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The true cost of policing football in England & Wales: Freedom of Information data from 2015-2019

European Society of Criminology Conference – Malaga, September 2022

Richard Hester (Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences, University of Gloucestershire)
rhester@glos.ac.uk
Dr Jon Hobson (Associate Professor of Social Sciences, University of Gloucestershire)

Paper:

Hester, Richard and Hobson, Jonathan (2022) The true cost of policing football in England & Wales: Freedom of Information data from 2015-2019; *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal (in final review)*

Research background

Background in football policing with Thames Valley Police as a Dedicated Football Officer (DFO), wanted to explore the friction between football clubs and police forces over the cost of policing matches

This paper is part of PhD research which examines how the police implement Special Police Services (SPS) for the policing of football in England and Wales

SPS allows the police to recover the costs of resources that are deployed within the ‘footprint’ of the event

Research context

AERIAL VIEW OF PORTMAN ROAD, IPSWICH. (ATTRIBUTION: "FILE:PORTMAN ROAD AERIAL (CROPPED).JPG" BY JOHN FIELDING FROM NORWICH, UK IS LICENSED UNDER CC BY 2.0)

Legal ruling - police cannot charge for resources deployed under SPS on public land outside a football ground (Ipswich Town Football Club v Suffolk Police, 2017).

Following the Ipswich ruling, Hester (2020) suggests that research is needed to clarify how taxpayers money is being spent on football policing, to ensure an informed debate on the issue.

Research context

Reported costs of £48m, with only £5.5m being recovered by police forces (South Yorkshire Police, 2019).

These figures were debated in Parliament and accepted as factual.

CC Mark Roberts calls for legislation change and the football industry to pay more towards policing costs for policing football (Sky Sports News, 2019).

Unnecessary and excessive police resourcing at football (Stott et al. (2019).

Improved dialogue between police and football supporters could lead to a reduction in football related violence (Stott et al., 2012; 2018; 2019).

South Yorkshire Police Infographic on the Cost of Football Policing. Data Source (https://www.southyorks.police.uk/media/4048/20190645-football-cost-infographic.pdf)

Methods

The following FOI was sent to all 43 police forces in England & Wales:

From the 2014/15 to 2018/19 football seasons, how much Special Police Services have you received each season from football clubs in your force area?

From the 2014/15 to 2018/19 football seasons, how much have you spent each season on football policing operations?

To establish further detail about the figures produced in 2019, an FOI was sent to South Yorkshire Police, and the NPCC:

You have stated that: Police forces nationally charge clubs £5,479,763.76, and unrecovered cost to police football nationally is £42,526,149.79.

Please explain how both these figures have been calculated

What is the timeframe that both these figures relate to?

All FOIs were submitted between March 2021 and January 2022.

Findings

Most police forces are not actively calculating how much they are spending on football policing

9 police forces provided data on spend on football policing, some were making a profit!

Average SPS received each season was £10.2m

Total SPS received in 2017/18 was £12.6m, more than double the amount quoted by South Yorkshire Police / NPCC.

The FOI data does not align with South Yorkshire Police / NPCC data.

The NPCC state they no longer hold the data or methodology used to calculate the figures that had been put into the public domain.

	SPS Received from football clubs					Amount spent on football policing				
Police Force	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1. Avon and Somerset Constabulary	£97,511	£353,618	£202,601	£366,243	£239,935	£69,862**	£188,401**	£241,009**	£229,315**	£221,300**
2. Bedfordshire Police	No data	No data	£53,167	£54,260	£79,063	No data	No data	£78,276	£72,129	£35,226
3. Cambridgeshire Constabulary	No data	£59,830	£69,139	£56,569	£49,916	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
4. Cheshire Constabulary	£85,776	£88,149	£58,275	£31,002	£27,304	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
5. City of London Police	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
6. Cleveland Police	£88,035	£84,876	£204,600	£163,699	£151,369	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
7. Cumbria Constabulary	£0	£30,818	£51,234	£50,127	£7,018	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
8. Derbyshire Constabulary	£342,172	£375,615	£413,268	£206,079	No data	£308,764	£522,526	£550,728	£556,491	£454,851
9. Devon and Cornwall Police	£25,177	£45,869	£38,453	£20,583	£22,603	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
10. Dorset Police	No data	£113,382	£124,231	£135,434	£126,952	No data	£434,804	£334,885	£421,729	£429,206
11. Durham Constabulary	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	0
12. Dyfed-Powys Police	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	0
13. Essex Police	£2,278	£18,722	£6,701	£0	£0	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
14. Gloucestershire Constabulary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15. Greater Manchester Police	No data	£2,544,455	£2,777,264	£2,073,861	£1,721,122	No data	£1,857,979**	£2,249,630**	£1,843,000**	£1,698,479**
16. Gwent Police	No data	No data	No data	£10,761*	£18,497	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
17. Hampshire Constabulary	£317,635	£302,828	£326,152	£176,155	£196,028	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
18. Hertfordshire Constabulary	No data	£142,454	£85,852	£32,874	£39,984	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
19. Humberside Police	No data	£287,651	£455,654	£427,519	£353,758	No data	£467,677	£549,577	£761,556	£401,622
20. Kent Police	£9,949	£5,930	£10,921	£25,778	£7,085	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
21. Lancashire Constabulary	£421,386	£391,112	£366,800	£411,217	£346,771	£346,212**	£290,177**	£454,680**	£538,931**	£496,036**
22. Leicestershire Constabulary	£304,090	£294,456	£385,668	£340,516	£232,018	£82,398**	£54,136**	£129,918**	£84,236**	£107,721**
23. Lincolnshire Police	No data	No data	£6,171	£20,268	£13,043	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
24. Merseyside Police	£980,799	£991,742	£928,835	£1,089,029	£1,069,787	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
25. Metropolitan Police Service	No data	No data	£613,146	£559,170	£682,197*	No data	No data	£9,656,892	£8,549,734	£10,658,173.63*
26. Norfolk Constabulary	£236,852	£156,062	£70,000	£70,000	£91,735	£94,460**	£63,372**	£31,160**	£66,145**	£40,542**
27. North Wales Police	£16,929	£11,569	£14,286	£14,083	£8,755	£197,325	£182,049	£323,737	No data	No data
28. North Yorkshire Police	£15,637	£16,917	£0	£2,735	£0	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
29. Northamptonshire Police	£39,971	£39,219	£67,293	£74,616	£31,107	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
30. Northumbria Police	£610,099	£497,414	£449,470	£511,237	£474,917	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
31. Nottinghamshire Police	£217,484	£162,745	£216,577	£282,801	£155,602	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
32. South Wales Police	£175,499	£152,410	£154,216	£190,846	£166,793	£95,282**	£69,353**	£131,305**	£118,227**	£126,932**
33. South Yorkshire Police	No data	£34,719	£1,130,775	£688,807	£427,591	No data	£133,591	£1,971,950	£740,828	£1,316,444
34. Staffordshire Police	£170,602	£94,054	£71,549	£122,781	£151,902	£353,966**	£327,641**	£235,575**	£238,121**	£185,177**
35. Suffolk Constabulary	£169,826	£118,309	£68,800	£54,138	£69,972	£70,155**	£128,073**	£83,238**	£57,719**	£59,738**
36. Surrey Police	No data	£2,571	£2,705	£5,125	£2,435	No data	£1,484	£7,036	£10,251	£3,125
37. Sussex Police	No data	£169,188	£261,798	£366,841	£244,526	No data	£166,044	£273,394	£578,787	£363,572
38. Thames Valley Police	£159,567	£176,213	£137,805	£131,374	£76,121	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
39. Warwickshire Police	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
40. West Mercia Police	No data	£40,002	£12,384	£28,121	£24,232	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
41. West Midlands Police	£1,052,927	£1,046,400	£1,118,909	£1,106,841	£1,100,519	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
42. West Yorkshire Police	£637,752	£1,027,180	£1,398,188	£2,634,970	£1,263,826	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
43. Wiltshire Police	£44,512	£55,608	£63,925	£43,829	£36,033	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
44. British Transport Police	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£571,406	£874,884	£826,680	£642,157	£219,510
Total	£6,222,465	£9,932,086	£12,416,812	£12,580,289	£9,710,516	£1,618,424	£4,887,307	£17,302,991	£14,867,198	£16,598,144

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Implications

The lack of transparency over the South Yorkshire Police / NPCC data is concerning – cannot be judged as accurate if there is no record of the methodology used to calculate it.

It is not known how the 9 police forces have calculated their spend on football policing.

A further 30 police forces would need to be spending about £1m each on policing football to reach the suggested total of £48m. Given the data already indicates that most forces are not spending that much, and the relatively small size and lack of demand for football policing in some forces, the £48m can be seen as an overestimate as opposed to a reliable fact.

There is disparity in resourcing between police forces, supporting existing research (see Stott et al, 2018; 2019; Hester, 2020).

Key question for debate

What is more important in terms of football policing?

How much it costs?

or

How it is policed?

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rhester@glos.ac.uk
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