

The style of community policing criminology essay



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Policing in England and Wales over the years has been increasingly challenging as it has been subjected to unprecedented levels of public scrutiny. Britain consists of many different areas and these areas are all homes to many different communities. Therefore, this essay shall explain how Community policing is a better style of policing for the community.

Before the Scarman report in 1981 there was a need to improve public confidence in policing as well as policing with community consent. By the year 2008 all police forces in England and Wales had adapted a form of policing style, which was about tackling and fighting crime more intelligently. This form of policing style is known as Community policing and consists of many factors such as Reassurance policing, Neighbourhood policing and Citizen Focused policing.

Reassurance policing seeks to improve public confidence in policing as well as trust in the police. The Reassurance Policing Programme in England and Wales conducted between 2003/04 and 2004/05 provided evidence that suggested that Reassurance policing had a positive impact on crime, fear of crime and public confidence in the police. In order to deliver Reassurance policing the Government introduced Community Support Officers to provide reassurance, to act as a vital support in the community and prevent and solve low-level crimes such as anti-social behaviour. Community Support Officers act as a link between the police and the community to build trust, confidence and a relationship between the police and community.

Neighbourhood policing on the other hand is a model of Community policing and is centered on three concepts dedicated resources, intelligence led and

joint action. An important aspect of Neighbourhood policing is dedicated resources these are police officers who are locally developed, visible, accessible, knowledgeable to the area and locally known by the community who are able to enforce law and order effectively. One might suggest that the police are an organisation that is led by intelligence; they need intelligence which can only be gathered from the community to solve and prevent crime. This benefits the police as they are able to target crime hotspots and bring offenders to justice more importantly this benefits the community as crime is reduced as well as the fear of crime. Neighbourhood policing emphasises the importance of joint action which is action that is taken by the community, police and partners who include the local authority, Social Services, education establishments, and many other partners who are to work together to resolve issues and concerns which have been addressed by the community.

Citizen focused policing can be best described as a cultural and operational change in the police but reflects the needs of the community in police decision-making and service. Citizen focused policing helps improve community experiences with the police either being one to one or by telephone. One might argue that Community policing is delivered through Neighbourhood Policing Teams who are signed to specific beats.

Neighbourhood Policing Teams consist of Inspectors, Sergeants, Police officers, Community Support Officers, Special Constables, partners and community volunteers.

As Community policing consists of Reassurance policing, Neighbourhood policing and Citizen focused policing. One could argue that Community

policing is an effective and a better style of policing for the community as it helps build secure, confident, safe and cohesive communities. Along with this, Community policing is a proactive and preventative mode of operation, which benefits the community as crime is prevented than older approaches such as mobile patrol, emergency response and reactive criminal investigation. Community policing stresses policing with and for the community rather than policing of the community. Community policing emphasizes that the police are to be visible, accessible, locally developed, locally known and should be dedicated to specific beats. As Community Surveys have showed that those police officers who were assigned to beat areas community attitudes were improved. Community policing illustrates that it is in the interest of the police and the community to control crime and disorder along with reducing the fear of crime. Community policing is a better style of policing for the community as it is focused upon community involvement and support as well as promotes community involvement in policing. For instance, the Handsworth Wood Neighbourhood Policing Team of the West Midlands Police have set up police surgeries as well as a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme to allow the community to actively get involved in policing. Therefore, revenge from offenders is harder or less likely as it is hard to trace the informant as community policing promotes police officers to chat with all local residents. Community policing identifies problems within the community and improves the quality of life of those residents who live within the community by solving these problems. Community policing allows the community to raise concerns about issues that really matter to them and furthermore allows the community to make these concerns policing priorities. For example, each Neighbourhood Policing Team of the West

Midlands Police has a dedicated website that lists out community priorities which the community has set. Furthermore, an example of this was illustrated in a Newspaper article the Highgate community in Birmingham raised concerns to the police relating to drug dealing taking place. The West Midlands Police investigated and acted upon the information which led them to carry out street raids which resulted in several arrests and whereby three individuals were charged with possession of class A drugs. The article further went on to say that local residents were happy to see that the police were taking action and dealing with their concerns.

One should not forget that Community policing helps build relationships between the community, police and partners as well as promotes them to work together to resolve issues and concerns. An example of this was illustrated by the Cleveland Police Service, according to their statistics crime had fallen by 16% since the launched of Community policing in their force area. Therefore, at the end of September 2009 there were 51, 283 crimes committed across the force which is 9, 814 fewer crimes than the previous 12 months. One may argue that this is a perfect example of partnership working between all parties and achieving goals and aims. The community has benefited as there are 9, 814 were not victims of crime. The Government for the year 2008 – 09 provided a £324 million pound fund for Neighbourhood Policing Teams in order to ensure that they were able to implement Community policing, the fund is 2. 7% higher than 2007 – 08. This may be an indication that Community policing is effective and better style of policing for the community.

Community policing is an effective style of policing as it stresses the importance of keeping the community informed of what exactly is being done in order to deal with their concerns. To support Neighbourhood Policing Teams of the West Midlands Police have web pages that list out what is being done and has been done in order to deal with the issues and concerns of the community. Therefore, to one extent this provides direct accountability at a local level and enables the community to hold to account those who are responsible for reducing crime in their area. However, this may conflict with existing policing infrastructures and systems for example representative accountability structures which lie with Police Authorities who are responsible for police services. The question lies as Community policing involves the community, police and partners who is responsible for reducing crime and disorder and who is to be held account? Furthermore, Community policing helps distinguish the difference between those members of community who are prolific offenders and those residents who commit low-level crimes such as anti social behaviour. One should not forget that Community policing provides reassurance and helps to reduce the fear of crime as well as helps build trust and confidence between the community and the police.

Community policing emphasises the use of discretion by police officers rather than the use of arrests. One might suggest that the concept behind this is that the community may be more willing to allow the police to enforce law and order. In other words, harsh punishments like arrests may have a negative impact. However, Community policing does not totally de-emphasises the use of arrests but should be used as a last resource, in some

cases like the Newspaper article the use of arrests may have more of a good impact. Community policing to one extent does not reform society but supports and promotes restoring order.

Community policing has many benefits for the community but three main elements which are improved the environment, economy and social factors. The environment is improved as environmental issues can be dealt by other partners. The economy is benefited as local service providers are able to work together with the community, partners and police to resolve issues such as shop lifting or anti social behaviour. Social factors such as parks, playing areas, education establishments are improved. The police also benefit from Community policing as there may be financial benefits as partners may contribute to costs to help tackle crime. For example, local businesses may pay for special services such as patrols in shopping centres in order to deal with anti – social behaviour.

However, on one hand Community policing offers political benefits and little reality of police practice. In other words, Community policing sounds and sells better in political terms to the community as it is community orientated. But in police practice Community policing may have little value although there is no evidence to suggest this. For instance, some police officers may have not been asked but have been told that they are part of Community policing. Furthermore, the Birmingham West and Central Local Policing Unit of the West Midlands Police consists of 11 Neighbourhood Policing Teams which in total has 149 Police Officers and 97 Police Community Support Officers. The areas which the Birmingham West and Central Local Policing Unit covers as geographically big, residential and disadvantaged areas. This

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could be an indication that the police may not prefer Community policing and that they are not equipped to multitask in their role. Police Officers who may wish to progress their career may find it difficult as Community policing may be seen as a less useful attribute. On the other hand, middle class communities may be more willing to work with the police than fractured and disadvantaged communities who may be unwilling to work with the police due to lack of trust and confidence. Moreover, even those who wish to work closely with the police may be deterred because of intimidation from other residents. The belief that a community exists may be a myth as communities are so diverse where does one start and where does one end.

Developments of Community policing has led the Government to develop guidance for Neighbourhood Policing Teams to engage with children and young people. The early Intervention and Prevention of Youth Crime and Anti – Social Behaviour has been developed to allow the police tackle and prevent crime and anti social behaviour through prevention. This benefits the community as children and young people who are the next generation are driven away from crime and anti- social behaviour, but instead are educated, helped and driven towards a goal to achieve in life.

Overall, Community policing is a better style of policing for the community as it a philosophy that allows the community to work together with the police and partners to solve problems, fear of crime, physical and social disorder. Community policing helps define problems, shapes and forms priorities, examines and identifies problems as well as promotes community involvement and joint action. Community policing involves teamwork and commitment from all parties and requires a genuine partnership between the

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community, the police, local authority and other partners. To one extent Community policing controls crime but also meets the needs of the community. Community policing provides a quality, efficient and a comprehensive police service that is customer focused and most of all, ensures that the police move away from a reacting policing approach but to a proactive approach where the concept is to prevent crime.