

Student Name: Jordanne Sarah Jones
Programme: BSc Professional Policing Practice
Module: Operational Police Practice 2
Module code: BMPP5002D
Assignment Title: Assignment 2

Student ID number: 2124649

Essay One:

Compare and contrast police methods of conducting investigations for volume crime and priority crime. Your answer must be based on academic research rather than personal experience, but you may make reference to relevant case studies.

Word limit: 2000 words

Police constables conduct investigations at some level every day as part of their role and responsibilities. Whether responding to emergencies or dealing with a protracted investigation, this will largely involve the gathering of information and evidence in order to maintain law and order, protect victims of crime and bring offenders to justice. This essay aims to compare and contrast the police methods used when conducting investigations surrounding volume crime and priority crime.

The majority of crimes committed in England and Wales are volume crimes (Police Federation, 2019). The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) defines volume crime as 'any crime which through its sheer volume, has a significant impact on the community and the ability of the police to tackle it' (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2009). Although lower in severity, volume crimes such as criminal damage, burglary and vehicle crime still cause significant distress and inconvenience to victims and other individuals. In order to maintain public confidence in the police service and minimise the effect of crime on the wider community, police action is required and usually results in a criminal investigation taking place (Police Federation, 2019).

Volume crime often includes priority crime such as burglary and robbery. A priority crime will be classed as such through a number of factors including the severity of the crime, the level of threat, risk and harm posed, and the overall impact it has on the wider community (College of Policing, 2023). The severity of a burglary or robbery would be considered higher than that of criminal damage or vehicle-crime due to the overall impact that the crime poses to public safety. As an element of force must be present for a person to be guilty of robbery, the risk to other members of the public is considered higher (Theft Act, 1968). Similarly, if a spate of vehicle-crime is reported within a certain area, although the severity of this crime would be considered low, the frequency and overall impact it is having on the local community would determine it to be a priority crime (Stainton, 2022).

Between 2021-2022, South Wales Police reported to have the highest volume of 'violence against a person' recorded crimes in Wales. This accounted for 37% of the crime demand in the force area (South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, n.d). Although the severity of crimes concerning 'violence against a person' varies between common assault and murder, if the volume of these particular offences was considered high in comparison to other crime types, they could be considered as a volume crime for the South Wales Police force area.

To summarise, volume crime refers to offences that are more common and widespread whereas priority crime refers to offences that are considered more severe or have a higher level of threat to public safety. The distinction between volume crime and priority crime allows flexibility for police forces and BCU commanders to identify, prioritise and allocate their resources adequately in order to maintain public safety and address the root causes of crime through problem solving (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2009).

A fundamental role of the police service is conducting effective and efficient investigations in order to bring offenders to justice (Bryant and Bryant, 2020). The Code of Practice to the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA) defines a criminal investigation as 'an investigation conducted by police officers with a view to it being ascertained whether a person should be charged with an offence, or whether a person charged with an offence is guilty of it' (Ministry of Justice, 2015). In order to ascertain whether a person should be charged with an offence, or to determine whether a person is guilty of an offence, evidence and information must be obtained as part of the investigative process.

The initial stage of an investigation is paramount for any investigator. This could be immediately after a crime has taken place or the period of time where police prioritise the gathering of information and evidence. Referred to as the 'Golden Hour', the information and evidence obtained during this time is 'abundant and readily available for the police' (ACPO Centrex, 2005) allowing leads to be pursued more effectively. This can range from initial disclosures from victims and witnesses (which may be captured on attending officers' body worn video), the recording of their personal details, obtaining descriptions of suspects in order to affect an arrest to the securing or preserving of physical evidence.

Methods for conducting Golden Hour enquiries include the identifying of victims, witnesses and suspects, the identifying and preserving of scenes; considering use of a cordon to avoid contamination, conducting CCTV and house-to-house enquiries which may lead to further witnesses being identified, obtaining statements and the recording of all actions taken as well as any outstanding actions (College of Policing, 2023a). These enquiries are conducted in both volume crime and priority crimes as they result in the gathering of vital information and evidence which can significantly impact the progress and success of an investigation at any level. It is however, important to note that the Golden Hour enquiries can vary when comparing volume crime and priority crime investigations. For instance, when looking at a priority crime such as rape, forensic evidence would be sought from the victim and suspect as a matter of urgency. However, in a volume crime such as theft from a motor vehicle, although forensic evidence such as obtaining fingerprints from within the vehicle is a consideration, it is argued that the use of forensic science is significantly less as the material can be notoriously difficult to obtain (Tilley and Ford, 1996).

While typically associated with suspects, interviewing and obtaining an account from victims and witnesses is fundamental to an investigation and can significantly affect the outcome (Jansson, 2005). Without the support from individuals who were directly affected by a crime or the corroboration of independent witnesses, other sources of evidence such as CCTV footage, body worn video and forensic evidence may hold little value in securing a successful prosecution.

Police forces in England and Wales utilise the 'PEACE' approach to interviewing: Planning and Preparation; Engage and Explain; Account; Clarification and Challenge. (College of Policing, 2022) It is a methodical and structured approach to interviewing and focuses on building rapport, obtaining a detailed account and evaluating the information provided.

The PEACE model was introduced in 1992 alongside a national training programme of investigative interviewing in order to assist police officers in maximising the significance and trustworthiness of the information obtained during an interview (Home Office, 1992). Prior to this the ultimate aim of an interviewer was considered to be obtaining a confession or an admission of guilt during an interview (Spooner et al., 2022). However, following several high-profile miscarriages of justice such as The Guildford Four and Birmingham Six where concerns relating to human rights, police powers and the treatment of suspects (particularly during the interview process) were identified to highlight the need for reform. This led to the introduction of Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) and includes PACE Codes of Practice which advise how investigative processes should be conducted including the audio recording and visually recording of interviews. (Bryant and Bryant, 2020)

Furthermore, the College of Policing has set out a code of principles which investigators must comply with when conducting investigations. The principles state that: the exercising of policing powers must be proportionate to the crime being investigated; the investigation should be carried out transparently and have regard to an individuals' right to privacy; and all reasonable steps should be taken to understand the needs of individuals, particularly the vulnerable or those with protected characteristics as set out in Equality Act 2010 (College of Policing, 2023). These core principles mirror those within the Code of Ethics and when adhered to, can mitigate the impact of personal attitudes, values and biases on investigations. Honesty, integrity, transparency and impartiality are just some of the values which make for an objective and ethical approach toward the investigative process. (Bryant and Bryant, 2020; College of Policing, 2014)

An investigative mindset provides a structure to support quality investigations and should be applied throughout the investigation, particularly when approaching investigative interviewing methods. (College of Policing, 2023) An investigative mindset is defined as 'a state of mind or attitude which investigators adopt and which can be developed over time and through continued use' (ACPO Centrex, 2005). This is achieved through the application of five principles to the investigative process in order to interpret the information and use it to develop a disciplined approach decision-making. The five principles which underpin the investigative mindset include, understanding the source of material, planning and preparation, examination, recording and collation, and evaluation. (Spooner et al., 2022) In the cases of volume and priority crime, the 'golden hour' principles as detailed above provide investigators with the planning and preparation aspect of the investigative mindset as both principles aim to gather material relating to the investigation. Similar to the Planning and Preparation of the interview where an investigator will identify their objectives as well as considering the approach to the interview. For example, where an interviewee has a willingness and ability to cooperate (usually victims and witnesses), a cognitive or free recall interview may be more appropriate than the typical PEACE approach. The 'cognitive interview' enhances the retrieval of accurate information by using memory enhancing techniques such as re-living the events in the lead up to (or after) the incident. For example, an interviewer may ask how the interviewee was feeling while completing a task just before the incident took place. (CREST, n.d; College of Policing 2022)

The next principle in the application of an investigative mindset is to understand the source of the material. During an interview this could be determining the relationship between the victims, witness and suspects including any history or previous incidents. This links in with the Engage and Explain element of PEACE whereby interviewers seek to build rapport, explain the reasons for interviewing and set expectations. Investigators will seek to build rapport during volume crime interviews and priority crime interviews alike. The information and/or evidence obtained prior to the interview may influence the interviewing technique in priority crime offences where tactics such as phased disclosure are utilised in interview.

The examination principle of applying an investigative mindset can be summarised as the 'ABC approach': Assume nothing; Believe nothing; Challenge everything (Stelfox, 2012). Active listening and open questions will be key to applying this principle in an interview setting. The account provided will develop a picture allowing for a more natural conversation into the next topic or question. It is important to clarify and summarise the account with the interviewee as this will not only confirm accuracy of the account, but new or additional information may come to light. (Bradbury and Feist, 2005). Once fully established, the account can be compared to the evidence obtained allowing for any inconsistencies to be challenged.

Prior to the closure of the interview, emphasis should be placed on the summarising of the interviewees' account (Walsh and Milne, 2008). Interviewees should be given a chance to correct or alter their account. The interviewer can then move on to ensure that all topics/objectives have been addressed before formally concluding the interview. A recording of the interview finish time should be made as well as a summary of the interview which ties in with the investigative mindset principle of recording and collation.

Finally, an evaluation can be conducted which relates to reflective practices in both circumstances. Evaluation as part of an investigative mindset principle may relate to further enquiries being conducted as a result of an interview. (Robinson and Tilley, 2009) For example, the opportunity for forensic evidence to be obtained. However, where no further enquiries are identified, this could be analysing the effect the interview has on the investigation as a whole. If an investigator is not satisfied that objectives have been met, there may also be the requirement for a further interview. This would usually apply to major crime and serious investigations as opposed to volume crime investigations. Applying an investigative mindset to all aspects of a criminal investigation maximises the amount of information obtained and ensures that its reliability is effectively tested, appropriate actions are established, definitive records are kept, and that material is appropriately stored (Bryant and Bryant, 2020).

In conclusion, most methods of investigation are the same for volume crime investigations and priority crime investigations such as golden hour enquiries, interviews of victims, witnesses and suspects, CCTV enquiries and forensic evidence where applicable. The requirement for enhanced investigation methods is deemed necessary due to the severity of the crimes committed. Although there are a number of different methods which can be utilised throughout all types of police investigations, the objective for the police service remains the same which is to provide a thorough and impartial oversight in order to achieve the best possible outcome for our victims.

Word count: 2145 words

Essay Two: What are the risks of ineffective engagement between police and local communities, and how might poor engagement affect community cohesion?

Your answer should be based on academic research, although you may make reference to relevant case studies.

Word limit: 2000 words

Effective engagement between the police and local communities is essential for maintaining public trust, encouraging cooperation, and ensuring public safety. However, when engagement is ineffective and fails to meet the expectations or needs of communities, it can lead to a variety of consequences including a breakdown of trust, increased crime rates, missed opportunities in the prevention of crime and further risk of the escalation of conflict between different societal groups and the police. This essay explores the risks of ineffective engagement between the police and local communities, highlighting the potential impacts on trust, cooperation, crime prevention and community cohesion.

It is the responsibility of all police forces to build and maintain positive working relationships with the communities that they serve. The defining features of neighbourhood policing can be traced back to the nine Peelian Principles, developed by the founder of the Metropolitan Police, Robert Peel in 1829. The principles which are still relevant today, recognised that the police were part of the community and that their power and authority were dependent on the consent and cooperation of the communities in which they serve (Home Office, 2016). Without this, the community may be less likely to report crimes, cooperate with investigations or seek help from the police when needed.

The hostility between communities and the police was brought to light in the aftermath of the Brixton riots in 1981 (College of Policing, 2013). The late 1990s then saw an increase in demand for a more accessible and visible police service which led to the introduction of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) and neighbourhood policing teams. Neighbourhood policing focuses on providing a collaborative and proactive approach to the prevention and detection of low-level crimes whilst engaging with the public to address safety and quality of life issues (NPIA, n.d). In addition to this, neighbourhood policing specialises in bridging the gap between the police and communities they serve by building relationships, understanding community needs and addressing the root causes of crime. For this reason, community engagement and neighbourhood policing have a dependant relationship; one would not exist without the other. Having established the relationship between community policing and community engagement it is important to understand what community engagement is in order to fully understand the risks of ineffective engagement. In a policing context, Myhill (2012) defines community engagement as 'the process of enabling the participation of citizens and communities at their chosen level'.

Section 34 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act (2011) requires police forces to seek the views of the public about crime and disorder in their neighbourhood and hold regular public meetings in every neighbourhood. Used as a method of community engagement, Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings can be an effective way of involving the community in identifying local problems. In the same way, police can update residents of their current policing priorities and the actions they are taking to address them demonstrating their commitment to community concerns resulting in the development of trust and improving attitudes towards the police (Lockey et al., 2019). Risks of not holding PACT meetings include a lack of intelligence and missed opportunities in implementing crime prevention strategies. As a consequence of the lack of engagement that a PACT meeting provides, residents may feel disconnected from the police and therefore may be less likely to provide valuable information about suspicious or criminal activity (Moore and Recker, 2016). This in turn could lead to an increase in crime as without strong community relationships, police may struggle to gather information, identify offenders and disrupt criminal activity. Furthermore, PACT meetings provide the opportunity for the police to work collaboratively with partner agencies and extended

community members. Initiatives such as neighbourhood watch schemes, community events and Safer Streets Fund centre around collaborative partnerships and aim to reduce and prevent neighbourhood crime, anti-social behaviour and improving the safety of public spaces. Despite this, general attendance levels during PACT meetings which can be low or unrepresentative of the wider community means that they do not always provide accurate representation of community issues (College of Policing, 2019).

Adopting policing styles with consideration for different communities is vital for successful engagement especially in diverse and underrepresented areas where historical relationships between the police and its residents undermines effective policing (Braga et al., 2019). Another risk of ineffective engagement is negative perceptions of the police such as perceiving them to be unapproachable or biased which is a crucial element in improving public confidence in policing (Merry et al., 2012). There have been numerous examples when police officers have been challenged on their behaviour and decision to utilise stop search powers which has resulted in counter-productive community cohesion (Lennon and Murray, 2018). It has been argued that the fundamental issue behind this is a lack of engagement and lack of consideration of how a stop search may affect the individual being subjected to a search. Strengthen the foundations of officers' use of stop and search and focused on elements including unconscious bias, reasonable grounds for suspicion and strategies for conducting stop and search (Miller, et al., 2020).

It has been found that patterns of disproportionality have been associated with profound community resentment towards the police amongst black and minority communities (Bowling and Phillips, 2002). The risk of ineffective engagement amongst these communities is a lack of inclusivity. This is particularly important as with all public bodies, the police have an obligation under the Equality Act (2010) not to discriminate and encourage a representative workforce. Simply put, police should value diversity and inclusion as this assists officers and staff to adequately reflect the communities that they serve (Police and Crime Commissioner, 2019). If the police engage positively and effectively with their communities, this would enhance faith and trust between the police and BAME communities as well as enhancing police legitimacy and public confidence (Awan et al., 2013).

It has previously been alluded to that the Peelite principles are at the core of policing. The old fashioned image of policing is that it consisted primarily of white Christian males. However, under the Equality Act all bodies have the responsibility and duty to promote diversity and inclusivity in the workplace. If the aforementioned stereotype is maintained then it would lead to mistrust and resentment from the public and ultimately effect the cohesion of the community. The strength in an inclusive and representative workforce lies in the recognition that all people and groups are different and it is this difference that should be promote and encourage into the workforce. People from diverse backgrounds can provide a police force with a wide array of different skills sets which would enhance a local police ability to react and deal with an array of situations and incidents.

It could be theorised that the principle of community cohesion can employ Locard's theory of exchange. While the theory is most commonly referenced in the use of forensic matter stipulating, "every contact leaves a trace", the same could be argued with community cohesion (Byard et al., 2016). Individual's experiences with the police can significantly impact community cohesion as negative experiences including (but not limited to) excessive use of force, bias and discrimination has been shown to erode trust and create division (Bradford et al., 2009). A consequence of division within a community can further lead to increased tension and conflict. These experiences combined with ineffective community engagement between can result in increased social divisions and isolation of different segments of the community as well as a breakdown of trust and cooperation (Lockey et al., 2019). Community cohesion refers to the sense of belonging, mutual respect and shared values among individuals within a community (NPfA, n.d). Ineffective engagement can hinder the development of social capital. Also known as social networks and relationships within the community which are essential for building trust

and cooperation (Putman, 2001). Further corroborated by Coleman (1988), found that if residents believe there is significant investment in social capital in the community, they are seemingly less fearful of crime and more inclined to perceive the police in a positive manner.

Strategic policing can also be impacted as a result of ineffective community engagement. Tactical policing refers to the application of specialised strategies and often involves the deployment of tactical response teams. Though often associated with counter terrorism, organised crime and firearms operations strategic and tactical policing works in conjunction with neighbourhood policing as a way of predicting changes in the community as well as identifying increased vulnerabilities surrounding threat, risk and harm. Ineffective engagement would lead to a lack of awareness of changes within the community and tensions not being identified. Information like this is why effective engagement is fundamental to policing. Community members who have trust within the police are more likely to provide information which can aid tactical policing efforts when dealing with high-risk or critical incidents. Intelligence, particularly from a reliable source is invaluable which is why it is said to be the very “lifeblood of policing” (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 1999).

Research conducted on behalf of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services found that as well as deterring crime, a visible police presence was reassuring to the community and helped individuals feel safe (HMICFRS, 2019). This was echoed by Tuffin et al (2006) but further suggested that visibility alone was unlikely to increase public perception of the police. Nevertheless, when implemented in combination with community engagement and problem solving, having a highly visible and accessible police service can prevent anti-social behaviour and reassure the public.

It is for these reasons that the impact of ineffective engagement and community relationships should not be underestimated, highlighting the importance of neighbourhood policing. A highly visible approach to community engagement alongside fair decision making and positive police interactions increase institutional trust and enhance police legitimacy (Merry et al., 2012). If effectively implemented, community participation will assist in the community fostering social responsibility as well as community cohesion. This should encourage community members to help the police as well as motivating others to not break the law (Tuffin et al., 2006).

To mitigate the risks of ineffective community engagement it is vital to ensure that all community members have access to participate in community events and the means of providing feedback or information.

For the police service, effective engagement with the community can be most significant when dealing with a ‘critical incident’. A critical incident is defined as ‘any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or community’ (College of Policing, 2013). Critical incidents range from incidents involving death and serious injury to those with large numbers of victims and/or failures within the criminal justice system. If we look at those incidents involving death or serious injury these can have wide ranging implications for the whole of the surrounding community who often exhibit signs for trauma (Roycroft and Roach, 2019). This is entirely down to their personal proximity to the incident and their potential knowledge of the persons involved. The community’s reaction to these types of incidents may include shock and guilt but then exhibit outward reactions which are usually directed toward the police response. This was widely documented during the recent Mayhill riot (2021). Though the police service can mitigate these risks through the use of effective communication and continuous engagement with that community, members of the public often want only the very basic of information, such as being told what is happening when they see a heavy police presence purely to alleviate any feelings of fear and uncertainty in their community HMICFRS (2019).

In order to rebuild stability and community cohesion following a critical incident the police should be understanding of the impact that the incident or series of incidents has on the wider community. This can be done by utilising specialist officers, such as Family Liaison Officers whose sole responsibility is to bridge the gap between the official police investigation and the victim and/or community.

Word count: 1996 words

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