



# **Building a police workforce for the future**

**The need to scrutinise changes to the workforce mix**

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# Introduction

Since 2000 the make-up of the police workforce has altered considerably. In March 2000 only 30 percent of the police workforce was made up of non-warranted officers. By 2009 the percentage of the workforce represented by police staff had increased to 40 percent<sup>1</sup>. This included the recruitment of 16,000 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), a new role created by the Police Reform Act 2002.

PCSOs perform an important role and their powers, scope and duties have been the subject of discussion and consultation almost since their creation. The *Building Communities, Beating Crime* White Paper published in 2004 proposed the development of a minimum set of powers which all PCSOs need to possess to play a full part in neighbourhood policing. The introduction of a standard set of powers for all PCSOs was enabled by the Police and Justice Act 2006 and in November 2007, Parliament approved an Order to bring in standard powers and duties from 1 December 2007.

There is no doubt that PCSOs have added valuable capacity to community policing and public reassurance. However, as we discuss later in this report, the growth in PCSO numbers has itself been outstripped by the growth of other police staff roles, which have not been subject to the same degree of consultation or scrutiny. Moreover, the growth of both PCSOs and other police staff have each out-paced the growth in the numbers of warranted police officers.

This gives the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) a number of grounds for concern. The first is that the business case for this change in the workforce mix has neither been made effectively, still less has it been proven convincingly.

Secondly, the impact of these changes upon the diversity of police officers requires serious consideration. Despite several recent pilot projects to vary the workforce mix between police officers and police staff, at no stage has the equality impact on police staff and police officers actually been identified. There are, in fact, grounds for

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated police staff figures include PCSO headcount

believing that there has been an adverse impact on the diversity of police officers although no regard has been given to this issue.

Finally, there is a real danger that some of the changes in the workforce mix will lead to a fundamental transformation of the approach to policing in the United Kingdom. As more policing roles are sub-divided and delegated to members of police staff, the core policing role becomes increasingly one of confrontation. Visible community reassurance and public engagement will no longer be regarded as the best use of time of a warranted police officer. This trend in its own right is concerning. Taken together with the impact upon diversity set out above, it is potentially alarming. One of the most significant developments in policing in recent years, following the landmark publications of the Stephen Lawrence Report and the earlier Scarman Inquiry, has been the acknowledgement that the police service should reflect the communities it serves. If police officers are not reflective of wider society, but at the same time are concentrated in coercive and confrontational roles, this could have major implications for the relationship between the police and wider community.

Against this backdrop, the PFEW is calling for a debate about whether or not changes in the workforce provide the public with the level of service it has a right to expect. The PFEW remains open to suggestions which improve the standard of policing in England and Wales. However, changes should not be made on any substantial scale until they have been proven to work. To that end each staff role must be shown to provide better value for money for the public without compromising either the quality or the fundamental mission of the police service.

## **The change in staff ratios over the last decade**

As indicated in Table 1 of Annex 1, in the year 2000 the average ratio of police officers to police staff (excluding traffic wardens) was 2.3 to 1<sup>2</sup>. By 2009 the average was 1.4 to 1. (1.7 to 1 if we exclude PCSOs from the police staff headcount).

In every force in England and Wales since 2000 the growth in police staff numbers has outstripped the growth in police officer numbers (See Annex 1). Nationally there

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<sup>2</sup> Police Officer and PCSO numbers: Police Service Strength. House of Commons Library. 3 September 2009. Police Staff numbers were obtained from the Annual Home Office Statistical Bulletin

has been a 16 percent increase in police officers but an 80 percent increase in police staff (49 percent excluding PCSOs). South Yorkshire has seen a 5 percent drop in officer numbers against a 76 percent increase in staff (52 percent excluding PCSOs). North Yorkshire, the force which had the greatest increase in police staff at 158 percent (122 percent excluding PCSOs), saw only a 12 percent increase in officers.

Surrey has the lowest ratio of officers to staff. It is the first force where the number of police staff exceeds that of officers. It has the lowest detection rate in England and Wales. This does little to support the likelihood that civilianising policing duties that do not require warranted powers will lead to improved performance or value for money for the public.

However, Surrey is not completely alone; a number of forces are close behind. 29 out of 43 forces have less than 1.5 officers to each member of staff. Whilst these numbers are less dramatic if we do not include PCSOs in the numbers of police staff, there are still 15 forces with less than 1.5 officers to each staff member. In 11 forces police staff numbers have increased at 10 times the rate of officers or more. In Durham police officer numbers have increased by 0.5 percent while staff numbers have increased by 86 percent - an incredible 167 times the rate of officers.

The PFEW is supportive of changes that improve the service provided to the public. However, we question why it makes sense for staff numbers to increase at such an extraordinary rate while officer numbers are increasing slowly or even beginning to decline. In the current environment where all public spending will be under extreme scrutiny this question has to be addressed once and for all.

## **The range of staff roles within the police service**

Many staff roles have been introduced with the admirable aim of freeing officers from administrative tasks and giving them more time to undertake frontline duties. Indeed, the PFEW acknowledges that many staff roles may have a positive impact on performance, customer satisfaction, or both.

For example, we are aware that co-ordinators in CID teams can take administrative work away from officers and their role of keeping in touch with victims to update them

on the investigation can lead to increased satisfaction. Volume Crime Scene Investigators can attend crimes that would previously not have justified the attendance of a Scenes of Crime Officer. This can lead to increased public satisfaction even if it does not necessarily translate into an increase in detection rates.

However, the value of other roles is less convincing. For example we are aware of a force which introduced Civilian Public Protection Review Officers to take on the responsibility of managing “lower risk“offenders. In practice police officers retained overall responsibility for the offenders even though they had no day to day contact with them. Therefore, ultimately it is hard to argue that the supervising officers’ burden is significantly reduced.

These are only isolated examples of the types of role being undertaken by non-warranted officers. The full range is currently unquantifiable and in our view none have been adequately evaluated before being adopted into the workforce. In 2001 the Home Office published a research paper, *Diary of a Police Officer*<sup>3</sup>. The report concluded that an average of 17 percent of the average police officer’s shift was spent out of the station on patrol. In March 2010, in response to a parliamentary question, the Home Office stated that time spent on patrol by police officers in 2003-2004 was 14.2 percent and in 2007-2008 was 13.8 percent. This would appear to confirm that the increased use of police staff failed in this regard at least.

What is more worrying, though, is that it has become impossible to keep abreast of the variety of staff roles that have been introduced across the 43 forces of England and Wales over the past decade. Although the Police Staff Council has negotiated a national pay structure, it is based on 45 different grades, it does not apply to the Metropolitan Police and it may be varied by local agreement. There is also limited national training offered to ensure staff members in similar roles are trained to the same standard in different forces. All these factors contribute to making the task of ascertaining whether or not staff roles provide value for money extremely difficult. Yet, this is something that must be evidenced before decisions are taken on how public funds should be spent on the police workforce of the future.

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<sup>3</sup> Home Office Police Research Series 149, *Diary of a Police Officer*, PA Consulting Group, 2001

## **Diversity**

The proportion of officers from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities has increased from 2 percent in 2000 to just over 4 percent in 2010, a fact that does not compare well with the 9 percent of the overall population from BME communities. Even this modest, if unsatisfactory, increase may be short-lived if the trend towards workforce modernisation continues. Forces are often quick to claim that civilianising policing tasks and increasing numbers of support staff results in a more diverse workforce. This may be true, but at no stage has the diversity of police staff and police officers been separately measured. Forces must conduct adequate equality impact assessments prior to making changes to their workforce mix, especially given the strong concern that those aspects of the police officer's job that remain after the workforce is "modernised" are those which have, so far, proven less attractive to female and BME officers. We have already seen evidence of an increased threat of employment tribunals within the pilot forces in the Workforce Modernisation Programme. If our fears prove to be accurate, the profile of warranted officers may actually become less diverse and more white and male than at present and we will drift further away from the goal of police officers reflecting the make-up of the public they serve.

## **Value for Money**

In the name of "Workforce Development" increases in police staff numbers are often funded by a reduction in police officer posts on the assumption that police staff members are a more efficient use of resources. For example, Surrey Police recently calculated that the performance of their Targeted Patrol Team could be improved by reducing the police officer number by 11 Police Constables and recruiting 15 Police Support Officers at no extra cost. This increase in overall headcount is an attractive proposition to any senior officer with stretched resources. However, in order to prove whether or not this is a better option it is necessary not only to monitor the effect on performance but to compare the actual total staffing costs of officers and staff over a significant period of time. This means taking into account all additional costs e.g. training, overtime and turnover levels. It is a time-consuming process and one which forces are generally reluctant to undertake in sufficient detail. We are aware of no

example where a force has offered definitive proof, substantiated by detailed and accurate data, over a sufficient period of time. We would welcome such analysis being undertaken and we believe some forces would have sufficient data to undertake a robust evaluation if there were the will to do so.

## **Resilience**

It is important to highlight that short term gains are not sufficient justification for permanent change. Changes must be tested over the long term to show they are sustainable and that the workforce remains sufficiently resilient in times of unforeseen demand. We know that senior officers believe a workforce with a large proportion of police staff is less flexible and less resilient than one consisting wholly of officers. Indeed, it must be since staff employment contracts do not offer the same flexibility to the Chief Constable as Police Regulations.

Staff salaries and benefits vary by force. Taking PCSOs as an example, they will typically work a 37 hour week in shifts between 8 am and midnight, with a shift allowance paid for working unsociable hours. Police staff cannot be ordered to remain on duty if they are needed once they have worked their contracted hours, whether or not they do so is reliant on the good will of the member of staff involved. In contrast, police officers do not have employment contracts but are governed by Police Regulations and Determinations 2003 (as amended). They can be required to remain on duty after a shift ends, they can be recalled to duty between two shifts and they can be required to begin a shift earlier than rostered.

We recognise that the NPIA is currently embarking on work on the future resilience of the workforce. However, this work has been left undone for too long. Even now, the NPIA acknowledges that few forces have shown any interest in a tool they produced to help test workforce resilience under a range of scenarios. It is hard to understand why forces would ignore this tool unless they were concerned about what they might discover. However, this is not a consideration that can be ignored any longer. It will be extremely unfortunate if we have to wait until the service reaches breaking point before we give this issue the consideration it merits.

# The future nature of policing

Reconfiguring a workforce and allocating tasks that do not require warranted powers to a member of staff inevitably leads to a risk of silos developing and the potential loss of the omni-competence of the office of constable. For example, PCSOs make up a significant proportion of the public facing arm of the police service but they are employed to engage in non-confrontational duties and were never meant to perform the job of a police officer.

PCSOs are designated a set of standard powers under Schedule 4 of the Police Reform Act. These include powers such as the ability to require a name and address, issue certain Fixed Penalty Notices and to seize drugs. In addition to these powers there are optional powers that may be designated by the Chief Officer of their force. These include the power to detain and the power to search detained persons for dangerous items. Although this mix of standard and discretionary powers can be confusing for members of the public, we acknowledge that at least PCSOs have some national consistency in their powers and duties. Other staff roles are designated powers and tasks decided entirely at force level. Such roles are even more confusing, if not actually misleading, to members of the public.

Given that PCSOs have no power of arrest it is inevitable that, with the level of interaction they have with the public, they will encounter situations they are not equipped to handle. In such instances they will need to call on the service of a police officer if an arrest is required, drawing on resources engaged elsewhere and having a potentially negative impact on resilience. The PFEW is particularly concerned about this “Taylorist” division of labour approach to policing because we fear that if officers ultimately only perform roles that require warranted powers this will largely consist of tasks that entail conflict with members of the public

This would seem to be a shift away from the tenet of the 9 principles of policing (see Annex 2) which focus on the need for public approval, cooperation and respect. If the public as a whole perceives officers to engage primarily in confrontational activity, these will be almost impossible to retain.

# Action

The PFEW believes it is time that the Home Office, APA and ACPO had an open and thorough discussion with staff associations to ascertain:

1. the full range of police staff roles in existence throughout England and Wales
2. whether civilianising tasks that do not require warranted powers has a negative impact on police officer diversity
3. whether specific staff roles have a positive impact on performance or public satisfaction
4. whether that impact provides better value for money to the public than the equivalent cost of police officer

Such a discussion must be backed by robust independent research that is supported and trusted by all stakeholders.

We do not deny that this may involve significant investment. However, the alternative is that forces will continue experimenting on an ad-hoc basis resulting in localised differences in police workforces with no consensus on the merits or otherwise of a particular workforce mix.



# **ANNEX 1**

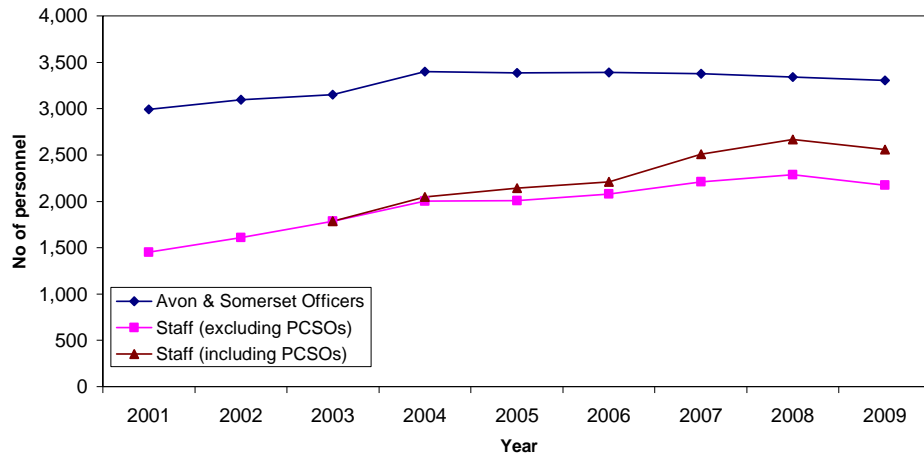
## **Police officer and police staff numbers for forces in England and Wales**

**TABLE 1**

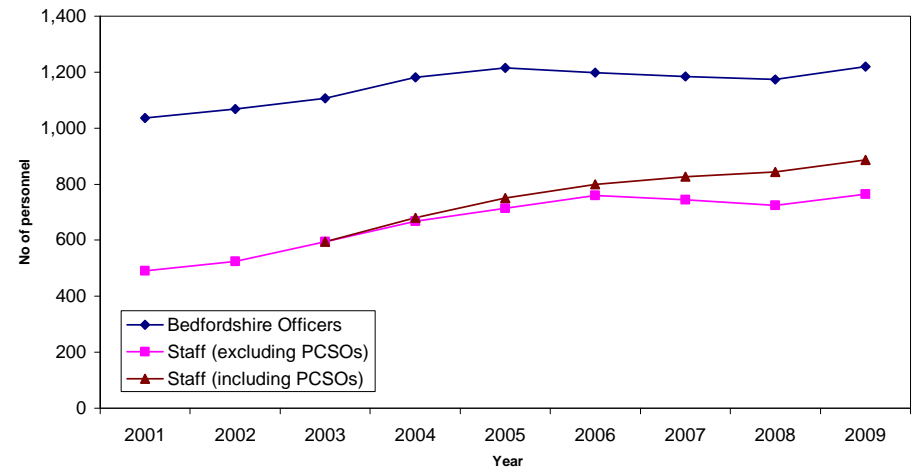
	Officer % increase/ decrease in last 10 years	Staff % increase/ decrease in last 10 years (inc PCSOs)	No of officers per staff (inc PCSO) member in 2000	No of officers per staff (inc PCSO) member in 2009	Staff % increase/ decrease in last 10 years (exc PCSOs)	No of officers per staff member (exc PCSOs) in 2000	No of officers per staff member (exc PCSOs) in 2009
Avon & Somerset	13	78	2.0	1.3	52	2.04	1.52
Bedfordshire	19	81	2.1	1.4	56	2.10	1.60
Cambridgeshire	14	136	2.5	1.2	97	2.46	1.43
Cheshire	6	108	2.4	1.2	80	2.44	1.43
City of London	10	21	2.6	2.3	4	2.57	2.71
Cleveland	25	55	2.4	1.9	22	2.36	2.42
Cumbria	16	96	2.3	1.4	73	2.31	1.55
Derbyshire	19	81	2.2	1.4	56	2.15	1.65
Devon & Cornwall	24	60	2.1	1.6	33	2.12	1.97
Dorset	12	66	1.9	1.3	43	1.90	1.49
Durham	1	86	2.6	1.4	57	2.64	1.69
Dyfed Powys	13	99	2.9	1.6	76	2.89	1.86
Essex	23	88	2.1	1.4	55	2.08	1.66
Greater Manchester	20	65	2.4	1.7	37	2.41	2.10
Gloucestershire	23	80	2.3	1.6	46	2.30	1.94
Gwent	13	100	2.5	1.4	72	2.54	1.67
Hampshire	8	86	2.4	1.4	63	2.37	1.57
Hertfordshire	20	103	2.0	1.2	74	1.99	1.37
Humberside	8	105	2.3	1.2	67	2.30	1.48
Kent	16	71	1.9	1.3	48	1.95	1.53
Lancashire	15	70	2.2	1.5	39	2.24	1.84
Leicestershire	17	80	2.5	1.6	51	2.48	1.92
Lincolnshire	8	88	2.2	1.2	58	2.16	1.48
Merseyside	9	83	2.8	1.7	52	2.80	2.01
Metropolitan	26	77	2.4	1.7	34	2.40	2.27
Norfolk	19	106	2.1	1.2	64	2.11	1.53
North Wales	12	89	2.7	1.6	59	2.70	1.92
North Yorkshire	12	158	2.6	1.1	122	2.61	1.31
Northamptonshire	16	120	1.9	1.0	92	1.86	1.13
Northumbria	6	64	2.7	1.7	46	2.67	1.95
Nottinghamshire	8	71	2.2	1.4	47	2.15	1.58
South Wales	6	90	2.7	1.5	60	2.71	1.80
South Yorkshire	-5	76	2.3	1.2	52	2.27	1.42
Staffordshire	1	81	2.5	1.4	53	2.53	1.66
Suffolk	12	71	1.9	1.2	45	1.91	1.47
Surrey	2	154	2.3	0.9	127	2.34	1.05
Sussex	12	87	2.1	1.3	57	2.13	1.52
Thames Valley	14	91	2.1	1.2	62	2.09	1.47
Warwickshire	8	111	2.3	1.2	74	2.28	1.42
West Mercia	29	91	1.8	1.2	65	1.81	1.41
West Midlands	19	63	2.7	2.0	32	2.67	2.40
West Yorkshire	20	93	2.2	1.4	58	2.19	1.66
Wiltshire	8	76	2.0	1.2	52	1.98	1.42
<b>National</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Maximum	29	158	2.9	2.3	127	2.9	2.7
Minimum	-5	21	1.8	0.9	4	1.8	1.1



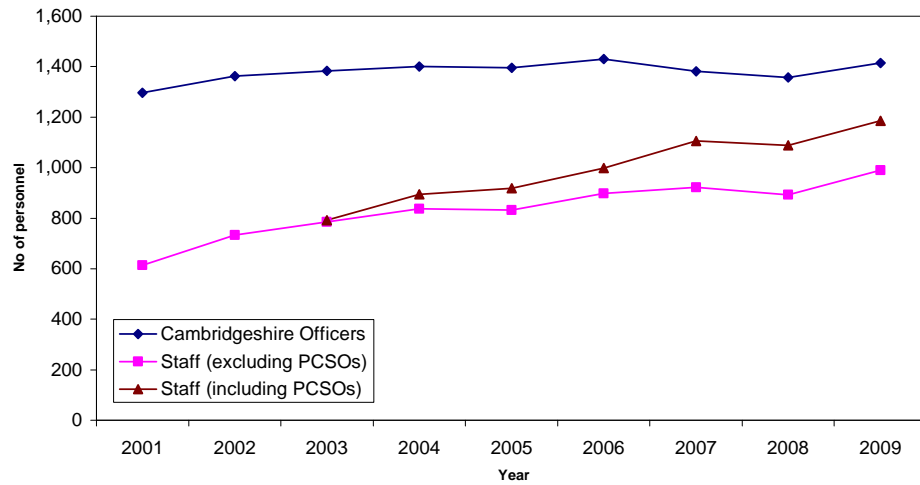
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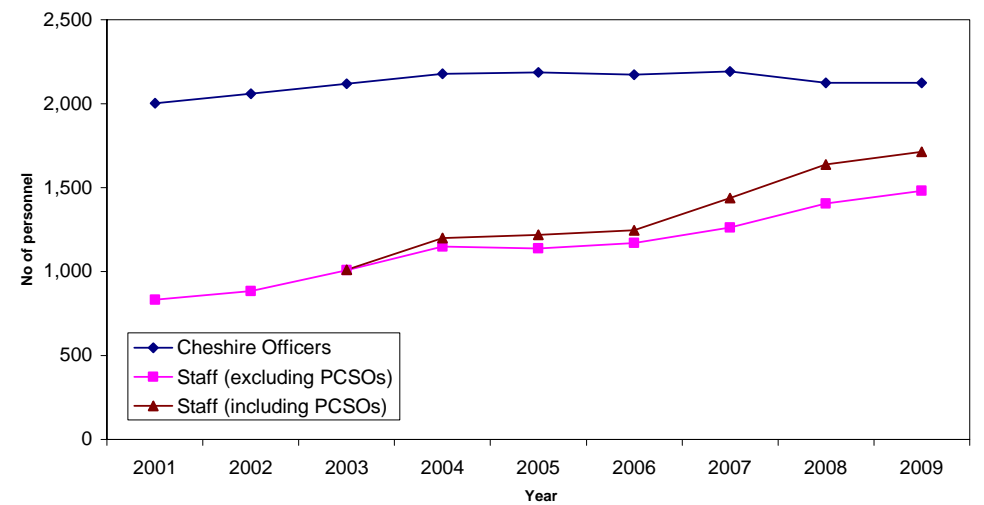
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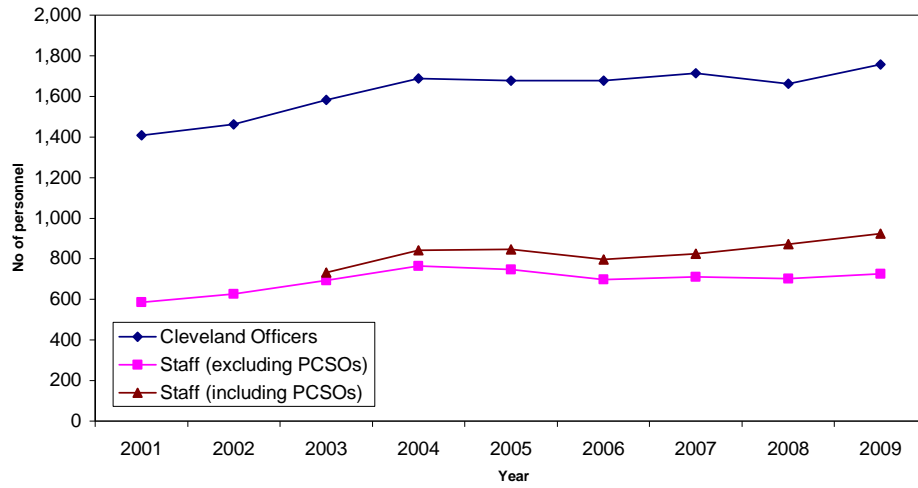
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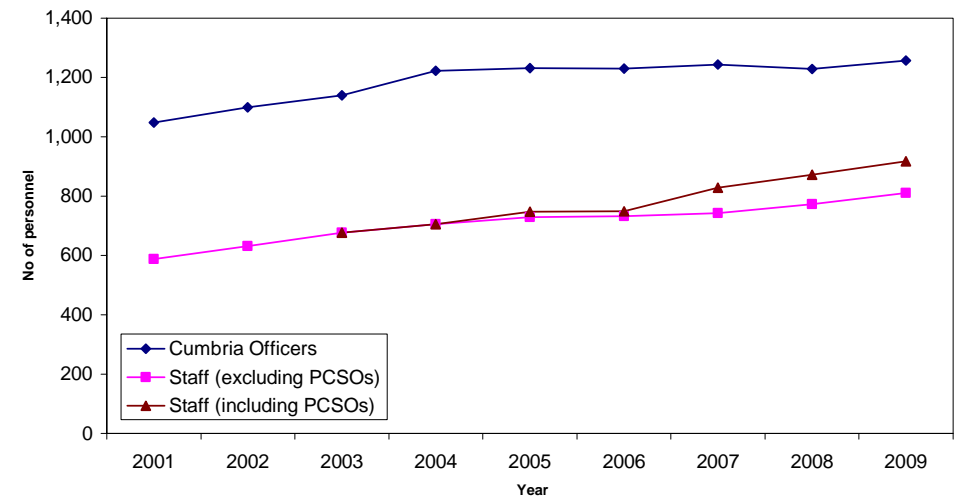
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**Cleveland**



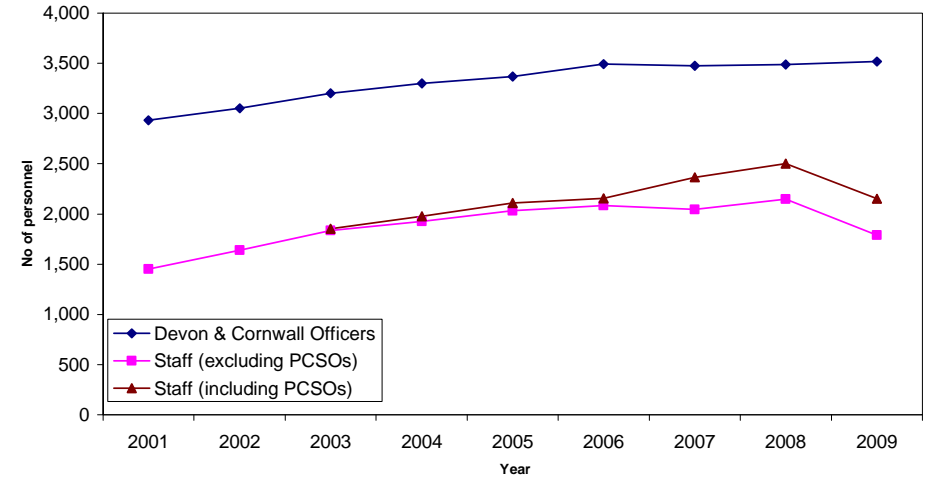
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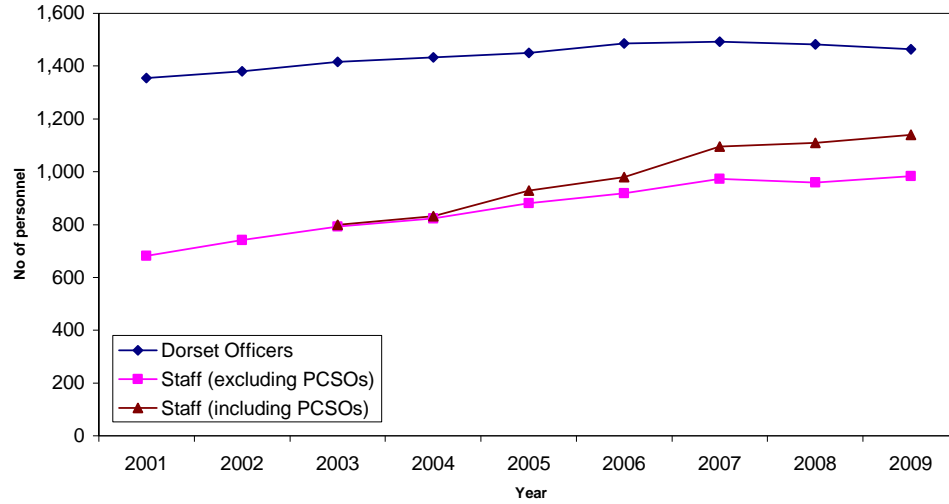
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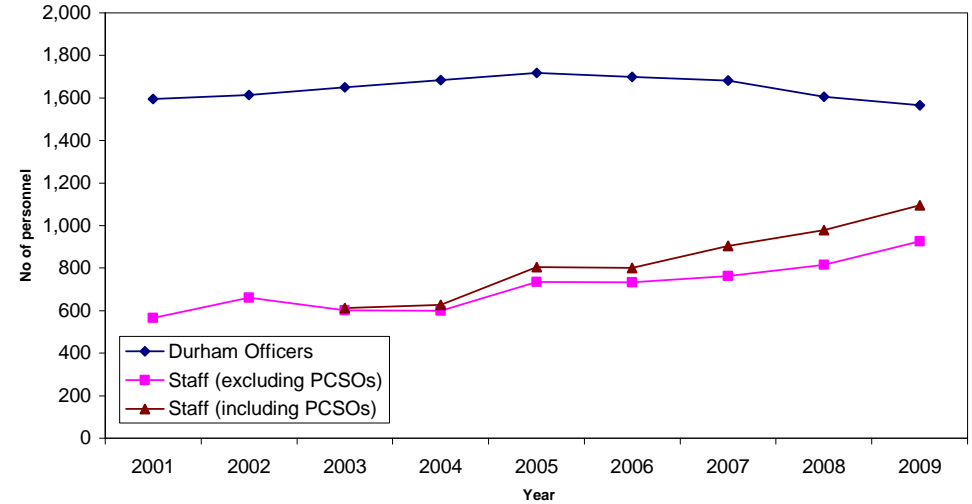
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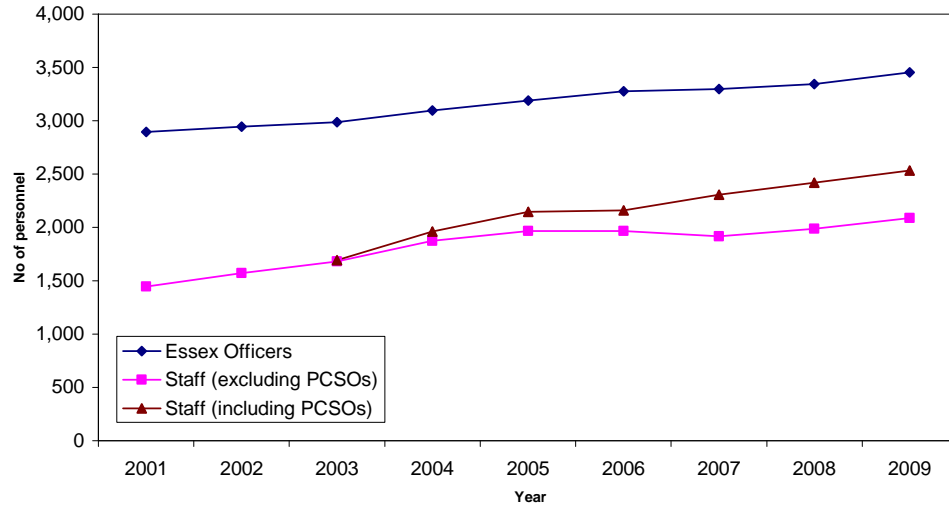
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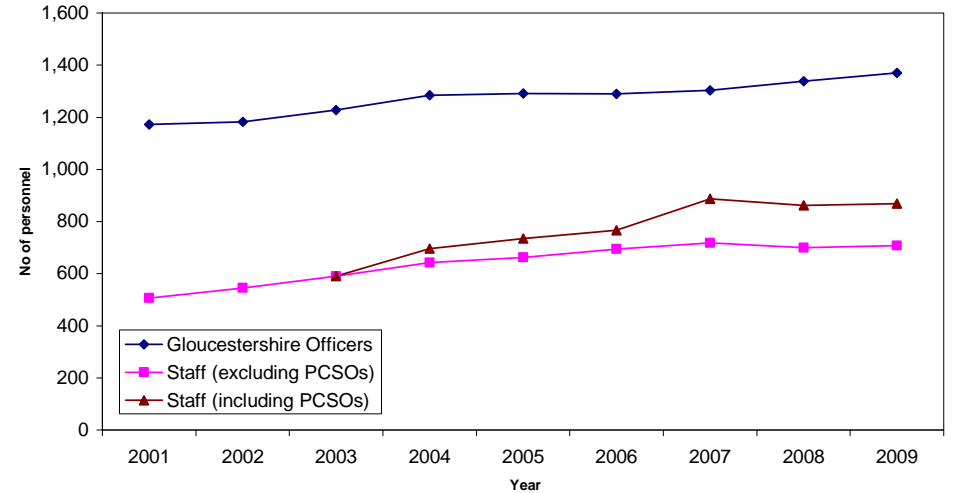
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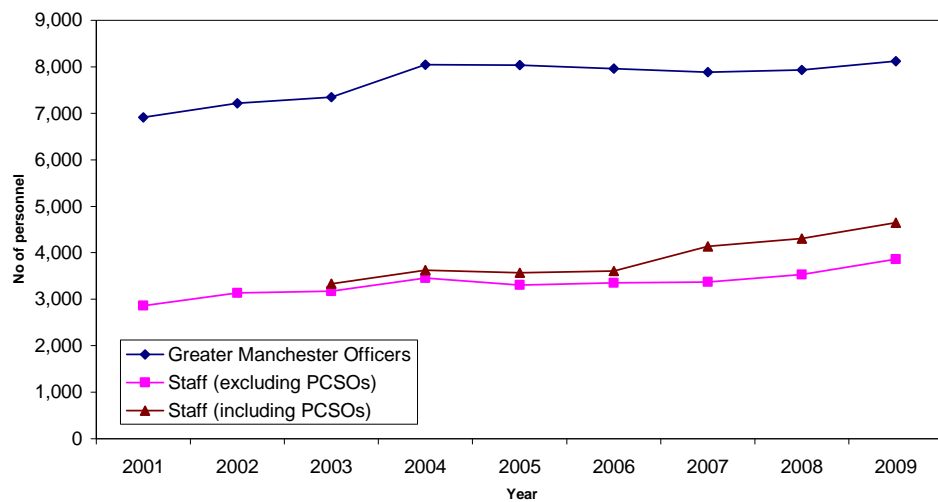
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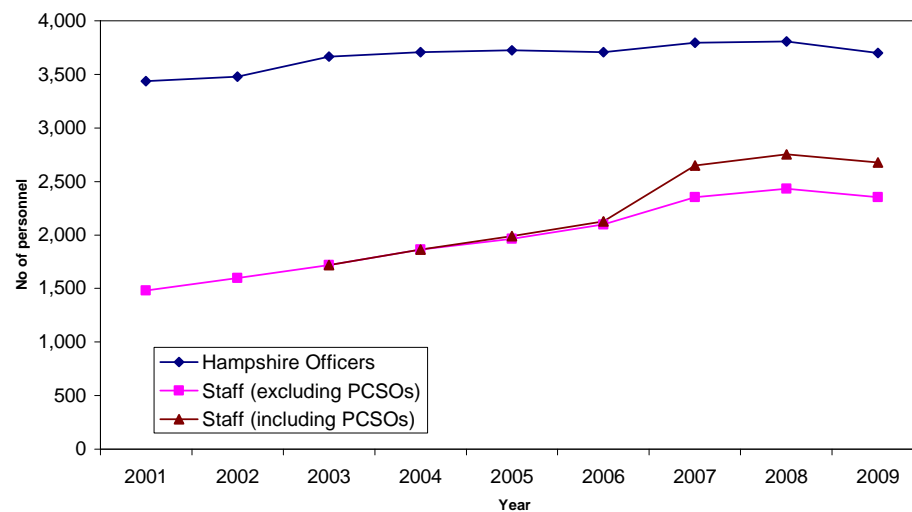
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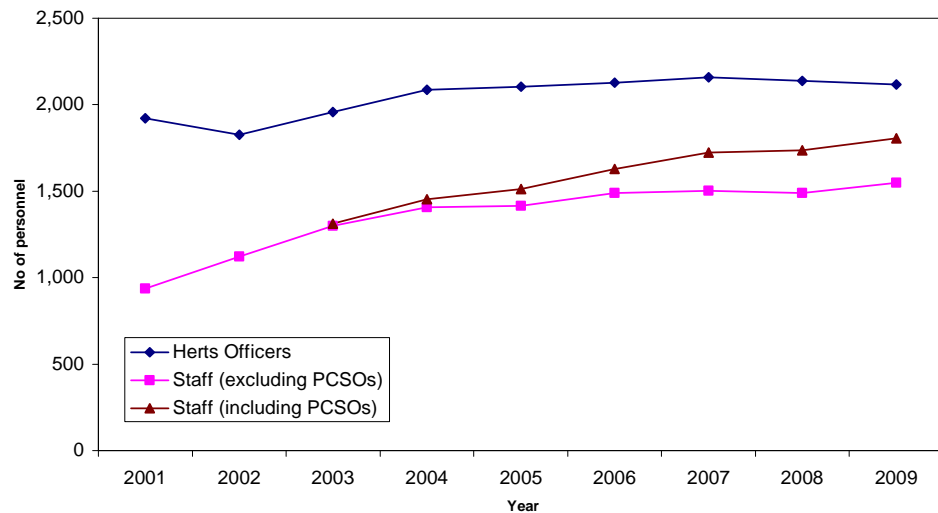
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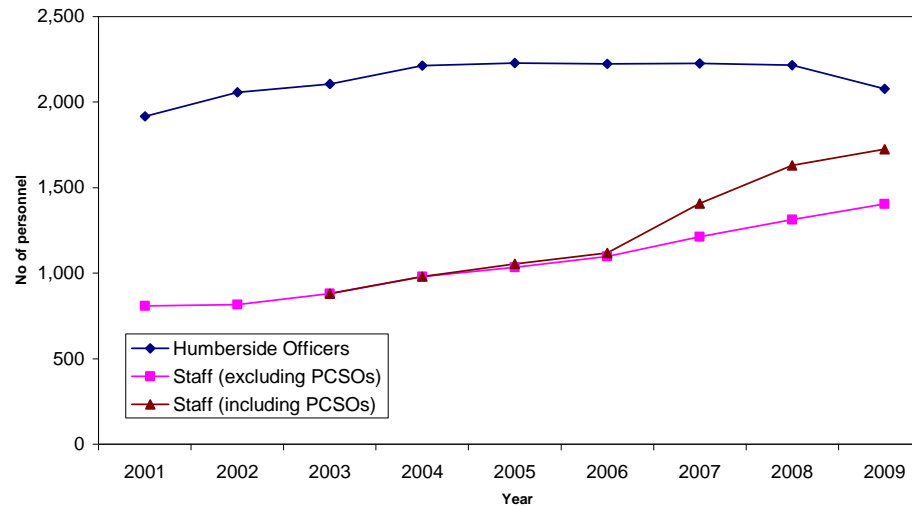
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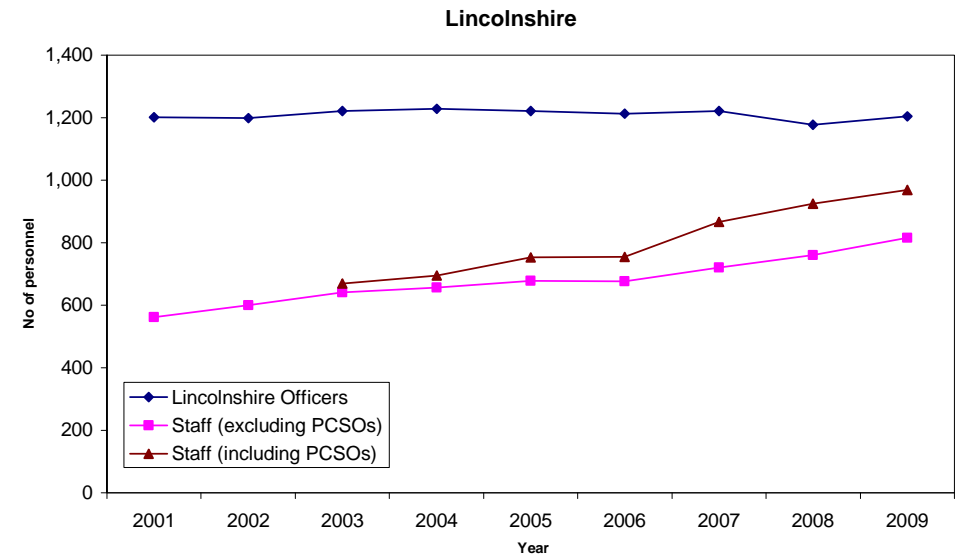
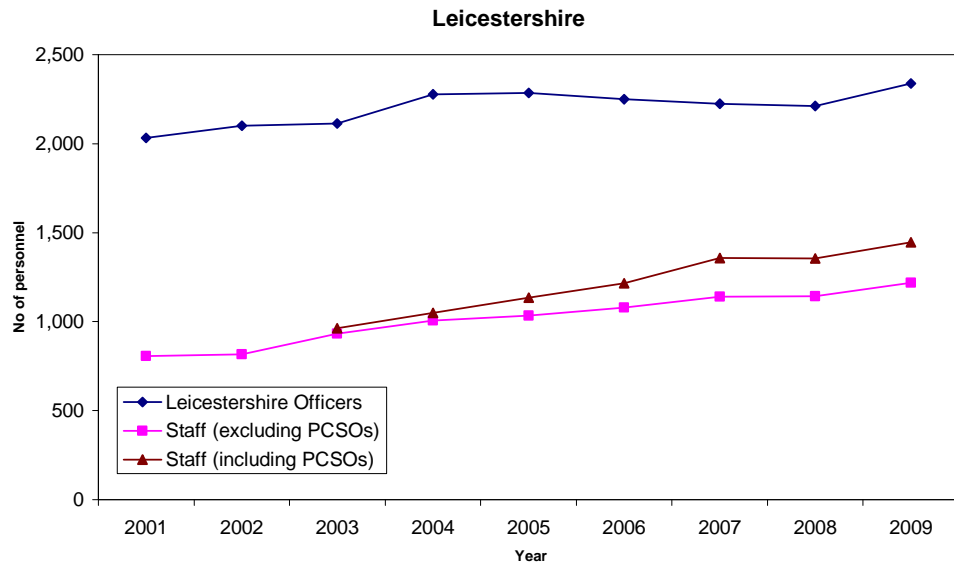
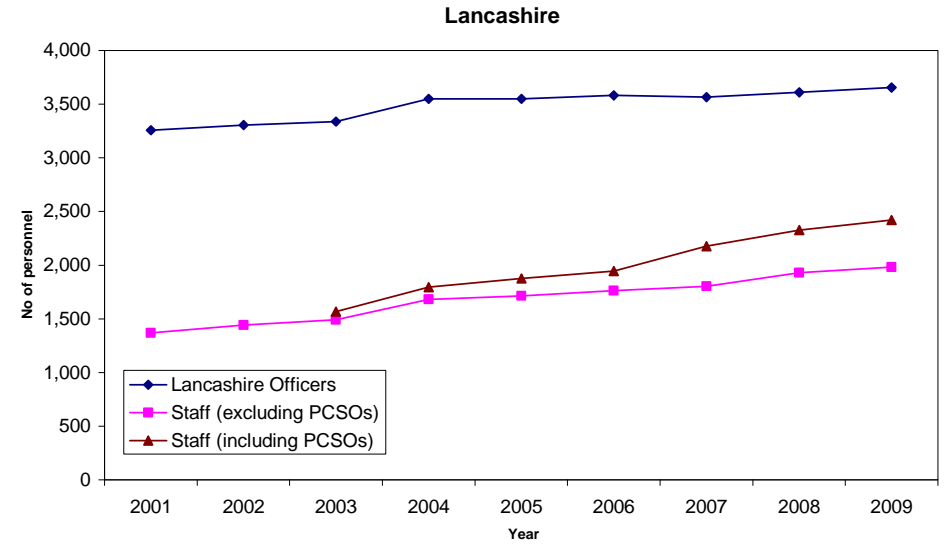
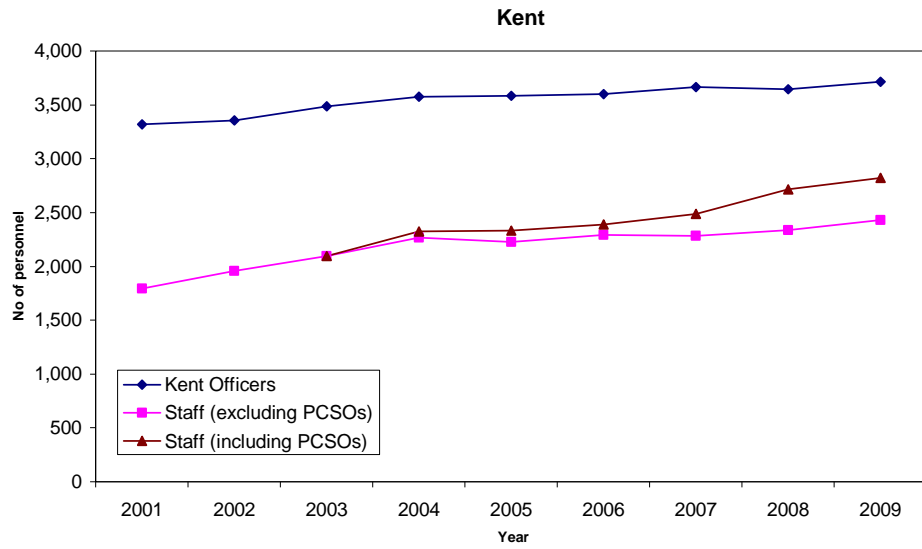


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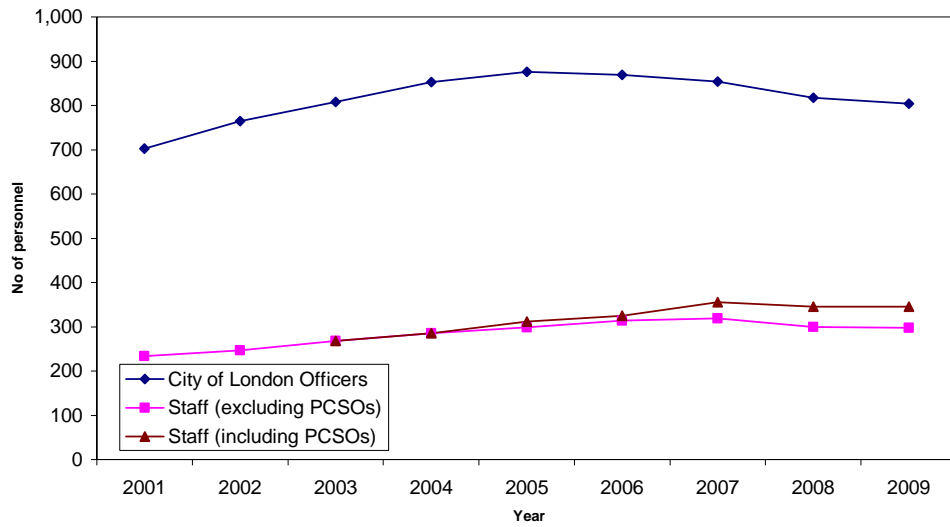


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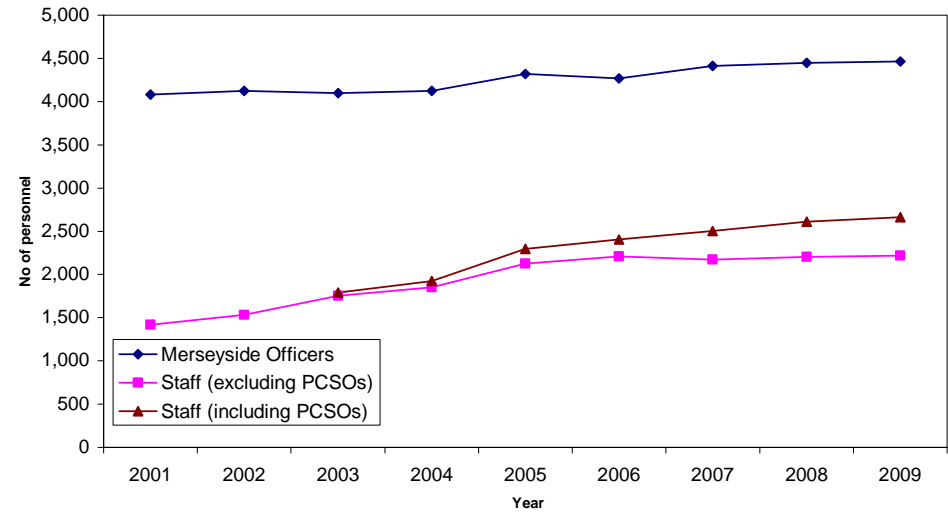




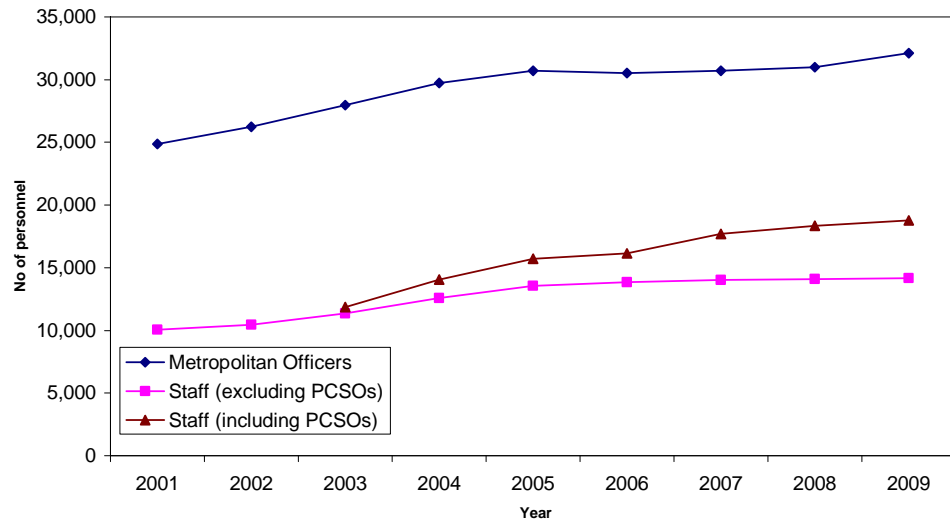
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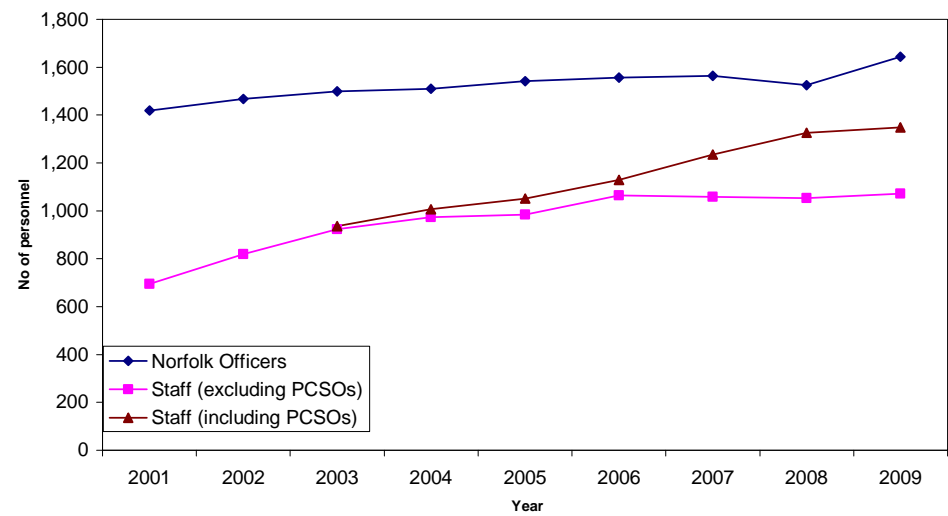
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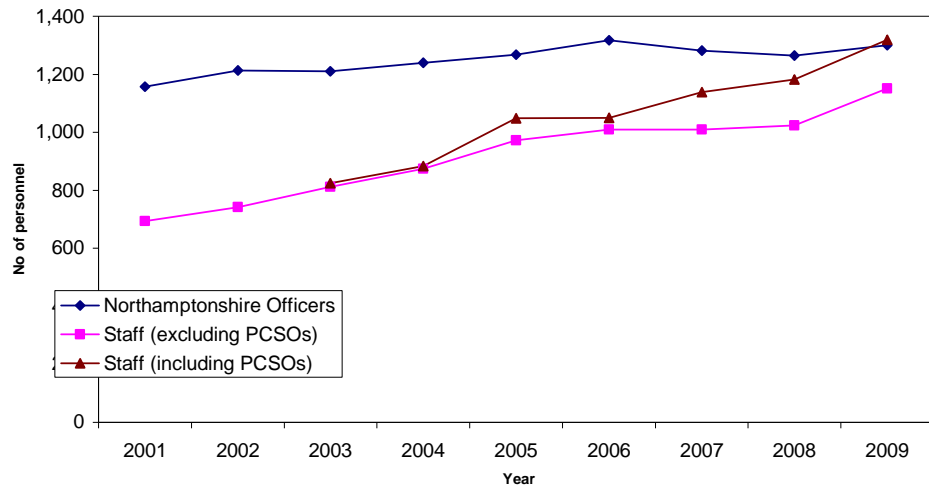
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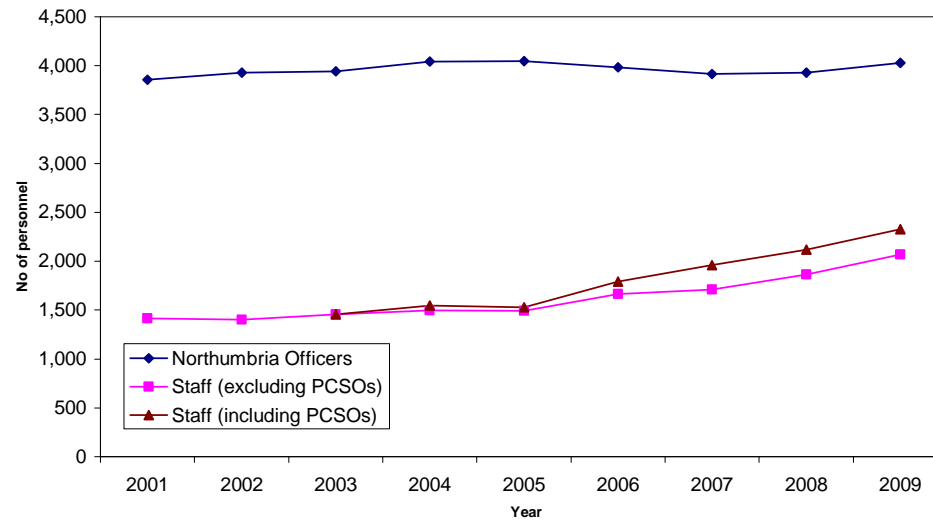
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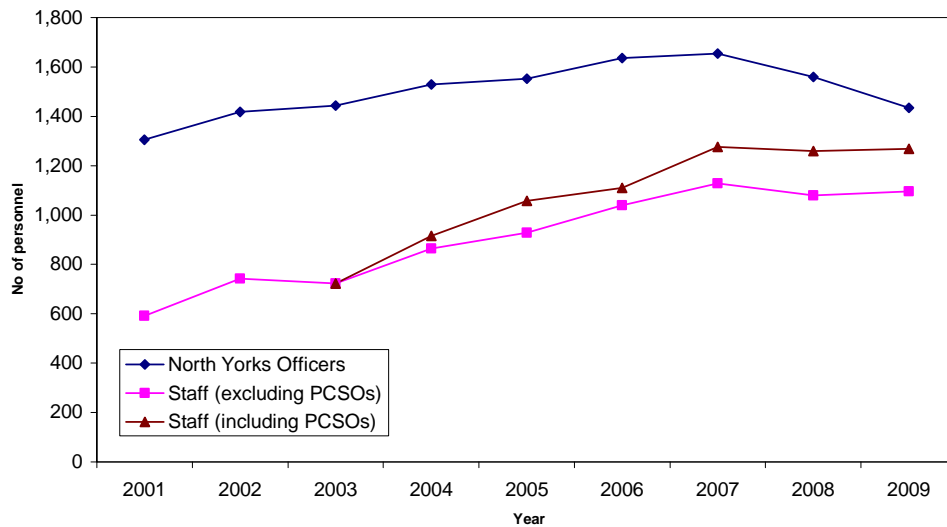
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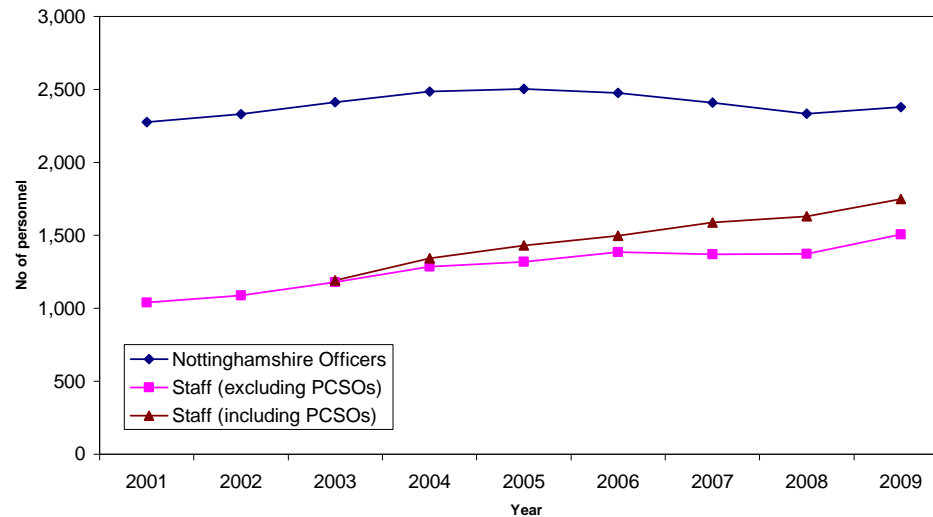
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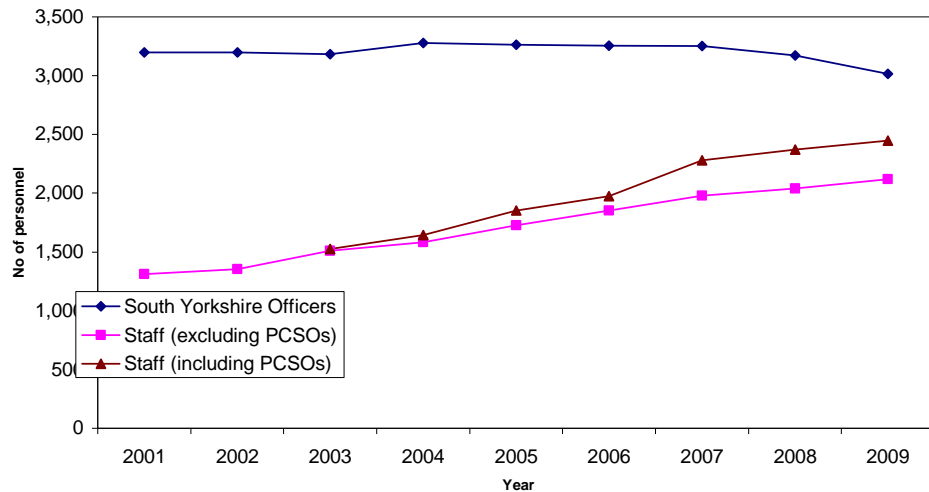
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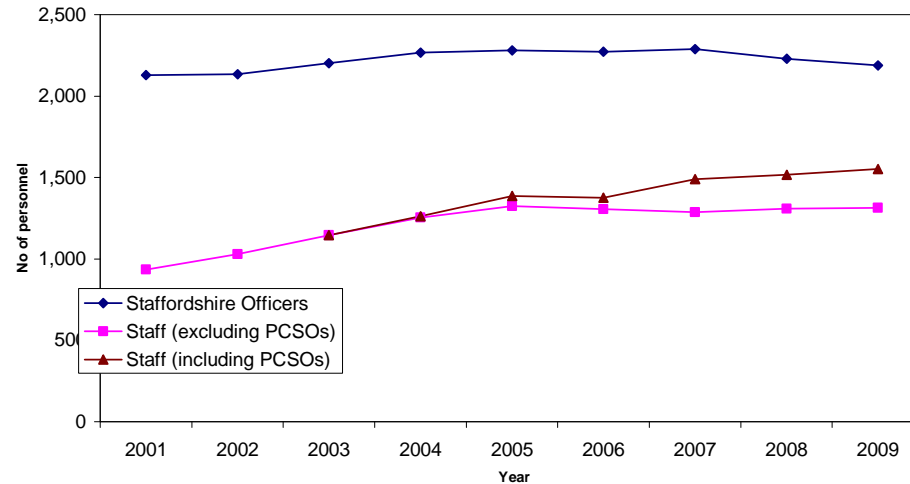
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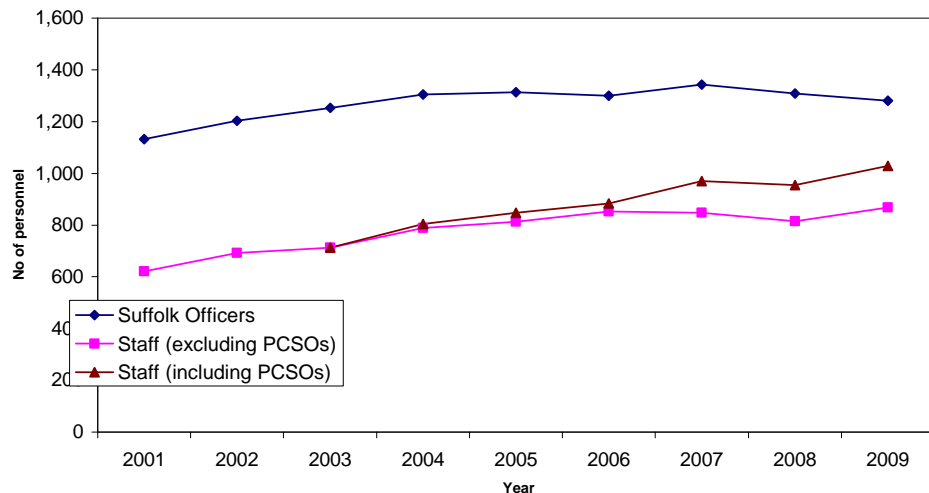
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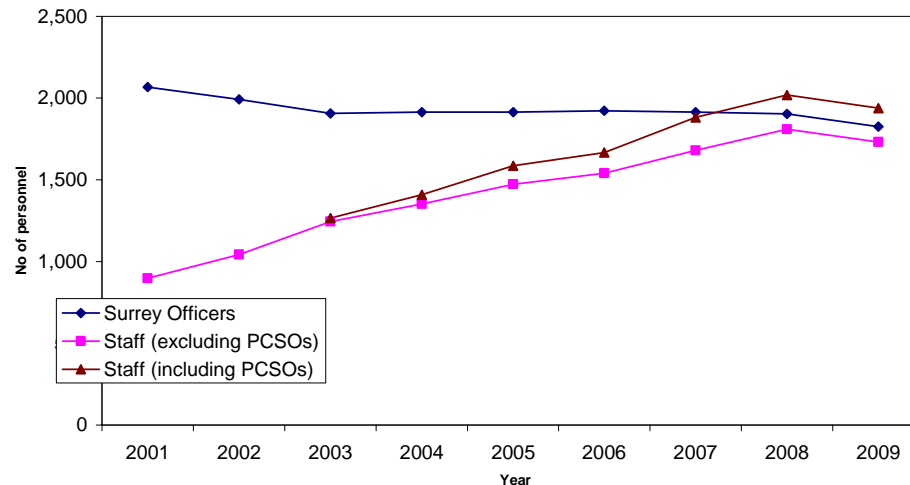
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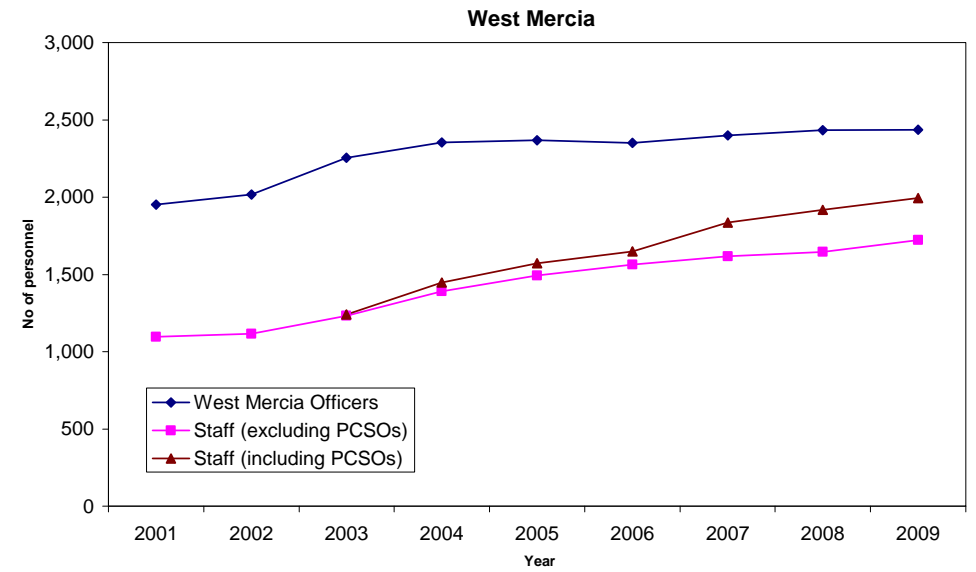
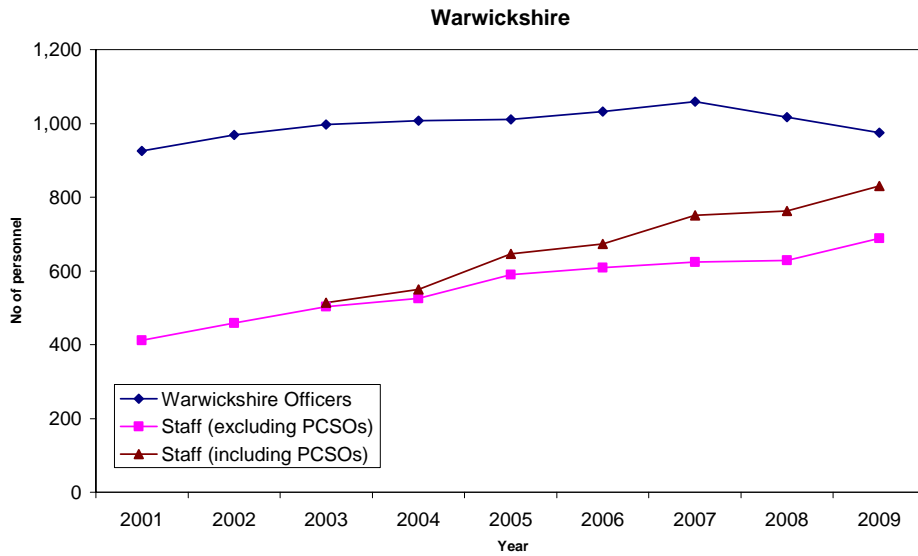
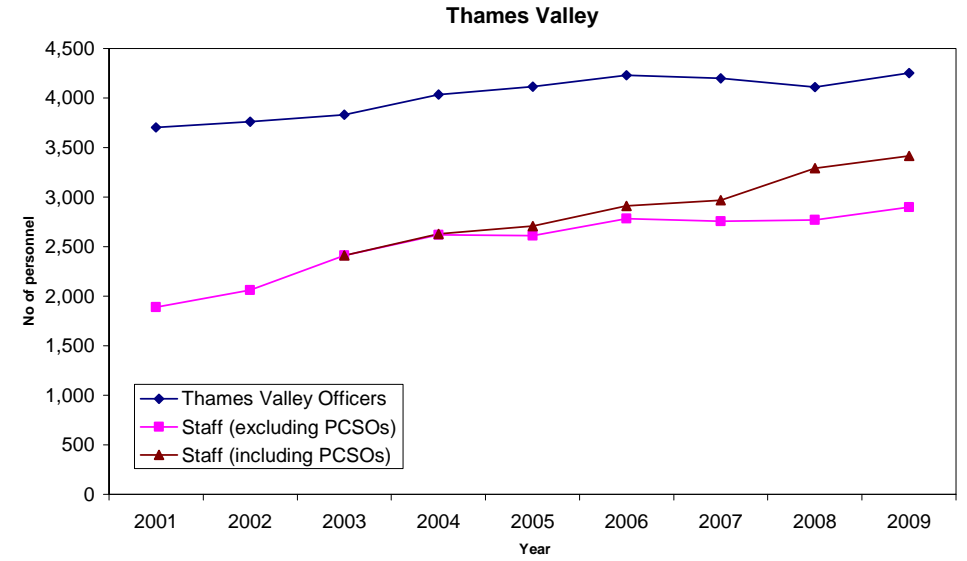
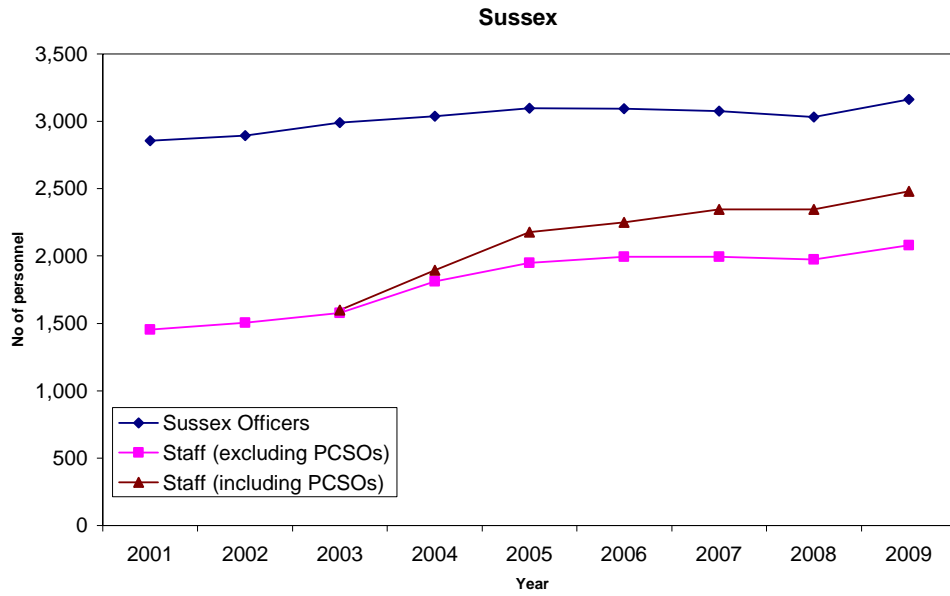


**Suffolk**

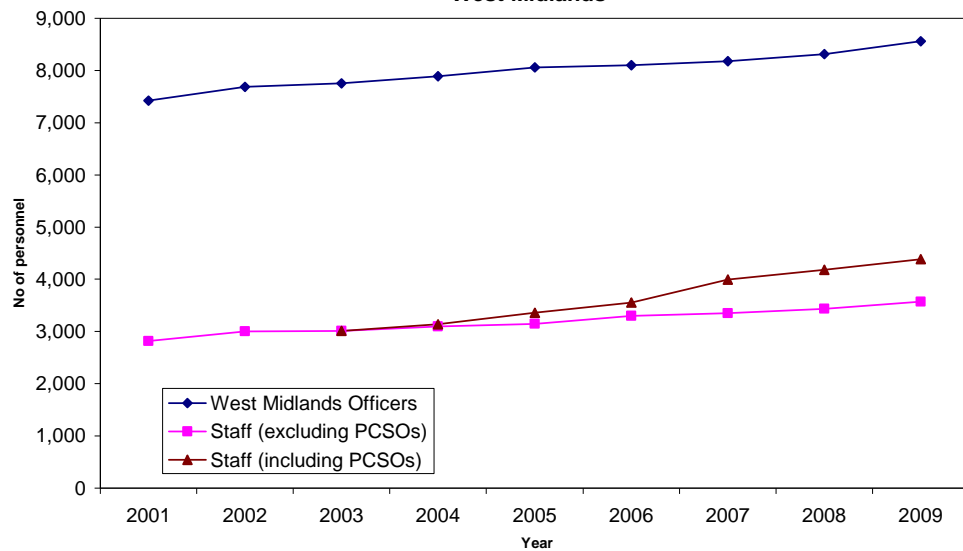


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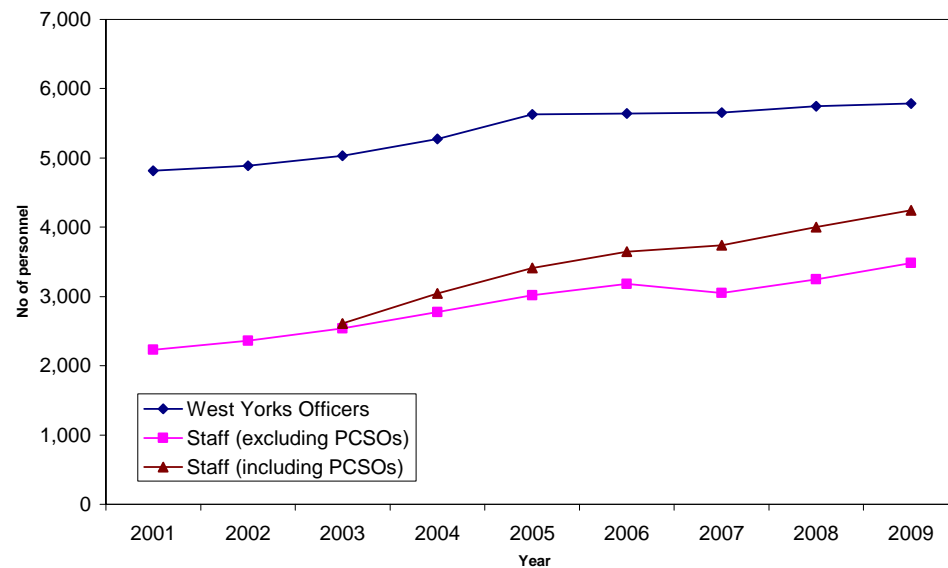




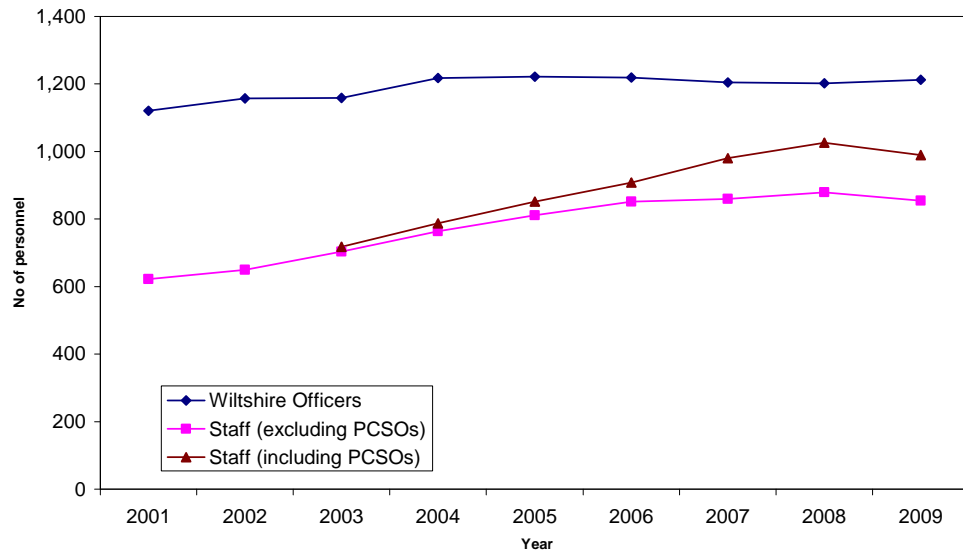
**West Midlands**



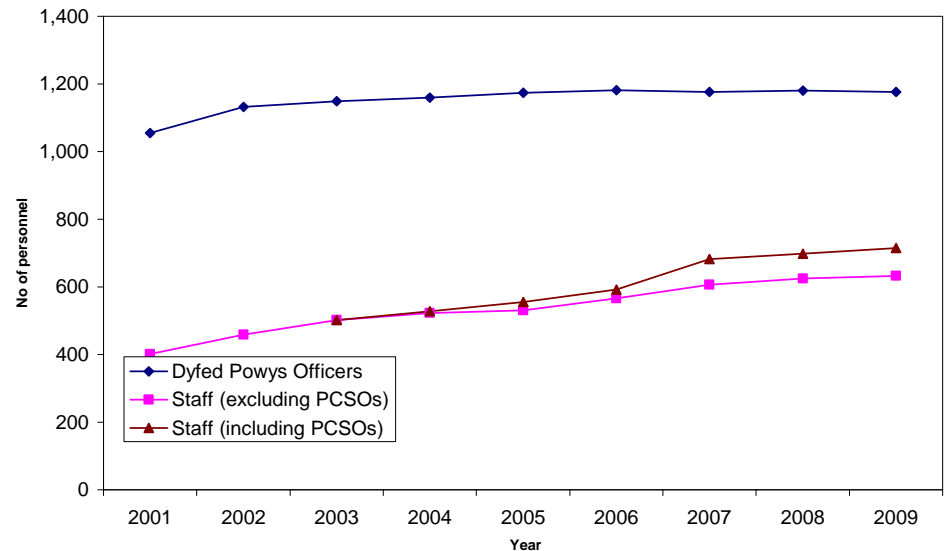
**West Yorkshire**

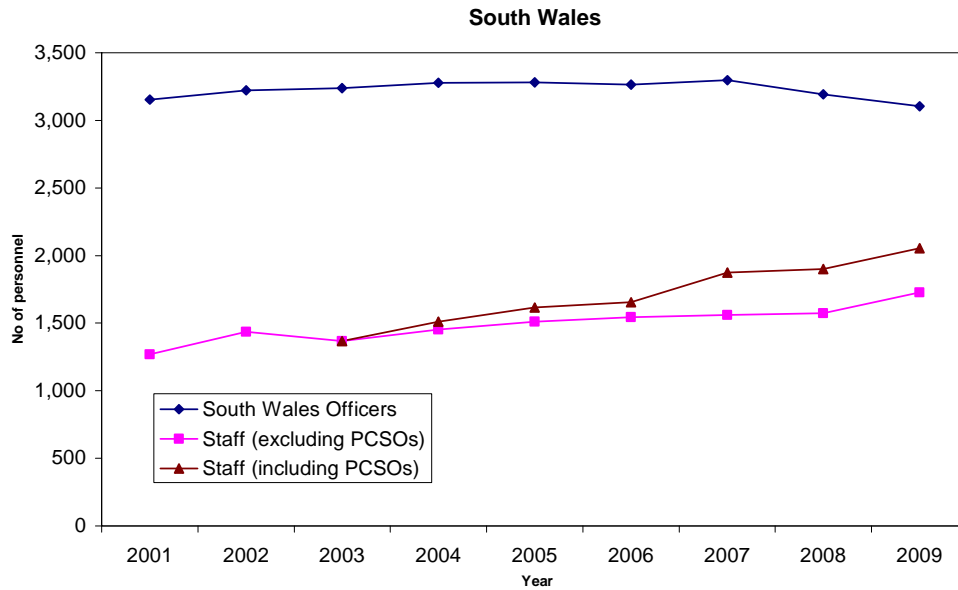
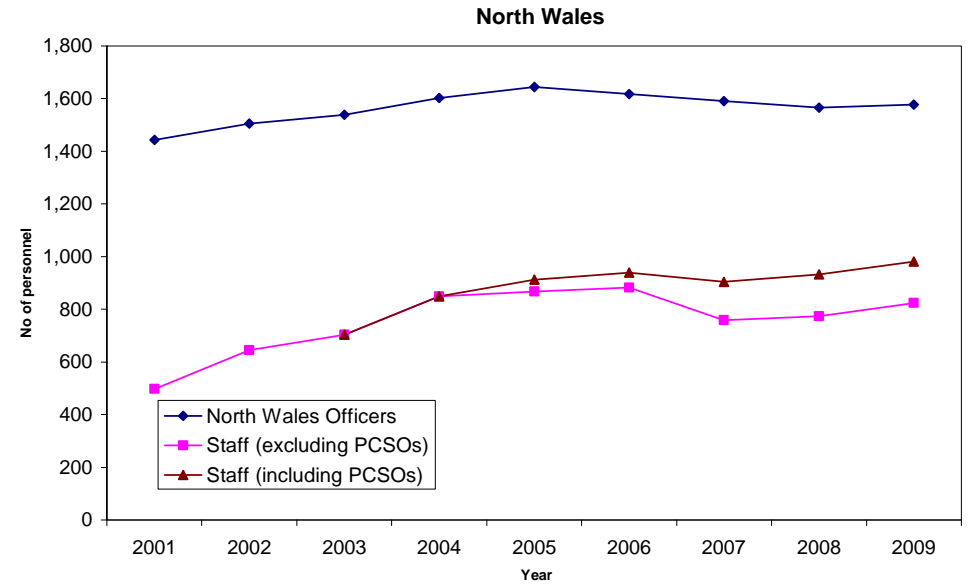
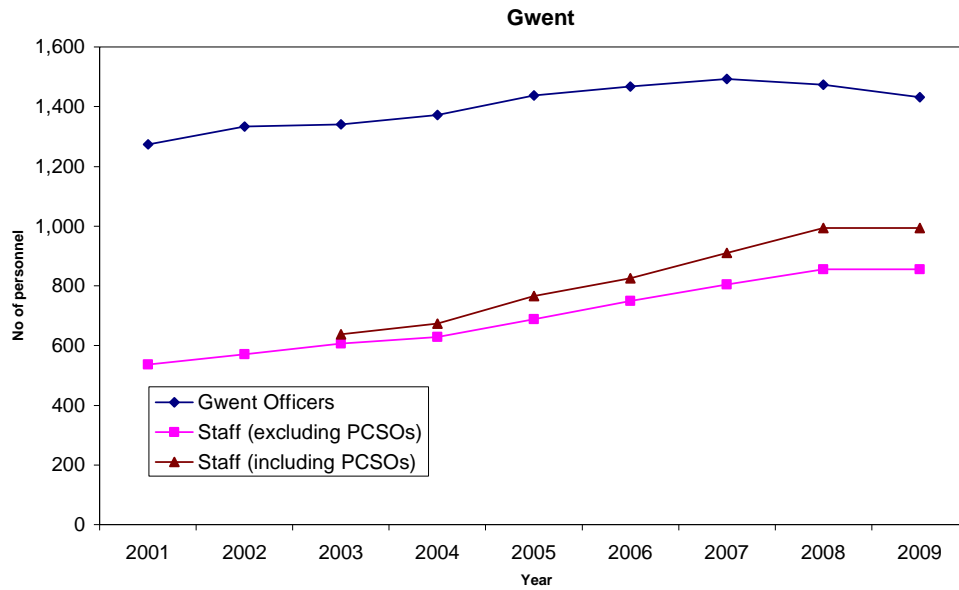


**Wiltshire**



**Dyfed Powys**





**Source, Police Officer and PCSO numbers: Police Service Strength. House of Commons Library. 3 September 2009 (summarised from HO Statistical Bulletins)**

**Source, Police Staff numbers are from the Annual Home Office Statistical Bulletin as staff numbers were not included in the Police Service Strength Document in the HOC Library**

**Source, Police Staff numbers are from the Annual Home Office Statistical Bulletin as staff numbers were not included in the Police Service Strength Document in the HOC Library**



# ANNEX 2

## **The nine principles by Sir Robert Peel**

1. The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder.
2. The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions.
3. Police must secure the willing co-operation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public.
4. The degree of co-operation of the public that can be secured diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force.
5. Police seek and preserve public favour not by catering to public opinion but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law.
6. Police use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient.
7. Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence
8. Police should always direct their action strictly towards their functions and never appear to usurp the powers of the judiciary.
9. The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it.