

Task 1

From 2020, the Police Officer role became a graduate profession in the UK, whereby new recruits are required to obtain an academic accreditation during their probation period. Furthermore, the policing career requires continuous professional development (Watkinson-Miley, Cox and Deshpande, 2021). The College of Policing (CoP) UK plays a significant role in strategically forming and sustaining professional standards within Policing. The College of Policing provides a source of education, training and professional development for UK forces and officers that is pivotal to enhancing working police practices (College of Policing, 2021). This assignment aims to critically evaluate the strategic role of the College of Policing in the UK through discussing several key aspects. I will also evidence how I fulfil the role of a modern Police Officer by giving examples of my own work. Lastly, I will critically reflect on the changes the final year of my probation period has brought by discussing topics relevant to my own circumstances.

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) as delivered by the Home Secretary provides direction on how Police forces should be responding to the most substantial national threats. There are several pillars of response highlighted in the requirement (Home Office, 2023). The College of Policing holds a strategic role in supporting the SPR through producing and providing the relevant training and development opportunities. The College of Policing has successfully adopted a Five-Year strategy that sets out five strategic ambitions to support Police officers and staff to achieve best practice and build confidence and trust within the public (College of Policing, 2022).

The College of Policing has a strategic role of providing standardisation & training in line with the SPR. An example of how the CoP contribute to this is the development and adoption of the Policing Education Qualifications framework (PEQF). Williams, Norman and Rowe (2019) suggest that the PEQF programme is effective in the sense that officers develop their professional policing knowledge through achieving a recognised qualification. Further to this, there is a positive impact on police officer incentive to invest in further professional development. There are also perceptions that the educational role enhances critical and

reflective thinking, a trait highly beneficial to the policing role. However, this same piece of research states there are concerns that a restrictive curriculum could provide an incomplete overview of what constitutes as useful police learning. Wood et al. (2017) supports this, whereby it is stated that the PEQF delivered by the CoP has narrowed Police training into academia. It has been suggested that the PEQF is limited, lacks depth and wider knowledge. This ultimately produces barriers from within the organisation that make it difficult to consider the policing responsibilities from a more holistic perspective. Research provides evidence that Police Officers feel unable and unequipped to utilise the knowledge gained through their academic learning into their daily roles (Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019). Both positive and negative aspects discussed suggests that although well-constructed and delivered, the framework limits police training into a specified curriculum. The framework does appear to promote critical and reflective thinking, however learning regarding the encompassing requirements of the Police officer role are seemingly missed. Officers appear to have little opportunity to put the knowledge gained to the test, this suggests that there may be barriers between new officers and higher management, who maybe do not recognise the strategic role of the College of Policing for its positive attributes.

In addition to training, the CoP plays a significant role in standardisation throughout UK police forces in line with the SPR. The College of Policing is recognised as being highly effective in outlining best practice and delivering quality training across UK forces. Its success is noted whereby forces are provided the same training, therefore are largely working to the same evidence-based policies and standards when responding to communities (Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019). Sherman (2013) argues in favour of this by pointing out that the College of Policing use proven methods. "Targeting, testing, and tracking" refers to the proactive management of police resources through the use of data-driven evidence. Alternatively, the CoP standardisation criteria has been seen as offering stock type methods with a limited awareness of contextual elements that are specific to a certain area or demographic. This could have an impact on its overall application and success, whereby it adversely impacts on police performance and response to particular communities (Lumsden and Goode, 2016). The positive and negative aspects relating to this specific element suggest that the strategic role of College of Policing is successful in providing standardisation. The quality training is utilised

throughout forces in order to effectively create recognised standards and professionalise the policing role. On the other hand, it appears there are some challenges whereby local issues are not considered due to being unrecognised.

The Policing Vision 2025, originally created and published in 2016 by the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) provides a ten-year plan for policing. The plan highlights several changes that will be made to reform modern policing by 2025 (NPCC, 2016). Upon writing this essay I am in my final year of Probation as a police officer whereby daily role includes implementing several of these changes. As a case topic, I will discuss two key aspects of modern policing, namely Digitally inclusive Policing and Problem orientated Policing.

The Policing Vision 2025 outlines the requirement to be digitally inclusive in order to adapt to modern policing methods. This is due to the rise in the use of technology and the recognition that it has become a part of everyday policing and crime (NPCC, 2016). My role as a response police officers sees me utilise digital methods on a daily basis. For example, when attending any incident, I am always considering potential digital evidence such as CCTV and phone records. This type of evidence can be pivotal information, assisting in the detection and prevention of crime. In addition to this, any digital evidence that is available is typically received from members of the public via a link that I personally send to their mobile phone. Further to this, I utilise my works mobile device to capture images at scenes and my body worn video is active on near every call I attend. These actions enable me to create and then use digital evidence to support investigations.

Problem-oriented policing (POP) has been developed to direct police attention away from traditional reactive tactics and towards more proactive approaches to ongoing issues. POP is now widely employed in local policing by police forces throughout the UK to address a variety of challenges. POP is acknowledged as a modern policing strategy (Hinkle et al., 2020). Whilst conducting my daily role as a response police officer I often use the POP model. For example, when attending incidents that involve Anti-Social behaviour (ASB) and neighbouring issues I

seek to understand the core issue in order to find a long-term solution. This method also sees me working collaboratively with other departments such as Neighbourhood policing and partner agencies. Majority of referrals I make to partner agencies requires submission of digital forms. This again ties in with digital policing and sees me effectively fulfilling the role of a modern professional police officer.

My final year of probation has seen many changes in my role as a Police officer. Most notably increased responsibility and accountability. The change has become most apparent in recent months as several officers with long periods of service behind them left the team. These officers were replaced with new recruits and despite my length of service being under three years, I am considered most experienced on shift. The increased responsibility has allowed me to take on more complex tasks and lone working. This has been incredibly beneficial for me with regards to building my knowledge, confidence in myself, and confidence in my decision making. Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) suggests that work environments, including job role and responsibilities has a direct impact on employees' confidence and satisfaction of their own performance. I have also felt more fulfilled in my role as I have had more freedom to be self-sufficient, use holistic approaches to problem solving and build on my strengths and weaknesses. This positive factor has also trickled into my personal life where I have felt overall more content. Lambert, Qureshi and Frank (2021) suggest that job satisfaction has a direct link with overall life satisfaction. On the other hand, the increased responsibility has resulted in elevated stress levels due a significant increase in workload over a short period of time. The role is incredibly busy and there is constant pressure to meet deadlines between attending emergency calls. According to Burnett, Sheard and St Clair-Thompson (2019) operational stress is not only a product of the nature of the job, but the heavy workload attached to it.

Following on from the previous point, I have found myself in what could be considered a mentor type role. This has been a direct impact of the aforementioned changes and my length of service. In recent months I have guided, supervised, and passed knowledge to the new officers on the shift. These actions have given me insight and experience of a mentor and leadership role that has ultimately inspired me to consider working towards a Sergeant role in the future. Despite the positive experience, it again caused increased workload as I would be

dedicating more time to help others. McCarty, Zhao and Garland, 2007 suggests that constables with a greater length of service often reported more feelings of stress and burnout in comparison to those with less experience. The changes within the team were abrupt and seen me swiftly thrown into the 'deep end'. I personally thrive under pressure, and despite the increased stress, I have gained better experience within the job and feel more confident in my capabilities on a whole.

In conclusion, the CoP is recognised for its significant strategic role in supporting professional policing and the requirements outlined in the SPR. The College of Policing plays a huge part in providing the relevant training and standardisation through UK forces. There are many positive aspects of the role which is seen to be largely successful. The PEQF has been discussed, whereby it is noted that it is beneficial for the adoption of critical and reflective thinking. In addition to this, the PEQF, delivered by the CoP sees new officers celebrate achievement in obtaining a recognised degree in professional policing. There are however challenges with regards to the academic knowledge gained being transferred into the role, where it has been outlined officers struggle to utilise the new knowledge in their daily roles. The strategic role of the CoP with regards to standardisation has also been discussed. Again, the CoP has been celebrated for its quality training and triumph in setting standards throughout UK forces. There is however room for improvement in condensing training and altering methods to effectively manage local issues.

My job as a response police officer sees me fulfil the role of a modern professional police officer in many ways on a daily basis. Particular attention has been given to my activities in digital policing, Problem oriented policing (POP) and partner agency collaboration to evidence my work. In addition to this, several changes in my role whilst in my last year of probation have been discussed. The changes have been abrupt and seen me hold much more responsibility in multiple ways. Despite the increased stress, the changes have had a largely positive result whereby I have become more knowledgeable and confident in my actions and decision making.

Word Count – 1918

Task 2

In recent years, the popularity of social media has increased and continues to grow with many different platforms being used worldwide. Facebook and Youtube are celebrated as two of the most utilised platforms to this day. Originally used to connect with family and friends, social media has also developed into a relatively new phenomenon of social networking (Boulianne, 2015). Whereas Police forces have made use of websites for many years, the present day sees Police adopting social media as a means of public engagement and information sharing (Crump, 2011). This essay will be a critical evaluation of my own experience of using social media in policing. To begin, I will briefly identify how police predominantly use social media. Secondly, I will discuss a specific experience where I used Facebook as a means of engaging with the community and promoting police initiatives. As I was employed by South Wales Police at the time, consideration will be given to the force policy on the use of social media. The benefits and risks of the use of social media in policing will also be identified. Focus will be given to the key aspects I had to consider whilst utilising the platform. I will discuss the positive and negative outcomes of the online engagement once it was complete to provide further insight. I will then provide a summary of the critical evaluation before concluding the essay.

As already established, police forces have been using social media to engage with and inform the public in recent years. This initiative is largely used in a local and community policing sense, whereby community events, educational material and real-time updates are provided (Crump, 2011). Bullock (2017) suggests that when used in the correct way, social media can promote two-way communication with the public and help police to better understand the communities in which they serve. In support of this, Panagiotopoulos et al. (2016) states that social media publications are also used by police as a positive action to reduce uncertainty in the communities. In addition to this, the use of social media, such as Twitter is also utilised as a way of obtaining information from the public, for example, when attempting to locate missing persons or offenders. This method has proved popular amongst many UK forces. Despite this, as my role is in response policing, I have had very minimal opportunity to utilise social media to engage with the public. This is owing to the fact that my role is to predominantly respond to emergency calls, having face-face contact with the public.

In the course of organising an online consultation event, I gained experience in using the social media platform Facebook to engage and inform members of the public. The aim of the event was to ascertain the public's perceptions and opinions on the police service and new policing initiatives. The information required was gathered from the public through a survey. It included both open-ended and closed-ended survey questions. The South Wales police Facebook page was then used for disseminating the survey. Taking the South Wales Police policy on the use of social media for a policing purpose into consideration, it is noted that maintaining a professional image on social media is crucial for the Police. This suggests that improper use or communication can harm the reputation of the police force and erode public trust. For this reason, I personally felt anxieties when carrying out the online engagement and prefer face to face contact that is considered the 'norm' for my particular job role as a response officer.

There were several benefits noted with regards to using Facebook to engage with the community. The platform allowed swift and easy dissemination of the engagement activity and information to a large population. The main benefit of this was that it would facilitate instantaneous open communication with the public, which was also essential when considering the project deadlines. Walsh and O'Connor (2018) states that social media allows Police to provide real time information to the public. The immediate communication from using Facebook enhanced the efficiency we had in responding to the public. We were able to adapt our approach to community policing in the relevant areas according to the feedback. Lieberman, Koetzle and Sakiyama (2013) suggest that the use of social media as a tool to improve community communication and response is becoming more and more popular among police professionals. In addition to this, through the correct use of the service it was established that it allowed us to show transparency, building trust and confidence through open communication. Lieberman, Koetzle and Sakiyama (2013) further suggests that a key component of community policing is efficient police-public communication for a number of reasons. Increased community engagement is a result of effective communication. Both the social ties between the police and the community may be strengthened by this.

Despite the benefits outlined, it was important to consider the risks associated with using social media for a policing purpose. The risk of possibility of unintentionally excluding participants received special attention. There are various possible explanations for this, most of which have to do with demography. For instance, not everyone is interested in or has access to all social media platforms. Bullock, Garland and Coupar (2020) support this, whereby it is noted that people use different platforms and are often attracted to one platform. Furthermore, 'traditional' platforms such as Facebook and Twitter lack users that fall into younger categories. This suggests that unequal engagement and information sharing would be the result of excluding certain demographics. To minimise this risk, the only way to ensure further reach was to also hold face-face consultation.

As the survey was dissimilated on Facebook, the post itself was open to public comments. For this reason, the risk of the Police force being publicly subject to online abuse was noted. Walsh and O'Connor (2018) suggest that the use of social media by Police has previously had a negative impact. Research showed that the public prompted conversations of police misconduct and abuse, especially following the Black Live Matter (BLM) movement. This was a topic that was mentioned by the public, despite the post and survey being completely unrelated to the events. I felt that these comments, that were in the public domain could have potentially caused persons that were potentially impartial to adopt a negative perception of police. From my experience, it was recognised that such matters were difficult to deal with on a large scale. To effectively manage this risk, strategies were put in place to monitor and manage the interactions. Strategies included limiting the publics ability to comment on the post, manual review of comments and removal of any comments that included abusive or derogatory language.

Through further evaluating my experience of engagement with the public via social media, it has been established the final result had several positive outcomes. The Facebook survey received many responses from a diverse population directly from the Facebook link. This fact evidences the methods success in reaching a large audience from different demographics. I found this aspect to be valuable as I was able to engage with and understand the thoughts of a vast number of communities. Jeanis, Muniz and Molbert (2019) states that social media

enables Police to reach an extensive audience due to the global adoption of social media as a communication tool. In support of this, Kelly and Finlayson (2015) believe that community policing requires online police connection with communities, since organisations that do not use this type of interaction are losing their vital audience and so continuing to fail in effective engagement. This suggests that the use of social media is becoming one of the preferred means of communication from the public and communities. Through personal experience, I have noted several members of the public made mention of enjoying seeing Police promote their initiatives through social media as it has enabled them to discuss and share the matters with friends, family and other organisations.

Another positive factor was that the social media engagement was well received, and the use seemingly promoted public confidence and transparency. The Facebook post and survey gained several favourable comments about the police force. Colbran (2018) supports this, suggesting that proper use of social media engagement appears to lower barriers between the public and the police. In turn, presumably encouraging more confidence and trust. Better working relations and transparency between the police and the public have recently emerged from this.

On the other hand, despite a number of positive responses, the post enabled persons with negative thoughts on the police to freely and anonymously slander the Police force. Further to this, the negative comments often included miss-information from random members of the public. For example, there were unrelated comments about previous police incidents, that from my own knowledge were untrue. Lieberman, Koetzle and Sakiyama (2013) explains that a paradox of communication in the context of community policing is that while it could elevate public opinion of police, it could simultaneously heighten public fear of crime as a result of heightened public knowledge of crime. This suggest that the negative and untrue comments could instil unnecessary fear in the communities. Therefore, there was a need to respond to such comments and amend the issues caused. Walsh and O'Connor (2018) support this, whereby it is stated that since disinformation is more likely to spread in online settings due

to its disorder and multitude, police must monitor the facts and present themselves as the sole trustworthy source of information.

In conclusion, the rise in popularity of social media use has urged Police forces to adapt their methods of engagement. This sees Police utilising a number of social media platforms for a multitude of reasons. The innovative approach is used predominantly in a local policing context as a means of engaging with and informing the public. As a response officer, the opportunity to use social media as a means of engaging is very minimal. There are a number of risks and benefits for the police to consider when attempting to optimise communication with the public on these platforms. Such risks include online slander, misinformation and negative public perception if used and managed incorrectly. However, there are benefits with regards to the outreach to a diverse and vast number of demographics. From my personal experience in relation to the use of Facebook, majority of these aspects had to be considered throughout. With regards to the overall outcome, there were both positive and negative points that have been noted. The positives were that there was a significant amount of engagement, including supportive comments and constructive criticism. However, on the other hand, due to the chaotic and open nature of the online world the Police were subjected to slander. Unfortunately, this slander was also unrelated to the topic and information being transmitted by the force. To summarise, it is apparent that the use of social media for this purpose is a double-edged sword. While I feel it offers an array of opportunities, it presents a number of difficult to manage challenges.

Word count – 1837

Task 3

As a Police Constable employed in the force's response division, I frequently respond to a variety of incidents where I encounter a wide range of challenges involving numerous individuals in differing locations. These incidents range from minor local issues to significant critical and major incidents. In order to effectively manage any situation, I must adapt my leadership style based on the scenarios I am met with. Waugh and Streib (2006) supports this claim by emphasising that a flexible leadership style is an essential requirement for successful management of policing incidents. This essay will firstly critically evaluate and evidence my flexibility in leadership style. I will discuss two incidents of contrasting nature to support this aim. In addition to this, I will critically analyse the leadership styles and strategies I adopted during the differing operational situations before coming to an overall conclusion.

Incident one saw me attended an ongoing domestic incident crewed with one other officer who had recently joined the team following tutorship. On initial attendance, there were two persons at an address where a domestic assault had evidently taken place. One involved person had injuries to their face. Waddington (1999) states a significant portion of UK police responses are related to domestic situations. These situations are seen as inherently dangerous due to the possibility of a physical confrontation as well as an escalation of circumstances in the future. Previous events that have seemingly been of a minor or innocent nature have escalated into further acts of violence and murder.

During the incident I saw it as appropriate to firstly assume a 'Servant Leadership' style. Parris and Peachey (2013) states that the focus of servant leadership theory is on serving others and acknowledging the role that organisations play in creating and constructing a more equitable society. In a policing context, I interpretate this as the need to prioritise and serve the needs of the communities through proper leadership. For me, the significance of approaching the incident with this leadership style was to effectively serve the vulnerable persons involved. From this action I learnt that the style was effective in building trust with the public. Joseph and Winston (2005) support this, stating there is a positive correlation between the use of the

servant leadership style and building greater trust. By using the perceived servant leadership style, I was able to successfully obtain an honest account from each person individually, although this did require spending more time at the incident. The outcome was successful whereby I was able to make an informed decision and sufficiently safeguard the victim. Further to this, due to also obtaining further details of the circumstances, I was able to ensure future support was put in place for the victim. Despite the time it took, I would adopt this approach again in the relevant circumstances.

In addition, I also adopted a 'Transformational leadership' style to support my colleague who was new in service. Bass and Avolio (1994, p.27) defined transformational leadership as taking place when a leader sparks colleagues' enthusiasm about investigating their role from a different angle. A transformative leader raises colleagues' levels of potential and ability while increasing awareness of the organization's mission or vision. In a policing context, I interpret this as inspiring and motivating my colleagues to act in line with professional standards and police policies, whilst showing compassion and commitment to every incident. Having applied this leadership style, I was able to effectively provide a good example of how certain situations could be dealt with. Feedback from my colleague suggested they gained significant and beneficial education from observing my way of working. They explained they were able to understand the bigger picture of such circumstances, which they did not fully understand before. However, on the other hand, due to leading nature of the transformational leadership style, I felt my colleague did not have the opportunity to gain the experience of decision making on this call. Considering this, despite the positive outcome I would think about adopting a different leadership style in future that would allow a new colleague to gain both educational examples and hands-on learning. Choi et al. (2014) suggests that transformational leaders create a safe and soft influence on their followers and provide a high job satisfaction level by supporting colleagues act of making individual choices.

Incident two saw me attend a major incident whereby I was one of the first officers on scene. A major incident is defined by the College of Policing as "an event or situation requiring a response under one or more of the emergency services' major incident plans" (College of

Policing, 2018). Like the previous incident discussed, I was in attendance with new officers that did not have any prior experience in dealing with a major incident. The supervising officer on duty was also unavailable due to being present at a critical incident in a different sector. This ultimately left me having to co-ordinate and manage the incident and police resources to the best of my ability whilst on scene.

During the incident I was required to adopt a combination of Transactional and Authoritarian leadership styles. Cockcroft (2014) states that transactional leadership is the 'norm' in policing, with much police work being considered 'transactional'. The style is based around a transactional relationship between different ranks of officers that consists of direct orders and reaction. The use of this style enabled me to delegate clear roles and responsibilities to other officers attending the incident and scene thereafter. In addition to this, I was able to ensure order and compliance by working through structured processes that are commonly used in transactional leadership. Although I did not feel completely equipped due to my rank to utilise this style, I saw no other option at the time. The result was that the officers with no prior experience in dealing with a major incident had specific roles to carry out, therefore they were working collaboratively to achieve the same goal without repetition. This meant that the incident was dealt with efficiently and professionally. What I learnt from this was that despite rank, some situations call for clear and informative direction. Cambell and Kodz (2011) supports this by suggesting that officers who are new or less 'self-motivated' react well to a transactional leadership style as they require clear direction.

As a Police Constable I am required to endorse 'Authoritarian' leadership on a daily basis. However, in this particular situation this extended my usual role where I was required to act in a supervisory manner. The use of this leadership style enabled me to make the relevant decisions and guide my colleagues in a respectful, yet direct manner. From this I learnt that again, despite rank, this type of leadership style is crucial and suitable in an emergency situation where fast paced decisions and actions need to be made. Harms et al. (2018) stated that in situations where chaos was viewed as an alternative possibility, an authoritarian leadership style made sense. When circumstances get difficult, people usually seek out

stronger leaders. Furthermore, research has demonstrated a correlation between proficient leadership and decreased stress levels among peers. This suggests that peers will ultimately perform better following plain-spoken orders. Kakkar and Sivanathan (2017) argues in favour of this, stating that in an environment of uncertainty when people tend to be in favour of an influential or authoritarian leader who they believe is capable of handling difficult circumstances and improve their chances of success. Upon reflection, if I was to see myself in a similar situation where higher-ranking officers were unable to attend, I would again make use of a combination of authoritarian and transactional leadership styles. This is owing to the fact that the incident, between police and other partner agencies was deemed to have been dealt with in an appropriate and efficient manner.

Throughout both incidents discussed and several other incidents I have also utilised recognised police leadership strategies in amalgamation with leadership styles to manage incidents. For example, leadership strategies such as proactive problem identification, transparency and accountability and community engagement were developed accordingly throughout. Maguire and John (2006) suggest that leadership strategies that incorporate and prioritise community engagement foster trust and collaboration between police and the public. In support of this, Gambetta Citation (1988) states that trust-building strategies can also be created to break the cycle of distrust as fear in communities typically lead to actions that create additional doubt. This suggests that poor execution of leadership strategies can easily result in broken confidence in police, therefore it is vital to ensure each scenario is dealt with effectively.

Furthermore, from my experience I recognised the importance of police leadership strategies that promote transparency and accountability. Walker and Archbold (2018) emphasises the need of implementing leadership strategies that take interest in accepting responsibility and accountability. As a result of these actions, public confidence is again increased. Furthermore, competent leaders provide an effective role model for other officers and encourage accountability as they recognise its significance. This suggests that police forces may face considerable challenges in light of negative incidents involving the police, even if isolated.

Such incidents and lack of transparency can significantly impact public perception, resulting in ongoing efforts to maintain and rebuild trust thereafter.

To summarise, my flexibility in leadership styles has been evidenced through my approach and actions during differing incidents. Both incidents saw me utilise a combination of situational leadership styles to appropriately and effectively deal with a police incident. The styles have been critically evaluated, with emphasis placed on both their advantages and disadvantages as well as how they have been applied in certain situations. The servant leadership style, although time consuming appeared affective in building trust with victims, in turn resulting in sufficient safeguarding. In order to effectively mentor and coach a new colleague, the transformational leadership style was adapted. From personal feedback, the style appeared largely effective, though maybe best used in conjunction with other styles. Emergency situations require fast informative action. This is where Transactional and Authoritarian leadership styles proved effective. Though there were challenges noted with regards to rank and authority. Overall, it has been established there is need for a flexible approach to managing different types of incidents. This is due to the ever-changing situations Police officers are faced with daily. It has been highlighted that contrasting scenarios require a different outlook and approach.

Through broad critical analysis of policing leadership strategies, it has been recognised that there are notable strengths, particularly with regards to community trust and confidence. Conversely, there are challenges with regards to maintaining said relationships, this may be due to poor action during high stake incidents. This is also linked with transparency and accountability, whereby it has been noted that leadership strategies that support this are effective in inspiring open communication and confidence. In addition to this, leadership strategies can also promote organisational change whereby they inspire and instil confidence in peers to be accountable. However, the police may face several challenges with the complexities of being accountable as a police force, especially following negative incidents.

Word count - 1837

Task 4

Upon writing this essay, I am nearing the final year of my probationary period. Over the course of the past three years, I have switched from a civilian police staff role to a police constable position within South Wales Police's response sector. I completed the initial six months of police training before passing out of police school and starting my career as a student constable. During my first three months on response, I was mentored and directed by a tutor who had worked as a police constable for almost 20 years. I have received guidance and training from the College of Policing, a police training tutor, senior officers, and colleagues during my whole three-year probation. The purpose of this essay is to critically reflect upon my probation period. I will go over each significant milestone in my journey in chronological sequence in order to complete this, emphasising the mentoring and coaching techniques I implemented along the way. I will also discuss how the methods have assisted me in meeting personal, professional, and organisational goals. In addition, I will explain how significant situations and aspects of my probationary period aided me to learn, develop and perform in the policing role.

Wood and Tong (2009) explain that in the wake of the Police Reform Act of 2002, several police forces established an official partnership with local universities that linked police training to academic degrees. In my case, as I was joining the force without prior achievement of a degree, I have been working towards a recognised accreditation in Professional Policing Practice. During my three-month initial training, I was required to learn a large amount of policing definitions verbatim and be successful in two exams to move into the role as a police constable. Historically I have found academic work difficult, this is largely due to my preferred learning methods being observational and practical. Training staff urged us to facilitate mentoring circles to help each other learn and prepare for the exams. Darwin and Palmer (2009) define mentoring circles as the process for fostering and promoting team members' professional objectives and students' intellectual growth. The primary objective of this method is for peers to exchange expertise, perspectives, and abilities in order to promote mutual development and learning. I found the mentoring groups particularly useful as they created an enjoyable atmosphere to learn in, which made it easier for me to retain the relevant knowledge. It also alleviated my feelings of anxieties about the exams as I had the

support of my peers. On completion of the exams, I was pleasantly surprised with my marks. I felt achievement in myself and met the required organisational goals to move forwards in my career. Darwin and Palmer (2009) support this, suggesting that Higher education researchers have connected mentoring circles to personal development, self-actualization, and career accomplishment. The mentoring relationship is advantageous to both mentors and mentees. Despite the success in my exams and initial police training, I did not feel fully equipped in a practical sense to begin my role on response. (Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019) argues in support of this, stating that new police officers feel they are unprepared and unable to apply the knowledge they have learned in training school to their everyday duties.

Throughout my three-month tutorship period I was mentored by a Police Constable that had nearly twenty years of experience in the job. They also had an abundance of knowledge of other areas of the force from working in several other sectors over the years. During tutorship I was able to learn the response policing role with the support and safety net of an experienced tutor. Throughout these months, my tutor applied Reflective Practice Theory. The idea of reflective practice is now widely used in professional education programmes. Integrating theory and practice constitutes what is meant by reflective practice, in which learners critically reflect on their experiences to develop an in-depth understanding of the subject (Thompson and Pascal, 2012). By adopting these methods, I felt I learnt quickly and gained a good understanding of the job. The tutorship period and adoption of the Reflective Practice Theory helped me build confidence in myself and my decision making. It also assisted me in meeting professional targets where I was signed off at the expected date and achieved single patrol status. Murray and Kujundzic (2005) suggests that by using Reflective Practice Theory, learners can become more independent thinkers who can tolerate a wider range of perspectives and scenarios. Despite my success, I felt that the tutoring period was not sufficient in length to ensure that I felt totally prepared to work as a single crew officer. I am of the opinion that in my first few months of working as an officer with single patrol status, I might have developed more and performed better if the learning periods had been longer.

Moving on from tutorship, I was lucky enough to commence my role as part of an experienced team. For the first twelve months of my duty, I was predominantly working alongside an experienced officer that had extensive experience and knowledge of the role. This officer essentially mentored and coached me for a period of time. Through working with them I was able to absorb their knowledge and from this, I have developed my performance in the workplace. I feel I have become a professional, competent officer who feels confident in decision making and tackling majority of the calls I attend. On the other hand, I feel that due to subconsciously relying on my colleague to take the lead on calls, my practical learning may have been hindered. However, this is a very minor pit fall in comparison to the positive outcomes.

Whilst on duty throughout my probation I have also benefited from applying Psychological Resilience techniques. Such techniques have enabled me to become mentally resilient and capable of bouncing back from challenging and distressing situations. In addition to this, I feel I effectively manage stress and maintain my well-being. As a result of this, I have been able to continue performing to a satisfactory standard. McCraty and Atkinson (2012) support this, suggesting that an officers' ability to identify and control their reactions to stressors in both work and personal contexts is enhanced by resilience-building strategies. Adopting these measures usually result in officers feeling less stressed, depressed, and negative. However, I feel that sometimes the ability to compartmentalise incidents in a way that allows me to move on quickly may have an effect on my long-term emotional wellbeing.

My probation period has also seen me partake in attachments to other departments. For example, the 'investigation hub' where the role consists of interviewing detained offenders and creating case files to be sent to the Crown Prosecution service (CPS). Whilst carrying out the role, I had a mentor who guided me through policies and procedures. Initially I found this role incredibly difficult as it was centred around paperwork, which is a recognised weakness of mine. However, upon spending a month in the role, I was able to understand and effectively manage workloads and case files. The attachment was highly beneficial to me achieving professional and organisational goals, whereby it is noted that an important part of my role

is to be skilled in this area. The attachment assisted me in developing my performance in this area. I also made me feel fulfilled in myself as I had acquired a new skill in an area of work that I was having significant difficulty in before. Watkinson-Miley, Cox and Deshpande (2021) notes that it is well-established that employees consider work-based coaching to be more beneficial than formal education. The effectiveness of such initiatives hinges on learners' contentment with their learning experience and their motivation to gain and apply the acquired knowledge and techniques. However, for all that, I unfortunately felt like I inadvertently lost the skills once I returned to my usual response role as I was not putting into practice what I had learnt.

My final year in probation has seen me pay particular attention to my future aspirations within the force. Through out my time so far, I have recognised my desire to work in a more investigatory or victim focused role. In recent months I have began working through the GROW model with my superior officers. The GROW model "can be applied to all coaching interactions. GROW stands for Goal, Reality, Options and Wrap-up" Passmore (2006, p.62). This has enabled me to establish a career path and begin working towards the relevant competencies to enter these types of roles. Due to this, I feel that the use of this model is also successfully assisting me in meeting organisation and professional goals. Brown and Grant (2010) believe that the GROW approach to coaching provides an effective way of harnessing goal-focused targets.

During the course of my probation period, feedback from colleagues and supervising officers has been pivotal in my development and performance. I have typically used a 'debrief' method when requesting, receiving, and providing feedback. From my experience, the method provides two-way open communication that has been beneficial for my understanding and own developmental requirements. In addition to this, I have also utilised one-one meetings with supervising officers to methodically discuss my professional development. I have found this to be effective in recognising my strengths and weaknesses, therefore I have been able to pay particular attention to learning gaps. Geimer et al. (2015) suggest this strategy is beneficial because meetings provide supervisors with an opportunity

to develop employee relationships and opinions about the organisation and their role within. Further to this, effective meetings see the exchange of employee ideas, needs and concerns.

In conclusion, my three-year probation period, the mentoring and coaching I have received over time has been highly beneficial in several ways. I have been successful in meeting many personal, professional, and organisational goals. This is credit to all the key aspects of my probation. However there has been situations, albeit not many where my development has been slightly hindered or deteriorated.

Initial training was difficult due to the academia involved, however I was mentored and supported by peers which proved successful. My tutorship period enabled me to feel more confident in the practical side of the job, though I would have preferred more experience before achieving single patrol status. Whilst on duty I have been lucky enough to work alongside a good team of officers who lead by example, enabling me to become the officer I am now. Though, real learning and self-reliance has come from being an independent officer. My role has also seen me adopt resilience techniques where I am able to effectively compartmentalise and move on from distressing situations. Nevertheless, I have personal concerns that it may impact my long-term wellbeing. My attachment in the interviewing hub developed my skills and performance in relation to interviewing and case file building, which was once a task I found incredibly difficult. Despite the success, the skill was inevitably lost for the most part once I left the department. My final year of probation has been centred around where I aim to head next in my career. Through discussion with supervisors and the use of the GROW model I have begun working towards developing skills and performance in preparation to move onto a new role in the future. Throughout, I have used a simplistic de-brief method as a means of receiving feedback which has been mostly effective. In addition to this, one-one meetings provide the opportunity to discuss relevant matters with my supervising officer. These methods have proven to be personally beneficial, therefore they are activities I will continue implementing.

Word count - 1948

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