

Critically analyse the concept of evidence-based policing and 'what works' in policing evaluating crime prevention theories and strategies and considering the options open to reduce re offending.

The concept of 'what works' in policing and what can be done to reduce reoffending rates is something that is always discussed in an aim to better manage offenders and lower the number of reoffenders. It is also something that every force and every individual that looks at crime prevention and what can be done to reduce reoffending, will have a different opinion or suggestion as to how to improve. Looking back and analysing what has been done is an important thing to do, not only as an individual but also as an organisation to ensure that you are reflecting on what has been done and what can be done to improve and develop moving forward. By looking at reoffending rates and what strategies are being used to get those results allow you to see how effective that method is as well as being able to take that approach and compare this to how other organisations work. Being able to identify offences and deal with incidents as they come in is a vital part of response policing to ensure that we are safeguarding victims and attempting to prevent further incidents from occurring. I believe that most of those who have a history of reoffending are those who started to commit crimes when they were younger even if it was minor offences or creating issues in an area. And although identifying offences and dealing with individuals is important, it is also important to look at what is being done further down the line when offenders are leaving custody or prison or diversion routes being used in an aim to prevent them reoffending and as a result, look at how effective this is as well as considering those involved in low level first offences whereby there is not much police involvement with and consider what can be done to prevent them from being involved in future incidents. In this essay I am going to be looking at different strategies that are being used by forces across

the UK when it comes to dealing with young offenders and what evidence-based approaches are being used or considered by forces and theorists as well as theories as to what could be done to reduce reoffending. I am going to focus on young offenders and what is being done in relation to trying to prevent them from reoffending throughout their life by looking at what crime prevention and strategies are being used to reduce the chances of them reoffending.

Evidence based policing is an important component of policing as it allows you to look at the bigger picture, when it comes to dealing with ongoing issues or trying to prevent anything further from occurring. This type of approach to policing looks to see if there are any long-term solutions that can be put in place to reduce the amount of reoffending by individuals.

Evidence based policing is defined as *“an approach that involves police officers and staff working with academics, partners and colleagues to create, review and use the best available evidence to inform and challenge policing policies, practices and decisions”*

(Wheller, 2019). This definition shows how policing is now trying to use a multi-agency approach to policing in order to try and tackle issues within the community in order to get the results that are wanted not just by the force but also those living in the local area.

Lawrence Sherman developed some of the original ideas in relation to evidence-based policing which have been developed into what we know it as today. He states that 50 years ago police had a very different approach to policing and this was mainly down to the fact that there was not previous evidence of results for them to base policing on. Because of this, police at the time could not say if a proactive response or a reactive response was the best at deterring crime and reducing offence from occurring (Sherman, 2013). Since then a lot in relation to how police deal with offenders at the time of the incident, as well as

throughout the criminal justice process has change as I believe that it has gone from more of a harsher punishment process to more of a process that is concerned over the individuals well-being and what can be done to help them to try and prevent them from reoffending. In 2012, Sherman believed that the approach taken by police had developed into what he called the triple-T approach, targeting, testing and tracking. He stated that although the basis of policing still remains, there is much more of an effort to look at the evidence and statistics available to us to see exactly what works in society and what can be done to improve offending rates. Over the years, policing has taken a much more evidence based approach as now there is a stronger focus on looking at what has been done previously, the statistics available from that, and looking at what police officers are doing in order to improve how policing works. This all leads to not only the organisation looking at what is being done and what can be improved upon force wide, but also for individuals to look and reflect upon what they are doing and how they have dealt with individuals or incidents, and what they could do to improve the service they are giving as well as how they can try and help to break the cycle of reoffending. And breaking the cycle is something that I believe is easier to achieve when you look at young offenders and those committing low level offences at a younger age, as i believe that the likelihood of being able to get them on a diversion route is higher compared to someone who has committed offences over a prolonged period of time.

When it comes to looking at the statistics and the evidence that has been collected, in order to properly evaluate what has happened and what the results show, there are different approaches that can be taken to analyse the findings. One way is by taking a systematic review of the evidence which looks at evidence from multiple sources and systematically

reviews them and provides a summary based on all the relevant information. (Stevens, 2001) This is done by using studies that can be easily reproduced to effectively analyse any results that are collected over a period of time, or in different locations. Another evidence collecting method is by carrying out randomised control trials which is a much more controlled method as it eliminates more external factors that can impact upon the findings. In this, participants are placed into either a control group or an experimental group in order to carry out and collect the findings from the study. This tends to give you quantitative study which can make it easier when comparing findings and looking for trends. (Bhide, Shah and Acharya, 2018). Both of these are valid methods that are used to collate evidence in relation to variety of things and is not specific to policing, but by different people using different techniques to analyse trends and patterns in policing can help to provide forces with different approaches than can be used to develop their policing strategy in an aim to reduce reoffending and improve the public's confidence in police.

The issue of youth offending is something that is evidently present in society and needs to be addressed in order to prevent those individuals from continuing to have a life of crime as those who offend whilst they are young have a high chance of reoffending at some point in their life. This is something that I feel is often overlooked in policing as by dealing with issues facing young offenders early on, the chances of preventing them from committing further offences is higher and therefore is helping to prevent further crime from occurring. When it comes to young offenders there are several outcomes that can be used in order to deal with the offence. For low level offences as those who are clearly remorseful for what they have done, and officer talking to them and the parents can be enough to prevent further offences, but there are occasions where other options need to be considered. This

can involve the individual being cautioned, custodial sentence or being sent to the youth offending service. When dealing with young offenders it is important to be aware of legislation that applies to young people such as the crime and disorder act (1998) which states that the aim of the youth justice system is to prevent young people from offending which is important as it shows that the government's aim is to prevent offending from a young age which will subsequently reduce offending rates. It also shows that they are concentrating on reducing the reoffending rates in young people as well as reducing the first-time entrants to the youth justice system by having other options open to them. Once a young person has reached the point in which police need to take action and the young person has involvement with the criminal justice system, the resettlement process that the individual will face along with any rehabilitation processes that need to be followed and is something that is believed to fail young people and not believed to be as effective as it could be. The Youth Justice Board (2005) has highlighted how the resettlement process is not an easy process and has significant challenges that face young people and how that can hinder a successful resettlement process and Harding (2006) discusses how the resettlement process requires 'multiple solutions' in order for the process to be successful. He states that it's not only support from agencies and services that are in place for individuals it is also important that the individual believes they can and wants to change their lives in order for them to have a better outlook on their life and have a long-term impact on reducing reoffending. Robinson and Raynor (2006) looked at more of what youth offending services do in regards to taking a behavioural style approach to dealing with an offender and trying to get them to change, whether this be by utilising anger management classes or tackling issues such as drug or alcohol dependencies. As well as looking at the importance of relationships the individual has with their families, support workers and any

other agencies that could benefit the individual. This is believed to give the individual a complete support network upon their release from the criminal justice system so that they will always have someone they can contact and have support from in a moment of crisis rather than reverting back to crime.

Another way to look at what can be done to tackle reoffending rates and prevent offences from occurring is by looking at an individual's background and how that can impact upon their life choices. This becomes extremely important when considering reoffending rates with young offenders as by looking at external factors that impact upon an individual's decisions in life and what can be done to help counteract that. By using this information, you can create an appropriate resettlement process for the individual in order to try and prevent them from falling back into the same lifestyle and continuing with committing crimes. It is believed that about 50% of youth offenders come from deprived homes (Gray, 2011) as well as about 25% having witnessed domestic abuse and another 25% living in local authority care (Jacobson et al, 2010). This means that they may not only be experiencing issues within their home life but may also be having relationship issues with their family as Case and Haines (2015) recognised that without an appropriate support system in place at home as well as other external factors in life, it may not be solely the individual's fault that they are in a situation that as a result of their upbringing has led them to be more likely to commit crime.

This means that it is important to take into consideration the wide range of external factors that can impact individuals and leads them to be in a situation in which they are unable to

get out of. With most youth offenders coming from disadvantaged homes that not only have economics issues but also personal issues, these are major factors that impact upon an individual's choices in life, and these are things that need to be addressed in order to reduce the likelihood of reoffending (Gray, 2011 and Goldson, 2005). With these factors not being acknowledged or address it means that there are high levels of reoffending rates within the first few weeks of release from a custodial sentence and up to 72.3% of young offenders reoffending within the first year (Goldson, 2005 and Goldson, 2015). with the high chance of individuals reoffending it is evident that the resettlement process and criminal justice process that in currently in place is not working at reducing or deterring people from committing crime. The ministry of justice (2012) has also highlighted that over 50% of young offenders often have issues in school whether this is by truanting or by being excluding, and this could be a crucial warning sign when it comes to preventing individuals from committing offences in the first place, as this could highlight external factors that could be impacting their lives and begin to create the cycle of offending and reoffending if it is not addressed.

When it comes to reducing the likelihood of individuals reoffending it is important to be able to recognise the factors that have led to the individuals offending in the first place so that more focus can be put into that. One factor that needs to be addressed and have a strategy to overcome is drug and alcohol issues that young people face. DPAS (2000) noted that when it came to looking at drug misuse, it appeared that in comparison there was a higher percentage of young offenders taking drugs compared to the general population and P. Gray (2011) mentioned how substance misuse is one of the main issues that needs to be addressed and tackled in order to prevent reoffending rates. Many believe that the best

way to tackle any drug or alcohol misuse issues is by using a multi-agency approach to the issue so that individual can get professional help, advice and guidance but this only works when the individual is willing to engage with the agency and be committed to changing.

Also, as previously mentioned, a big indicator into possible issues at home is evident in school and how they engage with the education system. It is believed that if an individual struggle at school or does not attend, and does not attain any qualifications they the likelihood of them being able to get a job becomes slimmer, but rather than this becoming highlighted whilst individuals are in school, this only becomes apparent when individuals become part of the criminal justice system, instead of it being addressed whilst they are in school. Neustatter (2002) believed in the importance of those who are on the older side of being a young offender getting the same support, advice and guidance as those who are younger than them. He recognised the importance of being able to give akl of those who are of school ag 15 hours of education a week whilst they were in custody in order to give them some form of education so upon their release they have a higher chance of being able to find work or continue with their education and reducing the chances of the reoffending.

Family conflict is a huge factor when it comes to having a support network and ensuring that individuals are not going to commit further offences. Family conflict is not something that is only considered to influence a young person's behaviour prior to them being involved in the criminal justice system, but is also something that can cause major issues upon release with impacting upon the individuals chances for desisting from crime. Case and Haines (2015) recognise the importance of young offenders having a support network in

place, not only from professionals and agencies but also from their family as they are the ones who are there to try and prevent the individual from committing offences before a professional is aware of the situation. Goldson (2005) also found that those young people who come from a deprived household who have drug or alcohol issues, financial issues or relationship issues are going to be the children who find themselves in the criminal justice system as they have not been given the guidance or have an example of how they should live their lives appropriately in society and will resort to living the life that they have been taught. This also leads on to the individuals having the appropriate accommodation to go to when they are released as this is something that can be overlooked and is vital in ensuring the individual is in a safe and secure address with the support that they need. This is a key point raised in the Children's Act (1989) as they believed that this is an issue that should be addressed when an individual enters custody rather than it being a last minute thing that is addressed prior to them being released.

These key factors are things that affect everyone's lives whether that be in a positive or negative way, everyone will have external factors that they have to deal with. Some people however, do not have the appropriate role models and guidance in life that ensures that they are living as it is accepted in society and are more likely to continue down the life of crime. In order to counteract this when individuals are coming out of the criminal justice system there are different approaches that are being taken across the United Kingdom as different police forces adopt ideas and strategies that they believe will give them the best results when looking to reduce reoffending rates. All the approaches that are taken have the same objective which is to attempt to have young people re enter into their community with a different outlook on life and prevent them from reoffending.

The standard resettlement process that is used for young offenders is when a multi-agency approach is used to address any issues that the individual could be facing. The basic process consists of education, training and employment services alongside offender behaviour programmes and other support services depending on what the individual needs. (Welsh Government Social Research, 2012) across youth offending institutes they have developed adapted the resettlement process in a way to create a resettlement support panel which is essentially a multi-agency panel that is there to provide support to individuals and ensuring that they spend their spare time wisely by developing life skills such as budgeting money and living independently. This is there to ensure that upon release, the individual has been given every opportunity to be able to live a better life once they are back in their community compared to when they went into custody. All youth offending institutes realise the importance of the individuals being able to continue with their education, find further training and potential job opportunities upon release. Neustatter (2002) discussed the importance of offender behaviour programmes as they give the individual the opportunity to develop life skills and allow the engagement of support services that they may not have been aware of.

When looking at and evaluating whether the standard resettlement process is effective in reducing reoffending rates it appears that the results are dependent on which region you are looking at. (Welsh Government Social Research, 2012) the resettlement support panel in Wales appears to be extremely effective in working with young offenders and ensuring that they have the appropriate support from multiple agencies to ensure a successful

resettlement. This approach as also not only provided support for the individual but further support has also been offered for the families to ensure they are in a position to provide a successful support network around the individual. The Youth Justice Board (2005) believe that by working on all the external factors as well as the families is key in ensuring the individuals have a successful resettlement and positive outlook on their future. As this approach does not appear to have been as effective across the rest of the country another thing that has been considered is releasing the individuals on a temporary licence so they can gradually get used to being back in society with all the support that they need. Beyond Youth Custody (2015) highlighted that there have been multiple issues when it comes to actually implementing the licenses due to the length of time it takes to put the requests in and have the restrictions put in place. But for the individuals who have been able to have this opportunity it has allowed them to successfully reintegrate into society and be able to build the vital connections that are needed with family and agencies prior to being released.

Another approach that is being used by some regions in the UK is the triage approach. This approach not only looks at attempting to reduce the amount of first time entrants into the criminal justice system but also looks at the young people who are in the high risk category and help them to tackle the issues that can lead to them offending, which is an example of taking those individuals who are committing low level offences and giving them the opportunity to take a restorative approach rather than the criminal justice route (Sherman and Strang, 2007). For an individual to participate in the process it is vital that the individual admits to their involvement in the incident and are showing remorse and a willingness to change. This involves a very similar multi-agency approach that is used with individuals

carrying out a custodial sentence. it involves multiple agencies working together to provide the individual support and guidance that they need in order to prevent them from re-entering the criminal justice system. The only difference being that rather than the individual participating in this whilst is custody, they engage with the agencies in the community. All this is to provide the individual with the vital support network that everyone needs.

The triage approach that is being used is having an overall positive impact upon individuals lives. It appears to be effective in reducing the reoffending rates as well as reducing the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system. Again, this is not something that is used across the country so is only having the positive effects on the forces that are implementing this strategy. By having the restorative approach, it is allowing the individual to have a voice throughout the process and gives them the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and actions and take control of their lives. With this also having the victim's involvement throughout the process, it also ensures that the victim gets some closure and the individual can take the opportunity to develop relationships with agencies and get the support they need.

There are multiple things that can impact upon how effective a strategy will be and the likelihood of it being implemented by a force. Whilst looking at the resettlement process that is used by many youth offending institutes, one of the main issues with it is the need of 'multiple solutions' (Harding, 2006) and that when an individual's presents themselves with multiple negative factors that are impacting on their lives, that all of these factors are

addressed and support is given to them as dealing with an individual's behavioural issues is just as important as dealing with their family support issues as without one there will not be a successful resettlement. Another factor that impacts upon reducing reoffending strategies is the lack of funds available for the forces in order to provide all individuals with the same level of support that is needed throughout the process. Even when looking at the triage approach there are still concerns with this as it may be that the individual has an ulterior motive behind taking part in the process as this will not show as a criminal conviction if they complete the requirements. All of this leads back to the evidence-based approach used by police in order to reduce reoffending rates as it requires you to look at the bigger picture when dealing with individuals to ensure that they are given every opportunity to provide themselves with a better life and desist from a life of crime.

It is evident that at this moment in time there is not a clear-cut answer as to how to stop crime and prevent reoffending but there are things that can be done in order to lower the chances but the responsibility for this ultimately sits with the individual and if they want to have a better quality of life. I have highlighted some of the many factors that face individuals and can contribute to individuals entering the cycle of crime and feeling as though they are unable to leave. This also highlights the issues that need to be addressed by the youth justice agencies, local councils and the government in relation to being able to identify issues earlier and recognise the early warning signs that can be addressed and ultimately prevent an individual's life from progressively getting worse. Although there is not currently a process in place that works perfectly, there are some programmes that appear to be more effective than others in resettling individuals back into society. The triage approach appears to have a more positive impact upon individuals and in helping them to

address any issues that they may have as well as providing them and their family with support which continues to stay in place for as long as they need. This appears to be a stark contrast to those individuals who receive custodial sentences as although they do have some support which there, there is a lack of communication between agencies and it appears as though a lot of things in relation to support post release is left the last minute resulting in them not getting the support and guidance that they probably need.

In order to effectively have a programme that will work for every individual is something that will be a challenge as each individual is unique and will require different levels of support. All of this needs to be considered and address when dealing with young offenders as the aim is that if you have been unable to prevent them from having involvement with the criminal justice system, then you do not want them to have any further contact. Each individual needs to be assessed and spoken to establish what external factors are causing them issues, what support they want and their commitment to making a change. If they are not willing to engage in this then being able to reduce reoffending rates is going to be a huge challenge.

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