

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

The police forces across the UK have consistently received criticism for underrepresenting certain demographics in society which has in turn led to certain communities feeling underrepresented and distrustful of those who represent the police. In this essay I will discuss how effective police forces across the UK have been in adapting and accommodating diversity.

Diversity is defined as “*a range of many people or things that are very different from each other.*” (Oxford Dictionary, 2025).

In a 2023 Survey conducted by the university of Law “65% of people agreed that they feel seen and represented within their local police force” (University of Law, 2023). This means that 35% disagreed and as such should be considered an area of concern. The survey also concluded that “one in three people who will struggle to foster a positive relationship with police as they don’t see people like themselves in their constabulary”. (University of Law, 2023). This therefore highlights the need for police forces across the country to do everything they can to try to encourage diversity and inclusion and be proactive in trying to ensure that the forces move towards being reflective of the demographics seen across society.

Mike Fuller who became the first black police chief constable of Kent police in 2004 said in 2010 after he retired that representation was “*very poor*” at all levels. “*People can’t look to the police service and feel [it] reflects the society that it serves.*”. (BBC, 2020)

After the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the McPherson report was published in 1993. The committee called for several recommendations including achieving a police workforce that is representative of the population by 2030. (College of Policing, 2021).

However, to effectively develop a plan it is important that the force has base line data to track their progress against. For the purposes of this essay, the focus shall be specifically on South Wales Police and the steps they are taking to try and tackle underrepresentation across the force and how effective these steps have been.

In the strategic Equality Plan for South Wales Police, it highlights that the two Primary focus areas for South Wales police are Misogyny and Racism. (South Wales Police, 2024)

This is also supported by the statistics captured by Police.uk displaying the workforce of South Wales police and their ethnicity.

In all categories apart from ‘White’, The proportion of police officer’s vs proportion of force area population is not aligned with Asian or Asian British officers making 0.7% of the force meanwhile making up for 2.8% of the population. All ethnic groups apart from White are currently underrepresented in the South Wales Police workforce. (Police UK, 2024).

This highlights the fact that in line with the findings of the university of law survey, it is likely that minority groups would feel underrepresented and that this would result in a negative impact on the relationship between the police forces and the respective communities which in turn would have a negative impact on the forces ability to engage and carry out their role in an effective manner.

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To try and tackle these primary focus areas, South Wales Police have established several ways to try and promote diversity and equality within South Wales police both internally and externally.

To try and combat equality and diversity across the forces the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) developed a toolkit. (NPCC, 2018). It is hoped that this toolkit will support the chief constable of the respective force in the development of their equality and diversity plan and will support them in setting objectives to which they can then be held to account. The NPCC established that for a plan to be effective it must cover several key components and focus on ways in which each area can promote equality and diversity. These key components are Leadership and Culture, Attraction/Recruitment, Retention, Progression, Wellbeing and fulfilment, and finally Exit from service with dignity.

The college of policing working in direct partnership with the NPCC on 'positive action' scheme. Positive Action gives individuals from under-represented groups a chance to access support and training, in preparation for and throughout recruitment processes, to overcome disadvantages competing with others. (Cheshire Constabulary, 2025)

As of March 2023, the total numbers of police officers from ethnic minority across all forces was 11,966 full-time making up 8.4% of the workforce this had increased from 8.1% in 2022. (Police federation, 2024) This highlights that positive action is working and has been effective in increasing the number of ethnic minority officers, however this number still doesn't reflect the percentage of the population.

South Wales police acknowledge that currently they struggle to recruit from Ethnic minority backgrounds and so have also established 'upskilling sessions' to support their application to various roles across the force. It is hoped that in doing this they will be more successful in ensuring that the demographic of the force better reflects the demographic seen across the force area. (South Wales Police 2025).

South Wales police has tried to tackle misogyny by becoming a Heforshe ally and by carrying out a Gender summit. (North Wales Police 2022). All the UK police forces have committed to heforshe that they will try to remove misogyny and sexism from their force and to encourage promotion via positive action in the higher ranks. The gender summit also brought women together to discuss issues that may be a barrier to them progressing through the ranks and it was established that there needs to be a review of flexible working arrangements to try and support women. In doing so it hopes to ensure that women are represented at all ranks.

From 2021 there has been an increase in the gender balance of senior leadership teams on average across the force with the number rising in 2022 to 11.84% from 10.78% in 2022. (North Wales Police 2022). This highlights that HeforShe is an effective approach in tackling misogyny in police forces.

As a result of their efforts to promote equality and diversity, South Wales Police have been recognised by becoming the second force in the UK to receive the National Equality Standard certification, meaning they are considered a leader in diversity, equality, and inclusion in the workplace. This shows that the measures they are using have been effective in adapting to promote a more diverse police force. It is hoped that in the future other forces will put the same emphasis on the need for a workforce that represents the force area demographic so that the police force will be more representative of society and so that 35% of people won't feel underrepresented by their force.

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Essay 2: Community policing – Why is partnership working the most effective way to reach groups or communities who are unwilling to engage with police?

The police have long been criticised for underrepresenting certain minority groups in society with 35% of people stating they feel underrepresented by their police force. (University of Law, 2023). Meaning it is vital that the police do everything they can to try and engage with these groups as positively as possible. One way that this can be achieved is by establishing ‘partnership working’ relationships, this will form the focus of this essay and why it is effective.

Partnership working is defined by the college of policing as “*using influence to build effective partnership working, particularly with individuals and groups who have influence within communities*”. (College of Policing, 2024)

Partnership Working was made a statutory duty under the crime and disorder Act 1998 (Crime and Disorder Act 1998). Since then, forces have adapted their working practices to ensure the widespread role out of partnership working to support the police in their role.

To encourage partnership working many police forces have adopted neighbourhood policing teams. This means that officers work in a specific area and police that community based on its specific needs. The needs of that community can be better understood if the police have access to data and insight that other agencies have access to that the police may not. This can be particularly important when engaging with groups like ethnic minorities and sexual assault victims, who have historically had negative experiences that have led to a distrust of the police. However, groups like social services provided by local councils, voluntary organisations and many other groups will sometimes have stronger links to these groups and so have the foundation of trust that the police have been unable to achieve.

By establishing working partnerships with these groups and by data sharing it often results in higher levels of positive engagement with the police and a greater impact in tackling key issues and promoting crime prevention. The importance of these teams working effectively can be seen with specific issues like tackling Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which involves women and primarily ethnic minority groups which are both demographics of society that are typically underrepresented across the forces. Working partnerships have therefore been vital when engaging with victims of these crimes.

The police have historically had to deal with issues in which they are not trained and so are unable to offer the best support. This has then resulted in a negative interaction with the individuals and contributed to a lack of engagement from communities moving forward. To try and tackle this all the forces in England and Wales have adopted the ‘Right care, right person’ approach. (South Wales Police 2024).

This approach has three main aims as seen below:

- to get the person or people involved the right help as soon as possible
- to prevent further distress to the person
- to allow the police to focus resources on preventing crime, protecting life and property and keeping public order

It is hoped that if the police can ensure that people get the support, they need from the correct source it will mean that those the police encounter will have a positive interaction with the police

and overtime this will encourage engagement in communities that historically have refused to engage with the police. To formalise this arrangement, the forces in Wales have all signed up to a national partnership group which involves the police working together with local councils, the NHS and various Voluntary organisations to seek the best outcomes for those they engage with. This group ensures that there are referral processes in place amongst all partners and that guidance can be developed for the police working practices when tackling specific issues and is fully informed by the expertise and experience that the partnering agencies can offer. (College of policing 2024). By having the involvement of subject matter experts that are often found in these partnering agencies in developing the approach of the police it has had a mainly positive impact on engagement levels

Whilst working partnerships do have many advantages to them to improve engagement with communities, there are also some disadvantages that can hinder the effectiveness of this approach. This was confirmed by the research conducted by the N8 Policing research partnership (Lotus et al, 2024) and in the report by O'Neill and McCarthy '(Re) Negotiating Police culture through partnership working' (O'Neill and McCarthy, 2014). Both highlighted the issue that some police officers have a sceptical attitude towards partnership working overall and a difficulty to accept the differing priorities and task focuses that working partners may have which the police may deem to be low priority issues. For example, whilst a police officer may think the main priority is to gather evidence, a partnering agency's focus may be to ensure there is support for the victim moving forward not related to the police's investigation. When these priorities conflict, it could result in a negative view of the police amongst the partnership agencies and so this highlights the importance of effectively managing these relationships and ensuring positive attitudes amongst all workforces.

Overall, partnership policing has a profoundly positive impact on the police's ability to positively engage and get data from ethnic minority communities that have historically refused to engage with the forces. This means that the police can carry out their role more effectively and can achieve better results for the individuals that they engage with. When combined with effective neighbourhood policing and the progression of equality and diversity in the police workforce, it is hoped that this approach will eventually change mindsets in the communities who have historically distrusted the police services and will mean the police can work effectively with others to support all individuals within the force area regardless of what community they belong to.

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

The House of Lords defines Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) as “*Criminal activity that is planned, coordinated and committed by people working individually, in groups, or as part of transnational networks*”. (House of Lords, 2020). It is estimated that Serious and organised crime annually costs the UK at least £47 billion and involves an estimated 59,000 people. (Home office, 2016). This essay will discuss the links between SOC and public protection issues, and the characteristics that make some people more vulnerable to exploitation.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) states that although crime overall has decreased, SOC now makes up a high proportion of crimes committed overall. (National Crime Agency, 2024). This highlights the need for it to be a top priority not only for the forces across the UK but also throughout government and society. This is evident from the ‘No place to hide: serious and organised crime strategy 2023 to 2028’ document which states how the government plans to tackle serious and organised crime and what support they will be giving to the police forces for them to prevent it. (Home Office, 2024).

Some police forces are required to deal with a lot more organised and serious crimes than others. One such force is Merseyside police who have for the last six years been graded as outstanding by HMICFRS. (Merseyside Police 2023). A big part of their success is their partnership approach and several interventions to try to highlight at risk individuals who may be susceptible to joining criminal gangs and working to prevent this.

In Merseyside one of the main issues is the sale of class A and B drugs. This then leads on to an increase in other areas of crime and other public protection issues. Merseyside saw an increase in the amount of gun violence which was highlighted by the chief constable when she discussed that ‘five offenders involved in serious organised crime killed members of their families with firearms on the streets of Merseyside.’ (Merseyside Police 2023).

However, she also highlighted that due to the efforts of the force the number of firearms discharged over the 1st of April-November had fallen by 64.5% down to 11 from 31 for the same period the previous year. (Merseyside Police 2023).

One tool used by SOC is violence to achieve their goals and prevent their victims from seeking justice. (Gonzales et al 2019). The use of violence by criminal organisations includes targeting family members of rival traffickers and other innocent civilians to “demoralising” other SOC groups, showing them that anyone associated with them, even if only literally “in passing”, is safe (Shirk & Wallman, 2015).

Whilst it is important to try and focus on stopping organised crime group activities, it is also important to try and protect those most at risk of exploitation by organised and serious crime groups. To do this effectively it is important to be able to ascertain what characteristics make an individual most vulnerable to these groups. In 2015, guidance was issued by the Strategic Centre for Organised Crime Office for Security and Counterterrorism. (HM Government, 2015)

In this guidance the key factors that can make an individual vulnerable to SOC. The guidance breaks this down into four key areas which include:

- Criminality – offending patterns and trends;

- Ability – specialist skills, access or professional positions;
- Networks – access to criminal associates through family, peer, or professional networks; and
- Identity – upbringing and lifestyle factors

(HM Government, 2015)

Using this, forces and their partnering agencies can then review those individuals in their specific force area most at risk and can use it to develop interventions which will hopefully reduce the number of individuals entering the world of serious and organised crime.

Young people are often more vulnerable to ‘grooming’ by SOC’s due to their unmet needs at home. They often have experienced domestic or sexual abuse, live in an area where gang activity takes place or have family members already involved in SOC’s. (NSPCC, 2024)

Children and young people may become involved in gangs for many reasons, including:

- peer pressure and wanting to fit in with their friends
- they feel respected and important
- they want to feel protected from other gangs, or bullies
- they want to make money, and are promised rewards
- they want to gain status, and feel powerful
- they’ve been excluded from school and don’t feel they have a future

This can be seen in Merseyside police where they have developed ‘Project Medusa’, which with a group of 60 partners aims to tackle county lines and its impact on vulnerable young people and children. Between April 2019 and 2023 the project has Safeguarded 1451 children and vulnerable adults. This highlights the large-scale impact that serious and organised crime groups have in this area and the sheer number of young people at risk of exploitation. (Merseyside Police 2023).

The force has also developed Operation Stonehaven which looks to use preventative engagement activities to connect to vulnerable young people. One such activity that has been particularly successful is the trainee Detective project which is a week-long programme designed to help young people make the right decisions in the future and educate them to recognise the signs of criminal exploitation. By preventing these young people from joining the crime groups it will have a direct impact on their operations in the force area and hopefully will reduce the amount of public protection issues as a result. (Merseyside Police 2023).

It is clear that organised crime has a phenomenal impact on communities and as a result can be clearly linked to several public protection issues from drug use to gun violence. It is however also clear that with effective policing and partnership working that the impact of these groups can be significantly reduced via early intervention with those most at risk of exploitation and can result in the effective safeguarding of thousands of individuals.

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Essay five: How effective is early intervention an effective means of preventing young people from offending or re-offending?

In England and Wales youth imprisonment is much higher than in other countries of a similar population such as France and Germany. Young persons who are involved in crime are far more likely to reoffend and it is estimated by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) that 'reoffending by children costs society around £1.5billion per year'. (Gov UK, 2023)

The New Economic Foundation, 2010 estimates that the cost to keep a young person in prison per annum is approximately £140,000. (Department of Education, 2010). This before considering the likelihood of individuals then going on to reoffend throughout their lives and the costs associated with this and therefore this highlights why investment in early intervention programmes is of such vital importance. For the year ending March 2021, those with no previous offences had a reoffending rate of 16.4%, compared to 63.8% for those who had committed 11 or more previous offences. (Gov UK, 2023)

In January 2024 the UK government published the "Youth Justice Statistics: 2022 – 2024" which states that the reoffending rate was 32.2 percent. (Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2024). This is an increase for the first time in 8 years increasing 0.9 percent from the 2021-2022 figures. This therefore has put an increased pressure on forces and their partnering agencies to try and tackle youth offending and trying to prevent them, via early intervention, from entering the criminal justice system. In this report I will consider several early intervention measures and how successful they are in tackling the increasing rates of youth offending in England and Wales.

One type of early intervention is the use of Youth Inclusion and support Panels (YISP). This is an early intervention programme, using a multi-agency approach, on a local council level, that focuses on with young people who are classed as 'high risk' and vulnerable for offending, exploitation, or antisocial behaviour. First piloted in 2003 YIPS is a voluntary service where the young person can join group training or shorter group session concerning specific topics. These group sessions tend to be face-to-face in schools or in the community dealing with a range of issues such as anger management, antisocial behaviour, and substance misuse. Referrals can come from several different agencies such as school, social services, health providers or the police. (Walker et al, 2007).

By engaging with young persons via the group sessions it is hoped that they will become less at risk of offending, exploitation, and antisocial behaviours. Since the programme was established, parents have regularly been surveyed and one such study conducted by the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne centre for family studies, found that both the child and parent were "mostly satisfied" with the support they had received. (Walker et al, 2007). Most believing that this early intervention had aided their child. Parents also stated that while their child was involved in the YISP programme they had not reoffended or been involved in any anti-social behaviour. This shows that YISPs not only prevent young people from participating in offending but also help to support young people with issues that if left untreated could make them more at risk of participating in criminal activities. It also clearly improves trust between the families of the young people and the police due to the support that parents have shown towards the scheme.

Another form of youth intervention would be via mentoring programmes. One such well known scheme can be seen In America, where they operate the Big Brother Big Sister program (BBBS). This is arguably the most well-known youth mentoring scheme and operates internationally and has well established roots due to it having run for over one hundred years. It has many Big

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Brothers, Big sisters UK has multiple locations and aims to give young people a more positive vision of themselves and aims to provide support to young people who may be facing adversity in their lives and help them to build trusting relationships with caring adults. Research conducted by the BBBS UK found that if a young person took part in the weekly mentoring sessions for a year there was a 50% reduction in school absenteeism, a 50% reduction in first time drug use and a 33% reduction in first time alcohol use. (Big Brothers Big Sisters UK Foundation, 2025).

This shows that by building positive relationships with young people and giving them mentors who they can trust and look up to, young people are far more likely to engage in positive behaviours and subsequently choose not to exhibit antisocial behaviours which would then make them at risk of engaging in criminal activities.

Several forces across the UK use early intervention programmes to tackle specific crimes which young persons are most at risk of participating in. One such campaign is by South Wales police and is called the 'not the one campaign'. (Violence Prevention Unit, 2024). This aims to tackle knife crime prevention by educating 11- to 16-year-olds on the consequences and dangers of carrying a knife. Since this campaign was established data from the Wales Violence Prevention Unit¹ stated that between October 2022 and September 2023 there had been a '53% decrease in young people (under 25 years) being admitted to hospital for a knife injury compared to the previous 12-month period'. (South Wales Police, 2024).

This demonstrates that early intervention programmes and campaigns can have a huge impact on young people and can educate young people about the dangers of crime. This in turn will reduce the burden on the UK taxpayer to deal with the aftermath of crimes committed and potential reoffending if they can be prevented from the start.

From reviewing the several different ways that forces and their partnering agencies can try to prevent youth offending and reoffending, overall, they prove to be a great success and investment in such schemes is of vital importance to tackle the rates of youth crime and reoffending rates currently seen across the UK. These schemes provide a great deal of support to thousands of young people and can have life changing impacts on individuals and their families.

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