

Community/Response Policing/Conducting Investigations /Digital Policing

Critically evaluate the role of the police in one of the following areas:

- Response policing (public perception and critical/major incidents)

Throughout this essay I will be evaluating the role of a response police constable and how their role is an integral part of policing. The role of an officer is made up of a variety of different tasks which is required as part of a constable's duty to be completed daily. But these demands are not necessarily understood by the public. Sir Robert Peel set out nine policing principles and within these principles the focus is ensuring the law is upheld and public reassurance is endorsed. Especially in principle point 7 where Peel states "the police are the public and that the public are the police". This notion will be explored and how it links to the public perception on the police's role.

I will be defining what is meant by the term public perception and how the public can be influenced into views of the police due to external factors and certain characteristics of a person. The essay will be looking at challenges that the police they in meeting the expectations of the public and how this can be detrimental to the how the police are viewed in the eyes of the public.

Additionally, within the essay I will be focusing on what is expected from response policing when a major incident is declared and the role the police play when dealing with such an incident. The essay will set out what a critical incident is and what steps the police take in dealing with an incident that cascades into this level of occurrence. It will be highlighting the steps that required by officers and challenges that are apparent when dealing with them for police and those of the public.

The college of policing (2020) define response policing as "the term widely used to describe the teams of police officers that respond to emergency and non-emergency calls from members of the public". The police officers who respond to these calls are referred to as response officers. This area/department of policing is one that the public tend to deal with in the initial part of any investigation. They are the ones who are first off at scenes and the ones who are the face of policing. It is therefore important that response officers do the upmost to support victims and apprehend offenders. This in

turn has a fundamental effect on the public as depending on how they are dealt with will affect any future dealings. It is important to understand how an officer's understanding can impact and will be demonstrating how a person's emotional intelligence contributes towards. In the essay I will be assessing how the interactions of police can impact upon the public perception and how the police try to combat the challenges to increasing a positive perception.

In some incidents there is a large-scale disruption due to the nature of the occurrence which requires police to liaise with other agencies and services. JESIP 2021 defines a major incident as "an event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency". The essay will be discussing how police respond to a major incident and what their role is when dealing with one.

Similar to a major incident, police are also involved in critical incidents. ACPO 2007 defines a critical incident as "any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community". This is a broad definition on what a critical incident minimises the opportunities identifying for a critical incident to be raised.

Between 2010 and 2018 there was a loss of approximately 21,732 police officers in the United Kingdom which equates to a 15% drop of officers (BBC News, 2019). This brings a whole host of issues into combating crime. According to the Independent 2018, there had been a 14% rise in criminal activity. With there being less resources to deal with crime and the number of crimes being committed on the rise this has an impact on the public information is available for the public to access. The implications of this is how the police have to change their approach to try and combat these challenges to reassure the public and portray a positive approach to the public.

With crime on the rise and limited police officers working on the beat, there has been a shift in how police deal with crime. Police intervention is based formed around threat, risk and harm. If there is a crime in progress or someone's life is in danger, then this take precedence over a crime that has happened. But for the public who fall victim of crime and does not necessarily have the opportunity to see a police officer as at the

time of reporting there is no apparent evidence available for an investigation to take place will hinder their trust and likelihood of reporting any future crimes. Posick and Singleton 2014 support the ideology that victims are influenced by their prior interactions of the police of reporting any future crime. If a person has had a bad experience whether it be through the interactions they had with a particular constable or they felt let down by the criminal justice system as they have not had the support to get the result they have wanted. It is supported by the 2018 Crime Survey for England and Wales (ONS, 2018) as 33% of people believed that the police could not do anything and therefore did not report the crime. With the demand being at a all time high, the opportunity for police to conduct proactive patrols is limited and therefore reactive to the crimes that are committed.

Furthermore, those who do interact with an officer may also be affected by the response from the officer. Especially when it is a more serious and/or distressing crime where the emotional distress of being involved in a crime. A major factor when dealing with emotional distress is an officer's emotional intelligence. Salovey and Mayer 1990 describe Emotional intelligence as "a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's own thinking and action". It is important for response officers to be aware and monitor a person's emotions to not only obtain an account to progress an investigation but empathising with a person to be able to offer them support. But this can prove challenging as if a victim of crime does not appear to be emotionally connected to a crime. For example a person who falls victim to being raped and does not appear to be distressed as they are trying not to have an emotional attachment to the incident, then this can prove difficult for officers who are dealing with the victim as the perception its not one that is expected of a person who has been subject to a the crime of that nature (Rose et al, 2006). This can prove difficult for officers who have limited understanding of emotional intelligence to comprehend the persons involvement. This then results in how the victim portrays the officers dealing with them as it can hinder an officers believe on the offence that has taken place if the officer has not got the emotional understanding.

Another impacting factor of the public's perception of response policing is how competent police officer is at doing their job. With there being a large-scale recruitment

drive on new constables across all police forces in the United Kingdom there is concern that the experience of old officers is being lost and not transferred onto the new officers. Alongside the new recruitment of officers, the UK have adopted a new approach of upskilling officers through academic qualifications to degree level. An article on the BBC discusses the concerns from a retired police officer who states “the public don’t care about police having degrees. They want someone competent, caring and capable”. (BBC News, 2016). According to Mastrofski et al (2006) the public focus on tangible results rather than statistics. This supports the article from the BBC that it does not matter what level officers are educated/trained to but having competent officers who are able to deliver the results in supporting victims.

A way in which this can be achieved is by police forces communicating with local residents on what is being done to combat particular crime patterns in an area and to inform them of convictions which have been carried out. Hohl et al (2010) found the providing information to the public in the form of leaflets, makes the police appear as though they are being proactive in their approach. The public appear to want to be in the know and kept updated about what is going. This appears to give them the satisfaction and more willing in participating with supporting police. It also gives the perception that the police are involving the community in what they are trying to achieve.

The appearance of an officer can also have an impact on the perception it gives to the public. Simpson (2018) conducted a study into the appearance of officers and the impact it can have a public meets an officer. The study places focus on how an officer is dressed and can place concern for victims. Items which are not necessary force issue such as an officer wearing sunglasses can indicate a more aggressive look and have a negative effect. But those wearing standard issue uniform can enhance the relationships with the public. Willis and Todorov (2006) suggest a person form a first impression on someone within 100 microseconds. Therefore it is important that officers not only adhere to the uniform but have the right attitude as that can change how a person behaves in a situation and how there perception is formed. The first impression that a person has from an officer that they have interactions transform the view of all officers.

The vast majority of the public do not have any interactions with the police but yet they still have an opinion of them (Langan et al 2001). It is therefore important that those direct and in-direct interactions by police officers are positive and police officers adhere to the law themselves. An example of where a member of the public may have an indirect interaction with a police officer is when driving on a road. A police officer who's driving is erratic and speeding when not on an emergency response is going to send out the wrong impression to another person. It is noticeable when an officer is driving in a marked police vehicle.

Subsequently, due to the rise in crime and the low number of officers there are a limited number of officers who are now working the beat and in view of the public. Skogan (2009) conducted research in how the visual presence of police officers impacts people's confidence and their concerns about crime. The research concluded that the public lacked faith in police dealing with crime when they do not have a visual presence. But even with the demands of increasing crime and limited numbers of officers, the public who have participated in Crime Survey for England and Wales (2014) have noticed a 6% increase from 2006/2007 of PCSOs and Officers walking the beat.

Another way in which the public interpret the role of the police is through media representation. With the majority of the news representing the police in a negative way and focus on what way the media wants to represent the police. It places disregard on positive results and other cases where police have provided good results apprehending criminals (McRobbie and Thornton, 2010). The focus of news broadcasters is to sell stories and therefore a lot of success stories of the police would not make good stories for them and therefore they are not promoted. Consequently, members of the public who have therefore never had any interactions with the police have a negative perception of the work that the police carry out. This is formed by their interaction of the police through the news.

Subsequently another major area for public perception is an officer's use of force. There is legislation where an officer can use reasonable force in arresting a person, preventing a crime and apprehend offenders. Sir Robert Peel outlined this in his principle, Point 6 "To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice

and warning found to be insufficient to obtain public cooperation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law to restore order, and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective". In recent times this has been in the public spotlight with the death of George Floyd where an officer has used excessive force and caused the death of Mr Floyd. The officer who was responsible was charged for the murder and received a 22-year sentence for the crime he committed (BBC, 2021). Force is not always necessary and if possible, officers should be effective at communicating to deescalate the situation verbally. As using force can be seen by the public to be unethical.

Whilst the structure of the police is changing so are norms of policing. There are different outlooks on police from the public depending on a person's age. The generational change where adults are of an older age prefer to speak with an officer in person. Percentages for the older generation who fall victim to crimes linked to online crime especially fraud where they have limited understanding on the implications of online security is a lot higher. Age UK (2019) states that 43% of those aged 65 years or older have been targeted by scammers. It is therefore important that officers understand the vulnerabilities that an older adult presents to be able to provide additional support in safeguarding them from crime.

Relevant to this are children and adolescents who feel targeted by police. They also felt that they were less able to get access from the police, but the majority of the children felt that they want to feel safer (Sindall et al 2016). A problem is that young people may not be aware of the consequences of their behaviours and try to resolve the issue themselves. This brings its own issues but also impacts the wider society as due to the generational gap has different views but also the way in which children/adolescents are dealt with has changed as they are no longer fearful of the consequences of being involved in the criminal justice system. Therefore, this view of generational policing has implications for persons on the age spectrum as limited and reduce number of officers are now walking the streets and depending on the crime and evidence available will have an impact on if a person.

As defined at the beginning of the essay, a major incident is one where the consequences are greater and require a multi service approach when dealing with it.

The type of major incident can include and not limited to natural disasters, large scale road traffic collisions etc. The role of the police officer at a major incident does not decipherer from the responsibilities of a normal working day of an officer but when a major incident is declared the police are required to follow and ensure several actions are completed at scene. The first and foremost focuses for the police is saving life. It all depends on what the nature of the major incident is and how accessible the casualties are for an police officer is able to get but where safe to do so and without endangering the officer. With a major incident requiring a multi service approach it is down to the initial responder who booked off at the scene to give updates and views on what services that are required and call them to the scene or pass the information for the force control room to instigate the communication with other services. Potential main services that could be called to assist are fire & rescue, ambulance service and coastguard. These are the main services that could be called to help assist with the major incident (Police Scotland, 2021).

Within the remit of the police, it is for the police to protect and preserve the scene. This is important especially if there is an indication that the major incident has been caused/created as a result of criminal involvement and there will be a criminal investigation. It requires for officers to conduct golden hour principles to negate any evidence being lost. The implications of the major incident tend to mean that due to the increased number of services dealing with the incident then there are increased chances of cross contamination and evidence to be missed. If there is scope for the potential of evidence to be collected from the scene then it may require specialist departments with the police to be called to assist with the investigation. The type of specialist teams that could be utilised in a major incident are officers that are specially trained to conduct searches, crime scene investigators ,traffic collision investigators. It can also require family liaison officers to support the families who have had a love one who has been pronounced deceased at the incident. It is the responsibility of the police to ascertain the details of the family members to inform them of the incident.

The effects that a major incident can have on a community can be devastating and effect the day to day operations of the community. It is important that messages are sent out through the appropriate social media channels to advise those who may be impacted by the major incident. It could have a multitude to of impacts from emotional

if a friend/relative has been involved to physical if a major road is closed then diversion would be in place so making those residents known. It also gives the opportunity for the police to reassure the public about the incident and what they are doing to combat the problem.

Once the major incident has been dealt with, it is the police's job to restore normality. As previously mentioned, it all depends on the type of major incident. It could be facilitating the clear up of a RTC to reassurance patrols in the local community.

Macklin & Marsden (2010) discuss the notion that it is important for those emergency works to only perform the duties that they are trained in when dealing with a major incident. Allowing for the suitable service to support in the area's which they are trained, reduces the likelihood of costly repercussions. In 2017, when the Manchester bombing took place, it took multiple specialist departments from the police and other emergency services to combat the terrorism attack that took place. The Independent (2017) stated that the police apologised due to a breakdown of communication between emergency services. Those emergency works who try to work outside of the trained capabilities could impact those victims who require support. With large scale major incidents, the collaboration of services working is critical and can have catastrophic results if not as demonstrated in the Manchester terrorist attack.

The police's role within a critical incident follow's the same response from police officers as those in a major incident. The main difference between a major incident and a critical incident is that a it will have impact on the victim, their family and the community. There are two types of critical incidents which are operational and non-operational. Operational critical incidents are terrorist attack, arson, escape from detention, encounter with serious crime, death of a person and local security threat. Examples of non-operational critical incidents can include pandemic, serious data breach, breach of procedure and corruption (West midlands police, 2014)

The College of Policing (2021) states there are three main stages to a critical incident these include: preparing for critical incidents, managing critical incidents and restoring public confidence. In the first stage, preparing for critical incidents, it is for management structures to take responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient

constables who are trained to the required level that the incident requires. The second part managing critical incidents identifies the processes that are required to be followed and ensuring they are implemented by the most appropriate persons. The third stage restoring public confidence focuses on the impact the incident has had on the victim, families and community.

Once a critical incident has been identified by the police, it is then crucial on how the police manage those who have been affected by the incident. Particular the incidents that have caused trauma and/or bereavement to a person as the emotional impact that the incident may have upon a person and it is not just an individual who may be affected by this incident it could be a whole community. In February 2021, Moyied Bashier died when police were dealing with Mr Bashier whilst he was having a medical episode. This caused great upset and anger by Mr Bashier's death to the local community in Newport, South Wales. The family were angry with the police as the brother stated that he called the police to help assist with dealing with his brother but felt that the police caused his death. As a result, protest was carried out in Newport which were organised by the deceased's family outside Newport Central Police station (Guardian, 2021). This incident shows how important it is for the police are constantly being scrutinised for every action they take. The police must balance the investigation of the matter and maintaining control of the community to prevent things escalating whilst offering empathy to the family has been affected. The police need to establish a mutual ground with those who have been affected to be able to offer support for the grief that they encounter and be transparent on the events which took place during the incident of the death of their family member.

Whilst officers are trained to deal with the incidents that present themselves under the classification of a critical incident, it is important to note the impact that it has on the officer as well as those who are emotionally and physically connected to the person's involved. A police officer can deal with a number of traumatic incidents on a daily basis but a lot of officers often know how to support those victims of the incidents but not necessarily the welfare of themselves. Solomon (2011) states that those officers who avoid dealing with their emotional reactions have an increased likelihood to re-live their trauma. It is also unknown to an officer when the trauma will affect them. Bohrer, (2005) highlighted the importance of the long-term consequences of not addressing

the stresses that an officer faces. The implications of this could result in police failings when responding to a critical/major incident if an officer has not had the correct support. The concern is that this could hinder an officer's performance on how they deal with the situation, if it hinders the ability to make the correct informed decisions about the incident. Police forces within the UK have adopted a referral process for those officers who have had to deal with a traumatic incident. An officer who has been identified as being involved in a traumatic incident get offered a trauma risk incident management referral (Gov, 2021). This is down to the discretion of the officer to accept but the process supports officers who have had to deal with an incident of a sensitive nature. If an officer chooses to accept the referral then support can be allocated, and the thoughts of the officers noted for potential future support if they do not feel the incident has affected them at the time.

Police often respond to critical incidents and deal with the incident in a respectable manner but the findings from the victims is that the continued support and updates through an investigation lapses from officers. According to the Independent (2017) fifty-five per cent on victims felt that their needs were not met after reporting an incident to the police. The consequences for the police are that if victims are not being supported adequately. Farrell et al (2019) suggest that due to the police's approach to situations and policies that the police have, this does not line up with the needs and wishes of the victim. An example of this is when a victim reports an incident of domestic incident and police take positive action to negate any risk of escalation by arresting the perpetrator to help keep the victim safe. The victim does not support a complaint or wish for the perpetrator to be arrested (Zelcer, 2014). Most of the time this is linked to the emotional attachment between the victim and the perpetrator. If the needs and wishes are being overruled by police's policies, then this is going to hinder a victim's likelihood of reporting future crimes. Especially when dealing with crimes of a complex nature which is deemed to be a critical incident, those who have felt failed by the police in circumstances deemed to be low level could face catastrophic consequences when police involvement is essential to prevent any serious harm coming to a victim.

Beckley and Birkinshaw (2009) conducted research on the police's response to critical incidents and even though they state there has been failings from the police in the past, the majority of critical incidents have been successfully applied and managed so

therefore the number of failings have been reduced due to the approach of the hierarchy within forces who lead on the incidents. Without this, it would increase the number of failings when responding to incidents of such calibre.

In this essay, I have evaluated a multitude of areas which can impact on the public's perception of the police. One of the main area's which appears to have the biggest impact on the public is a person's interactions with the police. This comes in a variety different forms that include how an officer deals with a victim during an investigation, the visual appearance of an officer and the behaviour displayed of an officer. These impressions can dictate on how the public interact with police and depending on they type of interaction whether it be positive or negative depends on how the public support the police. Police are under pressures due to an increase in demand and limited resourcing available. Therefore, this is limiting how much time each officer can spend conducting proactive policing and walking the beat. It also means that the amount of time each officer has dealing with the public is reduced. But these means that when an officer is dealing with the public that they make it memorable for the right reason to portray a positive image of the police.

It is also now easier for police to be under the spotlight with the advancements in technology and society recording interactions which they have with the police. This can be shared on the internet/social media where peoples perceptions can be formed without knowing the rationale acting in the way they are. Therefore, presumptions are made on information that may be have manipulated in a way that person wants the police to be seen. It is important that officer's man conscious efforts to ensure that they are professional at all times and mindful of the actions they are taking. This is to ensure the public perception of the police is the one that the police force wants to portray, and this will be down to the efforts made by officers.

I have evaluated what role the police are responsible for when dealing with a major and critical incident. In a major incident, it is important for officers to be able to work collaboratively with other emergency services and co-ordinate these services. An officer needs to be able to understand their role and make sure they carry out their duties at the scene.

From the research that I have examined the important part for police officers dealing with a critical incident is ensuring that support is put in place for the victim, their families and the community. Without this, it could increase the number of failings that the police

could find themselves having as victim do not feel supported by the police. This then causes them to be reluctant in reporting crime and supporting police action.

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