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Working Paper No. 7

Supporting 'Vulnerable' Detainees through a Student Volunteering Service

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Supporting 'Vulnerable' Detainees through a Student Volunteering Service

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ABSTRACT

Introduced in March 2017, the Northumbria Local Appropriate Adult scheme (NLAAS) was created by a partnership between the University of Sunderland, Northumbria Police and the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (OPCC). Police codes of practice require the police to secure an Appropriate Adult to support a 'vulnerable person' when detained, yet no official body is required to provide this support for adults. This paper will consider the use of student volunteers as Appropriate Adults through the voices of custody officers and the student volunteers and provides an initial evaluation of the scheme.

KEY WORDS

Appropriate Adult/ Vulnerable Adult/ Volunteer/ PACE

Introduction

Northumbria Local Appropriate Adult Scheme (NLAAS) was initiated in order to meet procedural requirements contained in the PACE (1984) Codes of Practice, and in particular code C which provides for the provision of appropriate adults to support vulnerable adults who have been detained in police custody with the intentions of:

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1. ensuring availability of appropriate adults for vulnerable adults in custody across the Northumbria Police Force area, to include a 24/7 365 provision of support to vulnerable adults in custody;
2. reduction of custody times for vulnerable adults in custody across the Northumbria Police Force area;
3. improving the experience of vulnerable adults who are detained in custody in the four custody suites in the Northumbria Police force Area;
4. providing positive outcomes for volunteers in relation to development of skills, knowledge and sector employability.

NLAAS is an innovative project, the first of its kind in the country, and is based upon a partnership between the University of Sunderland (UoS), Northumbria Police, and Dame Vera Baird QC, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Northumbria. NLAAS is an independently run organisation, managed by a member of the Senior Lecturing staff in the Social Studies team at the University of Sunderland, and financially supported by the PCC with supplementary provision of resources and training provided by the University. Strategic governance of the scheme is via a steering group which includes representatives of the partners who feed back to the manager regularly, and a student volunteer member.

The key aim of NLAAS is to provide support for vulnerable adults who are in police custody. The first phase has been completed and the scheme is now benefitting from a second cohort of volunteers, providing support to vulnerable adult detainees in the entire Northumbria Police Force Area 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, across 365 days of the year. Volunteers are called in to one of four custody suites when a detainee is identified as being vulnerable in order to ensure the comfort and fair treatment of detainees, and to aid communication between custody staff and the detainee (McKinnon, Thorp and Grubin 2015; Jessiman and Cameron 2017). This supports the detainee by providing a safeguard to ensure fair

treatment and will reduce unnecessary time spent in custody by detainees who have learning disabilities or difficulties, or who have support needs in relation to their mental health. This must of course be balanced against the need for an efficient service, and so the fulfillment of the role for any individual service user cannot be rushed. NLAAS produces a range of positive outcomes; for victims of crime as it supports due process, for the police as demands on custody are reduced, and for volunteers who enhance their future employability.

The scheme is affiliated to the National Appropriate Adult Network (NAAN) which provides national service delivery standards, training materials, online resources for NLAAS managers and volunteers and on-going professional development and support to NLAAS managers (<http://www.appropriateadult.org.uk/index.php>). Membership of NAAN is currently funded by the PCC.

The volunteers are current and previous undergraduate students from BSc (Hons) Sociology, BSc (Hons) Criminology, BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care, BSc and BA (Hons) Social Sciences and MSc Practice Development at the University of Sunderland. The volunteering allows students to apply learning from their degrees to help and support vulnerable members of the community, and also to gain practical work experience which supports them in developing their skills and work experience in readiness for employment in a range of applied social sciences careers.

All of the volunteers are subject to enhanced disclosure through the Disclosure and Barring Service, are required to provide two references and are interviewed to ensure that they are appropriate for the role, and that they have the skills and knowledge needed to support vulnerable adults in a professional manner. They undergo training relating to their responsibilities, police custody procedures, safeguarding, health and safety, and vulnerabilities including learning difficulties, learning disabilities

and mental health issues and disorders. The training is provided by the NLAAS Manager with support from Northumbria Police and in line with NAAN national standards for Appropriate Adults.

The research undertaken in the preparation of this report is a mixed methods analysis of the initial phase of the project. The scope of this interim evaluation is to review the implementation and current operation of the scheme and to triangulate³ available custody data, custody officer perspectives, and volunteer perspectives on the operation of the first phase of the scheme. The report is presented in order to use the available data in order to provide recommendations for the future development of NLAAS.

A further evaluation report is planned for June 2018. This will enable a more comprehensive assessment of the operational impact of the scheme against the objectives outlined above as it will allow for the inclusion of a full 12 months worth of performance data. It is envisaged that the next stage of evaluation will assess the implementation of recommendations contained in the interim report. It will involve a full process evaluation, will include the perspectives of individuals involved in the strategic planning of the scheme, will review the impact of improvements in methods of data collection, will include further qualitative research with police officers and volunteers, and will map service provision by local authorities in order to facilitate effective collaborative partnerships and to enable targeting of resource to cover demand. Quantitative analysis of Northumbria Police custody data will contribute to a broad span of evidence, demonstrating the impacts of the scheme upon custody experience.

The findings presented here will be used to improve and to develop the service, to inform practitioners, and to further develop academic scholarship around volunteering in the Criminal Justice System. It will

³ Defined by Flick (2015: 219) as “to take different perspectives on an issue”, see also Denzin (1970) for a full discussion on methodological triangulation.

involve quantitative analysis of numbers of callouts, including times, venues, and offence types, and qualitative interviews and focus groups with the student volunteers and with police officers who work in custody suites across the region.

The objective of this evaluation is to present a true and fair opinion on the management of the project implementation and the level of success to which the project has achieved its intentions.

Context

The Appropriate Adult Role

The need for an Appropriate Adult to be present during police questioning can be traced back to the so called 'Confait Confessions' [R v. Lattimore, Salih and Leighton, 1975]. The murder convictions which had been secured were quashed on appeal, as it was decided that there had been a breach of 'Judges Rules' (Bath *et al*, 2015)

The Appropriate Adult safeguard for 'vulnerable adults' was formally introduced in 1984 under PACE. The requirement for a provision is contained within the codes of practice rather than the Act itself and in particular within code C which sets out the Code of Practice for the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by Police Officers (As amended Feb 2017). There is a statutory obligation for provision for juveniles under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), which does not extend to adults although there is an obligation under the Care Act (2010) for local authorities and the Criminal Justice System to work together in supporting vulnerable people; the ill-defined nature of this does not compel service delivery in all areas.

Service users can be deemed to be 'vulnerable' for a number of reasons, including learning difficulties or disabilities, or 'mental disorder'. 'Mentally

vulnerable' people have been found to be at higher risk of incriminating themselves. Making mistakes, or otherwise providing inaccurate or misleading information (Gudjonsson, 2010) and so additional safeguards are needed throughout the custody process (see also Dehaghani, 2016 for a fuller discussion on identification of vulnerability).

Adult social services have historically delivered the majority of Appropriate Adult provision, and remain the largest funder of Appropriate Adult services nationally. This provision is currently under severe financial pressure.

Home Office (2003) have defined the main responsibilities of an Appropriate Adult as being:

- to support, advise and assist the detained person, particularly while they are being questioned;
- to observe whether the police are acting properly, fairly and with respect for the rights of the detained person. And to tell them if you think they are not;
- to assist with communication between the detained person and the police;
- to ensure that the detained person understands their rights and that you have a role in protecting their rights.

Often the only measure of performance used to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of Appropriate Adult schemes have related to time, and there has been limited focus on the nature of the support provided. (Jessiman and Cameron: 2017). Service users are unequivocal in their view that Appropriate Adults must be sufficiently trained in order to carry out their role effectively. There is no current requirement that Appropriate Adults are trained (Bath *et al*, 2015) although National Appropriate Adult Network members are provided with training materials and national standards for minimum levels of training.

Jessiman and Cameron (2017) identify a range of desirable Appropriate Adult attributes from a service user perspective. These include the need to be calm/ calming, caring, professional, knowledgeable, confident, and confidential.

Bath *et al.* (2015) identify personal attributes of key importance to service users including level of training, independence, confidentiality and the ability to be non-judgemental. Appropriate Adults in Bath *et al.* (2015) suggested that in order to carry out their role it was necessary for them to have the appropriate procedural knowledge, an understanding of the nature of the needs of the service users, and the role of others in the police station.

Appropriate Adults have also identified their role as being to protect welfare, to provide emotional support, to ensure physical needs are met and to ensure due process (Jessiman and Cameron, 2017). They highlight the importance of communication skills, appropriate boundaries and provision of support (Bath *et al.*, 2015)

Local Context

With a population of 1.4 million and 623,061 households, the force area in which NLAAS operates is extensive, spanning over 2,000 square miles, and contains six local authority areas, encompassing vast rural areas, two cities and three densely inhabited urban conurbations. The force currently has four major custody suites following a recent rationalisation of custody provision, although at the time of writing only three were operational with several satellite temporary suites that can be used in exceptional circumstances. A joint inspection by and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) (HMIP/HMIC, 2014) calculated that 56,840 individuals had been detained in custody suites across the force area between January 2013 and 2014. HMIC, (2014) commended custody staff for the respect and consideration afforded to vulnerable detainees, when their vulnerability was apparent, but warned that there was a risk that more complex cases of vulnerability could be missed and there was scope for greater sensitivity towards the privacy needs of vulnerable individuals.

Methodology

This evaluation uses a mixed method design, triangulating qualitative and quantitative data sources. The use of a mixed methodology allows for the inclusion of data from a range of sources in order to ensure that the findings are comprehensive, are robust, and also that they are able to capture data relating to both hard and soft outcomes, as well as causes and effects (Blaikie, 2010; Crowther-Dowey and Fussey, 2013). The inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative approaches broadens the possible scope of the questions that may be asked; a mixed design can both provide and can explain the data (Blaikie, 2010) as well as providing data that is both valid and reliable (Maguire, 2000). As this is an evaluation of the implementation phase of NLAAS it was thought important to ensure the ability of the researchers to check agreement of data across a range of sources to ensure the accuracy of the findings produced, and to be able to respond to unexpected data or anomalies that may have been produced by the research design (Crowther-Dowey and Fussey, 2013). It is to be expected that "due to demands placed on Criminal Justice Organisations and the necessity for secrecy about some operational activities, obtaining data can sometimes prove difficult and in some cases almost impossible" (Crowther-Dowey and Fussey, 2013: 207) and so data was sought from a range of sources to ensure that some useful evaluation could be conducted.

In addition to methodological triangulation, investigator triangulation has been employed in the authorship and the conduct of the research (Crowther-Dowey and Fussey, 2013). The evaluation was designed and overseen by Dr Faye Cosgrove who provides experience in conducting research with the police organisation, and who is currently working with Durham Constabulary and Cleveland Police with regard to understanding the retention of special constables. Dr Cosgrove is an employee of University of Sunderland, however has no involvement with NLAAS and is therefore able to examine the effectiveness of the scheme objectively,

which increases the external validity of the research (Flick, 2015). Dr Donna Peacock is the scheme manager of NLAAS. Dr Peacock has experience in both qualitative and quantitative research so is able to provide support for the critical analysis of the data sources. As NLAAS manager, Dr Peacock provides insight into the scheme and has developed prior relationships and rapport with both police officers and volunteers, which has enabled access to the data and frank exchange of opinions to increase the internal validity of the analysis. Dr Peacock also has the level of insight into the scheme to interrogate anomalies in that data and to remove errors, and so improving the reliability of the data presented. However, she brings bias as NLAAS Manager. Objectivity is required in data collection, in data analysis, and in interpretation of the data in order to increase reliability (Flick, 2015), in order to establish this level of trust in the data Dr Cosgrove oversaw each phase of the research.

The findings presented here include data gathered via an online survey conducted with police officers who have utilised the scheme (n=36), interviews with custody sergeants which have been conducted force wide and across a range of shifts (n=8), individual interviews (n=2) and a focus groups (n=1, with 3 participants) with volunteer appropriate adults , and quantitative data based upon the collection of monitoring forms which are collected in custody when an AA attends⁴.

Surveys with Police Officers

A survey designed by the authors of this report was distributed by Northumbria Police via email and was completed online. The use of a survey within the design was employed as it allowed for the collection of both qualitative data and quantitative data in a way that was quick and convenient (Flick, 2015) to the respondents, and was anonymous so that respondents feel able to be truthful in expressing their opinions. The survey

⁴ It is accepted that these are under-recorded

focused upon awareness of the scheme amongst police officers, knowledge and awareness of its associated procedures and processes, effectiveness of the scheme, and experiences of working with the volunteers. The survey was initially sent to police officers in custody (June/ July 2017) and was later extended to police officers force wide (September 2017), as it was identified by the NLAAS steering group that the Officer in Charge (OIC) or Arresting Officer (AO) may also have involvement with the Volunteer Appropriate Adult and could therefore enrich the data by providing further insight. Despite repeated circulation of the survey, and with the final sweep force-wide, the response rate was low; there were 36 responses provided in total. The low response reduces the generalisability of the data and limits the analysis to frequency analysis only (Blaikie, 2010). The level of response is likely to be a result of the low number of individual officers who have actually come into contact with the volunteers, and it is therefore envisaged that later use of surveys in evaluating the scheme may gain a higher level of response.

Interviews with Custody Sergeants

A total of eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Custody Sergeants on duty in three of the four custody suites in the Northumbria Police Force Area – at Newcastle, at North Tyneside and at Sunderland; at the time of the interviews the custody suite at South Tyneside was not in use. These were conducted at varying times during the day and in the late evening to ensure representative data was produced. The interview questions were designed by Dr Cosgrove (who is not operationally involved in the scheme) and were agreed in advance by Northumbria Police.

There were several limitations with the collection of data via this method. The main barrier encountered was the busy and erratic nature of the work

demands in a working custody suite at the time of the visit. This resulted in the cancellation of five interviews as the staff could not make themselves available to be interviewed as arranged. In addition, several of the interviews were disrupted by noise and interruptions, or the respondent was drawn away to deal with detainees. The researchers were also concerned by the lack of anonymity and the gatekeeper effects (Flick, 2015) produced by the organisation of the interviews, whereby the Custody Inspector preselected interviewees. This could result in data being recognisable, interviewees feeling duress to be involved, and also lack of candidness with regard to criticisms of the scheme. To reduce the impact of these concerns the researchers have anonymised the data, have removed any reference to the custody suite or shift where they were accessed, and have randomly numbered them CS1-CS8⁵. In addition, it is possible that the interviewees may have felt inhibited by the work environment, and the audio recording (Bazeley, 2013). The voluntary nature of the scheme, and the apparent reliance upon it to enable adherence to PACE code C may also have led to some acquiescence effects where negative experiences or views were not revealed for fear of losing the scheme.

Despite the several limitations outlined above, the method has produced a wealth of qualitative data, that is rich in meaning, is high in validity, and allows for in depth exploration of issues to be evaluated (Flick, 2015).

Interviews with NLAAS Volunteers

Dr Donna Peacock conducted interviews with NLAAS volunteers. As NLAAS Manager and the students' lecturer, she has established relationships with all 13 active student volunteers⁶ from the first cohort and it was felt that not only would this encourage them to attend but would facilitate more active participation. All 13 volunteers were invited to participate in

⁵ CS is used to mean Custody Sergeant

⁶ As at September 2017. There was attrition of 17 volunteers during the period March-September 2017. At the time of writing this report there are currently 30 volunteers on the register of volunteers.

individual interviews in June 2017 (two chose to attend, V1⁷ and V2⁸) and in a focus group discussion during September 2017 (3 attended, the data is labelled VFG⁹). Although the number of participants here is low, this is because of the small size of the sampling frame, and the response rate of five from thirteen is higher than would generally be expected in conducting social research where participation is voluntary.

Secondary Quantitative Data

Northumbria Police provided some initial quantitative data for the evaluation. This consisted of an Excel spreadsheet which was compiled based upon custody monitoring forms which the Custody Sergeant completes with the assistance of the volunteer appropriate adult after an Appropriate Adult visit has taken place. Some omissions within the data have been found; it is estimated by the NLAAS manager that approximately 50% of visits for August and September are currently recorded in the spreadsheet based upon comparison with volunteers' own records. The raw data provided reveals inconsistencies in that some are recorded by visit to the custody suite, some by offender, and some are recorded by charge. Comparisons can therefore lack accuracy as the cases are not like for like. There are also errors (e.g. non-NLAAS volunteer appropriate adults included, two volunteer appropriate adults attributed to the same visit) and omissions (of visits and of details). While it is acknowledged that the data is imperfect, it has been useful to consider the omissions and errors in identifying recommendations for the future monitoring of the scheme in order to ensure that data can be made more robust. The data provided also is useful in that it makes up a sample that allows for some estimations; for example, average times waited for a volunteer appropriate adult to arrive, of the range of offence types, and of the range of outcomes. As NLAAS manager Dr Peacock has been able to identify errors and anomalies

⁷ Volunteer 1.

⁸ Volunteer 2.

⁹ Volunteer Focus Group

in the data¹⁰, and to cleanse the raw data to support more accurate analysis. It is estimated that the data provided constitutes a sample of approximately 50% of the available sample frame and therefore can provide reliability as it would be likely to be generalisable to the wider population of cases.

Northumbria Police are aware of the current concerns regarding the quantitative data and are working to improve the accuracy of data that they provide for further analysis.

Findings and Discussion

NLAAS Processes

The NLAAS manager initially contacts volunteers regarding involvement in the scheme. Students who have completed their first year of undergraduate study in Sociology, Criminology, Social Sciences, and Health and Social Care are provided with information regarding the local scheme, the National Appropriate Adult Network, PACE codes of conduct, and are invited to apply. All applicants are interviewed by two people, this has so far been a senior police officer (usually a Custody Inspector) and the NLAAS Manager, in order to ascertain suitability. Suitable candidates are then subject to enhanced criminal disclosure checking through the Disclosure and Barring Service and are requested to provide two references. Training is provided in line with the National Standards set out by the National Appropriate Adult Network.

The NLAAS manager is responsible for the provision of call-out rotas. These are stored on the shared drive available to Custody Sergeants. Whilst these have been manageable with the low number of volunteers in the first phase

¹⁰ 5 cases of the 74 provided were removed as were incorrectly attributed or were duplicates, another 9 contained missing data as can be seen in the graphs and tables which follow.

of the scheme, this is expected to become more onerous with the addition of more volunteers and more localised rotas. No administrative time or support for rotas is currently provided which is a risk to the future sustainability of the scheme, particularly given that the number of volunteers has been substantially increased to meet operational demand.

Vulnerability and the need for an AA are identified by the use of observation of the detainee, OIC and investigating officer comments, risk assessment during standard check in procedure, and previous records relating to the detainee. A mental health assessment is requested if necessary. Custody Sergeants describe the assessment of vulnerability as being a dynamic process, that is on-going from the point of arrest throughout the duration of custody; although the need for a volunteer appropriate adult is usually identified during custody check but this is not necessarily always the case.

If a detainee requires the support of an appropriate adult and there is not a family member, friend or local authority availability, a NLAAS volunteer is called directly by custody staff in the relevant custody suite. There is a relatively high level of confidence among police officers that they understand how to contact an NLAAS volunteer if required. 83.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (n=30) and only 8.3% disagreed (n=3)¹¹.

The quantitative data provided for the evaluation by Northumbria Police relating to callouts between 07/03/17 and 02/10/17 indicates that there was an average wait time of 12 minutes for a volunteer appropriate adult to arrive once they are initially identified as being required¹².

Appropriate Adults are required to ensure communication and

¹¹ As shown in graph 1.

¹² It is accepted that this data is incomplete, it does however provide a large sample which is expected to be representative of the sampling frame.

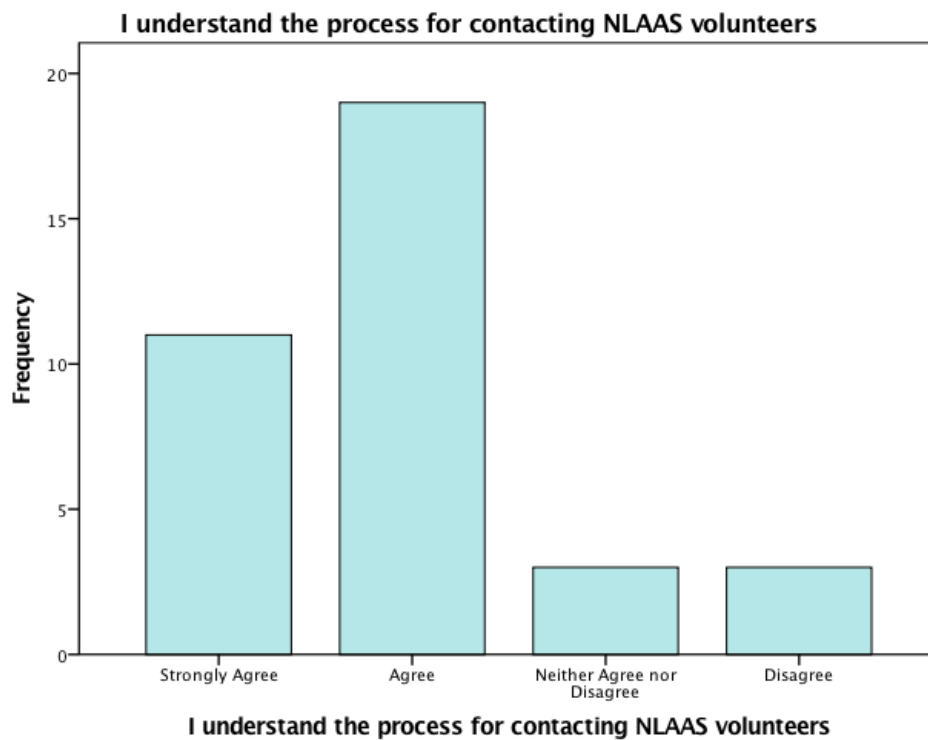
understanding at every stage within custody, from check-in to disposal. They are there to ensure the comfort, wellbeing, and understanding of the detainee. When asked to describe what they do, volunteers comment that 'each one [callout/ detainee] is different' (V1) and that 'every person is different with different issues', 'You are there for that person' - volunteers outline that they check that the police are not being too aggressive or intimidating, they check the understanding of the detainee, but also observe whether the detainee is making himself or herself understood. They state that they are not there for legal advice, that they can stop the interview if they need to for a break, or if they feel the interview is inappropriate, that they ensure rights are read¹³ and understood, that they check comfort (food, drinks, medication etc.), and that they should 'be there through the whole process, from check in to disposal' (VFG). The volunteers who have responded to this evaluation show a good level of understanding of the role in line with PACE (1984) and in line with the role as described by NAAN (Bath et al, 2015).

Although some concerns have been expressed about whether there is an understanding among police officers of the internal procedures relating to the use of NLAAS volunteers (CS1, V2), the graph below indicates that the majority of police officers who responded to the survey felt confident in their understanding of procedures relating to contacting and procuring an appropriate adult (see graph 1 below), and to procedures during the period that the AA is in attendance at the custody suite including recording of data for monitoring purposes (see graphs 2 and 3 below). Confidence in understanding of the requirements does not translate into full compliance¹⁴ and therefore indicates either a misplaced perception of understanding, or other non-compliance.

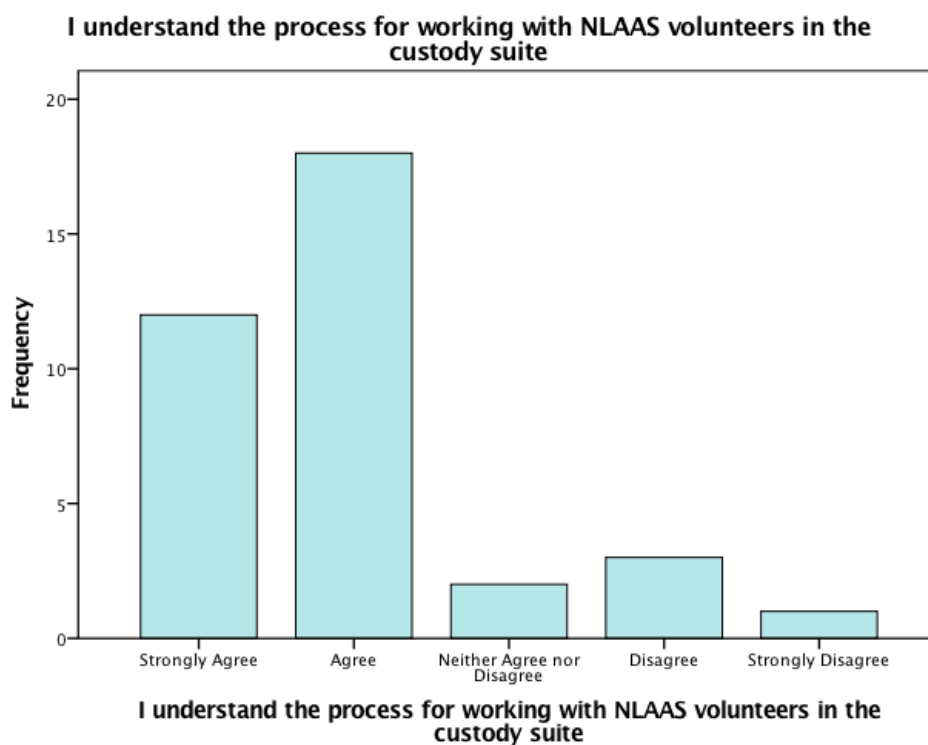
¹³ See also Cummins (2007) for a full discussion

¹⁴ It is estimated that approximately 50% of visits are recorded in the period under evaluation for this report

Graph 1.¹⁵

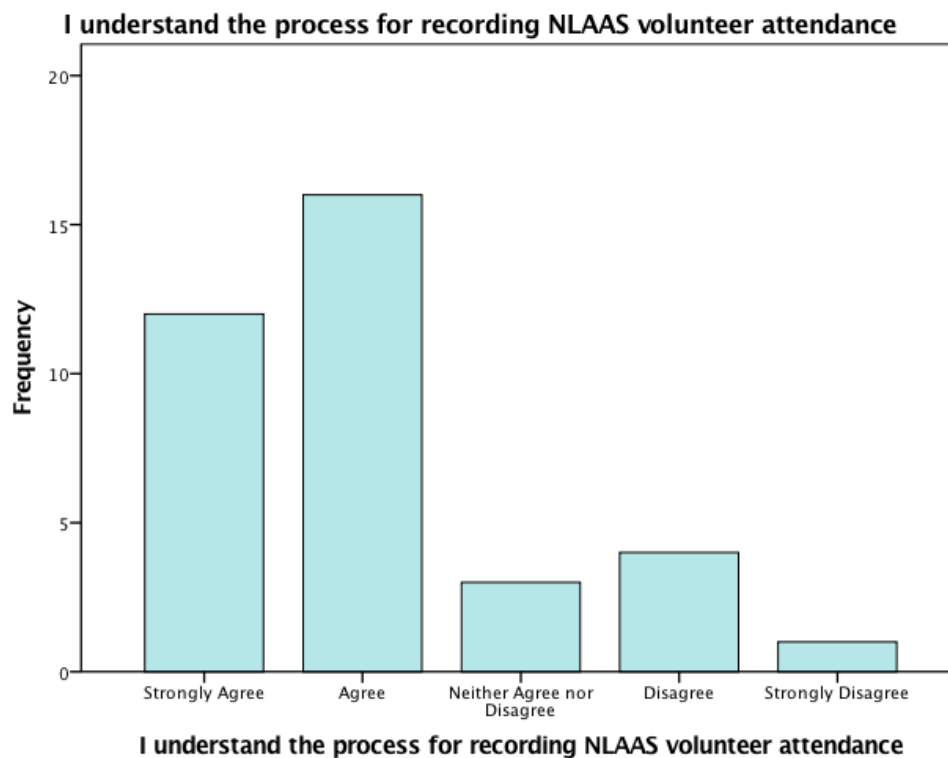


Graph 2.



¹⁵ Please note that respondents had the option to strongly disagree; none did, and so the option is not visually represented here as a bar on the graph.

Graph 3.



It has been agreed within the steering group that there is a need to review data monitoring procedures and that there is a need for all stakeholder organisations to work collaboratively in implementing a robust system for data management. Liaison with the OPCC reveals that there is also significant under claiming of expenses by volunteers. The NLAAS Manager, The PCC office and the custody Inspector attached to the scheme have been working with custody staff and volunteers to encourage the completion of monitoring forms and expenses claims. Both the Custody inspector and the NLAAS manager are expressing the concern that although there has been some improvement in attempting to close this gap in monitoring the scheme, this has become overly bureaucratic, with duplication of recording which needs to be streamlined. This is to be resolved in the near future with the implementation by Northumbria Police of an IT solution.

There is the potential for confusion regarding collation of monitoring forms since North Tyneside EDT will have their own separate monitoring requirements.

There is some confusion regarding the identity of the scheme – police officers call it the volunteer appropriate adult scheme in communications rather than 'NLAAS', volunteers refer to the scheme as 'Appropriate Adult Scheme'. The name Northumbria Local Appropriate Adult Scheme should be clearly referred to in all paperwork and communications to reinforce the identity of the scheme.

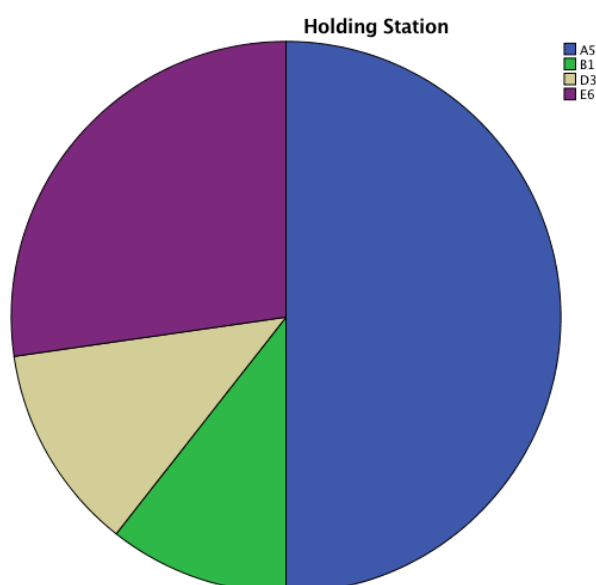
The NLAAS Manager reports a high rate of attrition of volunteers in the first phase of the operation of the scheme. From initially volunteering there is dropout at several stages, the first of which is training. Approximately 1 in 10 of the volunteers who have attended training decide not to proceed as they feel that the role is not suitable for them, or that they will not be suitable for the role. Delays in processing DBS checks for the first cohort of volunteers were particularly problematic and have resulted in the loss of approximately 30% of the volunteers who had signed up, as they either lost interest, graduated and have become employed, or they have volunteered for other schemes. As the volunteers are all students it is important to be aware that their motivation may be to enhance graduate employability, and although they can continue to volunteer for up to three years after graduating, some will gain employment or move out of the area, or otherwise wish not to continue. The high attrition rate of volunteers means that there is a need for regular and on-going recruitment and training. It is also a requirement of the scheme that all volunteers attend regular refresher training; all existing volunteers were invited to initial training for new volunteers in order to refresh their own knowledge, but also to support the new volunteers and to hopefully increase retention. Jessiman and Cameron (2017) and Bath *et al* (2015) identified training as a key concern for service users.

Of concern is the lack of service user voice in this evaluation; this mirrors the national picture (Bath *et al*, 2015; Jessiman and Cameron, 2017) and will be the focus of future research and evaluation.

Impacts upon vulnerable adults in custody

The key aim of the project was to provide appropriate adults for vulnerable adults in custody. The quantitative data available indicates that AAs have been provided to all four custody suites (see chart 1 below). The usage of the scheme appears to have been unequal across the four suites and is representative of variations in demand, variations in local authority provision, custody suite closures, and variations in recording of visits.

Chart 1.

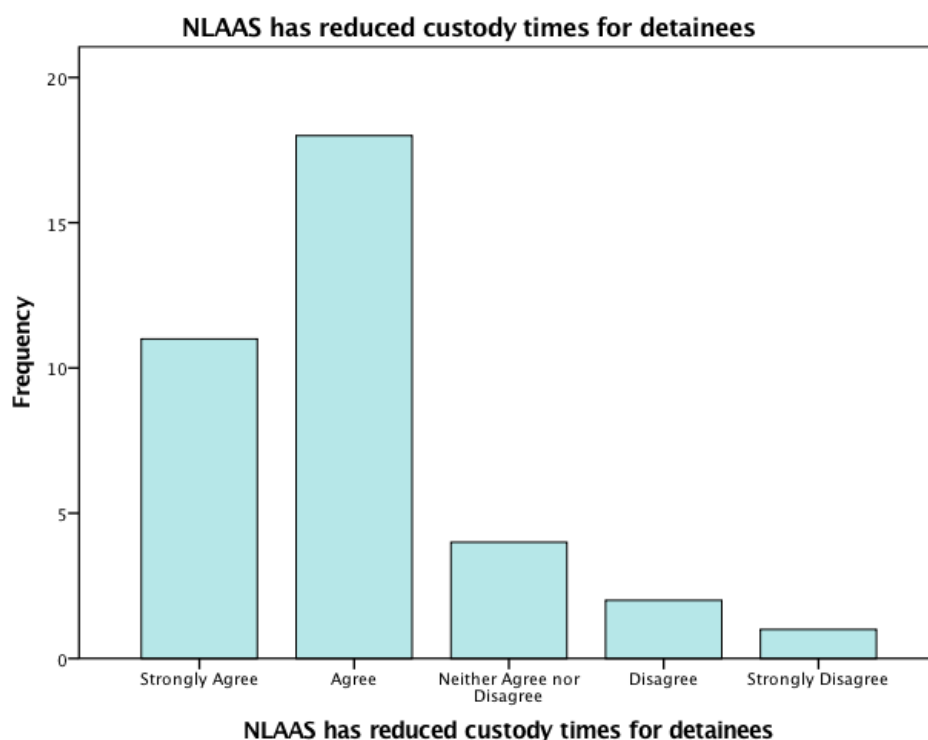


No records have been kept relating to callouts which have not been responded to, although there is some anecdotal evidence within the qualitative responses to the police survey which indicate that some calls have not been responded to, particularly outside of office hours. In cases where a volunteer appropriate adult does not answer the telephone, police

officers have frequently contacted the Scheme Manager. Where possible the Scheme Manager has either attended to act as a volunteer appropriate adult or has contacted another volunteer to attend. In order to remove the likelihood that a volunteer appropriate adult is not available further recruitment has taken place in order to provide full and adequate coverage.

Based upon the available evidence there has been a positive impact upon the time waited in custody for an appropriate adult to be secured. There is strong agreement by police officers that they perceive there to be a reduction in custody wait times for vulnerable detainees (see graph 4 below) with 80.6% of the sample in agreement (n=29) and only 8.4% disagreeing (n=3).

Graph 4.



This is a positive outcome for vulnerable adults who spend a reduced time in custody, but also has a positive impact upon the availability of police resources and outcomes, both physical and human, since detainees can be

processed more quickly and efficiently and the use of bail, whilst previously unavoidable due to the lack of availability of an appropriate adult, has become more infrequent; as one custody sergeant stated 'we used to bail them, but this doesn't happen often now' (CS6).

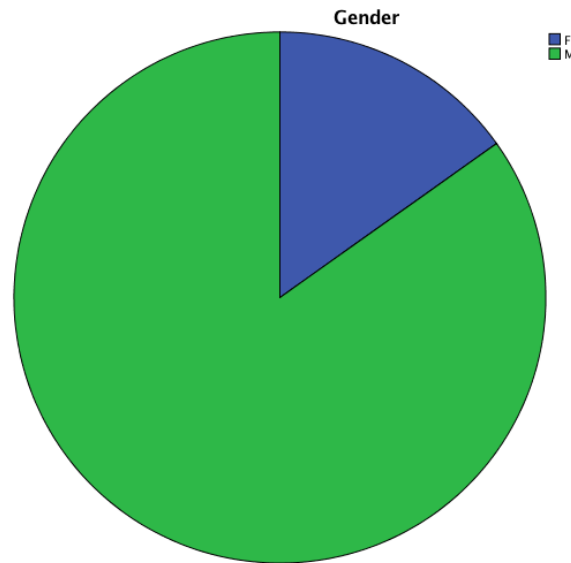
It was not uncommon for selected volunteers to be used more frequently than others and to receive simultaneous requests to attend across suites. Custody Sergeants indicated that they felt this could be improved by recruitment of more volunteers, and the use of a more geographically localised rota system.

During the evaluation period there were delays in procuring DBS checks and a low number of volunteers, so it is expected that this picture will have significantly improved in the next phase of the evaluation. The number of volunteers attached to the project has grown to 30, which will help provide a more comprehensive and localised provision, with further planned expansion subject to administrative and financial support.

Custody officers expressed satisfaction with the competence of volunteers and their efforts in safeguarding the welfare of detainees, with one custody sergeant confirming that NLAAS volunteers are 'very good at representing the individual' (CS1), implying improvement in vulnerable adults' experience of custody.

Vulnerable adults supported are predominantly male (see chart below) which is to be expected in line with the known statistics for arrest rates across the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales. In 2015/6 84% of arrested people were male (Ministry of Justice, 2016).

Chart 2.



The volunteer appropriate adults support vulnerable adults who are detained for a broad range of offences (as shown in chart 3 and table 1 below), the most common of which are categorised as violence against the person and public disorder offences, sexual offences, criminal damage, and harassment.

Chart 3.

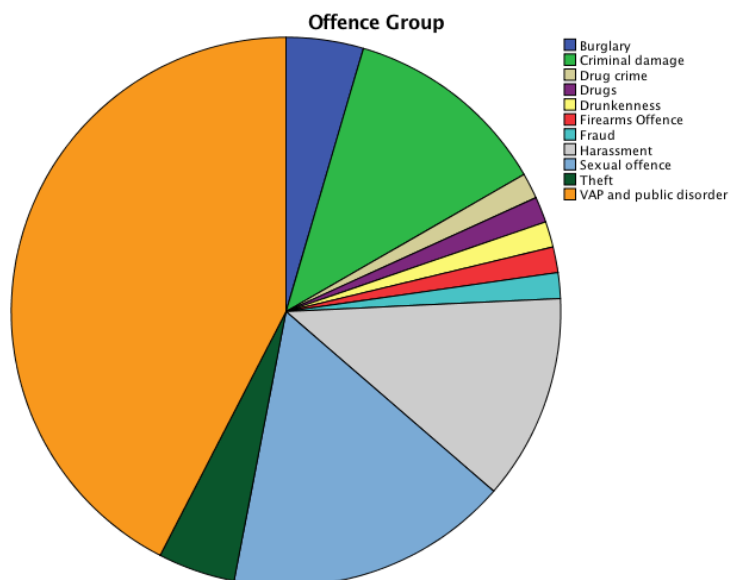


Table 1.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Burglary	3	4.3	4.3
	Criminal damage	8	11.6	11.6
	Drug crime	2	2.9	2.9
	Drugs	2	2.9	2.9
	Drunkenness	1	1.4	1.4
	Firearms Offence	1	1.4	1.4
	Fraud	1	1.4	1.4
	Harassment	8	11.6	11.6
	Sexual offence	11	15.9	15.9
	Theft	3	4.3	4.3
	VAP and public disorder	29	42.0	42.0
	Total	69 ¹⁶	100.0	100.0

volunteer appropriate adults remain in attendance throughout the custody procedure, culminating in disposal. The proportion of disposal types recorded are indicated in chart 4 and in table 2 below in order to illustrate the range of disposal types that AAs are present at.

Chart 4.

¹⁶ 5 cases have been removed of the 74 provided due to errors or duplication. In all 69 remaining cases the offence group is recorded.

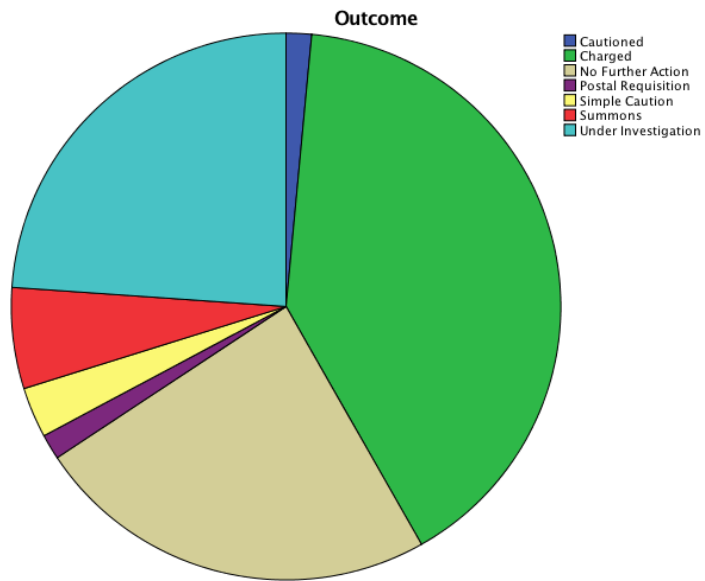


Table 2.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Cautioned	1	1.4	1.5
	Charged	27	39.1	40.3
	No Further Action	16	23.2	23.9
	Postal Requisition	1	1.4	1.5
	Simple Caution	2	2.9	3.0
	Summons	4	5.8	6.0
	Under Investigation	16	23.2	23.9
	Total	67	97.1	100.0
Missing		2	2.9	
Total		69	100.0	

Custody Perspectives

The effectiveness of the scheme

The scheme has been received very positively by Northumbria Police; the service is highly valued and is perceived to meet a need which was previously unmet. The main benefits of the scheme were identified as improved efficiency in investigation due to reduced custody waiting times and reduced use of bail, improved accessibility to appropriate adults, and professionalism and quality of the service provided, whereby officers are no longer dependent on family members or friends to attend. This is particularly of importance as Professional AAs are more likely to intervene where needed (Dhami and Sim, 2014).

The quality of the service provided by NLAAS volunteers was remarked upon by officers across three custody suites, with officers proclaiming 'it's far better than what we had before, (CS3), 'I'd have been lost without them' (CS4) and 'it was a nightmare before' (CS2).

Custody officers described the scheme as being invaluable to them in closing a gap in provision as experienced prior to the introduction of the scheme in April 2017. In North Tyneside, the local authority provides appropriate adults for juveniles and vulnerable adults through the Emergency Duty Team between 8.30am and 11.30pm. Whilst this service provides an additional source of support for custody staff to call upon, it does not provide support throughout the night. Other local authorities are able to provide some limited cover, they are described as being helpful, but struggling to resource the service, and are under no statutory duty to do so. A scoping exercise to map levels of cover and to identify where resource is most needed is planned as part of the evaluation to be completed in June 2018.

For officers, having a rota with named appropriate adults whom they can contact directly helps to alleviate the pressures of working within custody, specifically by avoiding delays in interviewing detainees and the detainee

eventually being released. The evidential and procedural benefits of the scheme for the organisation were routinely identified by custody sergeants, as evidenced by the following comments; 'the custody clock is ticking down, which is a big stress and concern' (CS7) and 'they [the volunteers] stop that clock running out' (CS6), '[having the scheme] means we can carry on with investigation through the night' (CS6). As such the scheme helps to ensure due process by avoiding delays in investigation and avoiding unnecessary drain on police resources. Response times were, on occasion, hindered by the volunteer not having his or her own transport. In response, officers were prepared to collect volunteers from their home in order to avoid delays in investigation as following comment indicates, 'it is resource intensive to pick them up, but its better than having somebody sitting in the cells for eight hours waiting' (CS1).

NLAAS provides a 24/7 on call service, however several comments were made by police officers in the online survey and by custody sergeants about the inconvenience caused where police transport has to be used. This has particularly been an issue where there have only been a limited number of volunteers available. CS7 relates that if the custody suite is busy the staff will be unable to collect the AA and that the detainee will be made to wait until the morning when the AA can travel via public transport or the Emergency Duty Team may become available.

Custody officers appear to have adapted to the introduction of the scheme rather well and were utilising volunteers, although two officers recommended that the scheme could be better promoted to raise awareness amongst both custody staff, to increase use, and more widely across the force, particularly amongst investigating officers, to improve understanding of the process they need to follow to secure an appropriate adult.

Despite the scheme being well received and valued within custody suites, officers raised grave concerns regarding the voluntary nature of the scheme and its potential discontinuation. A number of Custody Sergeants expressed frustration regarding the lack of statutory provision and the lack of long term stability of provision, as evidenced by the following remarks, 'I would hate it if it collapsed as we'd be back with nothing' (CS5) and 'at the moment it feels very uncertain...it should be statutory, we are obliged to provide one [A volunteer appropriate adult]' (CS4). When asked to consider how NLAAS volunteers compared to local authority provision, officers commented that whilst appropriate adults from the EDTs (emergency duty teams) were more confident and more experienced, they were often less enthusiastic and were frequently unable to attend or were slower to attend due to being under resourced or being faced with competing priorities.

The Appropriateness of the Volunteers

Prior to the introduction of the scheme, custody officers, in light of the limited capacity of the local authority to respond, were dependent on family and friends of the detainee to act as an appropriate adult. Whilst a family member or friend provides familiarity and is trusted by the detainee, they are often inappropriate due to their potential involvement in the offence, history of conflict with the detainee and/or offence history, and/or do not have the appropriate knowledge and training to provide the necessary support and guidance to vulnerable persons. Custody officers therefore valued the competence of volunteers, specifically relating to their understanding of the requirements of the role and their possession of good judgement regarding when to intervene (see also Kemp and Hodgson, 2016) and provide support, and the maturity and attentiveness shown to the detained. All custody officers remarked that volunteers were prepared, helpful and that they act professionally in their interactions with both police

personnel and the detained. Some officers remarked that the volunteers, owing to their age and casual attire, were non-threatening and non-judgemental to the vulnerable adult, thereby helping place them at ease.

According to one Custody Sergeant some new volunteers may need to be more 'intrusive' (CS7), and more confident. Once volunteers have attended on a few occasions they quickly seem to build this confidence according to the data from the interviews with Custody Sergeants. Established volunteers are described as being effective, confident and comfortable in the custody environment.

Custody staff often do not differentiate between volunteers and paid AAs, as one Custody Sergeant states, 'The fact that they are volunteers is not in the forefront of peoples' minds' (CS7).

Survey data further indicates majority agreement among police officers who responded that volunteers are efficient, that they understand custody procedures, and that they offer effective support.

Volunteers Perspectives

Volunteers have reported positive and clear benefits of the scheme. They feel that they have gained valuable experience, skills and knowledge that has enhanced their employability. They express that the practical knowledge gained has reinforced the theoretical learning from their degree programmes. (V1, V2, VFG) Volunteers comment that they feel well prepared to undertake their role by the training given, that they feel well informed, and that the training was interesting, well delivered and informative. Specific comments were made about the delivery of training by an experienced Custody Sergeant, who was able to deliver the training

very effectively, and to enliven the delivery due to his extensive and practical knowledge of scenarios which could arise in custody.

Within the volunteer focus group one volunteer makes specific reference to the 40-page hand-out supplied in training, which is very detailed and is designed to support their learning in training – she states that this was very useful and informative (VFG).

Officer CS2 states that the volunteers are sometimes 'shocked' by the custody environment. All volunteers have found the custody suite visits, which constitute part of the training, to be an essential part of their preparation as an effective volunteer appropriate adult, and they express their thanks to the Custody Inspector who facilitates these visits for providing a safe, informative, and thorough tour and associated briefing. (V1, V2, VFG) It has further been suggested that it is useful for volunteers to see the check in procedures and risk assessments that take place in custody where possible (CS4).

One of the volunteers expresses concern that custody staff are unaware of the training that is given to the volunteer appropriate adult, and suggested that she would have liked to have some training sessions where the volunteer appropriate adult and custody staff are trained together so that they can gain a full mutual understanding of each others' needs and role.

Overall, the volunteers have been very positive about the knowledge gained in training and in practice, they have been able to make links to their degree studies. Volunteer number 1 states 'I'm grateful for the scheme, it's done me wonders' and goes on to list experience, knowledge, skills, and insight into her future chosen career as a police officer as the reasons for this.

Volunteers identified the skills and qualities that they feel are required to be appropriate in their role, they suggest that volunteer appropriate adults must be assertive, have good observation skills and communication skills, be good at listening and explaining, be open minded, and be non-

judgemental. They expressed that they felt that an AA had to focus on the vulnerability of the detainee, and not the offence committed, that the offending behaviours are the concern of the police and not the volunteer appropriate adult (VFG). They also express that a volunteer appropriate adult would be a caring person who is interested in people and in supporting people.

One volunteer describes the mutual support between police officers and volunteers 'It's new for everyone, so we support each other' (V2)

It is apparent from the comments of the volunteers that they feel that they are safe and that they are looked after inside custody suites; one of the volunteers comments that 'I feel I am kept comfortable and safe' (V2). This is unsurprising given the very consistent messages from all Custody Sergeants about what they do to keep everyone in custody safe, including on-going risk assessments, observations, and controlling the physical environment. The volunteer focus group (VFG) identified the following which they have been directed to by custody staff: the 'blue strip' (a wall alarm in all corridors in custody suites), the need to consider where you sit or stand in relation to police officers and detainees, that they are not to give anything to the detainee (one states that they were advised that a pen, for example, can be a very dangerous weapon), the availability of health services, the availability of counselling and support.

Volunteers perceive that they are valued by the custody staff. One volunteer commented that 'They are all thankful for you being there' (V1), and that 'They get frustrated if we can't go' (V1) which again, was apparent in the responses from the custody sergeants (see discussion of custody perspectives above).

Volunteers are expressing a need for further support for their role. Although counselling is available to them when needed via the University of Sunderland Health and Wellbeing service, they are requesting on-going

support at a peer level. This was identified by volunteer number 2 'It would be good to have a support group for the volunteers, so we can support each other' (V2) and also within the focus group where it was suggested that there could be a monthly coffee morning for the volunteers where they could get to know each other, support one another and where they could be given any briefings and refresher training. The focus group also suggested that a buddy scheme or some mentoring for new volunteers joining the scheme would be beneficial. The Focus group suggested that this would be a good place to do some further and in-depth specialised training on emotional resilience, specific learning disabilities and mental health disorders, for example.

Conclusions

NLAAS volunteers are perceived by police officers to be professional in their approach and efficient in carrying out their role of supporting vulnerable detainees during their time in custody. Volunteers attend promptly, and police officers report that custody wait times are reduced. Training of volunteers is effective, is well delivered, and is well received. The scheme is highly valued by police officers and by the volunteers and brings wide ranging benefits to both, in addition to the support afforded to vulnerable detainees. Appropriate Adult availability has improved since the scheme was initiated and is sufficient to meet demand, however will require regular monitoring and ongoing and regular recruitment in order to ensure that the operational risk of not being able to provide an Appropriate Adult to a vulnerable suspect remains low. Further on-going support and training to volunteers will be beneficial and should be informed by regular evaluation activities with input from relevant stakeholders.

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Donna Peacock

Donna Peacock is a Principal Lecturer in Social Studies at the University of Sunderland. Her research interests relate to cybercrime, cybersecurity, the impacts of technology on society, policing, and 'vulnerability'.

Donna has recently studied the impacts of gender in cybersecurity and is currently involved a further evaluation of the Northumbria Local Appropriate Adult Scheme (NLAAS) which provides support to vulnerable adults in custody (with Dr Faye Cosgrove). Donna is the scheme manager for NLAAS; organising, training and supporting the volunteers who work as Appropriate Adults in the Northumbria Police Force area.

Donna and Faye are commencing further research to identify disabling barriers in custody, and to gather service user input into research and evaluation relating to police custody for 'vulnerable adults (with Dr Stephen Macdonald)