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BSc (Hons) Professional Police Practice

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.

Once submitted your workbook will be assessed and marked independently.

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;
- take personal responsibility for adhering to confidentiality rules.
- not include any dates of any incidents or anything that specifically identifies an actual incident.

Please be aware that any content that is deemed to be inappropriate, disrespectful, or abusive will not be tolerated. Following review of any content of this nature the information will be shared with the employer of the student responsible.

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Your workbook will be submitted electronically via Turnitin on Moodle. Guidance on this is in the Student Handbook.

Remember that the workbook is YOUR responsibility you must not rely on the assessor or anyone else to pick up any confidentiality breaches as this is your work and you must accept full responsibility for confidentiality. Meeting all the confidentiality requirements is very important.

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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	Total	8000

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:

Introduction:

During the final year of my probationary period as a police constable, I encountered a high-risk domestic abuse incident that significantly shaped my understanding of what it means to operate as a modern and accountable police officer. Although I had attended numerous challenging incidents during my probation, this particular event demanded a level of autonomy, ethical judgement, structured decision-making and professional curiosity that extended far beyond the routine procedural tasks that characterised my early learning. It brought into focus how the National Policing Curriculum, the professional standards established by the College of Policing, and broader national policing strategies influence not only how we respond to incidents, but how we develop into the role of a professional police officer. Reflecting on this incident has allowed me to critically examine my progress throughout probation, and how my role now aligns with national expectations for policing in England and Wales.

The incident involved a distressed victim reporting repeated abuse from her partner, with the situation escalating on the night to an extent that posed immediate risks due to visible injuries, alcohol involvement and the presence of a young child in the home. Responding effectively required not only applying legal knowledge and discretion but also engaging with the emotional, psychological and safeguarding complexities present in domestic abuse cases. When I arrived at the address, it

became immediately clear that separating the individuals was vital to prevent further escalation and ensure safety. Research consistently emphasises that immediate separation reduces further harm, particularly where coercive control is present (Barlow et al., 2020). This decision—although seemingly simple—represented a crucial policing judgement, demonstrating the importance of swift situational assessment, safeguarding priorities and leadership within frontline roles.

As I began speaking with the victim, her hesitance, fear and emotional distress were immediately obvious. She struggled to articulate what had happened and initially appeared reluctant to engage, which is common in domestic abuse cases where victims often minimise risk due to fear of reprisals or emotional dependency (Robinson and Cook, 2018). I adopted a trauma-informed communication style, softening my tone, using non-threatening body language and providing reassurance. This reflected the College of Policing's Code of Ethics, which requires officers to demonstrate compassion, respect and understanding, especially when supporting vulnerable individuals (College of Policing, 2021). Although I was not consciously thinking of academic theory at the time, my approach reflected the behavioural expectations embedded within the Competency and Values Framework (CVF), particularly "We are emotionally aware" and "We take ownership," which emphasise empathy, active listening and professional accountability.

At the same time, I had to maintain investigative rigour. The alleged offender was still within the property, and given the injuries, prior history and presence of a child, I determined that arrest was necessary under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. This decision aligned with the Authorised Professional Practice (APP), which states that proactive arrest is essential to safeguard victims and secure evidence in domestic abuse cases (College of Policing, 2022). I made use of body-worn video, capturing the victim's demeanour, the injuries and the state of the property. Research shows that early evidential capture significantly increases the chance of a successful prosecution, even if the victim later retracts their statement (Goodall et al., 2017). This approach demonstrates the increasing professionalisation of policing, where evidence-based practice—promoted by the College of Policing—now plays a central role in frontline decision-making.

Reflecting critically on the incident allows for a more detailed evaluation of the strategic role of the College of Policing in professionalising policing. Since its establishment in 2012, the College has positioned itself as the professional body responsible for raising standards, embedding consistent national practice and integrating research into policing (Holdaway, 2017). The introduction of the Code of Ethics, CVF and APP marked a shift toward a more structured and professional policing model. During this incident, these frameworks guided my ethical approach, interactions with the victim, and investigative decisions. This demonstrates how the College's influence reaches into day-to-day operational work and reinforces consistency across forces.

However, there is ongoing debate about the College's impact. The College of Policing's Fundamental Review (2022) found that although officers recognise the value of standardisation, many perceive the College as "distant from frontline policing" and overly focused on academic expectations. Loftus (2020) further argues that attempts to impose professionalisation can overlook the realities of

unpredictable operational environments. While these critiques highlight tensions between policy and practice, my personal experience suggests that the College's frameworks act as a supportive foundation rather than a restrictive structure. During the incident, the College's guidance helped me remain confident in my decisions, particularly regarding safeguarding and the lawful necessity of arrest.

The incident also demonstrated how I have worked to fulfil the expectations of a modern professional police officer, reflecting key elements of the Policing Vision 2025. This national strategy emphasises prevention, digital capability, improved safeguarding, and closer partnership working (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2016). During the incident, I made extensive use of digital systems to identify repeat patterns, assess risk and ensure accurate record-keeping. I also liaised with social services, domestic abuse practitioners and health professionals to establish a sustained safeguarding plan. These actions reflect a shift away from traditional reactive policing toward a more preventative, holistic and multi-agency approach.

My development during the final year of probation is also consistent with the Workforce Transformation 2018 programme, which stresses the need for a more resilient, adaptable and skilled police workforce capable of tackling increasingly complex crime types (NPCC, 2018). Over the past year, I have actively taken on greater responsibility, participated in multi-agency safeguarding briefings and improved my understanding of vulnerability and early intervention. Research by Woolford and Ratcliffe (2021) notes that probationary officers often begin with a rule-driven mindset but gradually evolve into reflective and autonomous practitioners—a progression that mirrors my own experience.

A further aspect of my development relates to the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR). While domestic abuse is not specifically listed as a national threat, the SPR highlights the importance of capabilities such as safeguarding, risk management, and partnership collaboration (Home Office, 2023). These expectations are central to domestic abuse response, demonstrating how routine frontline policing contributes to broader national capabilities. Understanding this has deepened my appreciation of policing as part of a wider safeguarding system rather than an isolated set of tasks.

Reflecting more deeply on my progression throughout probation, I can see how my approach has transformed. In the early months, I often relied heavily on supervisors and adhered rigidly to procedure. As I gained experience, I learned to exercise greater professional judgement, analyse situational risk more effectively and respond with confidence to complex safeguarding needs. This shift reflects Martin's (2022) research, which argues that the professionalisation of policing relies on officers internalising reflective, ethical and evidence-based practice.

Furthermore, the incident highlighted the emotional pressures inherent in frontline policing. Managing a distressed victim, coordinating safeguarding and arresting an offender while balancing legal and ethical obligations is emotionally demanding. Developing emotional resilience has therefore been an important part of my growth. Supervision and peer support played a crucial role in this, enabling me to reflect honestly on the incident and manage its impact. This aligns with national policing

priorities, which increasingly acknowledge officer wellbeing as an essential element of professional competence (NPCC, 2018).

Reflective practice, encouraged by the College of Policing, was central to my learning following the incident. Taking time to critically analyse my decisions helped me recognise strengths—such as communication, calmness and evidence handling—as well as areas for improvement, including enhancing my multi-agency engagement and ensuring more detailed early documentation. Reflective practice allowed me to understand not only what I did, but why it mattered, and how I can further develop as a professional officer.

In conclusion, the domestic abuse incident provided a powerful and meaningful opportunity to demonstrate the professional values, competencies and decision-making expected of a police officer in the final year of probation. It showed how national professional frameworks—particularly those developed by the College of Policing—shape and support frontline practice, even in complex and emotionally charged situations. It also highlighted the wider strategic influences of the Policing Vision 2025, the Workforce Transformation programme and the Strategic Policing Requirement on my development. Through this experience, I have come to understand policing not as a series of isolated tasks, but as a reflective, ethical and evidence-driven profession grounded in safeguarding, public trust and multi-agency collaboration. As I progress beyond probation, I feel confident that my development aligns with national policing expectations and that I am prepared to continue my journey as a competent, reflective and professional police officer.

During incidents such as domestic abuse or safeguarding concerns, it encouraged me to consciously assess threat, risk and harm, consider powers and policy, reflect on proportionality and ethics, and justify the rationale for my actions. This way of thinking strengthened both my operational confidence and my ability to explain decisions afterwards, something vital for accountability and transparency.

A clearer understanding of vulnerability has also shaped my development significantly. At the beginning of my probation, vulnerability felt like a broad concept that was difficult to define in real time. However, repeated exposure to victims—some frightened, some traumatised, some struggling with hidden or complex needs—gave me a much deeper appreciation of how vulnerability can manifest. The College of Policing's (2023) guidance on vulnerability emphasises the importance of professional curiosity, and I found myself developing this through experience. Instead of accepting the surface explanation during an incident, I learned to look for underlying patterns: previous reports, escalating behaviour, coercive control, or indicators of neglect. This shift in mindset helped me identify safeguarding concerns earlier and work more effectively with partner agencies such as social services, domestic abuse advocates and health professionals.

My interactions with partner agencies grew more confident as my understanding of their roles improved. Initially, I felt hesitant when liaising with external professionals, worrying that I might not use the right terminology or provide enough detail. Over time, through observation and feedback, I learned how to communicate more effectively with them, understanding their thresholds and expectations. The domestic abuse incident reinforced how vital multi-agency collaboration is. It

became clear that policing alone cannot meet the complex needs of victims, particularly when safeguarding extends beyond the immediate incident. Enhanced communication ensured that risks were better understood, referrals were more thorough and victim support was more consistent.

Emotionally, I also matured significantly. I realised that being affected by difficult incidents is not a sign of weakness but a natural human response. The NPCC's (2018) emphasis on officer wellbeing resonates more strongly with me now than when I first joined. I have become more aware of the cumulative impact of trauma exposure and have learned to manage it proactively. This includes speaking more openly with supervisors, reaching out to colleagues after difficult shifts and using reflective practice as a tool to process emotion rather than suppress it. These small but meaningful adjustments helped build resilience and prevented burnout, making me a more effective and balanced officer.

Feedback from supervisors became another key element of my development. In the early days, I viewed feedback as something that happened to me—either praise or criticism. As I progressed, I grew to understand that feedback is part of an ongoing professional dialogue. Instead of simply waiting for comments, I began to ask questions about my handling of incidents and invite suggestions for improvement. This change reflected a shift towards owning my professional growth rather than passively receiving it. It aligns strongly with Martin's (2022) view of professionalisation as a process where officers become active, reflective learners.

Another area of growth has been my understanding of proportionality and legitimacy. In domestic abuse incidents, where emotions run high and decisions can have life-changing consequences, maintaining procedural fairness is essential. Tyler's (2004) work on procedural justice highlights how the fairness of police actions shapes public trust more than the outcome itself. Throughout my probation, I became more aware of how my communication, tone, transparency and fairness contribute directly to public confidence. The domestic abuse incident reinforced this. By taking time to explain decisions carefully, acknowledging the victim's concerns and demonstrating empathy, I contributed not just to the immediate outcome but to the longer-term legitimacy of policing.

Finally, this incident helped consolidate my understanding of policing as a profession rooted in learning, accountability and continual development. Policing Vision 2025 emphasises a more skilled, adaptable and reflective workforce. Through this incident and many others, I have experienced firsthand what this means on the ground. It has taught me the importance of taking ownership of my learning, valuing supervision, seeking feedback and reflecting honestly on both strengths and weaknesses.

Overall, the incident strengthened my understanding of what it means to be a modern police officer: ethical, reflective, evidence-based and committed to safeguarding. I now feel more confident, more self-aware and more aligned with the expectations and values of contemporary policing. As I embark on my career beyond probation, I feel equipped not only with the skills needed to respond to incidents but with the mindset required to continue developing as a professional and serving the public with integrity.

Word count - 2189

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:

Communication is central to effective policing, shaping how officers build rapport, gather information and support people during some of the most distressing moments of their lives. Alongside these interpersonal skills, modern policing increasingly relies on digital communication, particularly through social media, to reach the public quickly and support operational outcomes. South Wales Police (SWP) makes significant use of social media platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram to share appeals, updates and reassurance messages. In my own experience attending a high-risk missing person incident involving an elderly vulnerable adult, I learned how interpersonal communication and organisational social media processes complement one another in practice. This essay critically examines the role of communication skills and social media in policing, using this incident as a central example and drawing on guidance from the College of Policing (CoP), South Wales Police and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

The College of Policing (CoP) defines communication as a two-way process requiring active listening, empathy and adaptability. This means that officers must tailor their tone, pace and clarity depending on who they are speaking to and the emotional context of the situation (College of Policing, 2024). This definition is especially relevant in incidents involving vulnerability, where people may be frightened, distressed or confused. The College of Policing guidance on vulnerability-related risk highlights the importance of communication that is calm, patient and

sensitive, as this helps to build rapport quickly and encourages disclosure (College of Policing, 2021).

In terms of wider engagement, Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on engagement and communication emphasises that social media forms a key part of modern police communication strategies as it supports rapid dissemination of information, public reassurance and community engagement (College of Policing, 2013). South Wales Police outlines publicly that its social media channels are used to keep communities informed about appeals, missing persons, local incidents and prevention advice, while describing the public as “invaluable” in assisting with appeals for information (South Wales Police, 2023).

Taken together, these definitions highlight that communication in policing extends beyond face-to-face interactions and is increasingly intertwined with how police forces communicate digitally with the communities they serve.

The incident that best illustrates the interplay between communication skills and social media involved an elderly individual reported missing from home. They had various health concerns, and their disappearance was sudden and out of character. Due to their vulnerability, the Missing Persons Unit (MPU) graded the risk as high.

From the outset, my communication with the family was crucial. They were understandably distressed, and I made a conscious effort to use a calm and reassuring tone, allowing them time to express their worries. I used open questions to gather essential information such as when the person was last seen, their usual habits and any places of significance. This approach reflected the Competency and Values Framework (CVF) behaviours around communicating and influencing, which stress the importance of empathy, clarity and adapting communication to different audiences (College of Policing, 2024). The family’s anxiety eased slightly once they understood the steps we were taking, and they were more able to provide the detailed information we needed.

Despite local searches, door-to-door enquiries and immediate checks with neighbours, no strong leads were emerging. Based on the risk level and the limited lines of enquiry, I discussed with my supervisor the option of requesting a public social media appeal. Individual officers in SWP are not permitted to post on official accounts, so appeals must go through the force’s Corporate Communications Department. The South Wales Police communications team publicly describe how they support officers by preparing missing person appeals and acknowledge that the “power of social media dramatically helps obtain information from the public” (South Wales Police, 2023).

After obtaining the family’s permission to share a photograph, I forwarded all relevant information to the communications team. The appeal was posted on the force’s official Facebook and X accounts. The response from the public was immediate, with several reports of possible sightings. One report, passed to us through the control

room, was particularly credible. Officers were dispatched to the location, and the missing person was found safe shortly afterwards. Social media played a decisive role in generating the information that led to this safe outcome. This experience demonstrated the operational value of social media when used appropriately. The appeal reached thousands of people within minutes, far beyond what officers on the ground could have achieved through traditional methods alone. Members of the public were quick to engage, sharing the appeal widely and calling in potential sightings. The rapid spread of information created new lines of enquiry at a time when our local search efforts had stalled.

South Wales Police frequently highlight the importance of social media for appeals and updates, noting that its followers provide vital assistance in live investigations (South Wales Police, 2023). National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) guidance on missing persons similarly emphasises that media and social media appeals can generate essential information, particularly in high-risk cases, if the decision-making is proportionate, justified and recorded (NPCC, 2021). In this incident, social media not only provided the crucial sighting but also reassured the family that everything possible was being done. It also strengthened public confidence by showing that the police were acting transparently and involving the community in safeguarding efforts.

Although the social media appeal was effective, the incident also made me more aware of the risks associated with using these platforms in policing. South Wales Police guidance on missing person publicity warns that once personal details or images are posted online, it may be difficult or impossible to remove all references later, which could have long-term implications for the individual (South Wales Police, 2023). This is particularly important when dealing with vulnerable adults, who may feel embarrassed or distressed after the incident has passed.

Furthermore, there is also the risk of misinformation. Some members of the public may report sightings that are well-intentioned but incorrect, creating potential distraction for officers. In some cases, social media comments can become speculative or insensitive, which may be upsetting for families. Poorly worded appeals can inadvertently reveal more personal information than necessary, potentially breaching privacy or undermining dignity, even having the potential of a Data Protection breach, which stipulates the legislation surrounding sharing personal information online without a person's consent (Data Protection Act 2018). This reinforces the importance of the College of Policing Code of Ethics, which emphasises fairness, respect, privacy and professional standards in all public communication, including digital communication (College of Policing, 2024).

Being aware of these risks influenced how I spoke with the family. I made sure they understood the purpose of the appeal and the kind of information that would be publicly shared. I was transparent about how widely the post might spread and reassured them that we would update or remove the appeal appropriately once the

missing person was located. This helped manage expectations and ensured they felt included in the decision-making process.

The incident also highlighted how vital internal communication is when using social media as part of an investigation. I needed to articulate clearly to my supervisor why a public appeal was necessary at that stage, presenting a structured rationale based on risk and investigative need. Communication with the Corporate Communications Department required accuracy and attention to detail, as their ability to prepare a correct and effective appeal depended entirely on the information I supplied.

Coordination with the control room was equally important. Incoming calls and messages generated by the appeal needed to be prioritised and evaluated promptly. To support this, I adapted my communication style depending on the audience. With the family, I aimed to be empathetic and reassuring, validating their feelings and worries. With supervisors, I was concise and factual and utilised closed questions to secure the information I really needed. With the communications team, I provided structured, precise information. The College of Policing's guidance on effective supervision emphasises that good communication requires clarity, honesty and adaptability, all of which were essential throughout the incident (College of Policing, 2022).

Furthermore, there were also multi-agency considerations. Families are discouraged from posting their own appeals online, and South Wales Police guidance suggests that contact details for either the police or Missing People should be used to ensure the safety and accuracy of incoming information (South Wales Police, 2023). Communicating this clearly to the family was an important part of maintaining safeguarding standards.

Reflecting on the incident, I feel that my communication played a key role in the positive outcome. I was able to build trust with the family at an early stage, which helped them feel supported and involved rather than overwhelmed. I also felt more confident than earlier in my probation about suggesting a social media appeal, recognising that communication is not just about speaking to individuals but also about knowing how and when to engage wider digital audiences through the organisation.

There are, however, things I would improve. On reflection, I will ensure my rationale for the appeal was recorded more explicitly in the decision-making log, in line with NPCC guidance, which stipulates the importance of direct, comprehensible wording, highlighting the risk factors such as vulnerability, length of time they have been missing and any potential issues that may come from the media appeal, such as impact on their mental wellbeing. I would also prepare earlier for the possibility of large volumes of public contact by agreeing clear responsibilities within the team. Additionally, I would consider whether targeted posts to local community groups would be proportionate and helpful in similar future cases.

These reflections align with the work of Schön (1983) on reflective practice, reinforcing the idea that officers must constantly review and improve their communication methods based on experience.

This incident demonstrated the powerful relationship between interpersonal communication and the effective use of social media in policing. My communication with the family, colleagues and partner agencies helped establish trust, structure and reassurance, while South Wales Police's well-managed digital communication channels allowed us to reach the public quickly and generate essential information. Social media proved its value in supporting a time-critical investigation, but it also highlighted important ethical considerations, particularly around privacy, safeguarding and long-term digital impact.

Reflecting on this, I have gained a deeper appreciation of why frontline officers cannot post operational content directly and why the expertise of dedicated corporate communications teams is crucial. Their work ensures compliance with legislation, protects vulnerable people, supports investigative integrity and upholds the principles of procedural justice (Tyler, 2004). It has also made me more aware of my responsibility, even without direct control of official accounts, to provide accurate information promptly and to understand how digital communication integrates into wider investigative and safeguarding processes. The incident also highlighted how policing as a whole is adapting to new expectations around transparency and digital engagement, aligning with national strategies such as Policing Vision 2025, which emphasise improved public contact, legitimacy and the professionalisation of communication.

Overall, I believe the experience strengthened my understanding of communication as both a personal skill and an organisational process. By combining clear, empathetic interpersonal communication with responsible, proportionate use of social media, I believe officers can work effectively with both individuals and communities to achieve safer outcomes in high-risk policing situations.

Word count - 1864

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:

During my three years in response policing, something I discovered quite early on is that leadership is not simply something that belongs to a sergeant, inspector, or anyone of key authority. It is something that frontline officers often end up showing every day, often without even realising it. In the fast and sometimes chaotic world of response work, there is rarely time to think formally about leadership models or theories. Instead, you find yourself stepping into small leadership moments because the situation demands it. One incident during my probationary period that showed me this and helped me understand was during a mental health crisis occurring inside someone's home, where our usual police powers under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 did not apply.

Looking back, it forced me to adapt my natural leadership style, rely on the experience of my team and draw heavily on communication, patience and flexible decision-making. It is only when I reflected properly afterwards that I realised how much the situation showed about my development and how my team's mentoring shaped the way I handled things. This reflection also helped me understand that frontline leadership aligns with what the College of Policing describes as "distributed leadership", where influence is shared across a team rather than held in rank alone, something increasingly emphasised in modern policing structures (College of Policing, 2015).

The College of Policing describes leadership as the ability to influence and guide others while acting ethically and professionally (College of Policing, 2015). I did not fully appreciate this broader definition when I first joined. I come from a background

where leadership was always pictured as someone standing at the top giving instructions, not someone in the middle of a messy incident trying to calm everyone down. As I gained more experience, I realised my natural leadership style leans towards being democratic, where I prefer involving my team, listening to them and making decisions together. Gastil describes democratic leadership as creating space for group involvement and shared responsibility (Gastil, 1994), and I recognise myself in that description. But policing does not always give you the luxury of being democratic. Sometimes you need to take charge. Sometimes you need to step back. And sometimes the leadership is not about directing your team at all — it is about quietly steering the person in front of you.

The incident that changed my understanding happened during a late shift. We were sent to a report of an adult in significant emotional distress inside their home. A family member had phoned because they were worried the individual might harm themselves. Straight away, I knew this situation would be complicated. As we were in a private dwelling, section 136 of the Mental Health Act could not be used, and we did not have a warrant under section 135. Legally, our only footing was the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The capacity test felt very real in this situation, not just something learned in a classroom. I had to consider whether the person could understand, retain and weigh information, and whether they were able to communicate their decision. I also had to keep in mind the least restrictive option principle. This refers to a fundamental principle used in health and social care, which can be used when making decisions for others who do not have the capacity to understand, without completely limiting their autonomy, freedom or rights. (NHS,2024). There were a few factors to consider when dealing with the subject individual, while keeping legislation in mind, such as their demeanour, any pre-existing vulnerabilities.

As we arrived, the house felt tense. The family were shaken, and the individual was pacing, crying and clearly overwhelmed. My first instinct was to bring the team together quickly. I asked them what they thought, what they had spotted and whether they had any safety concerns. This was my democratic side coming out almost automatically. I've always valued being part of a team, and in response policing, you quickly learn that everyone brings something different. That initial discussion made us feel aligned, but even then, I could sense that I needed to take on a slightly more guiding role.

I took the lead in speaking with the individual. This was not because I saw myself as "in charge", but because I felt I could build rapport with them. My earlier mentoring sessions with my tutor had really pushed me to work on my communication. They helped me understand that sometimes the most important thing is how you say something, not what you say. I found myself speaking softly, slowing my tone down, giving the person time to respond and trying to make sure they felt heard. Rogers' ideas on empathy and acceptance (Rogers, 1957) made sense to me in that moment, even though I wasn't thinking of his work consciously, as I was simply trying to be more personal by speaking on a closer level. Modern policing guidance

also encourages this approach, where trauma-informed communication is now recognised as essential in interactions with vulnerable individuals, and evidence shows that empathetic communication can reduce agitation and increase voluntary engagement (Morgan et al., 2019).

While I was doing this, I noticed how the situation required more than one leadership style. There were moments where I had to gently guide the conversation, which felt more like a coaching approach. But then there were brief flashes where I had to switch to something closer to situational leadership. When I saw sharp objects in the room, I quietly asked one officer to remove them. This was not a moment for discussion — it was a moment where safety came first. Hersey and Blanchard argue that leaders must adapt their style to the situation and the readiness of those involved (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 2008). I did not recognise it at the time, but this is exactly what I was doing. The balance between supporting someone emotionally and quietly managing risk behind the scenes was delicate.

As time passed, the individual slowly began to trust us. They opened about what they were feeling, and I gently explained their options. I made it clear that we could not force them to leave their home, but that we could help them get assessed if they chose to. This felt like a transformational moment — focusing on reassurance, building confidence and motivating the person in front of me. Bass and Riggio describe transformational leadership as inspiring others and guiding them through emotional engagement (Bass and Riggio, 2006), and I could feel the truth in that during this incident. Eventually, after a long and emotional conversation, the individual agreed voluntarily to attend hospital with a close friend. It felt like the right outcome, one reached through communication rather than coercion. This is supported by crisis intervention research which shows that non-coercive engagement leads to safer and more sustainable outcomes in mental health crises than force-led interventions (Clare et al., 2021).

Afterwards, when I reflected on the incident, I realised how much of my approach came from the mentoring and coaching I had received during my probation. My tutor and team had always encouraged me to talk through incidents afterwards, to think about what went well and what I would do differently. Looking back, those conversations followed something very similar to Whitmore's GROW model, even if we didn't label it that way. We would talk about the goal, the reality of what happened, the options available and what I could do next time. Over time, this helped me grow in confidence. I began to understand not just what I was doing, but why it mattered. It also made me more aware of the emotional side of policing. Kram's work on mentoring, which highlights both the practical and emotional functions mentors provide (Kram, 1985), really resonates with me when I think about my team. They didn't just tell me what to do; they supported me, reassured me and helped me process difficult moments.

One part of the incident that stayed with me was how emotionally draining it felt afterwards. Seeing someone suffer so deeply is always hard, but in this case, I carried their words with me for several days. For a moment, I doubted whether I had done enough or said the right things. It was only when I spoke with my colleagues, who reminded me of the positive outcome and the effort I had put in, that I realised the emotional impact was part of the job. This helped me understand the importance of emotional resilience and the need to look after my own wellbeing so I can continue supporting others effectively. Research on police wellbeing highlights that emotional labour — the work of managing one's own feelings while supporting others — is one of the biggest pressures in response policing, and reflective conversations with peers are proven to reduce burnout and improve resilience (Boulton et al., 2022).

In reflecting critically, I can see areas for improvement. Although my democratic style helped bring the team together, I could have been clearer when assigning roles at the start. A slightly more structured approach might have reduced uncertainty. I also recognise that I could have contacted mental health crisis services sooner for advice. In the moment, I was so focused on communication and rapport-building that I delayed making that call. In future incidents, especially those involving high vulnerability, I want to be more confident in drawing on all available resources early.

Despite these learning points, the incident showed me that I am capable of adapting my leadership style. I learned that leadership in policing is rarely about giving instructions. More often, it is about guiding someone through a difficult moment, supporting your team and making sure everyone feels safe and understood. This incident showed my ability to remain calm, communicate effectively, adapt my style as needed and reflect honestly afterwards. It also reminded me of how important my team has been in shaping my development. Their mentoring, encouragement and willingness to share their experience have all added to my growth.

Overall, this incident highlighted that leadership in response policing is dynamic, emotional and deeply human. It reinforced that my natural democratic approach has strengths, but that effective leadership means adapting to the situation, drawing on coaching methods, showing compassion and being willing to take control when needed. As I continue my policing journey, I want to keep developing my confidence in making decisions, improve my multi-agency communication and strengthen the balance between empathy and assertiveness. This incident taught me that leadership is not a fixed skill — it is something shaped through each difficult moment, each conversation and each reflection afterwards. I have grown significantly through mentorship and real-world experience, and I am more aware than ever that leadership in policing is not about authority, but about guiding people safely through uncertainty, supporting vulnerable individuals and learning continuously from the situations we face.

Word count - 1808

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:

My three-year probation within response policing has been the most challenging and developmental phase of my professional life. Response policing exposes officers to constant demand, unpredictable incidents and emotionally charged situations that leave a lasting impact long after the shift ends. The College of Policing (2022) describes response work as fast-paced, high-stakes and relentlessly varied, and this description reflects my lived experience. I found myself moving between high-risk domestic incidents, sudden deaths, missing persons and vulnerable individuals within the same day. In this environment, coaching, mentoring and regular feedback have not simply been helpful additions; they have been essential in helping me develop competence, confidence and emotional resilience. Reflecting on my journey, and drawing on models such as Whitmore's GROW coaching model and Kram's phases of mentoring, I can clearly see how structured developmental support has shaped the officer I have become.

Coaching and mentoring each play a distinct but complementary role. The College of Policing (2021) describes mentoring as a supportive relationship where a more experienced officer provides guidance, reassurance and professional role modelling. It often develops into a long-term relationship that supports both emotional and professional growth. Coaching, on the other hand, focuses more on asking reflective questions, encouraging self-led learning and helping individuals find their own solutions. Whitmore (2017) explains that coaching builds long-term capability by guiding individuals to develop insight and confidence in their own decision-making, particularly through structured reflection. Both approaches support the wider

professionalisation of policing, where evidence-based practice, reflective thinking and continual personal development are encouraged (Neyroud and Weisburd, 2014). For someone like me, who initially felt overwhelmed by the pace and responsibility of response work, these approaches became foundational to my growth.

When I think back to the start of my probation, the learning curve felt almost vertical. Walking into every shift felt like the unknown, and although I had good training, I often worried whether I could apply it fast enough under real pressure. I leaned heavily on the more experienced officers around me, whether formally assigned as mentors or simply part of the team. In many ways, my early experiences resembled what Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as a “community of practice,” where learning happens through participation, imitation and immersion rather than formal instruction. I absorbed the habits, attitudes and values of the team around me.

Nowhere was mentoring more vital than during sudden death incidents. These incidents carry both operational demands and emotional weight. One of the first sudden deaths I attended involved an elderly man who had died alone at home. The tasks themselves were manageable: securing the property, confirming no suspicious circumstances, working with paramedics and completing the necessary logs. But emotionally, I found it distressing. I kept replaying small details in my mind — the silence of the house, the objects left where he last touched them, the impact on the family when they arrived. When we drove away afterwards, I remember feeling numb and questioning whether I had shown enough compassion, or whether I had approached the situation correctly. It shook me more than I admitted at the time.

My tutor officer, however, recognised this without me having to explain it. Instead of simply telling me that I handled it well, he created a space for reflection that felt supportive but also challenging. Although neither of us named it at the time, he guided me through a conversation that closely followed Whitmore’s GROW model. He asked what I thought my role had been and what I hoped the outcome would be. He encouraged me to talk honestly about how the incident had felt, why it had affected me and what I thought I could do differently next time. He helped me consider what support or strategies might help me manage similar incidents in future and asked what I would commit to practising going forward. That conversation stayed with me. It was the first time I realised how coaching transforms raw emotional experiences into meaningful professional development. Instead of feeling like I had failed or been overwhelmed, I began to see the incident as a step in my learning, one that would make me stronger and more aware going forward.

Kram's (1985) mentoring theory describes mentoring relationships developing through stages: initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. When I look at my first year in policing, I can clearly see how I was in the initiation phase. My tutor set the tone for my learning, modelling professional behaviour and encouraging me to reflect after each incident. As I gained more confidence, our relationship moved into the cultivation phase. My tutor began stepping back, encouraging me to take the lead at scenes while still offering guidance from the sidelines. This happened most clearly during sudden deaths, where he prompted me to speak first with families, manage initial investigative tasks and take responsibility for documenting scenes. I grew into these responsibilities gradually but noticeably, and I felt supported rather than pushed.

Mentoring was not limited to one person. My response team as a whole played an enormous role in my development. Officers with ten or more years of service would casually offer advice between calls or share their own experiences during quieter moments in the station. Their openness normalised the emotional challenges of the job and made me feel that I was not alone in struggling at times. One officer, after a particularly distressing sudden death involving a young adult, described how he had coped early in his career and how he managed the emotional side of repeated exposure to trauma. His honesty meant a lot to me. It made it clear that vulnerability did not mean weakness; it meant being human. This echoes Kram's concept of "psychosocial support," where mentors offer empathy, acceptance and emotional guidance. That kind of support made a fundamental difference to how I processed difficult incidents.

Coaching, meanwhile, helped me develop the practical and cognitive skills needed for response work. Coaching conversations often happened in the patrol car, between calls or during short breaks. These moments rarely felt formal, but they were some of the most influential learning opportunities I had. After another sudden death involving a suicide, my supervisor initiated a coaching conversation that centred on what had challenged me most. His questions prompted me to consider where my attention had gone during the incident, what I felt uncertain about and how I might adjust my approach next time — whether by slowing down, asking more open questions, liaising more effectively with paramedics or managing the scene layout differently. This reflective questioning mirrored Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, which explains how learning moves from experience to reflection, then to conceptualisation and finally to practice. These short coaching conversations helped me break down emotionally heavy incidents into understandable parts, preventing them from becoming overwhelming or causing self-doubt to build up.

Through such coaching, I began to integrate more structured learning into my daily work without even realising it. Personally, I grew more aware of how sudden deaths affected me emotionally. Early in my probation, I often found myself feeling unsettled after these incidents, even if I seemed fine at the time. Through coaching, I learned to recognise early signs of emotional fatigue, to use short welfare breaks effectively, and to talk openly with colleagues when I needed support. Schön's (1983) concept of the reflective practitioner — someone who learns by reflecting in and on action — started to feel like a genuine description of my development. I became more able to recognise patterns in my own reactions and adjust accordingly.

Professionally, coaching helped me refine complex skills. For instance, I struggled initially with writing complete and structured logs during sudden death procedures. I tended to rush documentation because I felt emotionally unsettled afterwards, wanting to finish quickly rather than dwell on the details. Through coaching, I realised this habit and learned how to approach documentation more methodically, giving myself time to compose my thoughts while still producing accurate and detailed records. This improved both my competence and my confidence.

Organisationally, coaching and mentoring enhanced my ability to support public trust and legitimacy. During sudden deaths, families judge the police not only on efficiency but on compassion, fairness and communication. Mentoring helped me develop these skills, ensuring that I provided a service that aligned with professional values and national expectations around procedural justice (Tyler, 2004). Being guided by senior officers to maintain empathy and clarity during difficult moments ultimately improved the service I delivered.

There were challenges to embedding coaching and mentoring in such a demanding environment. Response policing rarely leaves long periods for structured reflection, and shift patterns can limit continuity in mentoring relationships. Emotional fatigue sometimes made reflection difficult because I needed time to decompress before discussing an incident. At times, significant demand meant that learning took a back seat to immediate operational needs. These challenges echo research showing that organisational pressures in policing can hinder reflective practice despite its value (Bryson and Davis, 2012). However, the commitment of my team ensured that coaching and mentoring remained a consistent part of my development.

Reflecting on the entire three years, I can clearly see how coaching and mentoring transformed the way I handled pressure, made decisions and understood my emotional responses. They helped me not only to perform better operationally but

also to grow as a person. More importantly, they taught me how to support newer officers. As I became more confident, I naturally began passing on small pieces of advice or asking reflective questions to probationers newer than me. It felt surreal at first to be in the position my tutor once held, even informally, but it made me realise how developmental cultures spread within policing teams. I found myself using the same reflective questions that had helped me: asking officers what they felt went well, what they found difficult and what they felt they might try next time. In doing this, I realised how coaching strengthens not just individuals but teams, because it encourages shared learning and open dialogue.

Looking back, coaching and mentoring were not just helpful; they were essential to my development. They enabled me to turn emotionally difficult sudden deaths into moments of growth, helped me navigate uncertainty and strengthened my professional identity. Through my team's support, and through structured models such as GROW and Kram's mentoring framework, I have developed into a more reflective, resilient and capable officer. These methods helped me meet personal challenges, achieve professional competence and contribute positively to the values of policing. They taught me that development in response policing is not just about gaining technical skills, but about understanding oneself, learning from others and being willing to reflect honestly on both strengths and areas for improvement. I leave my probation with a much clearer sense of who I am as an officer and with a strong commitment to supporting others through the same mentoring culture that supported me.

Word count: 1810

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