Mark came over to the children and asked them, 'what's the best bit?'. The MiniPolice collectively responded, 'the water!'.

Louise then asked, 'who wants to be a police officer?'. I observed 11 hands were raised.

She suggested, 'what about a firefighter?'. I observed 12 hands raised.

Then she asked, 'why?'. One male pupil answered, 'to save people' and another male pupil called out, 'so you can retire earlier'. The adults laughed.

Louise asked the MiniPolice if they would recommend the MPI to others. They collectively responded, 'yes', all smiling. Louise asked them if they spoke to their friends about it. One girl confirmed that they do, explaining 'when [they] talk about trips, everyone wants to take part'.

Louise's next question was, 'who here wants to join police cadets?'. They collectively answered, 'yes!'.

She asked, 'what do your mums and dads think of it?'. One girl (Asian ethnicity) answered, 'my mum thinks I'm sensible because I'm in the police'.

Louise then questioned, 'what are you all doing next?'. June then answered, 'we're hoping to do some more community gardening'.

#### **11.40am**

I observed Kev creeping up on one girl, joking, 'what you doin'. She jumped and laughed.

#### **11.45am**

Some female pupils demonstrated ‘the floss’ which is a dance move that I have observed in both Alfred Sutton and Katesgrove. ‘Jo’ joined in, and everyone was dancing and laughing.

The children drank orange squash and gave three ‘hip hip hoorays’ for the firefighters. Everyone thanked everyone.

### **12pm**

The children lined up ready to walk back to school.

On their way, Kev joked as if they were in the army, ‘FORWARD!’. The MiniPolice marched and giggled.

‘Justina’ then asked Hannah about the walkie-talkie again. Hannah took it off and let her have a listen. She explained, ‘they’re always talking’.

Kev then joked to June, ‘I’ve got ‘em trained!’.

### **12.20pm**

As we arrive back at the school, groups of younger pupils ran over to Kev. They greeted him with phrases such as, ‘hello police’, to which Kev replied, ‘hello trouble’.

Another younger pupil (male) ran over and asked, ‘are you real police?’; Kev responded, ‘yeah I am’. We arrived back at the classroom and the children got changed. June said the trip was absolutely fantastic and praised the MiniPolice for their behaviour. She rewarded them with ten minutes extra for lunch and everyone responded, ‘yes!’.

This concluded the end of my visit, a trip enjoyed by all.

## Appendix 4: MiniPolice activities

By Tom

Throughout 2017-18, the MiniPolice across the 3 schools in Reading took part in different activities under the theme of Community, Force Representation and Reward Events. Some of these were carried out at individual schools whilst others involved MiniPolice from the different schools coming together. Below are examples of some of the events and activities the MiniPolice have been a part of in Reading and some information about the implementation of the events and the partners involved.

### Litter Picks

A number of litter-picks have been carried out by Katesgrove school and Park lane school. These activities involved working in partnership with the initiative **Reading Adopt Your Street Programme (RAYS)** – an initiative funded by Tesco and supported by Reading Council. Litter picks, gloves and bags were provided by RAYS who also attended the first event at both schools. Each event has involved a short briefing on the laws surrounding fly-tipping and litter, before going on to discuss issues of safety when out in the local community. Each briefing has also included a specific input on drug litter/paraphernalia. The MiniPolice have then been split into groups to clean the streets/areas which have been adopted by the school.

Benefits of this activity include:

- Encouraging respect for the local environment/civic responsibility
- Understanding of safety issues around drug litter/paraphernalia
- High visibility in local area
- Positive interaction with members of the local community
- Confidence building for young people through positive comments from local community and understanding they are having a positive impact



\*Note – all images from Twitter (@TVP\_MiniPolice)

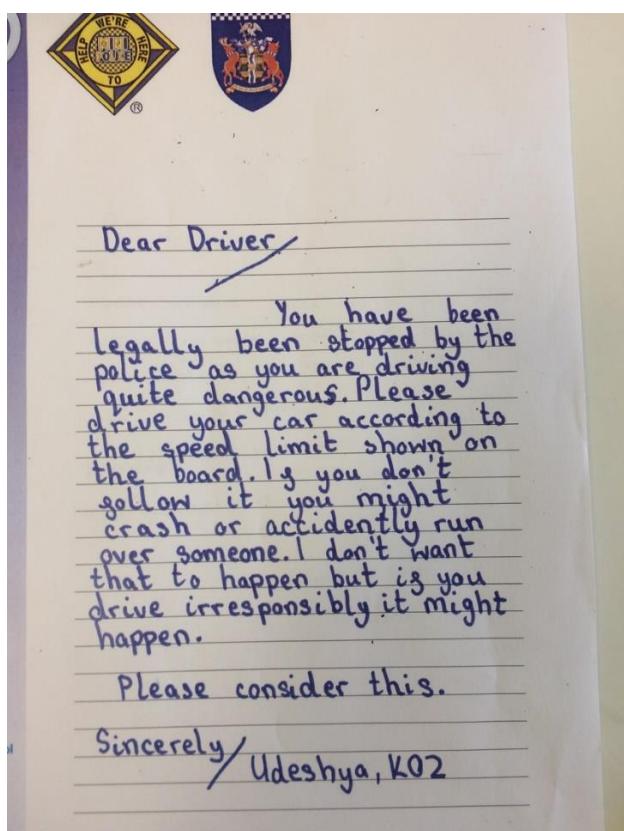


### Traffic Operations

Traffic operations have been carried out at both Katesgrove School and Park Lane School. At Katesgrove School, one of the traffic operations was in partnership with a traffic officer from the **Joint Operations Unit (TVP and Hampshire)**. This involved the traffic officer utilising the speed gun and another officer pulling vehicles driving in excess speed of the limit on the road outside of the school into a layby. After the officers had interacted with the driver and any passengers, following completing a dynamic risk assessment, the MiniPolice provided the driver a letter they had produced as part of their homework. These letters, addressed to motorists, considered the dangers of speeding outside of the school. The driver was passed the letter which was the preferred disposal method for this operation. A simpler way of conducting this activity would be to use a Speed Indication Advice (SID) and send the letters via post to those caught speeding.

Benefits of this activity include:

- Young people learning about road safety and the dangers of speeding
- Building young people's confidence to talk to adults and present their views
- Encourages civic responsibility
- Improved road safety in area and more impactful than either a ticket or simple words of advice.
- Positive coverage of police
- 

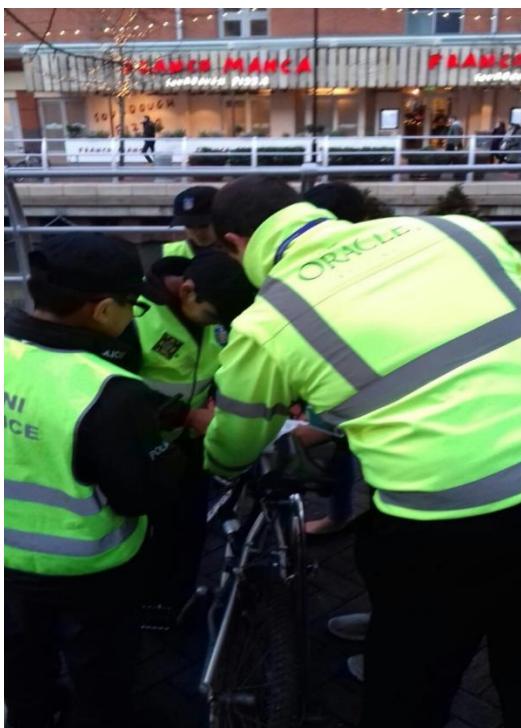


### *Bike Security*

Bike security events were held on a number of occasions. One of these was in partnership with **Oracle Security** at the Oracle shopping centre, Reading. The MiniPolice were given a brief by the security team before they split into two groups. One group were taken around the Oracle and Riverside areas where there were bike stations and those bikes which were insecure were locked with D-Locks. The MiniPolice took it in turns to radio through the description and location of the bike to the second group who plotted this on a map in the Oracle Security Control room where they were stationed. After the group had spent a period of time patrolling the area, the groups switched roles.

Benefits of this activity include:

- Young people learning about the importance of bike security
- Building confidence and sense of responsibility as they are taking an active role to prevent theft
- MiniPolice out in the public sphere where positive and encouraging comments were provided to young people
- Working in partnership with the Oracle (this provided contact for their escalator safety campaign)
- High visibility in area where theft of pedal cycles is frequent



### *Community Awards*

The **Reading Partnership Awards** event at Sulhamstead police college was attended by the MiniPolice. Over 120 individuals from 50 different partners attended the event which included a World Café where partners were able to discuss issues surrounding crime, mental health, vulnerability and engagement. The MiniPolice spoke about some of the work they had been doing in their local community and what they hoped to achieve.

Benefits of this activity include:

- Building social skills/confidence through public speaking
- Showcasing the initiative to partners who may also be able to utilise the MiniPolice to improve engagements/support with their work
- Positive coverage for Thames Valley Police



### *Crown Court Open Day*

The Reading Crown Court Open day is an annual occurrence where the court rooms are opened up to the public. Numerous partners have stalls whilst others hold talks throughout the day. Hundreds of people from Reading and the surrounding area visit the court on this day and mock trials are also heard. The MiniPolice supported officers and the Crown Court Staff in directing visitors to the right areas and welcoming them at the gates. They also had the opportunity to have a tour of the courts and learn about the criminal justice system whilst listening to talks from different partners and agencies on topics such as drug/alcohol abuse and youth offending.

Benefits of this activity include:

- Positive coverage for Thames Valley Police
- Encourages young people to feel proud of their role as part of the wider policing family
- Young people have the opportunity to learn about the criminal justice system
- Provides purpose for young people who are given the role of welcoming visitors and introducing the event to other attendees



### *Remembrance Sunday*

The MiniPolice joined **Thames Valley Police Cadets** in representing the force by marching through the town centre on Remembrance Sunday. The MiniPolice were briefed along with their parents at the police station before joining the cadets and walking/marching through Reading town centre to the cenotaph with other military personnel and esteemed members of the community.

Benefits of this activity include:

- Discipline and respect developed as the young people had to be smart, keep in line and walk/march solemnly to the cenotaph
- Develops confidence and encourages pride as they are representing TVP at a large scale event
- Positive coverage for Thames Valley Police
- Supports in developing a sense of belonging walking with other members of the local community and the Police Cadets
- Provides space to see the opportunities available following on from MiniPolice in the police Cadets



### *Katesgrove NAG (KCA/Mayor)*

The MiniPolice attended the **Katesgrove Community Association**/Neighbourhood Action Group's Annual General Meeting. Here, they prepared a speech including information on some of the work they had been doing, which was provided to those who had attended the AGM. A number of individuals from the council, councillors, the police as well as the Mayor of Reading also attended the event.

Benefits of this activity include:

- Developing self-confidence and public speaking skills
- Provide the young people with feedback on their contribution locally.
- Positive coverage for the local neighbourhood policing team/TVP
- Improve confidence of local community
- Encourage parents/families of MiniPolice to get involved in local projects/the Neighbourhood Action Group



### *Partnering with Wokingham Road Fire Station*

The MiniPolice walked to the Wokingham Road Fire Station where they were met by the Royal Berkshire Fire Service. They were provided with demonstrations on using the firefighting equipment and given an input on the work of the Fire Service and fire safety. Councillors, Members of Parliament and prospective Labour Party MPs attended the event, further adding to the significance of the occasion.

Benefits of this activity included:

- Providing the young people with an opportunity to see another strand of the emergency services and the work of the Fire Service
- The opportunity to consider another future career option
- High quality input on fire safety delivered to young people
- Increased partnership work between Thames Valley Police and the Royal Berkshire Fire Service



### *Visit to South Street Mosque*

Katesgrove MiniPolice walked to Ghosia Masjid on South Street, Reading, where they were given a tour of the Mosque by its founder and given the opportunity to ask questions. A short input was given by a member of Reading LPA's independent Advisory Group on the topic of Islam and common misconceptions about the religion and Muslims whilst a short lesson on Hate Crime with a focus on religious hate crime was also given by the police.

Benefits of this activity included:

- Providing the young people the opportunity to see a place of worship and deeper understanding of Islam
- Opportunity to build community relations between the neighbourhood policing team and the Islamic Community
- Contribute to policing priorities of building Key Individual Networks
- Contribute to school's religious education curriculum



## *Education*

Educational initiatives are expected to have a long term impact on individuals involved in the programme and contribute to future demand reduction. Although educational inputs, for example surrounding drugs, alcohol or domestic abuse, were not part of the initiative, going forward, consideration should be given to the importance of these inputs with the MiniPolice.

The **Community Alcohol Partnership** team from Reading Borough Council completed two inputs at Katesgrove Primary School on awareness surrounding alcohol abuse. Between the two sessions, the MiniPolice produced homework in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and posters which they presented back to their peers. Ideally, the MiniPolice would in future, present their work to their year group to deepen their learning and influence their peers.

Benefits of this activity include:

- Improved understanding by young people of dangers surrounding alcohol abuse
- More informed decision making leading to future demand reduction
- MiniPolice were used to trial sessions planned by CAP which are envisaged to be rolled out across the TVP policing area in primary schools



## **Appendix 5: MiniPolice in the media**

Media coverage of the MiniPolice has generally been positive, including Thames Valley Police's (TVP) MiniPolice, which received a video report from the [BBC](#) in July 2017, as well as from local sources, such as Reading council ([alcohol awareness](#)), the Whitely Pump [blog](#) and Katesgrove's own [website](#). Nationally, the MiniPolice in [Durham](#) continues to command media attention, but we also found interest in [Wales](#) and [Cumbria](#). We note a report from the [Daily Mail](#) earlier this year on the MiniPolice (in Durham) has generated over 400 public comments, with mixed views and responses, although some of these concerns seem to reflect a misconception about the purpose of the project.

As can be seen from the collage below, the press and media have taken a great interest in the MiniPolice Initiative in Reading. This has ranged from the local press including small blogging pages, *Get Reading* and *The Reading Chronicle* to larger outlets including *BBC Berkshire*.

This interest from news outlets is likely to have numerous benefits. Firstly, the reporting of the activities in which the MiniPolice are involved is likely to increase community confidence in the police. A number of activities including speed awareness initiatives, litter picks and a number of force representation events were reported on within the first year of the MiniPolice programme in Reading. These events are largely focused around supporting the community in tackling local problems and doing this in partnership with young people is likely to improve the way in which the efforts of the police are viewed.

Similarly, 'Good News Stories' are often absent from the headlines when reporting on policing. Whilst reporting on crime will inevitably conjure negative images in readers' minds, both local and national news outlets are all guilty of a tendency to sensationalise negative news stories surrounding policing. The MiniPolice programme and subsequently the positive reporting of the initiative provides a rare opportunity to report on a positive project set up and run by the police. Images and descriptions of young people from a variety of backgrounds working closely with the police and other partners to take responsibility for local issues are certainly likely to improve the view of the police in Reading and the Thames Valley.

The press and media has also enabled information surrounding the MiniPolice programme to be disseminated around the force. In terms of the programme being an opportunity for police and schools to carry out engagement and work together locally, the media have ensured other Local Policing Areas in Berkshire and the other counties within the Thames Valley are likely to understand more about the programme, perhaps encouraging them to adopt the initiative in their own area. Certainly, a number of other neighbourhood officers and PCSO's have taken an interest and sought information on how to set up and run the initiative.

Finally, the articles, videos and photographs made public through media and press outlets has also further worked to boost the pride and confidence experienced by those who participated in the programme. Being seen in the press to be wearing the MiniPolice uniform and to see their activity reported certainly contributed to the feelings of pride alluded to by a number of the MiniPolice participants in the focus groups.

A collage of some of the press releases, blogs and video reports can be seen below.

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### 'Mini Police' go on patrol in Reading

Children dubbed the "Mini Police" have been enlisted by Thames Valley Police to help their community. Seventy pupils aged nine to 11 from primary schools in Reading, Berkshire, have been taking part in the initiative.

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27th May 2017

### Three primary schools will work with Thames Valley Police in a new outreach scheme



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A CCTV image of three men police want to question in connection with the rape (Image: Thames Valley Police)

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### Thames Valley Police out again with new mini police scheme

The initiative looks to get young people from diverse backgrounds interested in the police and take pride in their community. Reading is the only Local Police Area to take part in the scheme south of Birmingham...



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### 16th June Speed awareness training for pupils near traffic hotspot

Luke Adams  
Reporter



Community have been educating children about speeding and dangerous driving outside their school.

The vet car outside Alfred Sutton School has frustrated parents and teachers for many months, with several near-misses and injuries caused by motorists mounting the pavement.

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### Mini police clean up Katesgrove lane

18 JUNE 2017 / ADAM HARRINGTON



#### 'Mini Police' Get Lessons in Alcohol Awareness

March 20, 2018 Victoria Nickless



SCHOOL children at Katesgrove Primary School are benefitting from alcohol awareness sessions, as part of a "Mini Police" project.

Reading Council's Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) Officer has been working in partnership with Thames Valley Police to deliver class sessions with 17 year 6 pupils at Katesgrove Primary School in Reading.

The focused sessions have been designed to provide age appropriate awareness of alcohol, including risks, health impacts and associated laws.\*

Cllr Sarah Hacker, Reading's Lead Member for Consumer Services, said: "Whilst we already run alcohol awareness sessions in many Reading Secondary Schools, we identified a gap in primary school age awareness.

"These sessions offer a good opportunity for us to reach a younger audience and to spread key health and well-being messages."

Cllr Lic Terry, Reading's Lead Member for Community Safety, said: "The Mini Police scheme is a great initiative. We hope these children will benefit from increased awareness of the harms associated with alcohol, and that they will become

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PC Laura Wilson and Ricky Josie from RBC removing a knife from Foundry Place

### **Social Media: Twitter @TVP\_MiniPolice**

Whilst press and media coverage has provided the opportunity for the work of the MiniPolice and the aims and objectives of the programme to be disseminated and thus greatly increased the reach and impact of the programme, social media has also been a useful tool in sharing information. A MiniPolice Twitter Page for the national initiative is run by Craig Johnson (founder) and consistently re-tweets the work of the MiniPolice in different constabularies to the accounts of its 2000+ followers.

The use of Twitter is not simply a positive Public Relations opportunity for the police and the partners involved in carrying out the programme. The use of a Twitter page and the subsequent wider dissemination of information through re-tweets by the central MiniPolice page and others on this social media platform allows the sharing of ideas in terms of lessons and activities. Police officers and staff who run the programme at a local level are therefore able to take inspiration from the work of other constabularies and Local Policing Areas in terms of the activities they are doing with their MiniPolice and subsequently replicate these events and lessons. Undoubtedly, the success in terms of the MiniPolice programme expanding to 10 constabularies since it was initially set up in Durham Constabulary in 2011 is largely due to its heavy presence on social media, with the positive messages surrounding the programme easily disseminated.

Certainly, the use of social media in highlighting the activities of the MiniPolice in Reading has been successful. As can be seen from the image below a particularly busy month for Reading LPA MiniPolice saw tweets from the TVP MiniPolice account which solely covers the activities conducted by the MiniPolice in Reading make over 12,500 ‘impressions’. In other words, it reached the Twitter Streams of this number of individuals. The sheer number of people who are reached by the use of Twitter is an important in spreading the aims of objectives of the MiniPolice, particularly in terms of improving community confidence in the police. As can be seen by the below example of the Tweet highlighting the work of the Park Lane MiniPolice during an investigative activity in June 2018, a single Tweet has the ability to reach over 3000 individuals and this is likely to increase as the MiniPolice programme becomes more established in the Thames Valley. Similarly, the support of partners in tweeting the work of the MiniPolice also enables the aims and objectives of the programme to reach a wider audience. The tweet below for example by the Royal Berkshire Fire Service of the visit by the MiniPolice to their fire station in East Reading earned 277 ‘engagements’ in June 2018 where users interacted with the tweet in numerous different ways, and more thoroughly than simply reading or scrolling past the tweet which would be labelled as an ‘impression’.

Lastly, particular comments from members of the public also show the importance of social media in terms of supporting the MiniPolice initiative in sharing its aims and objectives and the positive work carried out by the police and the young people themselves. The below image of a share on Facebook in July 2017 following a litter pick carried out by Katesgrove School MiniPolice evidences the positive engagement with the wider public through sharing the work of the MiniPolice. Comments including “Great idea for all schools. Get the children involved in their community” and “Wow this is fantastic” clearly show the positive reception of the MiniPolice programme, even when these individuals do not come into direct contact with the initiative. Similar to press releases and media attention, sharing information about

the programme on social media may also encourage the opportunity for neighbouring LPAs to expand the programme following comments such as “They need this in Bicester” and “Brilliant Idea...are you doing this near Banbury”.



**Jun 2018 • 30 days**

#### TWEET HIGHLIGHTS

##### **Top Tweet** earned 3,645 impressions

Park Lane school Mini-Police spent an afternoon last week learning about criminal investigations! A great afternoon organised by officers from a number of different NHPT teams. Next stop: the NIE! [@MinipoliceR](#) [@ThamesVP](#) [pic.twitter.com/lYhO4GZZhW](http://pic.twitter.com/lYhO4GZZhW)



1 3 16

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##### **Top mention** earned 277 engagements

##### Royal Berkshire Fire

@RBFRSofficial · Jun 28

This morning [@TVP\\_MiniPolice](#) visited [@WokinghamRoadFS](#), accompanied by MP [@LouHaigh](#), MP [@MattRodda](#) and MP [@RachelEden](#), to have a tour of the station, the fire engine and try out our hose reels. **#Berkshire #Reading** [pic.twitter.com/i0skVzrKGJ](http://pic.twitter.com/i0skVzrKGJ)



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