

## Introduction

The murder of Stephen Lawrence had a profound impact on the police, its practices, and policies. The immediate aftermath and subsequent investigation by the Metropolitan Police Service was extremely flawed and would have an impact on policing in the United Kingdom that is still seen today. It is only from the Macpherson report into the handling of the murder of Stephen that extreme issues were highlighted regarding policing and institutional racism. (Nickolls and Meade, 2024). The previous source supports the notion that the Macpherson report, highlighted institutional racism and poor policing practices. This report was also carried out, unbelievably before Stephen Lawrences killers were caught. (Narwal, 2022). This source infers that due to institutional racism and failures in policing and practices, that it took 18 years before two of the suspects were found guilty of Stephen's murder in 2012. The other three suspects have never been caught or prosecuted further highlighting the failings by the Metropolitan police service. Overall, the police service had no choice regarding the recognition of institutional racism. It simply had to happen for policing, its outdated policies, and practices to improve. The Macpherson report had many extremely positive benefits for policing as a whole, but racism and inequality has still grown since. To combat this community and neighbourhood policing is vital, but this is easier said than carried out, due to challenges and limitations such as the public's negative perception of the police. This following assignment will highlight and thoroughly examine the police services recognition of institutional racism, the impacts of the Macpherson report and the impact that it has had on community policing. The current challenges and limitations regarding community and neighborhood policing and its future will also be examined.

## Main Body

## Recognition of Institutional Racism and its Impact on Community Policing

The MacPherson report recognised that institutional racism was a significant factor in the handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder investigation. The report also recognised that institutional racism existed not only in the metropolitan police service but in other police forces and institutions across the United Kingdom. (Home Affairs Committee, 2021). This infers that until this report, there was no recognition of institutional racism. Subsequently, there was a need to improve community relations and the public's perception of the police service. This was vital as the police in the United Kingdom police by consent. Community and Neighbourhood policing was identified as a strategy to improve and modernise the police service. This is now a major part of the ongoing work that the police service does to improve community relations. (College of Policing, 2021). This source shows that the impact on community policing was extreme due to the MacPherson report. This is due to the fact that although community engagement had existed before in policing. (Lister and Platts-Fowler, 2014). It was not a major objective to improve community engagement by the police service nationwide before the Macpherson report. This highlights the importance of the recognition of institutional racism as it showed the necessity for an improvement in community and neighbourhood policing. The Macpherson report also detailed that local communities and police forces collaborate to promote the reporting of racial occurrences and crimes. In minority ethnic groups, it was also suggested that the police use local contacts to aid in investigations and to foster better relationships. (Macpherson, 1999). This further draws attention to the impact on community policing that was subsequently shown after the report. The previous recommendations, set out by the report, are also a good example of the complex interplay of partnership working between the police and communities. It is this partnership working between the police and minority ethnic communities that will improve the public's trust and confidence in the police. Community engagement, which involves local policing initiatives, also depend on the public's participation in determining issues and the reporting of crimes. (College Of Policing, 2023). From this, it can be inferred that without the Macpherson report highlighting the need for an improvement in community engagement, then there would have been a delay in the success of policing initiatives. Further showing the profound impact of the Macpherson report on community policing.

## Further Impacts of The Macpherson Report on Policing and Communities

The Macpherson report set out recommendations that would not only affect community policing but policing practices and policies in general. (His Majesty's Inspectorate of

Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, 2003). The report made specific recommendations for changes to policing practices such as a complete reform of the current stop-and-search procedure, which was found to be unfair towards ethnic communities. (Miller, 2010). This suggests that a complete reform led to police forces identifying that the use of stop and search powers by police should be subject to greater accountability. This would then affect ethnic communities positively as officers would have to be far more reasonable, instead of stereotyping, when using their stop and search powers. Furthermore, the impact of the Macpherson report on policing practices is shown in the review, (Metropolitan Police Authority, 2004). This report is an excellent example of greater scrutiny of stop and search procedures and statistics, due to the Macpherson report. Despite this, in the United Kingdom, stop and search procedures are still controversial despite reforms and scrutiny over stop and search data. Even after the Macpherson Report's recommendations, racial inequities still exist, with Black and minority ethnic people still being stopped and searched at higher rates than White people. (Home Office, 2024). These figures further show the racial disparity that is still committed when policing communities. These figures can explain why the level of trust between ethnic communities and the police is significantly low. It is due to this that the importance of community and neighbourhood policing initiatives is in the spotlight. Effective Community policing is required to restore trust after the years of mistreatment and stereotyping. (Tudor, 2023). The Macpherson Report also recommended improvements to police officer training, mainly in the areas of diversity, cultural sensitivity, and anti-racism. There was also a new target of boosting the diversity of police forces to make them more representative of the communities that they police. Equality and diversity being a part of the core training principles of policing is key to the successful training of police officers. (Clements, 2008). This infers that key training will mean officers are better equipped to serve the communities that they work in. This impacts the general standard of policing greatly as communities, particularly those of Black and minority ethnic, will feel that officers are fair and respectful of their differences. This introduction of equality and diversity training was one of the recommendations in the Macpherson report, which also shows the report's impact on policing, in general, and community policing. Similarly, as well as the suggestion of implementing diversity training, the MacPherson report emphasised how under-represented ethnic minorities are in the police force and other government services. (Bhugowandeen, 2013). Due to this, the government set targets for all 43 police forces in England and Wales to boost the number of police officers from minority ethnic backgrounds. This would have an extremely beneficial effect on policing as diversity within ranks would show the police service as progressive. Furthermore, community policing would be impacted as communities would feel represented, heard, and understood if the police had officers that represent the communities that they serve. It is extremely negative on the public's perception of the police if communities do not feel represented. Especially those communities that consist of Black and Minority Ethnic groups. (Carruthers, 2023). From this, it can be deduced that a lack of representation of diverse recruits can negatively impact the relationship between the police and communities. This again shows the importance of diversity and the effect of the Macpherson report on policing. There was a further need shown for accountability and transparency by police forces across England and Wales after the Macpherson report. The report recommended that systems be put in place for handling community complaints and issues. This action was also necessary for restoring trust in the police.

The Macpherson Inquiry was significant in the creation of the Independent Police Complaints Commission at the time and is the reason the Independent Office of Police Conduct exists today. (Independent Office of Police Conduct, 2023). Without the Macpherson report influencing the creation of this independent body, the police would not be held accountable which would have a detrimental effect on communities. This is because in order to preserve communities' confidence and guarantee accountability, effective complaints and investigations are essential. (Government Events, 2024). This further lead to an increased focus on transparency and accessibility from the police. Which in turn, resulted in further collaborations with the public, due to a sense of trust. Finally, to guarantee that any issues regarding the standard of policing being delivered were tackled, forces started to work closer with communities.

#### Current Challenges and Limitations Regarding Community and Neighborhood Policing

Although the MacPherson report set out detailed plans to restore the public's trust in the police and reduce mistreatment, these goals are still a work in progress. (Thomas, 2008). Further work can be done to improve the relationships between police forces and communities. However, this must be accomplished whilst there are other ongoing challenges and limitations that affect community and neighbourhood policing. Most notably the biggest challenge that affects community and neighbourhood policing is the current decrease of the public's confidence and satisfaction with the police. (Low and Owen-Evans, (2024). This lack of confidence impacts the ability for police forces to effectively police communities. This will also have a lasting impact on partnership working between the police and communities, due to an effective level of trust and confidence being paramount in cooperation with the police and compliance with the law. (Jackson and Bradford, 2010). Despite community and neighbourhood policing being effective in restoring the public's trust and confidence it is not a guaranteed solution. (Myhill and Beak, 2008). This source demonstrates that it is important to recognise potential challenges to increasing the public's trust that may require a different approach. It is therefore possible to conclude that other barriers limit the effectiveness of community policing. A further challenge that affects community and neighbourhood policing is the fact that some officers may not be able to effectively police certain communities due to language and cultural differences. Although there will inevitably be differences between some police officers and Black and Minority Ethnic communities, these cultural differences should not be dismissed. (Brown, 2020). This indicates that the primary issue with dismissing cultural differences is that it affects community policing negatively. A solution to ensuring cultural differences aren't dismissed however is to increase the number of recruits from BAME backgrounds, which was set out in the Macpherson report also. Despite the current challenges and limitations that can affect community policing, the current implementation of initiatives has been found to increase the legitimacy of the police force, and increase trust and confidence. (Colover and Quinton, 2018). This suggests that the current standard of community policing is effective for the time being. The current evidence suggests that the future of community policing will gradually involve a more frequent use of technology. (Future Policing Institute, 2024). For example, the use of social media, could be used to provide effective communication to a community for events or incidents. However, (Brewster, Gibson and Gunning, 2018), suggests that the lack of a centralised service would delay the response to a community. Importantly, although it is likely that technology will play a significant role in community policing in years to come. It is important that the core practices of community policing remain intact, such as high visibility patrols and schemes such as 'Coffee with a Cop' continue.

## Conclusion

It has been shown that the murder of Stephen Lawrence had an incredible impact on policing within the United Kingdom. The subsequent Macpherson report recognised the Metropolitan police service and policing, across the whole of the United Kingdom as institutionally racist. This recognition of institutional racism meant that the police service

and other services had to implement serious change. These changes were outlined in the Macpherson report. The impacts of this report, especially the recommendations for equality diversity training and targets, benefitted policing and society greatly as police forces became more representative of the communities that they serve. The subsequent effect on community policing by the MacPherson report was substantial also. This was because it meant that for the first time there was a clear objective to improve the relationships between BAME communities and the police. This greatly improved instances of partnership working between police and communities. In spite of community policing repairing the damaged relationships between communities and the police, because of institutional racism, community and neighbourhood policing teams still face many barriers in effectively policing communities. One major barrier is the historical mistrust in the police force. It should be an aim of all police forces to overcome these barriers to provide effective community policing.