RURAL POLICING
Does it require a different approach?

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Definition of rural/rurality is contested and socially constructed, but generally concerned with cultural differences, geographical locations, and population density compared to urban spaces (Merritt and Dingwall, 2010). Rural areas are romanticised leading to beliefs that crime is less substantial in the countryside (Smith, 2010). Rural policing fundamental in the UK, however responsibilities now thought to be less contrasting with urban forces (Mawby, 2008).

TYPES OF CRIME
– Many crimes not bound by geography/location and affect both rural/urban areas
– However, some crimes more common in rural areas e.g. agricultural/wildlife/theft/vandalism/fire-raising (Smith, 2010)
– Further to this, organised crime is increasing in rural areas due to criminals thinking they will go unnoticed in larger, more open geographical areas
– Different crimes require specialisation and new resources e.g. special vehicles, police training, more diverse roles, new equipment (Smith, Laing, and McElwee, 2013)
– Balance needed between policing issues unique to the countryside and

GEOGRAPHY
– Large rural areas often sparsely populated/isolated/limited access to support services (National Rural Crime Network, 2016)
– Large territorial areas with diverse terrain and long road networks
– Road traffic collisions and specific rural incidents such as roaming livestock an issue due to country roads, large open areas, and diverse terrain (Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership, 2018)
– As a result, police can be isolated from colleagues/have higher expectations placed upon them/suffer from longer response times
– Advances in technology and equipment have gone some of the way to reduce effects of differing geography (Mawby, 2004)
– Specific campaigns and partnerships needed to address issues presented by country road networks

COMMUNITY
– Rural areas are often made up of small villages/towns with close-knit communities
– Criminal activity can feel more pronounced despite sometimes being less visible (Cheshire Constabulary, 2018)
– 'Urban marauders' and 'rogues' are outsiders believed to be responsible for rural crime (Smith, Laing, and McElwee, 2013)
– Fear of crime increases due to social/physical environment and affected by factors such as migration (Neighbourhood Policing Programme, 2008)
– Need for universal rural crime definition/policy/strategy/reporting service (Smith, Laing, and McElwee, 2013).
– Rural police forces need to have specialist teams/trained officers to deal with resident's expectations and wider issues of crime

The policing of rural areas and communities often requires a different approach or adaptation of current practice by local forces. The nature of rural areas compared to urban locations such as differing geography, varied and unique criminal activity, and demands of local community residents, means that the police are required to use new resources, different technologies, and specialist approaches to tackle the issues presented.

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