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LEVEL 6 - 40 Credits

**Workbook title: Competency Based
Workbook 3 (PCDA)
8000 Words**

**(SOUTH WALES POLICE, GWENT POLICE AND
UWTSD)**

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FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAMME

Module title: Professional Police Practice 3 (PCDA) BMPP6000D

Workbook Guidance

Please read these notes carefully; they provide essential information.

What is the workbook for?

The purpose of this workbook is to enable learners to demonstrate and provide evidence of how they meet the learning outcomes set by the College of Policing, for the BSc programme. Essentially, you are being asked to outline your experiential learning based upon your theoretical understanding in a range of operational situations.

- Understanding the Police Officer role
- Modern Professional Police Officer
- Strategic Role of the College of Policing
- Communication Skills
- Social Media
- Leadership and Team Working
- Leadership style
- Flexibility and Leadership Strategy
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Professional and Organisational goals
- Assessment

You may wish to use the same incidents as you've outlined in the Occupational Competence Portfolio.

How should the workbook be presented?

Blank electronic copies can be found on Moodle of this workbook. You must submit this document electronically therefore it is important that you save your work regularly and upload the final typed version through Turnitin on Moodle.

Word count policy can be found in chapter 7 of the Academic Quality under section 7.7 (this applies to presenting work above and under the specified word count).

https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/academic-office/aqh-chapters/chapters---en/Chapter_07_Assessment-Taught_Programmes_Pages_72-79-UPDATED-05-11-2019.pdf

Reflective practice is a core aspect for your workbooks and although there is a variety of useful resources on Moodle, there is one particular book, that is specifically based on reflective practice in policing, here is a link to one chapter from Selina Copley's Reflective Practice for Policing Students:

https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/298870/mod_resource/content/1/Reflective%20Practice%20for%20Policing%20Students%20-%20Selina%20Copley%20Chapter5.pdf

How is the workbook assessed?

Advice and support about the completion of this workbook was provided by university staff as part of your initial training day and further help and advice is available on Moodle.

Your tutor constable and in-force training staff will not be involved in assessing or marking your workbook after it has been submitted.

Dates of workbook submission will be made available and posted on Moodle.

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Confidentiality

It is important that no individual can be identified either directly or indirectly from the information in the workbook. Therefore, you must:

- adhere to guidance in the Student Handbook about unfair practice and plagiarism.
- not identify individuals including witnesses, victims or offenders by name.
- not write information that enables any individual to be identified indirectly through the description you provide. This includes references to names, colleagues, places (including hospitals, schools, town, villages, streets) specific incidents which were high profile and could be identified due to past publicity, other professionals or any other personal information including medical or other conditions;
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Dyslexia and other special circumstances

If you have any condition that you feel may affect your ability to deal with any part of the programme, please see the Student Handbook for further guidance. The University has a Student Services Unit that may be able to help but ***it is the learner's individual responsibility to contact them.***

Guidance:

- *Your workbook must contain the items specified in the table below (clearly identified and in the order given).*
- *You should use this document (electronically on Moodle) - insert your text / answer within each section of this workbook.*
- *You should upload your completed document as a saved pdf file of this workbook; if this is not possible then a Word Doc file is acceptable. Do not send a scanned file from a photocopier, an apple.dot file, or a Microsoft publisher file as Turnitin will not be able to assess them despite you being able to upload them.*

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Task 1

Relevant areas of the National Policing Curriculum: Understanding the Police Officer Role

****You must choose a policing incident in which you played a significant role with an offender/service user/victim and reflect on what happened****

Critically evaluate the strategic role of the College of Police in professionalising policing in the U.K.

Evidence how you are working to fulfil the role of a modern professional police officer now that you are in your final year of probation.

Critically reflect upon how your final year of probation has seen your role as a police officer change.

Consider the strategic Policing requirement, Policing Vision 2025, the Workforce Transformation 2018 and the College of Policing's 5 Year Strategy.

2000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section)

ANSWER:

The introduction of the College of Policing (CoP) marked a significant shift towards a more professional, transparent, and accountable police service in England and Wales. Established in 2012, the College was designed to improve the standards and ethics of modern policing while promoting evidence-based practices to inform future policing (College of Policing, 2025). The aim of this essay is to critically evaluate the strategic role of the CoP in professionalising policing in the UK, focusing on key initiatives such as the Code of Ethics, the Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF), the 5 Year Strategy, and Policing Vision 2025. As a police officer in the final year of my probation, I am able to reflect on my personal professional development and the ways in which CoP initiatives influence day to day

policing practice. This essay will explore both the strategic objectives of the College and their practical implications, highlighting areas of success, limitations, and the impact of my own ability to fulfil the role of a modern professional police officer. By combining critical analysis with personal reflection, this discussion seeks to provide a full evaluation of the College's role in professionalising policing.

Historically, policing in the UK has been characterised as a “craft” occupation, relying heavily on knowledge and culture rather than formal professional standards and qualifications (Reiner, 2010). Such an approach has been associated with inconsistent standards, limited accountability of officers, and challenges maintaining public confidence. Professionalisation in policing therefore would require a shift towards set standards, ethical practice, evidence-based decision making, and structured training. In this context, the creation of the CoP could be understood as part of a broader reform aimed at enhancing legitimacy particularly when public trust has been declining as well as there being such high-profile failures in policing in the public eye. The College of Policing was created to address these challenges, providing national guidance on standards, ethical frameworks, and professional development (College of Policing, 2013). It could be argued that professionalism in policing encompasses specialist knowledge, ethical regulation, and accountability, aligning the police service with other recognised professions. Through these measures, the College aims to improve effectiveness and legitimacy in policing whilst ensuring that officers operate in a manner consistent with the expectations of the public and also legal frameworks. It is important to note that legitimacy is not only a result of effectiveness, but also from fairness and justice, meaning that the College's strong focus on ethics is a strategic move. Therefore, it can be argued that the College's objectives reflect this vision, including setting national standards,

improving training and education for new officers, embedding ethical values and implementing evidence-based policing. These objectives also form the foundation for the Policing Vision 2025 which seeks to develop a workforce capable of responding effectively to contemporary challenges. These challenges might include both complex crimes such as cybercrime and safeguarding vulnerabilities which both require technical expertise and ethical awareness.

One of the college's most significant contributors to professionalising policing is the Code of Ethics introduced in 2014. The Code outlines core principles designed to guide professional behaviour, including principles such as integrity, accountability, fairness, and respect (College of Policing, 2014). All police officers and staff are expected to adhere to these principles which provides a baseline framework for ethical decision making and conduct. The Code serves multiple functions such as acting as a reference point during officer training, underpinning misconduct investigations, and fostering consistency across all 43 police forces in England and Wales (Newburn, 2022). Its introduction represents an important step in promoting professional standards, particularly in an environment historically shaped by informal occupational culture. However, critics argue that the Code alone is not enough to drive meaningful change in behaviour, particularly where negative organisational culture is deeply embedded (Punch, 2010). High-profile misconduct cases also indicate that enforcement of the Code can be inconsistent reducing its influence on practice (Casey, 2023). Consequently, while the Code of Ethics provides a strong foundation for professionalisation, its effectiveness is reliant on consistent reinforcement, organisational learning, and visible commitment from

senior leadership. Without this, there is a risk that the Code becomes symbolic rather than transformative.

The PEQF programme was introduced to ensure that new recruits enter policing with a degree-level qualification or the equivalent to an apprenticeship (College of Policing, 2025). The reason for this was to align the policing profession with other graduate professions, encourage reflective practice, and promote ethical decision making. By embedding professional knowledge and critical thinking skills, the PEQF aims to foster transparency, accountability, and professional confidence in new officers (Brown et al., 2018). Additionally, it supports the development of evidence-based practice by encouraging officers to engage with research and apply academic learning throughout their initial probationary period. While the PEQF represents a positive step towards formalising professional standards it has faced some criticism. Some research suggests the framework prioritises academic achievement and talent over practical competence, which might alienate experienced recruits without formal qualifications (Charman, 2020). The cost and complexity of the implementation of the programme has also led to inconsistencies in the delivery of the training across different forces (HMICFRS, 2022). It could also be argued that there is a concern over officers' workload and therefore welfare when trying to balance academic and operational demands. Despite these challenges, the PEQF provides a theoretical basis for professional development which reinforced the College's objectives of standardised training.

The Policing Vision 2025 sets out a long-term plan for modern policing which emphasises public confidence, professionalism, and workforce development (College of Policing, 2025). Its key priorities include embedding ethical standards,

promoting evidence-based practice, and fostering a diverse workforce. Similarly, the College's 5 Year Strategy outlines specific actions to achieve these objectives, including a change in training, adoption of new technologies, and collaboration across different forces (College of Policing, 2025). These strategies enable police forces to align local practice with national standards and support continuous professional development. They also demonstrate that there is an awareness of the ever-evolving nature of crime and local societies. Nevertheless, implementation remains a challenge especially in environments where resources are strained. Furthermore, differences in local culture and varying levels of senior management engagement can limit the consistency of these strategies which highlights obvious differences between objectives and the reality of policing.

Another key aspect of the College's strategic role is its promotion of evidence-based policing, through supporting various initiatives such as the "What Works Centre for Crime Reduction" which provides officers with access to research on effective interventions (College of Policing, 2025). This reflects a broader shift towards professional decision-making grounded in empirical evidence rather than traditional methods. As argued by Sherman (2013) evidence-based policing has the potential to improve both efficiency and legitimacy by ensuring that police resources are directed towards strategies which have been proven to reduce crime and be effective. In this sense, the College's role is strategically significant in bridging the gap between academic research and frontline practice. Despite this, it can be argued that the integration of evidence-based policing into daily policing operations remains inconsistent. Bullock and Tilley (2009) highlight that officers may lack the time, training, or supervisory support that would be required for them to be able to

engage with this research effectively. This is particularly relevant in high-demand environments, where immediate response takes priority over reflective or informed approaches. Police officers in this scenario would not have the time to sit down and decide on the best approach which may impact their final decision-making as they often have to make off the cuff decisions without thinking of the consequences or outcomes of that decision. Additionally, there can be resistance within the policing culture, whereby policing experience is deemed as being a better quality than someone's knowledge of academia and/or academic studies (Cockroft, 2015). Consequently, whilst the College has made substantial progress in promoting evidence-based policing, its impact is dependant on wider organisational change, including through training, leadership support, and accessibility of research to those officers.

As a final year probationer, I have experienced first-hand how the College of Policing objectives and initiatives influence daily policing practice. The Code of Ethics serves as a guide for ethical decision-making, shaping how I interact with colleagues, handle incidents, and approach challenging situations. Reflective practice encouraged through the PEQF programme and supervision from my Sergeant has enabled me to critically evaluate my actions and develop a more professional mindset. Throughout my probation I have noticed a significant change in my role. In the early stages, my focus was largely on operational competence having to learn procedures, policies and practical skills. In my final year, however, I have developed a greater awareness of ethical standards, public accountability, and professional responsibility. For example, I now actively consider the broader implications of my decisions, ensure transparency in my interactions, and consistently document my rationale for actions taken. This aligns directly with the CoP's strategic objectives,

demonstrating how the College's guidance shapes individual practice. Despite these improvements challenges still remain. Balancing operational demands with reflective practice can be difficult and I am still developing confidence in making independent judgements. The emphasis on evidence-based policing has also encouraged me to critically assess my approach to incidents, using data and research to inform decision making rather than relying mostly on my experiences. Despite this, I find that during high-pressure situations, I sometimes still rely on instant and experience rather than research, which I feel highlights the ongoing difficulties between traditional and professional approaches.

Overall, the College of Policing has played a central role in professionalising policing in the UK. Its initiatives, including the Code of Ethics, PEQF, Policing Vision 2025, and the 5 Year Strategy, provide both strategic direction and practical tools for officers. These measures have strengthened ethical standards, improved training, and fostered reflective practice. However, it is clear that limitations still persist. Implementation across all forces is inconsistent and organisational culture can hinder the full adoption of professional standards. Resource constraints, differences in senior ranking leadership, and differing organisational resources available put into question the effectiveness of the CoP initiatives. Consequently, while the College has made significant efforts to improve professionalism in policing it remains an ongoing process which requires consistent commitment. This process is further complicated by the need for cultural change within policing, which is often slower and more resistant than structural reform. The College of Policing has had a profound impact on the professionalisation of policing in England and Wales. Through various strategic initiatives the College has established a framework to be utilised by all police forces. These initiatives have influenced my own professional

development as a final year probationer, shaping my ethical awareness and decision making as first set out to. While challenges remain, the CoP provides a coherent vision for the future of policing providing practical tools for officers. Ultimately, professionalisation is not a one-time achievement but a continual process and the College of Policing remains central to ensuring that the UK policing evolves to meet all expectations.

1820 words

Task 2

**Relevant areas of the National Policing Curriculum:
Communication Skills, social media, Communication Strategy**

****You must choose a policing incident in which you played a significant role with an offender/service user/victim and reflect on what happened****

Critically evaluate your experience of the use of social media as a means of informing and engaging with the community and promoting policy initiatives.

Consider the force policy on using social media for professional information and engagement purposes.

What social media platforms are used by policing?

What are the benefits and risks of using social media?

2000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section)

ANSWER:

The rise of social media in recent years has significantly transformed how police communicate with the communities they serve. Various platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have increasingly become central tools for informing the public, engaging with communities, and promoting policing priorities and initiatives (Ralph et al., 2024). As a police officer, my experiences of using social media reflect both the opportunities and challenges that accompany the shift towards increased online engagement. Although social media offers the ability to deliver messages instantly, it also represents a range of ethical, professional, and operational risks that must be carefully managed. This essay will critically evaluate my personal experiences of using social media as a police officer, focusing on its effectiveness as a tool for community engagement, information dissemination, and policy promotion. Drawing on academic literature, policing frameworks, and reflective practice, this essay will explore how social media can enhance

transparency and trust while also examining its limitations, such as misinformation and digital exclusion. Ultimately, this essay will argue that social media is an invaluable tool for modern policing, but that its effective use requires professional judgement, strategic communication, and continuous reflection.

Policing has traditionally relied on face-to-face engagement prior to the introduction of digital technologies. This often involved local meetings or organised events that brought together police officers and members of the public from local communities. However, the emergence of social media and digital communication technologies has significantly altered how such engagement occurs, as public expectations regarding accessibility and responsiveness have also evolved (Goldsmith, 2015). Social media now allows police forces to communicate directly with communities without the delays associated with organising physical meetings, enabling real-time updates and wider dissemination of information.

From my experience as a police officer, social media has become an integral part of everyday policing practice. Official accounts belonging to Gwent Police are frequently used to share crime prevention advice, particularly during periods where a specific type of crime becomes more prevalent. They are also used to circulate information about missing persons, provide traffic updates following collisions, and sometimes share updates about ongoing incidents where public awareness is required. Additionally, these platforms are used to highlight policy initiatives such as neighbourhood policing strategies, stop and search statistics, and safeguarding campaigns relating to issues such as domestic abuse. This reflects what Lee and McGovern (2014) describe as the “digital turn” in policing, whereby communication and legitimacy are increasingly shaped through online interaction. Despite these

developments, it could be argued that the effectiveness of social media is heavily dependent on how it is used, who it reaches, and how the information provided is interpreted by the public. One of the most immediate benefits of social media in policing is its capacity to rapidly inform the public. In my professional experience, platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have been particularly effective during critical incidents, enabling the timely dissemination of safety advice and factual updates that can help prevent the spread of misinformation. This aligns with research suggesting that social media can improve public awareness and compliance during emergencies (Crump, 2011). For example, during incidents involving road closures or public disorder, social media has allowed officers to provide clear and concise updates that reduce confusion among the public and limit unnecessary calls to the Force Control Room. The ability to share visual content such as images or short videos can further enhance public understanding by illustrating the nature of an incident or providing clear guidance.

However, my experiences have also highlighted several limitations. Social media communication is often very brief and can lack context, which can sometimes lead to misunderstanding. I have observed situations where posts intended to reassure the public have instead generated criticism or hostility, particularly where individuals believe that information is being withheld or that communication lacks transparency (Ralph, Robinson, and Aitken, 2025). Additionally, not all members of the community use or have access to social media, which creates issues relating to digital exclusion (Reisdorf and Rhinesmith, 2020). Older adults, vulnerable individuals, and those without reliable internet access may therefore be disproportionately excluded from this form of communication. This highlights that although social media enhances the reach and speed of information sharing, it cannot replace traditional engagement

methods that may be more inclusive. A blended approach combining both digital and traditional communication methods is therefore likely to produce more effective outcomes. Another important consideration when evaluating the use of social media in policing is the ethical and professional risks associated with its use. Police officers are required to maintain high professional standards both online and offline, and any communication shared through official social media accounts can have significant reputational implications for the organisation. From my experience, officers must carefully consider what information can be shared publicly, particularly during ongoing investigations or sensitive incidents. The need to protect operational security and the privacy of victims means that officers must constantly balance transparency with confidentiality which might place added pressure on those officers.

The College of Policing's Code of Ethics emphasises principles such as integrity, accountability, and professionalism, all of which apply equally to officers when using digital communication. Social media posts that are poorly worded or lack sufficient context can easily be misinterpreted by members of the public, potentially undermining confidence in the police service. I have observed occasions where posts intended to reassure the public were criticised for appearing insensitive or dismissive. This highlights the importance of careful communication and organisational oversight when using social media as a policing tool. Officers must therefore remain mindful that online communication is permanent, highly visible, and capable of reaching audiences far beyond the local communities it is intended for. In addition to information sharing, social media also functions as a tool for community engagement and relationship building. In this context, engagement extends beyond simply broadcasting messages and involves fostering dialogue,

trust, and connection with the public (Mawby, 2020). My experience suggests that social media can help humanise policing by providing insight into the daily realities of police work and highlighting positive interactions with the community. Posts showcasing neighbourhood policing initiatives, school visits, and community events often receive supportive engagement from members of the public, including comments expressing appreciation for the work carried out by officers. It could be argued that this reflects Procedural Justice Theory, which emphasises the importance of fairness, voice, and transparency in building public trust, as outlined by Tyler (2006). Social media provides a platform through which these principles can be demonstrated, helping police appear more approachable and accessible to the public (Jones et al., 2025). Nevertheless, engagement on social media can also be dominated by a vocal minority who express highly critical or hostile views. As an officer, reading such comments requires a degree of emotional resilience and professionalism. There is a risk that persistent hostility online could discourage officers from engaging meaningfully on these platforms, potentially reducing communication between the police and the public. Furthermore, engagement metrics such as likes, shares, or comments do not necessarily indicate genuine trust or confidence in policing. A post receiving high engagement does not automatically mean that the relationship between the police and the community has improved. Goldsmith (2015) argues that digital engagement can sometimes create a false illusion of legitimacy, where online visibility is mistaken for genuine trust. My own experiences support this view, as online engagement does not always translate into improved perceptions of policing within the community.

Social media can also influence perceptions of police legitimacy. Legitimacy refers to the belief that the police have the rightful authority to exercise power and that

their actions are justified. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook allow police forces to communicate directly with the public, providing updates about operational activity and organisational decision-making. In theory, this level of transparency should contribute to greater public confidence. However, the relationship between social media and legitimacy is complex. While online communication increases the visibility of policing activities, it does not necessarily guarantee meaningful accountability. Some scholars argue that social media can function as a form of “performative transparency”, whereby police forces highlight positive activities while less favourable aspects of policing receive less attention. From my perspective as a police officer, the credibility of social media messaging depends heavily on whether it reflects the reality of policing experienced by communities. If there is a disconnect between the image presented online and the lived experiences of the public, attempts to improve legitimacy may instead undermine trust.

Social media has also been widely used within policing to promote policy initiatives, including crime reduction strategies and safeguarding campaigns. In my experience, social media can be an effective method of raising awareness of such initiatives. Campaigns addressing issues such as domestic abuse or knife crime benefit from the ability to distribute targeted messaging that provides information about support services and preventative advice. Brainard and McNutt (2010) suggest that social media can enhance policy visibility and public understanding by making information more accessible to a wider audience.

Despite these advantages, I have also observed several challenges associated with promoting policy initiatives through social media. Complex policies are often difficult to communicate through short posts, which increases the risk of misinterpretation.

Members of the public may form opinions about policies based on incomplete information if they are not provided with sufficient context. One way to address this limitation is to include links within social media posts that direct users to official webpages where full policy details are available. From a reflective perspective, I have found that policy promotion is most effective when online messaging is supported by consistent offline action. Policing practice must align with what is communicated online in order to avoid accusations of inconsistency or superficial messaging.

Reflecting on my experiences of using social media in policing, it is evident that its effectiveness depends largely on how strategically and responsibly it is used. While social media provides clear advantages in terms of speed, accessibility, and visibility, officers must critically assess whether their communication genuinely reaches and represents all members of the community. This requires acknowledging the limitations of digital engagement and ensuring that online communication is complemented by traditional forms of interaction such as neighbourhood meetings, school engagement, and partnership work with community organisations. Looking forward, policing organisations may benefit from providing additional training for officers responsible for managing social media accounts, particularly in relation to digital communication strategies, ethical considerations, and responding to public criticism. By combining reflective practice with clear organisational guidance, police officers can continue to improve how social media is used to inform communities, strengthen relationships, and promote policy initiatives.

In conclusion, this essay has critically evaluated my experiences of using social media within policing and demonstrated that its effectiveness as a tool for informing the public, engaging communities, and promoting policy initiatives is influenced by several factors. While social media offers significant advantages in terms of speed, accessibility, and transparency, it also presents challenges including misinterpretation, ethical risks, and digital exclusion. It has the potential to improve communication and strengthen relationships between the police and the public, but it can also expose policing organisations to criticism if messaging is poorly managed or inconsistent with operational realities. Ultimately, social media should be viewed as a complementary tool within policing rather than a replacement for traditional engagement methods. When used responsibly alongside face-to-face communication and community engagement, social media can contribute to a more transparent, responsive, and community-focused approach to policing.

1897 words

Task 3

Relevant areas of the National Policing Curriculum: Leadership and Teamworking

****You must choose a policing incident in which you played a significant role with an offender/service user/victim and reflect on what happened. ****

Critically evaluate and **evidence** your flexibility in leadership style.

Critically analyse leadership strategies that you have developed to manage a range of different operational situations.

Consider leadership models commonly used in policing.

How were you able to apply a change in leadership style/strategy to reflect changing circumstances?

2000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section)

ANSWER:

Effective leadership within policing is fundamental to the delivery of an ethical, legitimate, and effective public service. Police leaders, police officers, and staff are all required to operate within complex, high-risk and rapidly evolving environments where decision-making and adaptability are crucial. Modern policing demands that leaders are able to flex their leadership style to suit diverse operational situations ranging from low-level routine calls to intense public order scenarios. Within this essay I will critically evaluate my own flexibility in leadership styles, as well as critically analyse leadership strategies available to me which are designed to help manage such situations. Drawing on well-established leadership theories, personal experience and academic literature, this essay will demonstrate how flexible leadership can enhance operational effectiveness, officer wellbeing and public confidence. The College of Policing (2024) emphasises that effective police

leadership is value-based, evidence-led and adaptive, requiring leaders to adjust their approach according to the situation. When compared to traditional leadership models, which often reflected a more militarised structure within policing (Adlam and Villiers, 2003), a flexible and inclusive approach is now increasingly necessary due to rising public expectations and scrutiny (Brown and Brudney, 2020). This shift highlights the importance of leadership adaptability as a core competency within modern policing.

During my time as a police officer I have had opportunities to adapt my leadership approach, and I believe this is an area in which I have been largely successful. An example of this flexibility occurred during an operational situation where I assisted with arrest enquiries for the CID department alongside other members of my team. During this scenario I assumed an informal leadership role within a small team tasked with arresting a male wanted for a number of serious offences within my local area. At the beginning of the shift I adopted a coaching leadership style as I wanted to provide guidance on how the operation would run and outline an arrest strategy. I also aimed to support several less experienced officers who were still within their tutorship phase. This approach reflects the principles of situational leadership, which suggests that leaders should adapt their behaviour based on the competence and confidence of team members (Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Nelson, 1993).

According to the College of Policing, situational leadership aligns closely with the National Decision Model (NDM), which emphasises continuous assessment and the need to redirect actions where required (College of Policing, 2013). Leaders who adopt this approach may therefore demonstrate flexibility and openness to change by adjusting their leadership behaviour depending on the needs and abilities of

those they are working with. However, situational leadership has also been criticised for placing significant responsibility on leaders to accurately assess another person's capability in dynamic environments, which may be challenging in fast-moving operational contexts (Northouse, 2022). Furthermore, critics also argue that situational leadership can oversimplify human behaviour by categorising people into competence and commitment levels, which do not fully reflect the complex nature of police officers operating under high stress. Often in high pressure scenarios factors such as fatigue, stress, prior experience, and uncertainty, can rapidly alter an individual's performance making it difficult for a leader to assess their capability. This suggests that while situational leadership can provide a useful framework for leaders to follow, it should not be applied too rigidly. Instead, it could be suggested that leaders should combine professional judgement with ongoing communication and feedback from those they are leading. This would reinforce the importance of continuous information sharing to ensure that any decisions made remain proportionate and responsive. As a result, flexibility in leadership is not only about changing style but also about maintaining awareness of wider factors which might influence the team's performance.

Although my initial approach was effective and allowed me to tailor my support to colleagues based on their experience, I was subsequently provided with new information that the subject of the arrest had a warning marker for possession of a dangerous dog, specifically an XL Bully. This information had not been available during the initial briefing. As a result, I needed to adopt a more directive leadership style to ensure the safety of all officers involved. With this newly identified risk, it was necessary to provide clear and concise instructions regarding roles and

responsibilities. I ensured that my communication was direct so that each officer fully understood both their task and the potential risks involved. I believe this shift demonstrated my ability to adapt my leadership style appropriately by recognising that the initial coaching approach would have been less suitable in a time-critical and potentially dangerous situation. In this context, decisiveness and control were required. The outcome of adopting this directive approach was positive: no officers were harmed, the most appropriately trained officer was utilised with a dog shield to manage the risk posed by the dog, all officers clearly understood their roles, and the suspect was subsequently arrested.

Yukl (2013) highlights that directive leadership can reduce uncertainty and ambiguity by providing clear expectations and structured decision-making. This approach can also reduce cognitive overload among team members because responsibilities and instructions are clearly defined. Higher-ranking officers frequently adopt this leadership style, particularly within the Gold, Silver and Bronze command structure used during major incidents (HMICFRS, 2019). However, research also suggests that over-reliance on directive leadership within policing can reduce initiative among officers and discourage independent decision-making (Silvestri, 2007). This suggests that while directive leadership may be highly effective in high-risk or time-critical situations, it should be balanced with other leadership approaches to ensure that officers remain confident in using their own judgement. I believe that during my experience I am reflecting on, I transitioned between situational leadership first of all to directive leadership once I had further information which required a quicker decision based on a high-risk situation. Critically reflecting on my experience, the transition between leadership styles required a considerable degree of self-awareness and emotional intelligence from

myself. It was important that colleagues did not perceive the change in leadership style as indecisiveness or inconsistency. While the directive approach was necessary due to the newly identified risks, it was equally important to adopt a more supportive leadership style following the incident. This allowed for an effective debrief where colleagues could discuss what went well and identify potential improvements. Such reflective practices support the broader concept of adaptive leadership within policing (College of Policing, 2021). This experience reinforced for me the value of leadership flexibility and highlighted the importance of continuing to develop this skill in future operational situations.

Two other leadership strategies frequently discussed within policing literature are transformational leadership and transactional leadership. While these are not leadership strategies I have personally used extensively, both are widely recognised within academic research. Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring and motivating followers through vision, personal influence and strong interpersonal relationships (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Research suggests that transformational leadership can lead to increased job satisfaction, stronger organisational commitment and improved ethical behaviour among officers (Campbell and Kodz, 2011). This approach may be particularly valuable given current concerns surrounding officer wellbeing within UK policing. HMICFRS (2018) identified wellbeing as a significant issue across many police forces, and transformational leadership may help address this by fostering a stronger sense of purpose and value among officers. However, a key limitation of transformational leadership is that it often relies heavily on the personal qualities of the individual leader, such as charisma, emotional intelligence and communication ability. As not all leaders possess these attributes to the same degree, this may result in inconsistent

leadership experiences across teams (Northouse, 2022). HMICFRS (2017) has suggested that inconsistent leadership can contribute to poor organisational performance within police forces.

Transactional leadership represents a more structured approach to leadership, focusing on clear expectations, rewards and consequences. Within policing, this style can support compliance with legal and ethical frameworks set by organisations such as the College of Policing (College of Policing, 2021). It may also support officer development by providing clear feedback and reinforcement regarding performance (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 2013). Despite these advantages, transactional leadership may also present limitations. For example, it may struggle to address deeply embedded elements of police culture, which have historically emphasised tradition and hierarchy (Cockcroft, 2014). In some cases, this may lead to resistance to organisational change among officers.

More broadly, effective leadership within policing rarely involves the exclusive use of a single leadership style. Instead, contemporary leadership research emphasises the importance of leadership agility, which refers to the ability of leaders to adapt their approach in response to changing circumstances and organisational demands (Joiner and Josephs, 2008). Given the unpredictable nature of police work, this ability is particularly important. Police leaders must balance operational effectiveness, officer wellbeing and public accountability simultaneously. Organisational culture can also influence the effectiveness of leadership strategies. Policing has historically been characterised by hierarchical command structures and a strong emphasis on authority (Reiner, 2010). While this structure can be beneficial during emergency situations requiring rapid decision-making, it may sometimes

discourage collaborative leadership approaches. Silvestri (2017) argues that elements of traditional police culture may reinforce command-and-control leadership styles, potentially limiting opportunities for officers to demonstrate initiative or contribute to decision-making processes. Leadership also plays a significant role in maintaining officer wellbeing and organisational legitimacy. Research conducted by the College of Policing (2021) suggests that supportive and inclusive leadership styles can improve morale, resilience and job satisfaction among officers. This is particularly relevant given the increasing demands placed upon police forces, including resource constraints, rising workloads and increased public scrutiny. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, effective communication and emotional intelligence are therefore more likely to foster positive working environments that support both operational performance and officer wellbeing.

Reflecting on my own development, it is clear that leadership flexibility is not simply a skill that develops automatically but rather one that requires continuous reflection and learning. Operational experiences such as the arrest scenario described earlier provide valuable opportunities to evaluate personal leadership approaches and identify areas for improvement. In future situations, I believe I could further improve by communicating the reasoning behind leadership decisions more clearly, particularly when shifting between different leadership styles. This may help ensure that colleagues understand the rationale behind decisions, thereby maintaining trust and confidence within the team.

In conclusion, effective leadership within policing requires adaptability, self-awareness and a strong understanding of different leadership theories. This essay has demonstrated how situational leadership allowed me to adapt my approach

during an operational arrest scenario by shifting from a coaching style to a directive style in response to emerging risks. Through critical analysis of transformational and transactional leadership approaches, it is clear that each strategy presents both advantages and limitations. Ultimately, effective police leadership is not defined by adherence to a single leadership style but by the ability to apply different approaches depending on the operational context. Developing this flexibility is essential for maintaining operational effectiveness, supporting officer wellbeing and sustaining public confidence in modern policing.

1812 words

Task 4

Relevant areas of the National Policing Curriculum: Coaching, Mentoring, Assessment

Critically reflect upon your three-year probation:

How have you benefited from mentoring and coaching?
How has it helped you to meet personal, professional and organisational goals?
How has it aided you to learn, develop and perform in the workplace?

Consider relevant coaching and mentoring definitions along with current coaching and mentoring theories used in policing.

How do you provide and receive feedback?

2000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section)

ANSWER:

The probationary period is one of the most important stages in a police officer's career. It marks the shift from being a student officer to working independently, and requires officers to combine theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and professional values in challenging and demanding situations and environments. During this time, officers face high levels of responsibility, exposure to difficult incidents, and frequent public scrutiny. Therefore, effective mentoring and coaching is an essential part of supporting a probationary officer in order for them to develop competence, confidence, and resilience. Personally, having strong mentoring and coaching was vital in helping me to achieve all of these goals. This essay aims to critically reflect on my three year probation with Gwent Police, during which I began in an urban environment before transferring over to a rural response role. Throughout the essay I will discuss how mentoring and coaching helped me grow personally, professionally, and within the organisation itself. Particular attention will be paid to my relationship with my tutor constable, significant operational experiences, and

how I progressed towards independent practice. I will also draw on relevant theories of reflective practice and adult learning to show how these experiences contributed to my development as an ethical and adaptable officer enabling me to meet both personal and organisational aspirations. Mentoring and coaching are widely recognised as essential in high-risk jobs like policing. Mentoring is a relationship where a more experienced officer provides guidance, support, and role modelling (Clutterbuck, 2014), while coaching focuses on improving performance through feedback, reflection, and goal setting (Whitmore, 2017). In policing, probationary officers are supported by tutor constables and supervisors who provide both operational guidance, emotional support, and infrequent formal assessments (Foster, 2018).

Mentoring and Reflection

During my initial ten weeks after training, I was assigned a tutor constable who combined both mentoring and coaching approaches. His support extended beyond showing me procedures, he also encouraged me to reflect on what I was doing, offered advice on professional decisions, and reassured me when I faced difficult situations. This approach helped me build a strong foundation for learning which has continued to influence my practice throughout my career. I found reflective practice particularly useful. Schön (1992) discusses the topic 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' whereby practitioners analyse experiences both during and after the event in order to improve future practices. Furthermore, Kolb's (1984) learning cycle also highlights how experience becomes learning through reflection and practice. My tutor encouraged me to look at incidents this way, discussing what went well, what could be improved, and how similar situations should be managed

in the future, which all helped me turn every shift into a learning opportunity. Knowles' (1984) theory of andragogy suggests adults learn best when they can direct their own learning. My tutor gradually gave me more responsibility, letting me make decisions while still providing guidance when needed. This balance made me feel more in control of my development and helped me see the relevance of what I was learning.

Confidence and Resilience

One of the biggest personal benefits of mentoring for me was gaining confidence and emotional resilience. Early in my career I often felt unsure in high-pressure situations, particularly those with an element of uncertainty or unfamiliarity. Policing frequently exposes officers to emotionally challenging incidents, including conflict, trauma, and vulnerability (Violanti et al., 2017). Without adequate support, I think I would have struggled more with stress and decision-making and eventually this might have had a negative impact on both my wellbeing and my overall performance. My tutor would often provide me reassurance and constructive feedback. For example, during an early safeguarding case involving a vulnerable female who had been stuck abroad, my tutor supported me throughout the process, from intelligence gathering to airport collection and safeguarding arrangements. This case required empathy, organisational skills, and professional judgement. Experiencing this with him helped me understand how to manage complex cases and gave me confidence in my professional judgment. Later, receiving recognition through a force award further reassured me that I was on the right path and validated my developing confidence and competence. This experience fits with Dweck's (2006) concept of a growth mindset, in which challenges are seen as opportunities

to improve rather than sources of failure. My tutor encouraged me to approach difficult situations using a growth mindset, which helped me build resilience and self-belief. Mentoring also helped me to understand the importance of ethics and professional values. Watching my tutor handle sensitive situations with integrity reinforced my own commitment to fairness and accountability, supporting what Wood et al. (2016) describe as moral development in policing. As I gained experience, I started to feel a real sense of responsibility when wearing my uniform, rather than just following rules. Mentoring encouraged me to use the sense of self that accompanies the uniform in a responsible and positive manner when engaging with members of the public.

Operational Competence and Professional Judgement

During the early stages of my probationary period, I relied heavily on my tutor for guidance in applying legislation, conducting investigations, and managing incidents. Through supervised patrols and structured feedback, I gradually developed procedural knowledge and situational awareness. A key learning moment came when I completed my first handover to an insufficient standard. Feedback from my supervisor highlighted gaps in clarity, structure, and evidential continuity. Although initially disheartening, discussing this downfall with my tutor enabled me to identify some weaknesses and make improvements. This experience shows how reflection-on-action works in practice as according to Schon (1983). As I gained experience, I became more confident in managing case files, briefings, and inter-shift communication. Coaching conversations encouraged me to think critically about decisions rather than just simply following procedures, which helped me develop independence and professional judgement which are skills essential for effective

response policing (Stoughton et al., 2021). Several operational milestones strengthened my confidence even further. My first successful foot chase and arrest represented a defining moment for me, showing me that I could apply training and thought under pressure in a dynamic situation. Following this incident, reflecting on these events with my tutor highlighted both tactical strengths and safety considerations, reinforcing my learning whilst celebrating an achievement. Additionally, acquiring specialist skills, such as method of entry and blue light driving, marked a shift towards even more independent practice. These experiences reflected Van Maanen's (1975) concept of occupational socialisation, showing how repeated exposure builds professional identity and I increasingly felt as though I was becoming a "proper police officer".

Communication and Organisational Development

Effective communication is critical in policing, particularly in conflict resolution, safeguarding, and community engagement. Mentoring helped me develop interpersonal skills, such as tone, body language, and empathy. Practising these skills with my tutor and receiving consistent reflective feedback helped me to grow emotional intelligence. Research suggests that coaching in this manner promotes self-awareness and adaptability (Grant, 2017). This development has become one of my professional strengths and supports my future career aspirations. From an organisational perspective, mentoring and coaching contributed to improved performance and accountability. Regular assessments and feedback ensured that I met professional standards. Mentoring also allowed me to learn from past incidents rather than just my own mistakes, promoting a learning culture. Supportive mentoring relationships of my own created a workplace environment built on trust

and psychological safety, which encouraged honest reflection and ethical reporting – characteristics which have been shown to make an effective police officer (Edmonson, 2018). The probation period represents a high-risk time for leaving the profession due to stress and unmet expectations (Blumberg et al., 2019). Mentoring reduced this risk for me by providing me with emotional and professional support. Feeling valued and supported increased my job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation, reinforcing my intention to pursue a long-term career within policing.

Limitations and Areas for Improvement

Despite its many benefits, mentoring during my probationary period was not without limitations. The quality of support a probationary officer receives can vary considerably, often depending heavily on the individual mentor's level of experience, availability, and personal commitment to the role. While my tutor provided exceptional guidance and consistently facilitated both practical and reflective learning opportunities, I observed that other supervisory interactions were sometimes constrained by workload, competing priorities, or limited time for structured support. Research indicates that mentoring effectiveness therefore relies on organisational investment and structured mentor training (Clutterbuck, 2014). These limitations occasionally made it difficult to receive consistent feedback, engage in in-depth reflection, or address complex operational queries in a timely manner. Furthermore, the dual role of mentors of both assessors and supporters can create subtle power dynamics that might inhibit full disclosure of uncertainty or self-doubt, limiting the potential for open discussion about mistakes or ethical dilemmas. In some instances, protected time for reflection and development during my probationary period was scarce, meaning that learning often occurred in ad hoc

or reactive ways rather than through planned processes which I would have preferred. Additionally, differing organisational structures and culture can play a significant role in shaping mentoring experiences. It could be argued that when mentors are stretched thin or pressured to prioritise operational tasks over developmental and mentoring responsibilities, probationary officers may miss opportunities to explore new complex scenarios fully or to discuss alternative approaches to problem solving. This can hinder a probationary officer's ability to develop critical thinking, professional judgement, and confidence. Moreover, variability in mentoring approaches across different supervisors can lead to inconsistencies in learning outcomes and create gaps in knowledge and exposure to key skills. These challenges highlight the importance of formal mentor training, regular assessment of mentoring effectiveness, and organisational commitment to protecting developmental time. Despite these challenges, the experience as a whole highlighted the importance of organisational investment in structured mentoring programmes, protected reflection periods, and formal mentor training, which can significantly improve the developmental experience of probationary officers and better prepare them for the demands of professional policing. Navigating these constraints and challenges offered me valuable lessons in resilience, self-directed learning, and adaptability, as I have often had to supplement formal support from my mentor with independent reflection and proactive engagement in order to improve and become the police officer that I am today.

Conclusion

Reflecting on my three-year probation, mentoring and coaching were central to my development as a police officer. Emotional support, ethical role modelling, and

structured feedback all helped me to build confidence, resilience, and reflective practice. Key experiences including safeguarding work, early mistakes, skill acquisition, and confidence-building incidents, became important learning moments through guided reflection. Mentoring allowed me to meet personal goals related to wellbeing and self-efficacy, professional goals regarding competence and communication, and organisational goals linked to performance and retention. The strong foundation I built during my probationary period continues to influence my daily practice and supports my aspiration to progress into armed response eventually. Although challenges related to time pressures and variable mentoring quality existed, the overall impact was overwhelmingly positive. In conclusion, mentoring and coaching are essential components of probationary training in policing. When delivered effectively, they help develop ethical, competent, and resilient officers capable of meeting the demands of modern policing and sustaining public trust.

1841 words

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The bibliography should only include sources referenced within the workbook using the Harvard referencing system. Information about referencing in written assignments and how to avoid plagiarism can be found on Moodle. It is important that you are aware of the importance of ensuring that the work submitted is your original work.

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