

This essay will examine the importance of 'Policing by Consent' and the impact it has on modern-day police service. The idea of 'policing by consent' was first thought of by Home Secretary Robert Peel, however, there is no proof to say that the notion was his. It is far more likely that Charles Rowan and Richard Mayne of the Met police force thought of the idea (GOV.UK, 2022). The idea has nine principles, the principles show that in order for the police force to function it must have public support, by following these principles gave police officers guidance on how to work with communities and gain public trust. The nine principles show that policing should not be done through fear but through cooperation with the public, to seek public approval and maintain it (Torrible, 2022).

Policing by consent has been around for 200 years and has been the main value around policing which the UK organised, police would rather have the public confidence so that they will show support and respect than revert to violence, but for those who have experienced police violence, it can be very difficult to trust them or respect them. How can they think their consent is valued if they have experienced violence or discrimination from the police? Therefore, there are rules and regulations for the police, that need to be followed to make sure that the public is safe and can trust the police rather than being afraid (Medicore, 2022). The public and the police must work together to ensure the Laws are abided by, for example, being stopped and searched is very scary and intimidating especially for younger people. In 2022, a young Black man who was only 14 years old had been stopped and searched 30 times in 2 years, some people believe that stop and search have decreased over the last few years, but not for Black men. Black men are 8 times more likely of being stopped and searched than any race (George, 2022). It makes young Black boys and men afraid of the police and nervous to be around them, George (2022) also states that real crime prevention needs police to work with the public and build a happy and trustworthy environment, so the public can say in confidence who is committing these crimes. In the principles of Robert Peel, section 2 clearly states that the police must keep the respect of the public and work in cooperation with them (GOV, 2022). In the UK, Black people and ethnic minority groups seem to experience stop and search at a higher rate. So, while the principle is there, it is not always followed. This will have an impact on modern-day policing as the police will continually lose the respect of Black people and minority groups. Defunding the police, the activist response around the world has racialised violence by police against black people as stated by Fleetwood (2022). People have thought of taking some of the funding from the police and putting it into communities to create safety. However, defunding the police could create bigger issues, such as less funding to employ more police officers. It would be better to use the funding to give extra training to police officers in the nine principles of policing by consent.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, the UK willingly gave consent to the new Laws that were introduced, for example, the ban on social gatherings, business restrictions and movement restrictions. This is a perfect example of 'policing by consent. Laws were

made, the public agreed, and the police enforced the Law (Brown, 2022). Laws that are accepted by the public will allow the police to enforce them. The police were given a 'four-phase approach' to follow, they are, engage with the public to make sure they understood the restrictions, explain to the public and educate them of the risks of the virus. Encourage the public to follow the rules and act accordingly. Enforce the restrictions, this would be the last resort, it would include physically removing a member of the public if they are not following the rules of the restrictions. However, a research study conducted by The police Foundation (2022) it showed that during the lockdown restrictions participants were shocked that force was not being used on those who were ignoring the restrictions. Although the participants sympathised with the police, they still expected them to use harsher punishments such as imprisonment. At this time the police and the public were working together, members of the public would contact the police to let them know of any rule breakers. Between March 2020 and June 2021, the police issued 117,200 fixed penalty fines in England and Wales, which included fines for large gatherings, for not wearing a face mask and for breaching the self-isolation rules (NPCC, 2021). In this situation, the public is giving the police consent to use force towards those that are not following the restrictions. This may be because they were fearful of the Covid 19 virus, as they did not have much information at that time. However, it does show that in times of need the public will give their consent to harsh policing and it also shows the importance of policing by consent. The public worked with the police at this time by reporting those who were breaching the restriction rules (Hills, 2021).

The Covid 19 pandemic showed the importance of policing by consent, if the public did not agree with the new Laws, then they would either be forced upon the public or they would need to change the Laws to please the public, and the virus would have spread, which would have resulted in more deaths. The public must give their consent to the Laws for them to work. During the Covid 19 pandemic, the public understood the need for the laws, so they accepted them. Unfortunately, the police saw a plummet in popularity and became fearful of the police after the death of Sarah Everard in 2019 (Cooke, 2021).

If the communities feel that the police force is not working with them then they may lose the respect of the public which may result in the downfall of the police force, for example, in 2019, the murder of Sarah Everard sparked outrage with the public, they had been protesting for changes to be made to ensure the safety of women, the police force reassured the public and made some policy changes that would make sure that women and girls felt safe, such as, the verification of police officers. If a woman had been stopped by a plain-clothed, male police officer then she has the right to verify his identity by contacting the control room where a uniformed police officer will verify the identity (Venn, 2021). This may seem like an extreme rule that the Met Office has enforced, however, after the death of Sarah Everard the police needed to show the public that they are doing all that they can to ensure the safety of the public and gain back the public confidence. This is another good example of

policing by consent, as the public showed their disapproval by protesting. The police force had no other choice but to make changes for the public to feel safe and gain back their trust and cooperation.

To conclude, policing by consent plays an important role in modern-day policing. The police must have support from the public to function. As stated above, the restrictions that were placed on the public during the Covid 19 pandemic had the support of the public, this allowed the police to do their job, however, in the case of the murder of Sarah Everard, the public showed their disapproval by protesting, new rules were then put in place to ensure the safety of women. Both examples show how important policing by consent is and how the public has an impact on how the police work. The police and the public must work together to build strong communities, however, the principles of policing by consent must be followed otherwise the public will not give their support to the police.

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