

University Of Wales Trinity Saint David

Evaluate what are the primary factors that contribute to an individual's vulnerability in the content of policing.

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Professional policing

Policing Vulnerability and Risk.

There are many things that can go into a person's vulnerability, some are seen more than others. This assignment will delve into the topic of vulnerability to develop an understanding of what factors play a role in a person's vulnerability and how police are taught to appropriately tackle instances where a vulnerable person is involved. This assignment will include cases where the police have failed to attend those who are vulnerable and how they learnt from those cases to help better the response they have to those who are vulnerable. These plans will be dug into in this assignment to see their effectiveness when it comes to the vulnerable. This assignment will also bring in cases where the police failed to take appropriate action and if the police service has learned from these instances or whether they decided to push them aside.

When working for the police, there will be many times where they will have to attend a scene where there is a great deal of vulnerability in a person or people and they have to figure out the best course of action in how to deal with situations like this. This is why the police have a set plan that they follow that helps the police make the most informed decisions when dealing with someone who is vulnerable.

The definition for vulnerability is "The inability to protect oneself or others from harm or exploitation" (*College of Policing, 2021*). There are also Many characteristics that can go into a vulnerable person, "defined as in need of special care, support or protection because of age, disability or risk of abuse or neglect." (*Office for health improvement & disparities, 2021*). When it comes to the police attending scenarios where there are vulnerable people the police are trained in how to deal with people who fall into these

categories. A lot of the time, especially if the victim is mentally ill the police have a duty to contact a specialist as they will have further experience and understanding of individuals with mental disorders and will understand how to properly communicate with said individual. Blackstone's handbook for policing students 2023, chapter 13, 13.1, has a quote that states "(Police) are not obliged to assume responsibility... Other partner agencies are often better equipped to deal with such issues". (*Dr Barry Blackburn et al, 2023*).

There are legislations put in place that the police can use when dealing with the vulnerable, one being section 17 of the PACE Act 1984. This act allows a police officer to enter a property without a warrant if they truly believe that it is going to save someone from serious harm or death, otherwise said as to save life or limb. Another legislation is the Mental capacity Act 2005 section 4B, this legislation is very similar to Section 17 of PACE 1984 as it states "If the following conditions are met, D is authorised P of his liberty... (i) giving P life-sustaining treatment or (ii) doing a vital act." (*Legislation.Gov.UK, 2005*). Police don't always have to use legislations to interact with the vulnerable, they also adopt tactics. One tactic that the police adopt to avoid entering the property if the situation does not escalate to that point is trying to coax the individual outside. This makes it easier for police to restrain the person if needed and it allows them to physically intervene if said person starts acting out and harming themselves or others.

Approaches can also aid in police interactions with the vulnerable. An approach that the police are taught when it comes to interacting with a vulnerable person or people is THRIVE or threat, harm, risk, vulnerability and engagement. When engaging with someone vulnerable, this is what police officers are expected to evaluate in order to

interact with the vulnerable. The ultimate aim is to allow the person to feel safe and seen, which- ultimately allows them to go into further detail as to what happened and even if it has happened before, allowing to paint a bigger and clearer picture. This also allows the police to take the correct course of action for the victim and it can help avoid situations needlessly getting out of hand as they have concluded what the best approach would be for the person they are dealing with.

There have been times where the police were not adequate with a person who is vulnerable, one example being the case of Fiona Pilkinton. Fiona was a 38-year-old mother to a disabled daughter who often faced intimidation from the youth. Fiona would often call the police- over a course of multiple years from 1997 to 2007 reporting crimes. The police eventually stopped responding to these reports and this cause Fiona to go down a deeper spiral “she used to phone them up but they couldn't send ‘cos they ain't got no one” (*Ann Jones, 2009*). Fiona decided that she had enough and unfortunately decided to get in the car with her daughter and pets and set it alight, killing them both.

The police faced a lot of criticism for this and even the IPCC stated that there is case of misconduct for 4 officers due to this case. The police were very much in the wrong when it comes to Fiona, it is the Teenagers' fault that Fiona decided to do what she did, but a lot of the blame can go on the police as they basically pushed her aside and decided her calls were not worth attending, further pushing her to kill herself and her daughter. " It (IPCC) concludes that the police's error in not identifying Fiona Pilkington and her children as a vulnerable family "lay at the core" of their failure to provide a cohesive and effective approach.” (*BBC, 2011*)

Blackstone's handbook for policing students 2023 gives examples of cases where police interaction with those who are vulnerable was not adequate and that action should've been taken much sooner, when it came to the vulnerable. The case of 'Baby P' or Peter Connelly is one. Peter was a baby who suffered horrible abuse and a violent death through his parents, a number of services were involved before Peter's death, the police being one of them but failed to take appropriate action and failed to act until it was too late for the young child, highlighting how devastating the consequences of waiting too long or failing to take action can be "...ongoing failures in child protection procedures had not been properly addressed." (*Laming, 2009*). "(Victoria Climbié, Peter Connelly and Daniel Pelka)... been the subjects of contact with doctors, the police, social services and schools... they had however failed to take appropriate action to prevent the deaths of these children." (*Dr Barry Blackburn et al, 2023*).

The police have used these cases to better their response when it comes to dealing with the vulnerable and now work more closely with other agencies to help prevent situations like baby P again. They have done this by setting out plans and legislations to help avoid negative outcomes. Working together to safeguard children 2023 sets expectations for the police and other agencies to collaborate when it comes to cases involving children "The following expectations have been developed to underpin this multi-agency working. They apply to all agencies and practitioners involved in safeguarding and protecting children. Specifically, these include police..." (*Department for education, 2015*).

Police will also encounter repeat victims and repeat offenders. A repeat victim is someone who ends up becoming a victim to crimes multiple times, this can be through the same person, who will then be classed a repeat offender, and it is often seen in cases

of abuse, this can be children and adults. Repeat victims can start to become harder for the police to support or take action, this is because sometimes, the victim will simply stop reporting incidents to the police, this can be for a multitude of reasons one being manipulation from the person victimizing the other or threatening the victim, it can also be through the police doing little to nothing to aid the victim.

When it comes to repeat victims, there are trends that can be seen that interlink with why they are victims' multiple times. "The most consistent predictor of future trauma exposure is a history of prior trauma exposure." (*Jaffe, et al. 2019*). "A child who is abused is at a significantly higher risk of being revictimized in adolescence and/or adulthood." (*Aakvaag, et al. 2019. Zamir, et al. 2018*). To tackle repeat victimization, the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales police does have plans set in place to help, one being the supporting victims & witnesses' strategy 2021-2026. "We share a passion for early intervention and prompt, positive action. We are cooperating closely with other agencies and working to make the local Criminal Justice System efficient and effective, preventing crime and reducing reoffending." (*Police and Crime Commissioner South Wales, 2021*)

It is shown that people reoffend because of their childhood, drug use, mental health and family issues and was found that "Most strongly associated with a higher likelihood of reoffending after release." (*Ministry of Justice, 2013*). One plan to tackle reoffending is the Prison Leavers Project. This project aims to rehabilitate offenders using 4 key factors, health and wellbeing, the day of release from prison, community and relationships and employability and skills. "The project promotes collaboration across sectors and at a

local level to develop innovative ways to help turn people leaving prison away from crime.”

(*Ministry of Justice, 2021*) This project employs those who specialize in preventing offenders in reoffending and rehabilitating offenders.

There is a plan set in place called PEEL, and this plan is an inspection of all police forces throughout the UK, the PEEL plan for 2015 was centred around vulnerability. Out of the 43 forces, 12 were considered ‘good’ and 27 had room for improvement. There is a silver lining to this, “victims had an 83.7% satisfaction rate” (*HMIC, 2015*) across all police forces. This shows that the police’s plans to support victims is working and that they have learnt from past experiences where they didn't do enough for the victims.

Overall, the police have had instances where their response- or lack thereof, was not the best and concluded in devastating consequences like the cases of Baby P and Fiona Pilkington but, it has been seen that the police have learned from these instances and are actively aiming to reduce victimization before it’s too late and there is a newer plan put in place the ‘Supporting Victims and Witnesses strategy 2021-2026’ is an example and does show the police have learnt from their mistakes rather than sweeping it under the rug. There are still improvements to be made as seen by the PEEL plan 2015, but all together the Police force has changed for the better when it comes to supporting victims.

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