

Essay one:

Evaluate the role of police within the joint emergency services operations and examine the potential impact that critical and major incidents can have on officers' mental wellbeing.

The United Kingdom (UK) has faced numerous high-profile incidents that have tested the efficacy of joint emergency services, requiring seamless collaboration between police, fire, medical and other response agencies. This article delves into specific incidents where the coordination of these services proved pivotal, showcasing the importance of a unified approach in managing complex emergencies. The London Bridge attack in June 2017 involved a vehicle ramming pedestrians on London Bridge followed by knife attacks in the Borough Market area. The incident resulted in eight fatalities and dozens of injuries. The response from joint emergency services including the Metropolitan Police, London Ambulance Service and London Fire Brigade, was swift and well-coordinated. The police neutralised the attackers while ambulance services provided immediate medical assistance and the fire brigade ensured the safety and evacuation of affected areas. The incident highlighted the effectiveness of joint training and established protocols in responding to multi-faceted threats (Counter Terrorism Policing, 2019). Another incident was the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury in 2018, which involved a military-grade nerve agent. This incident required collaboration between emergency services, including the local police, fire service, and hazardous materials (hazmat) teams. "A HAZMAT team is an organised group of professionals who are specially trained to handle hazardous materials or dangerous goods. HAZMAT is an abbreviation for "hazardous materials," which refers to any substance that poses a significant risk to people, property, or the environment" (Mishra, 2024). During both these incidents, the responsible agencies focused on securing the area, treating the victims, and conducting a thorough investigation. The coordination between agencies showcased the adaptability of emergency services in dealing with unconventional threats and the importance of specialised units, such as hazmat teams in managing hazardous material incidents.

Another high-profile incident was the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, where the police played a critical role in supporting the emergency response efforts. The Metropolitan Police Service was actively involved in coordinating the evacuation, maintaining public order, and conducting investigations into the causes of the fire. Their multifaceted involvement highlighted the importance of police in ensuring a comprehensive and organised response to such a devastating incident (Moore-Bick, 2019). One key aspect of the police response was their role in managing the evacuation process. Officers worked alongside firefighters and other emergency services to facilitate the safe evacuation of residents from the burning building. Their expertise in crowd control and public order management proved crucial in the presented chaos and ensured an orderly evacuation, especially considering the scale and complexity of the incident. Furthermore, police were instrumental in establishing a secure perimeter around the Grenfell Tower, controlling access to the site, and

managing the influx of emergency vehicles, which contributed to the overall safety and efficiency of emergency response (London Fire Brigade, 2019). Additionally, the Metropolitan Police Service worked closely with other agencies to provide information and support to affected individuals and communities, demonstrating the collaborative nature of emergency services in such situations (Javid, 2017). The police support during the Grenfell Tower fire showcased their versatility in the handling of diverse responsibilities during major incidents. Their involvement in evacuation management, public order maintenance and collaborative efforts with other emergency services, contributed significantly to the overall effectiveness of the response and the recovery efforts. The Grenfell Tower fire serves as a testament to the crucial role played by the police in coordination and supporting emergency services during high-profile incidents.

While joint emergency services in the UK demonstrate commendable responses to high profile incidents, challenges still exist. Communication remains a critical factor, especially in rapidly evolving situations. The need for real time information sharing and interoperable communication systems is evident to facilitate seamless coordination. Additionally, incidents like the Salisbury poisoning emphasise the importance of ongoing training, to ensure that emergency services are well-prepared for diverse and unconventional threats. By recognising the need for continual improvement, the UK has implemented an initiative to enhance the coordination of joint emergency services. The Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme (JESIP) is a national programme that focuses on interoperability between police, fire, and ambulance services. JESIP's aim is "to ensure the blue light services are trained and exercised to work together as effectively as possible" (HMICFRS, 2018). By promoting joint training exercises and the development of shared protocols, JESIP aims to enhance the collective response of emergency services during high pressure instances. The initiative reflects a proactive approach to address the challenges identified in past instances and further strengthen collaboration efforts. The coordinated efforts of police, fire and medical services is instrumental in minimising the impact of these incidents and ensuring public safety.

In the UK, incidents are categorised based on severity – critical incidents and major incidents. These are terms commonly used in emergency management and public safety, each signifying a different level of severity and impact. A critical incident typically refers to "any incident where the outcome or consequence of that incident is likely to result in serious harm to any individual, significant community, public confidence, or business impact" (Home Office, 2021). These incidents often require the activation of emergency services to mitigate the immediate risk and ensure public safety. Critical incidents are characterised by their potential to overwhelm the resources of local agencies and necessitate a rapid and well-coordinated multi-agency response. On the other hand, a major incident is "an event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency" (JESIP, 2024). While major incidents can include critical incidents, they also extend to situations where the scale or complexity exceeds the capacity of routine and recovery efforts. Major incidents may involve prolonged response and recovery efforts, often requiring collaboration between various agencies and the

mobilisation of additional resources. Therefore, a critical incident is considered a subcategory of a major incident, because a critical incident demands an immediate and intensive response due to its potential for imminent harm, while a major incident encompasses a broader range of events that exceeds routine capacity of local emergency services, and often requires a sustained and collaborative effort for effective management and recovery, therefore emphasising the urgency and intensity of the response required. This hierarchical approach helps emergency services prioritise resources and actions based on the nature and scale of the incident.

Incidents such as those above, can have a significant effect on the mental well-being of the emergency services personnel who deal with them. The World Health Organisation (2022) defines mental health as a “state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community”. Mental well-being refers to emotional, psychological, and social health, encompassing various aspects of mental health, emphasising on positive emotions, resilience, and the ability to manage challenges and uncertainties in everyday life, which underscores the holistic nature of mental well-being, emphasising personal development, effective stress management, and social engagement (Ozorio, 2011).

One foundational element of mental well-being is emotional resilience. This involves the capacity to bounce back from adversity, adapt and change, while maintaining a positive outlook. Resilient individuals can navigate life's ups and downs more effectively, while fostering a sense of well-being even in challenging circumstances (Peterson, 2019). Positive mental well-being is not merely absence of mental disorders but represents a proactive approach to mental health. “Hedonia (like the word ‘hedonism’), refers to pleasure and happiness - in the context of mental wellbeing, it means feeling happy about one's life and enjoying experiences that cause happiness” (Nortje, 2021). It involves promoting positive mental states, such as happiness, contentment, and satisfaction with life. The importance of mental well-being has gained recognition in various fields, including public health - “The Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) supports the view that everyone, irrespective of where they live, should have the opportunity to achieve good mental health and wellbeing” (Public Health England, 2018).

Police officers, often face significant challenges to their mental well-being during and after critical incidents, which could have lasting effects on their mental health. Critical incidents such as shootings, acts of terrorism, or major accidents can be highly traumatic and emotionally taxing, therefore understanding the impacts on police officer's mental well-being is crucial for developing strategies to support their mental health. During a critical incident, police officers may experience intense stress, fear, and exposure to graphical disturbing scenes. The immediate pressure to make split second decisions and confront danger can trigger a physiological stress response. This prolonged state of heightened alertness can lead to exhaustion and sleep disturbances. Violanti et al, (2017) found that sleep disturbances were strongly associated with post-traumatic stress symptoms and general psychopathology. After the incident, officers may grapple with a range

of psychological challenges, such as heightened anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which contributes to their acute stress reactions. PTSD is “a mental health condition caused by a very stressful, frightening, or distressing event and is a common concern, characterised by intrusive memories, nightmares, and emotional numbing” (NHS, 2022). The growing impact of exposure to multiple critical incidents over a career can contribute to a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion. Officers may also face difficulties in readjusting to routine duties, experiencing hypervigilance, and struggling with trust issues or a heightened sense of vulnerability.

Several factors contribute to the impact on police officer’s well-being. Lack of adequate support systems, stigma surrounding mental health in law enforcement culture, and the expectation to appear resilient, can deter officers from seeking help. Additionally, organisational factors such as inadequate training, insufficient debriefing process, and limited access to mental health resources can exacerbate the mental health toll (Edwards and Kotera, 2020). Addressing the mental well-being of police officers during and after critical incidents requires a multifaceted approach. This includes implementing comprehensive mental health support programmes, reducing stigma, providing accessible counselling services, and promoting a culture that prioritises mental health awareness. Recognising and addressing the specific challenges faced by police officers is essential for fostering a resilience and mental health law enforcement community (Steenbeek et al., 2020).

Similarly, to the impact from critical incidents as above, police officers are also significantly impacted during and after major incidents and this can have a lasting effect on their mental well-being. Major incidents such as natural disasters, large scale accidents, or acts of terrorism, place police officers in challenging situations that demand not only physical, but psychological resilience and again, by understanding the impact on police officers is crucial for developing strategies to support their mental health. During a major incident, police officers are often exposed to overwhelming scenes of destruction, loss, and human suffering. The sheer magnitude of the event can lead to stress, anxiety, and an increased risk of trauma. Officer’s may face challenges in managing the chaos, ensuring public safety, and coping with the emotional toll of witnessing and responding to distressing situations (Soffia, 2019). After an incident, police officers may struggle with the aftermath which can include a range of psychological challenges, such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety, which are common mental health concerns. Continued exposure to major incidents over an officer’s career can impact that officer’s ability to function effectively both professionally and personally.

Several factors contribute to the impact of police officer’s mental well-being during and after major incidents. These include the nature and severity of the incident, the level of personal threat faced by officers and the adequacy of support systems in place. Additionally organisational factors such as the availability of mental health resources, effectiveness of debriefing processes and overall culture within law enforcement agencies can influence officer’s mental health outcomes (Burns and Buchanan, 2020). Addressing the mental well-being of police officers during and after major incidents requires comprehensive support systems, including

mental health services, peer support, and training in resilience and coping strategies. Creating a culture that prioritises mental health awareness and reducing the stigma associated with seeking help are essential components of ensuring the long-term well-being of police officers who face the challenges of major incidents (International Public Safety Association, 2019).

In conclusion, the role of police in joint emergency service incidents and the impact on their mental well-being during and after critical and major incidents, sheds light on the complex dynamics of emergency response and mental health within law enforcement and understanding mental well-being is paramount to assisting officers throughout their careers. It encompasses emotional resilience, positive mental states, and the ability to navigate life's challenges. By recognising the importance of mental well-being has led to efforts to destigmatise mental health in various sectors, including law enforcement. Moving forward, it is crucial to continue refining emergency response protocols, fostering a culture that prioritises mental health, and providing ongoing support for the well-being of police officers. By addressing the lessons learned from high-profile incidents and understanding the complexities of mental well-being, the goal is to create a more resilient and responsive emergency services framework, that prioritises the health and effectiveness of those who serve on the front lines.

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Essay two:

Evaluate the use and effectiveness of specialist interview techniques (e.g., cognitive interview, structured investigative interview). What factors increase or limit their effectiveness?

Specialist policing interview techniques are crucial tools employed by law enforcement agencies to gather accurate and reliable information from individuals involved in criminal investigations. These techniques go beyond standard interview practices and are designed to elicit specific details, uncover hidden information, and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the situation. Some key specialist policing interview techniques are touched on below.

Cognitive Interviewing is a technique that aims to enhance the retrieval of information from witnesses and victims by promoting open-ended questions, encouraging the use of multiple perspectives, and minimizing interference during the interview process (Geiselman and Fisher, 2014).

Developed by the United Kingdom's (UK's) National Centre for Policing Excellence, the PEACE model emphasizes a structured approach to interviewing suspects and witnesses. PEACE stands for Planning and preparation, Engage and explain, Account, Closure, and Evaluate (Clarke, 2014).

The Reid Technique involves a structured approach that includes both investigative and behaviour analysis components, which is widely used in the United States. It focuses on assessing the truthfulness of the interviewee and obtaining a confession from suspects (Vrij, 2004).

Statement Validity Analysis (SVA) is a technique used to assess the credibility of a statement by examining its content and structure. It involves comparing the statement with known facts and evaluating the consistency and coherence of the narrative (Wojciechowski, Gräns and Lidén, 2018).

Conversation Management is a technique which involves managing the flow of conversation strategically to elicit information from individuals without raising suspicion. It requires skilled communication and an understanding of the psychological dynamics of the interview (Hood and Hoffman, 2019).

These specialist interview techniques are continuously evolving, with law enforcement agencies adapting their practices based on research findings and advances in forensic psychology. Training programs often incorporate these techniques to enhance the skills of investigators and ensure ethical and effective information gathering during police interviews.

Delving more into cognitive interviewing within policing; this is a technique developed for enhancing the accuracy and completeness of information obtained during investigative interviews, particularly in forensic

contexts such as police investigations. The primary aim of cognitive interviewing is to optimise memory recall by employing specific strategies based on principles of cognitive psychology. Context reinstatement is where witnesses are encouraged to mentally recreate the environmental and emotional context of the event. This helps in reactivating associated memories that may not be readily accessible. Mental reinstatement of the witness's perspective is where witnesses are prompted to recall the event from multiple perspectives, such as the sensory experiences, emotions, and thoughts they had during the incident, broadens the scope of the information obtained. Witnesses are instructed to report all details, even if they seem trivial or irrelevant, as this helps prevent information from being inadvertently omitted during the interview. Witnesses are encouraged to provide information in a different chronological order than it occurred. This disrupts the natural inclination to structure information sequentially, potentially revealing additional details (McLeod, 2023). Numerous studies have supported the effectiveness of cognitive interviewing techniques in police settings. The approach has been found to enhance the quantity and quality of information obtained from witnesses and victims (Fisher and Geiselman, 1992), and cognitive interviewing is particularly valuable in situations where obtaining accurate and detailed information is critical, such as in the investigation of serious crimes. While cognitive interviewing has demonstrated efficacy, challenges include variations in interviewer training and concerns about potential contamination of witness memory. Ongoing research continues to refine the technique, addressing these challenges and exploring adaptations to specific investigative contexts. Cognitive interviewing stands as a valuable tool in the police investigator's toolkit, offering a systematic and evidence-based approach to enhancing witness recall. As law enforcement agencies increasingly recognise the importance of accurate information in criminal investigations, the application of cognitive interviewing techniques is likely to remain a prominent feature in police training programs.

Also, delving more into structured interviewing within policing; a structured interview is a standardised questioning technique employed in policing settings to systematically gather information from individuals involved in investigations. Unlike unstructured interviews, which may lack consistency and comparability, structured interviews adhere to a predefined set of questions and procedures, aiming to enhance the reliability and validity of the information obtained. The key components of structured interviews in policing, involve a consistent set of questions that are administered uniformly across different interviewees. This standardisation minimises variations in the interview process, ensuring that each participant is exposed to the same enquiries. Objective criteria is where questions in a structured interview are designed to elicit specific information related to the investigation. This objectivity helps investigators focus on relevant details, reducing the potential for bias in information gathering. In some cases, structured interviews incorporate scoring systems or checklists to evaluate the responses. This allows for a quantitative assessment of the information provided and aids in making informed decisions during the investigative process. Research suggests that structured interviews can be effective in policing settings, particularly for obtaining accurate and reliable information, with one key advantage being the ability to reduce interviewer bias and increase

the consistency of data collection (Buck, 1992). The structured nature of the interview minimises the influence of the interviewer's personal characteristics, fostering a more objective and systematic approach.

Structured interviews are particularly valuable when dealing with sensitive or high-stakes investigations, where precision and reliability are paramount. The use of predetermined questions ensures that critical information is consistently addressed, enhancing the overall quality of evidence gathered during the interview process (Hurst, 2023). While structured interviews offer several advantages, challenges exist, including the potential for inflexibility in responding to unique situations. Critics argue that overly rigid structures may impede the exploration of unexpected details that could be crucial to an investigation. Furthermore, the success of structured interviews depends on the proper design of questions and adherence to standardised procedures. Effective training for interviewers is essential to ensure that the methodology is applied consistently and ethically. Structured interviews in policing settings represent a valuable tool for enhancing the reliability and consistency of information obtained during investigations. Their effectiveness lies in the standardised approach, reducing bias, and ensuring that key details are systematically addressed. As law enforcement agencies continue to refine their investigative techniques, structured interviews remain a prominent feature in the pursuit of accurate and credible information.

While both cognitive interviews and structured interviews are techniques used in policing settings, they differ significantly in their approach, goals, and underlying principles. Here's a breakdown of the key distinctions between the two:

The primary goal of the cognitive interview is to enhance the accuracy and completeness of witness recall by utilising principles of cognitive psychology. It focuses on maximising the retrieval of information from memory by encouraging witnesses to mentally reinstate the context of the event, consider various perspectives, report everything they remember, and change the order of recall (Geiselman et al., 1985).

The structured interview, on the other hand, is designed to maintain consistency and objectivity in information gathering. It involves a predetermined set of standardised questions aimed at obtaining specific details relevant to an investigation. The focus is on minimising interviewer bias and ensuring a systematic approach to data collection. Furthermore, cognitive interviewing allows for a more open and flexible approach. It encourages the witness to provide information in their own words, promoting a narrative that may include sensory details and emotions. This flexibility is intended to enhance memory retrieval, whereas structured interviews are characterised by a rigid set of predetermined questions. While this ensures consistency, it may limit the exploration of unexpected details or nuances in the information provided.

Cognitive interviewing employs various techniques, such as context reinstatement, mental reinstatement of the witness's perspective, reporting everything, and changing the order of recall (Geiselman et al., 1985). These techniques aim to optimise memory retrieval and enhance the quality of information, whereas

structured interviews use a standardised set of questions that are applied uniform across all interviewees and the questions are often designed to be objective and focused on specific aspects of the investigation. Furthermore, the cognitive interview technique is particularly suitable for witnesses and victims who may have experienced a traumatic event, as it focuses on maximising the amount of accurate information retrieved. Structured interviews are commonly employed in a wide range of investigative situations where a consistent and objective approach to information gathering is crucial. Whilst both cognitive interviews and structured interviews serve as valuable tools in policing, they differ in their underlying philosophies and methodologies. The cognitive interview emphasises optimising memory recall through flexible and open-ended techniques, whereas the structured interview prioritises consistency and objectivity by adhering to a predetermined set of standardised questions (P. Fisher, 2024).

A structured interview is an ideal approach when you need to gather comprehensive and specific information while maintaining a systematic and focused process. If your goal is to ensure that you collect all relevant facts and keep the interview on track, a structured interview provides a framework that can be highly effective. Here's how:

Systematic Questioning - in a structured interview, you have a predetermined set of questions that are designed to cover all essential aspects of the information you need. This systematic approach ensures that you do not overlook critical details or skip important areas of inquiry.

Objective Data Collection - the questions in a structured interview are crafted to be objective and focused on gathering specific information related to the investigation. This helps in maintaining the integrity of the data collected and prevents the introduction of subjective biases.

Consistency Across Interviews - using the same set of structured questions with each interviewee ensures consistency. This consistency is crucial when dealing with multiple witnesses or individuals involved in an incident, as it allows for easier comparison of responses and identification of patterns.

Time Management - structured interviews can be more time-efficient compared to unstructured approaches. The predefined set of questions helps in keeping the interview on track, preventing unnecessary diversions or lengthy discussions on peripheral topics.

Documentation and Analysis - the structured nature of the interview facilitates organised documentation of information. This documentation is valuable not only during the interview but also for later analysis and review and it assists in creating a clear and detailed record of the facts obtained.

Minimisation of Distractions - structured interviews minimise the chances of getting sidetracked or distracted during the interview process. The focused nature of the questions helps in steering the conversation toward obtaining the necessary information without unnecessary detours (Dovetail, 2023).

In conclusion, a structured interview is an excellent tool when your primary objective is to gather all the facts efficiently and methodically, because structured interviews adhere to a predefined set of questions, which creates a disciplined framework that ensures all relevant aspects of the investigation are covered, consistency is maintained, and time is managed effectively. Unlike structured interviews, cognitive interviews allow more information to be shared whether relevant to the investigation or not, due to the open-ended questions and more space for elaboration by the witness, victim, or suspect. Cognitive interviews also tend to take longer to undertake due to the considerable amount of information that may be given and having to decipher whether it is relevant to the incident. It is important to remember, while a structured interview is valuable for certain situations and may seem more effective and less time consuming, the choice of interview technique should align with the specific needs and characteristics of the investigation and the individuals involved.

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