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Citizens, Community and Crime Control

Karen Bullock

Reader, University of Surrey, UK

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*To my mother and father
Who dedicated much of their lives to pursuing
a democratic ideal*

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Series Editor's Preface

Those who have always thought of community engagement in criminal justice generally, and policing specifically, as an unqualified good will have that view challenged in this book. Karen Bullock critically appraises the roles of different forms of citizen and community participation together with volunteer activities. She starts by discussing different types of democracy (direct and indirect) and the implications of different types of citizen participation in the affairs of the state. Of particular interest is the role of the active citizen, which has been described as 'one who mobilises resources, influences decision makers and makes things happen at the local level', and in so doing helps provide security while 'promoting democratic practice', all of which she recognises is contested territory.

You will be taken on a journey that includes a review of contemporary forms of police accountability including their aspirations and shortcomings. You will read about the work of influential philosophers and how they have shaped thinking on modes of voluntary participation today. And you will read about the development and implications of different modes of voluntary action within contemporary police practice. These include indirectly through voting in elections, and directly through forms of consultation; via engagement in Neighbourhood Watch; by becoming a Special Constable or Police Support Volunteer; and by taking part in citizen patrols.

Overall, volunteers have been seen as providing a 'bridge' between service providers and the public; creating more diversity amongst those involved in service delivery; and providing an option for maintaining some services when fiscal contraction and constraint might have necessitated the dumbing down or termination of what is offered. Yet there are counter concerns, including that participation will lead to or reinforce inequality. Indeed, Karen's own analysis fuels these concerns in that she finds that public meetings provide a limited notion of democratic practice with limited impact on police decision making; that many community policing schemes have failed to persuade on the ultimate aim of reducing crime; that the impact of Neighbourhood Watch has been 'shaky'; while citizen patrols are relatively new and are unproven. In short you will learn that it is far from clear that citizen

participation in policing leads to improvements in police practice or changes in police attitudes and priorities, nor that community policing more generally has enabled the public to better hold police officers to account. From this then there is much that must be learned, not only for studies of policing but also for policy and practice.

Martin Gill

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This book was mostly written in the year before my daughter turned 1. For those of you who suspected that trying to juggle new motherhood and writing a book might be a bad idea, thanks for not saying so! However, it does mean that I am perhaps unusually indebted to the help and support provided and forbearance shown by my family. Thanks to my mum and dad for their enthusiasm for childcare duties. Whilst Esme adores you as you adore her, it would all have been so much easier if she would have taken a bottle! Thanks to Mike for his understanding, extensive knowledge of British politics past and present and ability to roll endless 'sausages'. And thanks to Esme who, even if she may have missed me, tolerated the absences of her mother with much spirit. Look Esme – it's a book!