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Essay one:

How effectively has the police service adapted to accommodate diversity within the UK? Consider the police force itself and/or the way police engage with diverse communities.

Your answer must be based on academic research.

Word limit: 1000 words.

Answer:

This essay will explore how effectively the police service has adapted to accommodate diversity within the UK, considering recruitment into the police force itself and the way police engage with diverse communities.

Historically the police have been viewed as lacking diversity, with a dominant white heterosexual male-centred culture being a key theme of much academic research (Silvestri, 2017; Bhugowandeen, 2013). In 1999 following the release of the Macpherson report which documented police institutional racism, national targets were set to increase the percentage of ethnic minority police officers to 7% in the UK by 2009 - to reflect the national population percentage of ethnic minority communities. However, this target was not met and in 2012 figures suggested only 5% of officers self-identified as BAME (Bhugowandeen, 2013). More recently this percentage has increased, with research showing 6.9% of police officers self-identify as being from an ethnic minority background (Hills, 2021), although, the minority ethnic population in the UK has also increased with the 2019 census providing a return of 15.6% of the UK population being BAME (Hills, 2021). This shows that those from minority ethnic communities are still under-represented within policing (Bury et al., 2018; Shankley & Williams, 2020), although the level of representation varies between police forces (Hills, 2021).

The levels to which police forces have prioritised the recruitment of diverse police officers have also differed, with some forces prioritising to a point of illegal positive discrimination within their recruitment processes (Bhugowandeen, 2013), and more generally a lower priority being placed on diversity in amongst a background of austerity and limited public resources (Bury et al., 2018). New routes into policing that have been introduced in the UK recently include direct entry paths to roles within Police forces including detective roles and those of rank. These routes have been seen to assist with the recruitment of more diverse applicants (Bury et al., 2018; Silvestri, 2017).

Alongside these recruitment practices, once diverse individuals are recruited within police forces, representatives are in place to advocate for groups across protected characteristics (Bury et al., 2018). However, the support and backing of these groups by forces, which can be limited by resources and by the level of perceived importance within individual forces, can result in these groups having limited impact and ability to create substantial change (Bury et al., 2018). Furthermore, it can be seen that staff retention within the police is lower for ethnic minority police officers, with more officers leaving within their two-year probationary period (Bhugowandeen, 2013). However, the research conducted by Bhugowandeen was published in 2013 so this may no longer be the case.

For other diverse groups within police workforces, it can be seen that following the release of the Macpherson report, the work experiences of these groups have been positively transformed from that of an exclusionary nature (Jones, 2015). Research by Jones (2015), suggests that lesbian, gay and bisexual police officers reported an increase in feelings of inclusivity in the workplace, however note that there are still concerns surrounding diversity in police forces in some instances. As a result of this, Jones (2015) concludes that further work surrounding equality and diversity must be completed to ensure an inclusive police community and culture is achieved.

Training is completed in the UK at a force level surrounding diversity and inclusion, in a similar manner to that described by Miles-Johnson (2019), however the impact of this training when dealing and engaging with ethnic minority communities is said to be strongly influenced by the following factors: Pride that officers have in their work, and the attitudes of senior officers toward policing diverse people (Miles-Johnson, 2019). This displays that police engagement with diverse communities will differ between forces and with individual interactions with different officers, however Miles-Johnson's (2019) research is based on Australian policing so may limit applicability to policing in the UK. Research by Al-Khouja et al (2021), states that current equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training is insufficient within policing, with EDI centred stop-search training exemplified to not create a measurable impact on reducing disproportionate stop-search practices on ethnic minority groups (Al-Khouja et al., 2021). This can be seen in research by Shankley & Williams (2020), which states that the rate of stop-searches on black communities in 2016/2017 was eight times that of white communities in the same period.

A key theme as outlined previously is the masculine nature of police culture. Research by Dick & Cassell (2002), and Silvestri (2017), suggests that rather than changing working patterns and practices to tempt a diverse range of applicants to policing as discussed by Bury et al. (2018), there needs to be a cultural shift away from a cult of masculinity to challenge the status quo and remove the largest barrier to increasing police diversity. The perception that the police are institutionally racist, white male dominated and sexist is widespread and enhances the Police's poor reputation, leading to distrust in police services by diverse and minority groups (Bhugowandeen, 2013). The lack of diversity in policing itself can be seen as a barrier to increasing diversity, with few role models within UK police forces for minority groups to establish relatability and challenge the perception of a homogenous policing community (Bhugowandeen, 2013).

In conclusion, the police service in the UK can be seen to be in a process of adapting to accommodate diversity, with the increase in different routes to policing assisting a more diverse range of applicants, and a priority focus being placed towards diversity and inclusion by individual forces. However, the adaptability of policing to represent and effectively engage with a more diverse population appears to be dependent on the attitudes of forces and individuals within these forces. There is still more that can be done to provide a representative service to communities, with under-representation of BAME communities a clear indicator of this. The culture of white heterosexual masculinity within policing is strongly referenced throughout academic research into policing, however this cultural image can be seen as oversimplified and the widespread perception of this exclusionary and regressive culture remains a barrier to both recruitment and retention of diverse police workforces, and to public engagement with diverse communities.

1023 words

Essay Two:

Response policing – Why is it important to manage mental wellbeing in policing? What can be the consequences if mental wellbeing is not managed appropriately?

Word limit: 1000 words.

Answer:

This essay will discuss why it is important to manage mental wellbeing in policing, and what the consequences can be if mental wellbeing is not managed appropriately. This will explore the extent of mental ill health, and what contributes towards psychological illnesses within the context of policing. This essay will also explore the impacts both on individuals and on policing at organisational levels of mental ill health within the policing workforce.

Mental health illnesses can be seen to be widespread within society, with 1 in 4 people affected by at least one form of mental ill-health over the course of their life (HMICFRS, 2018). Mental health can also be seen to be an underlying theme which runs through many aspects of policing work, including the demand for mental health support within policing incidents, and the effects of policing as a career on officer mental health (Santre, 2024; HMICFRS, 2018). Research suggests that police officers, compared with the general population, are more likely to experience problems with their mental health (Santre, 2024). It is said that across the world, one in every seven police officers have suffered with mental health illnesses in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression, which is roughly double the amount when compared with the general population (Santre, 2024). Furthermore, 10% of police officers have struggled from other mental illnesses (Santre, 2024). Other research into mental wellbeing and the policing population suggests that nearly 40% of police officers require help for their mental ill health - a considerable amount higher than is seen within the general population (Edwards & Kotera, 2021).

Policing as a field in the UK has more recently seen an increase in pressures from a number of different areas, including socioeconomic factors such as the rise of austerity measures which have reduced policing budgets, higher levels of crime which are diversifying and becoming more complex in nature, and a reduction in police officer numbers resulting from reduced resources - all of these increase the pressure on individuals within policing (Edwards & Kotera, 2021). Research conducted by Demou, Hale and Hunt (2020) determined that mental health within police officers was being put under strain primarily through long working hours and heavy workloads, however policing culture and organisational change also was noted to have an impact on officers' mental health. Other stress inducing aspects of policing include a lack of support in conducting the role, potential for interpersonal conflict with colleagues and supervisors, time pressures when managing workloads, and an organisational system which is bureaucratic in nature, being strictly managed and quick to punish members of staff (Purba & Demou, 2019). Purba & Demou's (2019) research that these stressors are applicable across cultures, including countries such as the UK and South Africa as examples.

Research by Santre (2024), noted that police officers are often hesitant to discuss their mental health and seek treatment, and much research suggests that this stems from a masculine macho culture that surrounds policing and makes those who speak about mental health deemed to be weak and less capable (Silvestri, 2017; Demou, Hale & Hunt, 2020; Edwards & Kotera, 2021). One of the reasons it is important to manage mental wellbeing in policing is that there is a need to challenge this regressive culture of association between mental illness and weakness within policing (Silvestri, 2017; Demou,

Hale & Hunt, 2020; Edwards & Kotera, 2021). It is also suggested that the police's culture and institutional attitudes towards mental wellbeing is a contributing factor towards psychological illnesses within policing, being a more significant cause than the nature of policing as a job in itself (Edwards & Kotera, 2021). However, the job police officers conduct can be a source of much stress, with officers undertaking 'emotional labour' due to the nature of dealing with the public, and being expected to act professionally and manage particular feelings when encountering traumatic incidents as part of the role (Purba & Demou, 2019).

If mental wellbeing is not managed appropriately within policing, research (Demou, Hale & Hunt, 2020) shows that this has a significant impact on absence from work due to mental health sickness, alongside an increase in poor interactions with the public, reducing public support and confidence in policing. Research suggests that half of police officers have taken sickness leave for mental health-related illnesses in the last 5 years (Edwards & Kotera, 2021), amounting to a significant level of financial expenditure for forces, and also reducing the numbers of operational officers during a time of reduced public funding and staffing levels. Demou, Hale and Hunt's (2020) research also shows that struggles with mental health within policing leads to an increase in use of force by police officers and a generally lower quality of work by those that stay in work during their mental health struggles.

Outside of the work arena, there is also an impact on the physical health of officers, and a strain can be placed on external relationships (Santre, 2024; Demou, Hale & Hunt, 2020). Examples of physical problems that may arise as a result of mental ill health includes stress related symptoms such as gastrointestinal issues and high blood pressure, it can also lead to an increase in injuries whilst at work (Santre, 2024). More generally the impacts of poor mental health and well-being can include job instability, relationship and marital issues, and insomnia (Santre, 2024).

Further issues can arise when mental wellbeing is not managed appropriately within policing, with research showing that alcohol is sometimes used as a crutch to help officers cope with work pressures and psychological symptoms (Edwards & Kotera, 2021). Within much research into the topic area of mental wellbeing of policing, the organisational stressors have been seen to associate or cause occupational stress, anxiety, depression, psychiatric symptoms, psychological distress, burnout, and suicidal ideation. (Purba & Demou, 2019).

In conclusion it can be seen as important to manage mental wellbeing in policing due to the widespread nature of mental ill health within policing, with higher levels seen in the policing population than the general populus. The potential consequences if mental wellbeing is not managed appropriately can be significant, with policing staff succumbing to organisational stressors and becoming ill with psychological ailments. This has a knock-on effect within policing to reduce quality of work completed, and by reducing staffing levels through sick leave from mental ill health. Outside of the organisational impacts, officers may find that by not having mental wellbeing managed, they will experience physical and psychological illnesses, and will have an increased strain on relationships.

1087 words

Essay three:

How might personal attitudes, values and bias impact upon the effective investigation of volume crime?

Your answer must be based on academic research, but you may refer to relevant, recent examples.

Word limit: 1000 words.

Answer:

This essay will explore how personal attitudes, values and bias can impact upon the effective investigation of volume crime, utilising academic research. Within this essay I will explore the impacts of police attitudes, values and bias in relation to the reporting, investigation and outcomes of criminal investigations. Volume crime can be defined as crimes which are higher in occurrence such as burglary, theft, criminal damage, drug possession, assault and fraud (Brown, & Smith, 2018).

Personal attitudes, values and bias of police officers can impact perceptions of the public, which in turn has an impact on the percentage of crimes which are reported, alongside who reports crime that takes place. Research suggests that when individuals receive negative treatment by police during any recent involuntary police contact, this increases perceptions that police are biased in the way that they deal with different populations (Renauer, & Covelli, 2011). The extent that people perceive the police to be biased can also be seen to be associated with their level of trust in the police service, therefore lower trust in police can be seen when communities perceive the police to be biased (Madon, & Murphy, 2021). It can be seen that as a result of this, racial minorities may be less likely to report victimisation to law enforcement (Powers, Khachatryan, & Socia, 2018). Research conducted by Madon and Murphy (2021), specifically focused on the Muslim population, and concluded that this demographic have experienced bias in the form of discrimination from policing authorities. As a result of experiencing this bias and negative attitude, the trust of Muslim communities in law enforcement can be seen as damaged, with many people from the community feeling that they are viewed and treated as suspects (Madon, & Murphy, 2021).

Once volume crimes have been reported to the police, research suggests that officers' personal attitudes affect the level of investigative detail and time commitment that is placed in these reported crimes (Engel, & Worden, 2006). More specifically, Engel and Worden's (2006) research suggests that officers' perceptions of their supervisors' priorities has a significant impact on the resources they expend in conducting these investigations (Engel, & Worden, 2006). Furthermore, supervisor attitudes towards information sharing can make a vital difference within the success of police investigations within a broad range of criminal activities including volume crime (Berg et al., 2008). As such, a strong emphasis in research by Berg et al. (2008) suggests that the values and personal attitudes of police managers towards encouraging information sharing is key to effective investigations.

Alongside this, it is evident from much research that biases take many forms in policing, including tunnel vision and confirmation bias. Tunnel vision can be defined as the propensity for individuals in the criminal justice arena to filter evidence selectively to reach a conclusion of investigation which matches the perceived suspect and circumstances, with confirmation bias favouring evidence that helps an officer confirm their preconceptions, however this can reduce the effective analysis of information's accuracy (Elaad, 2022). Research by Elaad (2022), suggests that in spite of the criminal justice systems foundation of believing innocence until proof of guilt, police officers often employ

personal beliefs of guilt-presumptive processes. This can lead to issues in investigative actions including criminal interrogation, and evidence gathering which is heavily directed and biased (Elaad, 2022).

When looking at volume crime, the two opposing biases of tunnel vision and confirmation bias can be seen to act independently or with co-morbidity dependent on the investigation (Elaad, 2022). Confirmation bias from external evidence sources are typically trusted when investigations are complete in ambiguous cases, whilst tunnel vision is typically unconsciously implemented by officers in clear-cut cases (Elaad, 2022). As most cases are not entirely clear however, there is the possibility for both confirmation bias and tunnel vision to appear within many cases at the same point (Elaad, 2022). These biases in extreme circumstances can result in miscarriages of justice with the wrong persons being investigated for crimes they have not committed.

Another form of bias which is discussed above in this essay is the existence of racial bias, which within volume crime can contribute to outcomes which are racially disparate (Kahn & Martin, 2016). However research by Kahn and Martin (2016) suggests that there is a difference between the level of existent racial bias in policing, and the perceptions of levels of racial bias within the police. As personal attitudes are often difficult to identify, personal attitudes which have a negative impact on criminal investigations are often left as not perceived and this results in increased difficulty to enact positive change within policing culture (Kahn & Martin, 2016).

When looking specifically at engaging with minority communities within policing investigations, research by Miles-Johnson (2019) suggests that there are factors which influence these personal attitudes and biases, including the pride that officers have in their work, and the attitudes of supervising officers' toward policing diverse people. The difference in individual police officer engagement with diverse communities will be seen between forces and individual interactions with different officers (Miles-Johnson, 2019), however this can be seen to influence the level of trust and therefore reporting of volume crime to be investigated as discussed above (Madon & Murphy, 2021; Powers, Khachatryan, & Socia, 2018).

Personal attitudes, values and bias can also directly influence the outcome of low-level volume crime outcomes, with police officers in many countries including the UK given discretionary authority to divert low-level offenders to out of court disposal methods in lieu of arrest and formal criminal justice outcomes (Schaible, Gant, & Ames, 2021). Research by Schaible, Gant and Ames (2021) suggests that police officers are more likely to divert offenders of low level crime from court proceedings when they have a positive attitude towards the potentials of offender rehabilitation.

In conclusion, personal attitudes, values and bias within the policing community plays a large role in the effective investigation of volume crime, from interactions with the public which impact on the levels of crime which are reported based on feelings of trust in police services, to biases within the investigation process such as tunnel vision and confirmation bias which can reduce the open-minded investigative mindset when, and even the outcomes of investigations, with decisions being made by officers on a discretionary basis regarding out of court disposal outcomes for low-level volume offences. Within this, a key theme relates to racial biases and the perception of these biases within policing, which can be seen to impact upon effective investigations from initial report to investigatory outcomes and disposals.

1082 words

Essay four:

Outline potential links between serious and organised crime and public protection issues. What characteristics make some people more vulnerable to exploitation by serious and organised crime gangs?

Your answer must be based on academic research.

Word limit: 1000 words.

This essay will outline potential links between serious and organised crime and public protection issues, exploring what characteristics make some people more vulnerable to exploitation by serious and organised crime gangs. This essay will cover several types of criminal exploitation which inherently relies on vulnerable people, including cuckooing, county lines, human trafficking, and prostitution, and will discuss what characteristics make individuals more likely to fall victim to these lines of organised criminality.

Public protection refers to the section of a police force dedicated to safeguarding those at risk of becoming victims of crimes such as child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and human trafficking (HMICFRS, 2023). Vulnerabilities include age, mental ill health, learning disabilities, and financial difficulties. Cuckooing can be seen to link organised and serious criminal activity with this area of policing and can be defined as a phenomena where vulnerable people's homes are being occupied by criminals (Macdonald et al., 2022; Spicer, 2021). More specifically, cuckooing can be defined as either force being used against a vulnerable resident, or a method of 'befriending' being implemented with the isolated individual, with the aim of acquiring their home (Springer, Moyle, & Coomber, 2020). Once acquired, the home of this vulnerable individual is then used as an outpost for the facilitation of county lines in provincial towns (Springer, Moyle, & Coomber, 2020).

The vulnerabilities associated typically with cuckooing include physical and psychological disabilities, and research suggests that vulnerable groups subject to cuckooing suffer from social isolation, loneliness, and a lack of community services, and this contributes to the opportunity for criminal exploitation of disabled individuals (Macdonald et al., 2022). However, some research into cuckooing suggests that although it can be implemented by organised crime groups, the majority of cuckooing occurs at a local level and is perpetrated by local people. There is opportunity however for escalation within cuckooing situations, with local cuckooing being the first step towards county lines takeovers as part of serious organised criminality (Macdonald et al., 2022; Spicer, 2021).

County lines more generally, is a key field of criminality which can be seen to link up organised crime with public protection issues. Research suggests that county lines is reliant on vulnerable populations such as children to undertake exploitative labour, with the intention of building national drug selling markets for organised crime gangs (Moyle, 2019). The networks associated with County Lines have more recently adopted different business practices, and this has led to an increase in cuckooing and the exploitation of young people to transport and sell illegal substances (Harding, 2023; Spicer, 2021). This has occurred due to an increase in use of social media within organised crime gangs, and an increase in the saturation of competing drug sources within the drug markets (Harding, 2023), which means that drug dealing organised groups are extending their market areas, and requiring more individuals and operational bases to do so (Cockbain, 2021; Harding, 2023). Vulnerable adults and children have been utilised for this due to the method of force and/or 'befriending' which can be more easily administered in a background of isolation due to the vulnerabilities of these groups (Cockbain,

2021; Springer, Moyle, & Coomber, 2020). This knowledge of increased child exploitation has grown within policing, with specific focus on vulnerable child exploitation within county lines being targeted in the public protection arena (Harding, 2023).

Research suggests that county lines as a term can be seen to obscure and mitigate the criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults in the context of this practice (Cockbain, 2021). It can also be seen that within county lines there is a blurring between victimisation and offending of vulnerable individuals (Cockbain, 2021). Despite these individuals having agency, they also suffer from power imbalances and often become involved through heavily constrained choices (Moyle, 2019; Cockbain, 2021).

Another area of organised crime which can be seen to be linked to concerns of public protection is the practice of human trafficking and forced migration (Hynes, 2010). As human trafficking is an international organised criminal activity, gangs utilise financial vulnerability which can be seen as a 'push-factor' and the promise of employment opportunity as an important 'pull-factor' (Bales, 2011). It can be seen therefore that financial vulnerability as a public protection concern is an important vulnerability in criminal exploitation (Bales, 2011). Human trafficking can be seen to result in the systematic targeting of girls and women, showing that sex and class are vulnerability factors (Shepherd, Parida, Williams, & Wincent, 2022). This exploitation from trafficking can lead to prostitution, which is in itself a further form of organised criminal activity where vulnerability factors such as age, gender and financial stability lead to public protection concerns (Moran & Farley, 2019).

The public protection issues do not end for those that are trafficked and are returned to their home country, with many families expecting financial support from their migrated family members, which leads to further public protection issues with ostracisation and isolation upon victims' return (Paasche, Skilbrei, & Plambech, 2018). Cultural differences can also be seen with differences in perception from victims of trafficking being associated with a lack of agency, versus individual accountability being expected for a trafficked person's situation of vulnerability (Paasche, Skilbrei, & Plambech, 2018). Research suggests that there are multiple stages of human trafficking for prostitution, with vulnerable individuals being recruited through deception, entrapping them through isolation, building barriers to remove alternative options, and creating perceptions of power through training the exploited into exploiters (Shepherd, Parida, Williams, & Wincent, 2022).

In conclusion, there are multiple aspects of organised and serious crime which connect with public protection issues, including cuckooing as part of county line networks, and human trafficking which can also involve the exploitation of individuals for prostitution. From a review of academic research, it can be seen that vulnerabilities change dependant on the type of exploitation, but can include characteristics such as physical and mental disabilities, young age, and financial instability, with gender also being a factor in prostitution.

990 words

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