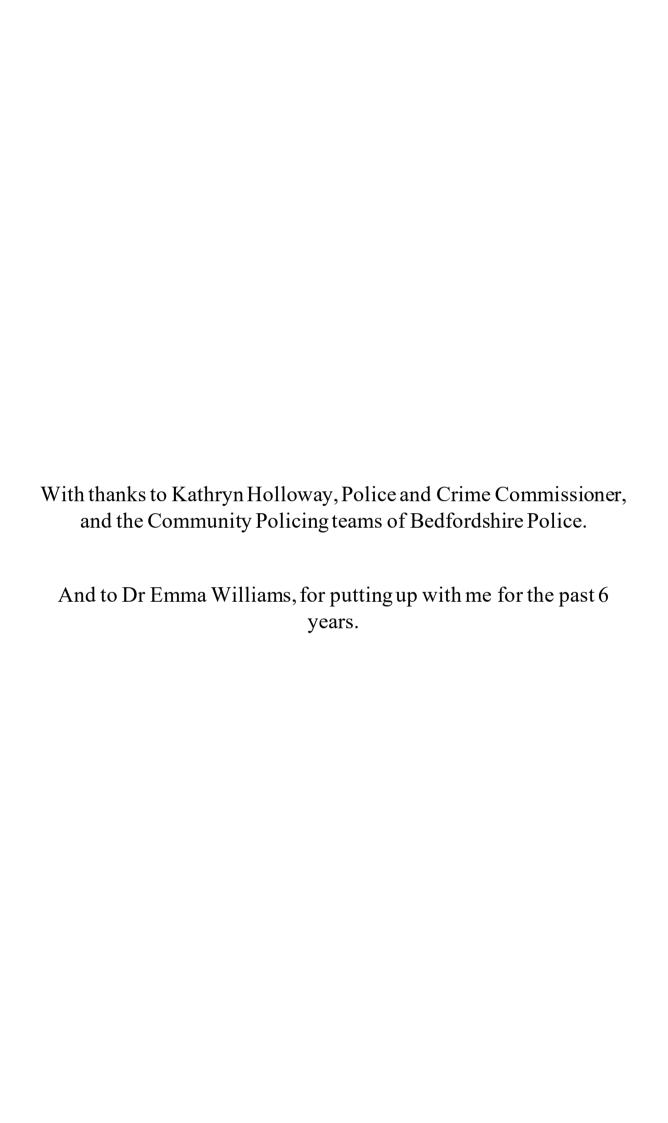# Can Community Policing be used to improve public perception of the Police and how has this been affected in times of austerity?

by

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Abstract

There have been many studies looking at the huge impact that austerity has had on community policing and how this is impacting on relationships between the police and the public. The majority of these studies have been conducted within large metropolitan police forces, this study aims to look at the effect that austerity has had on police – public relationships within one of the smallest police forces in the country.

Using both online surveys and face to face interviews the study looks at views of officers and staff across the ranks of community policing as to how much of a priority they think community policing is currently within the force with the views of those at a management level differing greatly from frontline officers and staff - while everyone agrees that it is an important part of modern day policing many of those on the front line do not see that they are treated as such.

The study looks at how community policing teams are attempting to rebuild relationships with local communities that have previously been damaged as a result of budget cuts and the barriers that the teams are facing as well as the use of a dedicated community cohesion team in order to provide the visible presence craved by local communities.

Lastly the study looks at how austerity has impacted on community policing, following a HMICFRS report deeming Bedfordshire as inadequate there had been a drive to populate community teams meaning that views on the effects of austerity may by distorted, officers and staff who had been part of community policing before budget cuts began see things very differently to the newer officers drafted in to the repair the damage caused with longer serving officers fearing that the damage could be beyond repair.

Table of contents.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Public sector cuts as a result of austerity need little introduction, in recent years the implications to the police service have become very clear, there is widespread political and public debate regarding what the police service across England and Wales can realistically deliver during a time of austerity (Millie and Bullock, 2012). Changes had to be made to modernise the police service and have been done so but these have not come without consequences to police legitimacy.

A community style of policing has been used to build relationships with the public in order to gain legitimacy (Sunshine and Tyler, 2013). Community policing spans back hundreds of years, throughout this time the focus of this style of policing has remained constant, community policing emphasises on building positive relationships with the community to build and maintain a sense of security and order (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005). In current times the focus remains the same but as time evolves so does the way in which policing is delivered, police forces within the United Kingdom are under greater pressure than ever to 'prove themselves' in performing an effective and efficient service despite ongoing cuts by the government.

Following concerns raised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue service (HMICFRS) in their 2016 Police effectiveness report in relation to concerns that forces across England and Wales had failed to 'redefine' neighbourhood policing in the context of not only budget cuts but changing demand in 2018 the College of Policing published their Neighbourhood policing guidelines in order to directly address these concerns and establish a way of effective delivery of a neighbourhood style of policing meeting the current demands on policing.

There has been a great deal of research in relation to community policing but tends to be carried out within large metropolitan forces, this study aims to look at the impact of community policing in today's current climate within a small, considered rural force.

I will firstly discuss the context of this research, Wooden and Rogers (2014) believed that in order for community policing to succeed it must have the support of both the community and the police alike in order to focus on building positive relationships between the two. In order for a police officer or a member of staff to have self-legitimacy they need to have a confidence in their own authority and the sense that they hold a purposeful position within society. Without self-legitimacy it would be impossible to create a sense of audience legitimacy, being that the public see the police as legitimate. Kronman (1983) found that in order to achieve this

not only do police officers dealing with the public on a daily basis need to be believable but those at a management level need to do the same in order for the officers themselves to demonstrate self-legitimacy and gain the confidence and trust of the communities.

As part of a study for the police foundation Higgins and Hales (2017) looked at local policing within Bedfordshire, they believed that across England and Wales local policing was becoming a more paramilitary style 'blue light' emergency service with austerity being the driving force behind this, with Bedfordshire being no exception. They found that in March 2015, prior to the publication of the 2018 Neighbourhood policing guidelines less than 11% of Bedfordshire's work force made up the community policing teams with there being 1 community officer for 5000 residents, the national average being 1 in 2300. These figures found that Bedfordshire were overly reliant of police staff rather than warranted officers. During the HMICFRS (2016) police effectiveness report Bedfordshire were labelled as inadequate, the main concern raised by Higgins (2017) was the inconsistency in Bedfordshire's approach to community policing. Higgins and Hales (2017) discussed how practically removing any neighbourhood policing function within Bedfordshire had significant consequences in the ability of the force to engage in effective working practices, as echoed by HMICFRS (2016). It was clear that a community style of policing should be considered a core role within policing rather than a nicety and that Bedfordshire's approach should not be considered an acceptable response to austerity.

This study will look further into these issues through the following research aims, this study aims to provide an understanding of how much of a priority community policing is within Bedfordshire police and how community policing can impact on police-community relations but also to gain an understanding of how austerity had impacted on these relationships within Bedfordshire.

In order to meet these research aims this study is made up of 7 chapters, the first being this introduction to outline the aims of this research. The second chapter is a literature review, this chapter examines the literature relevant to this study, it starts by looking at the history of community policing in recent times and how this has changed to meet new demands on the police service. I will then explore the effect that community policing can have on relationships with the community and what these relationships can mean followed by the difficulty in measuring the successes of community policing and the reasons why it is often overlooked, lastly I will look at how community policing has changed as a result of austerity and what this means for police-community relations.

Following the literature review is the methodology of the study. This chapter outlines the methodological

approach to the study, the chapter begins by discussing action research, a hands-on approach used for development in an organisational setting arising from issues and concerns from 'real world' problems (Denscombe, 2007). The research methods are then outlined, discussing the benefits of qualitative research, formulation of an online survey, sample selection, interview design, data collection and recording and analysis of these findings along with the consideration of ethical issues.

The findings chapters are then broken into 3 sections, the first addressing the first stated aim of this research looking at how much of a priority officers and staff believe community policing is. This chapter initially discusses community policing across England and Wales and the implementation of the College of Policing's 2018 Neighbourhood policing guidelines, this is followed by how much of a priority the officers and staff involved in this research feel community policing is within Bedfordshire and discusses any perceived differences on a national level. I will then explore the views of community policing as a specialism and the importance of training staff sufficiently to increase self-legitimacy, finally I will consider the measurement of successes within community policing.

The second findings chapter will explore how community policing delivered within Bedfordshire effects relationships with the communities served. It will look at the many barriers to building these positive relationships and the measures put in place to help rebuild these damaged relationships or try to maintain existing links. I will also discuss Bedfordshire's community cohesion team, put in place to monitor tensions and engage with hard to reach community groups, finally this chapter will look at effective communication with communities within Bedfordshire.

The third and final findings chapter will consider community policing in times of austerity. The first part will discuss whether those involved in community policing feel that issues are specific to Bedfordshire or if these are more of a nationwide issue. The second part of this chapter will look at how Bedfordshire are trying to replenish these depleted teams and repair the damage done by them being lost in the first place followed how Bedfordshire are working to regain the confidence and trust of their communities. This chapter will also look at managing unrealistic expectations on the community teams from both senior management and the public in the hope of improving the legitimacy of the police. This final chapter summarises the findings of the study in relation to the initially outlined research aims along with discussion regarding limitations of the study.

Chapter 2.

Literature review

Community policing is a wide and varied topic. I am going to look at the literature available in relation to public perception of the police and how community policing is used to build and maintain relationships with the diverse and ever-changing communities across the country and how this work effects the way in which the police are viewed by the public in the current climate.

Community policing in recent times.

Throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century profound social changes were taking place constituting changes in social order (Reiner, 2010). Interrelated changes socially, politically, technologically, culturally and economically caused problems in categorizing these new emerging societies (Hirst *et al*, 2009). Such changes brought about issues such as social exclusion, economic insecurity and perceived inequalities and as these grew so did the opportunities for crime to multiply creating profound implications for crime, order and policing (Loader & Sparks, 2007). Reiner (2007a) described the consequences for crime and order as a 'social earthquake'.

A community style of policing is not a new concept and spans many years. Throughout this time the focus of this style of policing has remained constant, community policing emphasises on building positive relationships with the community to build and maintain a sense of security and order (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005). In current times the focus remains the same but as time evolves so does the way in which policing is delivered. Police forces within the United Kingdom are under greater pressure than ever to 'prove themselves' in performing an effective and efficient service despite ongoing cuts by the government.

Throughout the 1970's and 80's there were a number of reforms of the Police service, each time a scandal came to light and opportunity for further 'soul searching' arose among police leaders and new policy initiatives were created (Reiner, 2010). One the most notable being the publication of the Scarman report, the investigation into the Brixton disorders, in the late 1980s, triggering re-orientation of the police across a wide range of aspects of policing (Reiner, 2007a).

Higgins and Hales (2017) highlighted these race riots of the 1980's as not only having a huge effect on public confidence but as leading to the introduction of a softer, more community-based style of policing but also saw this as a response to the changing, increasingly fragmented and plural societies that we are now required to

police and a return to more traditional policing styles.

Throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's crime rates continued to rise (British Crime Survey), in 1997 the New Labour government took office. Confidence in the countries police force was at an all-time low following successive crises for the British police, highly publicised scandals, the investigation and the subsequent publication of the McPherson report (1999) following the death of Stephen Lawrence as well as abuses of power, rising crime rates and the general legitimacy and ineffectiveness of the police (Fleming and McLaughlin, 2012). The newly elected New Labour government put an emphasis on repairing this damage and working to improve public confidence in the countries police force (Hough, 2012).

New Labours initial criminal justice policy was a departure from traditional Conservative or Labour policies detailing an intelligence led, problem solving approach with systematic analysis embodying the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Crime reduction programme as a radical approach to improve public safety (Brian, 2013). Policies were put in place to strengthen relationships between the police and the public. New Labours 'Third way' looked to incorporate enhanced public participation, crime reduction strategies and partnership and interagency working (Fleming and McLaughlin, 2012) in to the modern-day police service.

The new government were recognising the limitations of the police service working alone and moved towards a 'joined up thinking' approach with wider ranging policies rather than relying solely on criminal justice. (Reiner, 2010).

Johnson (2005) stated that Community policing lacked any coherent definition while Shearing *et al* (2003) described it as an umbrella term describing a 'broad family' of initiatives through which the police have sought to re-invent themselves.

Fielding and Innes (2006) discussed how they was no agreed definition of community policing and no clear guidelines on how this should be delivered but there have been many ideas as to how the best can be achieved from this. Fielding (2009) discussed how crime is only a small part of policing and how low level anti-social behaviour, mistrust between communities and bad police – public co-operation all need to be addressed. They described community policing as a 'kaleidoscope' with the picture changing depending on the perspective.

The 'Broken windows' imagery (Kelling, 1999) has shaped the role of community styles of policing that are used today. These concentrate on the role of maintenance and crime prevention rather than harder law enforcement whilst installing a more 'customer service culture' to the police service (Hough, 2012).

Wooff (2016) describes community roles such as reassurance policing and neighbourhood policing as the softer side of policing working with the persuasive roles of social control rather than harder enforcement styles of policing. Donnermeyer and Dekeseredy (2014) relate this style of policing to rural areas and describe this as negotiated order rather than enforcement. Savage (2007) describes community policing as orienting officers in the direction of the public rather than in police favour meaning that a lot of the time the public may favour this style of policing as it is to their benefit.

From Community to Neighbourhood.

As part of the police reform act (2002) Police community support officers (PCSOs) were introduced to the policing family as uniformed civilian staff with limited police powers to assist in the reduction of low-level crime and enhance public reassurance (Johnson, 2005). It was initially believed that deployment of PCSOs would mean that warranted officers could be released to deal with more serious issues. Due to rapid implementation and no data analysis the impact of PCSOs was not recognised, the roles previously undertaken by police officers were civilianised but not looked at any further to see if this change had been successful. It seemed to be that no one really had any idea as to what PCSOs were supposed to be doing, this was not to be addressed until 2004 (O'Neill, 2014).

Despite numerous failed attempts throughout the 80's and 90's (Fielding & Innes, 2006) community policing was successfully reinvented under the guise of neighbourhood policing, a locally responsive style of policing rather than a standardised response to community issues (Johnson, 2005). Neighbourhood policing gained renewed focus and significant funding from 2004 and by 2008 dedicated neighbourhood policing teams were in place (O'Neill, 2015). While crime rates were falling, lack of confidence in the police and 'quality of life' issues were rising (Herrington & Millie, 2006) and dedicated local teams were now in place to deal with these concerns.

Neighbourhood policing teams were described as:

'*Intelligence led, proactive, problem solving approach enabling them to focus on and tackle specific local issues. They will improve their local community by establishing and negotiating priorities for action and in identifying and implementing solutions. They will ensure a two-way flow of information with the community to build trust and co-operation to help them deal more effectively with crime and anti-social behaviour. Police and their partners providing useful and meaningful information on how a community is being policed will*

encourage and empower individuals to work with the police, feeding community intelligence into crime prevention, detection and reduction' (Home office, 2004a).

PCSOs became a vital resource in the provision of a visible police presence, not only being visible be able and willing to engage with the local communities more consistently than ever before (Paskell, 2007).

There was still some debate in relation to the role of a PCSO and in November 2004 the serious organised crime and police bill was published proposing new policing powers be given to PCSO's such as deterring begging, searching detained persons and directing traffic. PCSO's were being used effectively, for the first time in many areas, and due to a lack of research there was very little information on how increasing the limited powers would affect their ability to effectively engage with the community. It was believed that new powers may reduce the application of powers of persuasion and negotiation which were seen as a PCSO's most important tools (Crawford *et al*, 2004).

In 2008 the National police improvement agency (NPIA) conducted a review of PCSO's with subsequent reviews in 2009 and 2010, this was the first real piece of research in relation to the success of the role. Recommendations were made in relation to practices around tasking, management and consistency but the NPIA disbanded in 2013 and it is unknown how many of these recommendations were achieved (O'Neill, 2014).

I have already discussed how the imagery of 'Broken windows' has paved the way for this style of policing. Harcourt (2001) disproved the link to any serious offending but agreed that a localised community style of policing working towards regulating disorder promoted neighbourhood security, by improving social cohesion, disorder and to a lesser extent crime is reduced as the opportunities to allow it to happen lessen.

Due to changes in the plans in ways in which these communities are to be policed politicians and senior police officers found it easy to talk about building public confidence as a way to secure public co-operation as, in essence, neighbourhood policing is working to give the public what they want.

Bradford *et al* (2009) described reassurance policing as there to build public trust, to build better contacts within the community, to provide increased visibility and to improve communication with the public with the goal of increasing public trust in the police whilst decreasing fear of crime and improving quality of life within these communities (Fielding, 2005), dedicated neighbourhood teams would be in the position to facilitate this.

Lord Stevens (2013) spoke about the importance of increasing public participation in police work, Bullock and Leeney (2013) felt that the solutions to local problems were best found within the communities themselves and that by drawing back the state individuals or groups within these neighbourhoods will come forward and step into these roles. Higgins and Hales (2017) believe that over time, this style of policing, with increased public participation may help the public to see the police in a far more positive light and hopefully increase overall confidence in the police.

Police and Crime Commissioners.

In 2012, in an attempt to make the police more accountable to communities, Police and Crime commissioners (PCCs) were introduced to replace police authorities. PCC's are responsible for providing direct links between the police force that they were representing and the local residents. PCC's have been given significant power, they are involved in the appointment of chief officers, they are the primary budget holder for forces and work to develop local strategies (Loveday, 2013). Although there has been some scepticism amongst politicians and policing and criminal justice communities over the introduction of PCCs, these individuals are elected by the public to act as their link to the police but they have caused some confusion as to what they actually do. There is a lack of understanding as to what the responsibilities of the PCC are and where they sit in the policing landscape which has hampered the ability to hold PCCs to account (Murphy *et al*, 2016).

As well as the confusion surrounding the role of the PCC a further problem is the lack of interest from the public, in 2012 election turnouts were less than 15% which brings the legitimacy of the role into question with such a low percentage of the population expressing any interest. In the following election in 2016 the turnout was greater, unfortunately this was due to the election coinciding with local council elections rather than any greater interest although many of the successful candidates are now representative of political parties and have a raised public profile (Murphy *et al*, 2016).

Neighbourhood policing guidelines.

In 2018 The College of Policing published their Neighbourhood policing guidelines, in 2016 HMICFRS had raised concerns that local policing had been 'eroded' and that forces had failed to redefine neighbourhood policing in times of austerity, these guidelines set out to address this. The guidelines did not cover individual forces but were to act as a guide for fore leaders and PCC's to get the best out of their neighbourhood policing function.

The defining features of neighbourhood policing are described as

- Police officers, staff and volunteers accessible to, responsible for and accountable to communities.

- Community engagement that builds trust and develops a sophisticated understanding of community needs.

- Collaborative problem solving with communities supported by integrated working with private, public and voluntary sectors.

The college of policing describes neighbourhood policing as distinguished from other policing functions with an approach to connect our communities. It states that those involved in neighbourhood policing should work in proactive and preventative ways to:

- Protect local neighbourhoods or communities.

- Safeguard the vulnerable.

- Manage and divert offenders.

- Earn community confidence.

The guidelines cover the following areas, firstly in relation to the delivery of neighbourhood policing:

1. Engaging communities.

2. Solving problems.

3. Targeting activity.

Followed by guidance in relation to supporting a neighbourhood policing function:

4. Promoting the right culture.

5. Building analytical capability.

6. Developing officers, staff and volunteers.

And finally in relation to filling evidence gaps:

7. Developing and sharing learning.

A full breakdown of the guidelines can be found at college.police.uk but levels of investment into the guidelines were left for police leaders and PCCs to address but the guidelines stated that in order for neighbourhood policing to move forward and support the Policing vision 2025 senior leaders needed to ensure sufficient capability, capacity and continuity of resources in line with available funding, priorities and local needs.

Public confidence in the Police.

Police officers in designated community roles are a 'lynchpin' in building and repairing relationships within the community and developing social contracts but the police need to go beyond neighbourhood watch schemes or other police volunteers to penetrate the wider social networks within the local communities in order for this style of policing to build public confidence (Fisher and Ritchie, 2013).

Public confidence can be addressed as 'how good a job the police are doing' deemed by the communities that are served. Since the 1960s this has been in decline within England and Wales (Bradford *et al*, 2009) and is always at the heart of political agenda for any party. Public confidence is an indicator of how well the police are providing a service that is paid for by the public purse, the public treat good service as a given and will only react when things go wrong. Skogan (2006) described this as 'only counting when it goes against you'. A positive personal experience may be expected and may not actually improve the way in which an individual feels towards the police - negative experiences have a far greater impact (Fisher and Ritchie, 2013).

Police and community relations are dependent on trust, citizen participation can be enhanced along with attitudes towards compliance and confidence when directives or innovations look to involve citizens with the police (Fisher and Ritchie, 2013). The Police are there to defend community values and moral structures, the public feeling that their local community lacks cohesion, trust and informal social control is more influential in deciding confidence in policing than personal safety (Bradford *et al*, 2009). Skogan (2006) talks about procedural justice and how being treated fairly is far more important than final results, victims are far less outcome oriented but more influenced by how they are treated during the process is more important.

The understanding of the needs of a community should be based genuine assessment and engagement within the communities rather than a general assumption, so time needs to be spent within the community to decide what could benefit the members (Fielding, 2009). Consultations within these communities are valuable not only in determining views and opinions but in building frameworks for further consultation (Mitchell and Casey, 2007). Although neighbourhood policing teams are there, in part, to improve relationships with the community this is not always an easy task, Higgins and Hales (2017) conducted a study in Luton, a multicultural town in

Bedfordshire, policed by one of the smallest forces in the country. In Bedfordshire there has been a heavy investment into community cohesion within Luton but despite these investments and the time and effort of the police, other agencies the public are still reluctant to engage, this is mainly due to the nature of the communities being transient and low adhesion. Fisher and Ritchie (2015) state that there will need to be a culture change if police across the country are to move towards more consistent community engagement and that all officers should receive some sort of training in this.

Bradford *et al* (2009) talk about the importance of the police being visible, stating that low visibility means low public confidence. Skogan (2009) reported that individuals who had seen police officers patrolling their local area in the previous week were far more likely to report positively saying that the police were effective in controlling crime and keeping the local communities safe. Fielding (2009) discussed how efforts to make officers more visible may, at times backfire, 'action weeks' meaning that officers are sent to engage with local residents have caused concerns, with officers going door to door to speak to people caused upset with residents fearing that a police officer knocking on the door meant the death or injury of a loved one, on many occasions these officers were told to 'concentrate on catching criminals'.

Fleming and McLaughlin (2012) discussed public confidence agendas, concepts such as neighbourhood policing and reassurance policing to enhance feelings of safety and inspire confidence in the police. Public confidence agendas were introduced as part of the policing pledge, giving the public a 'right to know, right to challenge' in relation to what their local police are doing within their communities. Although such initiatives were put in place to improve public confidence this was not the case, each time the idea was re-launched it was described as having a 'cut and paste' feel testifying to the New Labour governments desperation to 'prove' that it was boosting confidence in the police. The credibility of the public confidence agenda initiative was severely damaged when the advertising standards agency concluded that the 'policing pledge' advertisements had cost the taxpayer £1.9 million and had been misleading as to what the public could expect. It was not made clear that these commitments applied only to neighbourhood officers and that not all police forces had signed up to the delivery of these commitments. Before long the scheme was tainted and the New Labour government was seen as deceiving the public (Fleming and McLaughlin, 2012).

The confidence agenda was abandoned in 2010 but budgets and officer numbers continued to reduce nationwide, although abandoned as a national performance measure since the implementation of Police and Crime commissioners in 2012 levels of public confidence have continued to remain a target across many forces (Morrel *et al*, 2020).

Public confidence within Bedfordshire.

In 2019 an online survey was conducted by HMICFRS to assess public perceptions of the police, it was found that 61% of respondents were satisfied with their local police with only 12% being dissatisfied. 74% of respondents stated that they had confidence in the police in an emergency but only 52% felt confident when requesting assistance for a non-emergency situation. 40% of respondents said that they would speak highly of the police while only 18% said that they would be critical and 58% of those taking part stated that they had seen no change in the service offered by the local police in the past year, 8% felt that this was worse but 22% felt that the service provided had improved.

Within Bedfordshire recording of public satisfaction is limited, victim satisfaction was previously monitored but was stopped by the office of the PCC as it was seen as too time consuming, there are plans in place to employ a 'text back' tool used by neighbouring forces but this is yet to be put in place.

Recording of domestic abuse victim satisfaction has also previously been recorded, this has been mandatory annual data collection completed by victim support but due to the coronavirus pandemic this has been stopped, as within most forces due to the heightened risk of contacting victims while a perpetrator may be at home.

Public confidence within Bedfordshire is measured solely through the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) although this is seen as not always providing up to date information hindering its usefulness. The table below shows results of the CSEW dated March 2019 for Bedfordshire:

Measure	Bedfordshire	MSG Average
Community understanding	60.8%	64.3%
Confidence	66.8%	72.6%
Fair treatment	68.7%	18.2%
Police deal with community priorities	46.5%	51.5%
Police do a good or excellent job	47.8%	54.8%
Police or council dealing with crime	48.8%	52.5%
Reliable	49.7%	54.6%
Respectful	88.4%	87.7%
Risk of crime (household)	17.2%	12.8%
Risk of crime (personal inc computer misuse or fraud)	15.3%	13.4%
Risk of all CSEW crime (personal inc computer misuse or fraud)	29%	24%

Comparing Bedfordshire to forces deemed as being in the most similar group (MSG) in March 2019

Bedfordshire was performing worse on average than the similar forces in all but 2 of these categories, the table below shows the data for the same questions asked 6 months later in September 2019:

Measure	Bedfordshire	MSG Average
Community understanding	66.9%	65.2%
Confidence	72%	73%
Fair treatment	72.9%	66.4%
Police deal with community priorities	51.6%	51.3%
Police do a good or excellent job	50.7%	53.9%
Police or council dealing with crime	56.1%	52.4%
Reliable	51%	54.8%
Respectful	90.4%	88%
Risk of crime (household)	12.7%	12.1%
Risk of crime (personal inc computer misuse or fraud)	11.6%	13.1%
Risk of all CSEW crime (personal inc computer misuse or fraud)	23%	23.3%

The results over the six-month period show that Bedfordshire are seen more favourably and far more in line with the forces within the MSG. Higgins (2017) discussed Bedfordshire as being 'inadequate' and described this as being due to multiple changes in direction and unsuccessful attempts to problem solve efficiently as well as trying to deliver services with a finite or limited number of resources. This improvement could be for a number of reasons including changes within community policing that I will discuss later on.

Measuring public opinion

Hough (2012) looked at the issues in measuring public opinion and how this data is captured, surveys used to capture this data are often quantitative and give very little scope into the reasoning behind the opinions given. Police fairness is not something that should be measured with such limited data, there are also issues with the meaning of the answers provided, for example the term 'quite good' in some areas may be very different to a 'quite good' in others meaning that the data collected is not precise. Perceptions of disorder can also be 'a mixed bag', incidents such as drunken behaviour or groups of youths can alter the way in which residents rate the local area and how the police are dealing with such incidents despite them not breaking any law (Bradford and Myhill, 2014).

Another issue with collecting data in this way is that the majority of the public have little or no contact with the police. 95% of the population are subject to normative compliance and no contact with the police unless they are a victim of a crime, the 5% of the population who have a history of non-compliance are the people that will have

regular contact with the police and are generally those that will be far more expressive of their views around the criminal justice system (Hough, 2012).

Awan *et al* (2019) discuss the importance race and ethnicity when measuring public satisfaction, individuals generally have the lowest opinions of the police when talking about public satisfaction, this could be down to personal experiences or historical opinions but this could be a concern when looking at public perception in a county as multicultural and diverse as Bedfordshire.

Holding the Police accountable.

A huge part of public confidence in the police is accountability, policing can only become accountable if it is conducted in the spirit of public service, moving beyond the consumerist approach to one which prioritises civic responsibility (Fisher and Ritchie, 2013). Bullock and Leeney (2013) believed that the best way to deliver accountability in policing is through responsive teams working at a local level which is ideally suited to community officers given the chance to work in such a way.

Murphy *et al* (2016) looked at how accountability helped to improve governance and democratic control, in order to demonstrate this accountability forces across the country were required to measure and publish a wide range of data as so the public can see exactly what they are getting for their money. This led to a trend across the UK's public services meaning that they are now 'probably the most performance related in the world' (Talbot, 2000).

Community policing is described as being like a democracy, everyone agrees that it is a good thing to do but the consensus extends very little further (Fielding, 2009), this is one of the many issues that is faced when it comes to community policing moving forward. As I have previously mentioned, the public services are amongst the most performance related in the world (Murphy *et al,* 2016) and although community-oriented work may produce results for crime prevention and building social cohesion despite best efforts by all involved this may seem invisible to performance management (Fielding, 1989). Kelling (1999) described community policing as being hampered by the tools used by the police to measure crime problems and police performance. Fielding and Innes (2006) stated that following years of research in the field of community policing the factors relating to the success of community policing, whether they be organisational, operational or personality based had very little use when it came to measurement and evaluation.

Modern day Community Policing.

Due to the fact that the successes of community policing are hard to translate into facts and figures allowing data to show the public what a good job the police are doing community policing rarely receives the support and the resources that it deserves, all too often it is made up of 'what is left, rather than what is needed' (Higgins and Hales, 2017). In current times delivery is increasingly becoming the sole responsibility of Police Community Support Officers or volunteers. Due to these failures in establishing effective means to measure activity in community policing there is a danger that policing circles may move away from this style of policing in favour of something that will provide measurable results (Fielding and Innes, 2006). This is already apparent in smaller forces with smaller budgets, Higgins and Hales discussed how within Bedfordshire community policing tasks are often over looked due to more time critical reactive tasks and that how. Generally in policing, community policing loses out to other business areas where demand is greater understood, Allsop (2013) spoke about cold case reviews, investigating serious crime that occurred years previously and may now cause no risk due to the impact that solving a murder or serious sexual offence would have on improving the perception of police effectiveness.

Hesketh *et al* (2013) talk about how policing in the United Kingdom is undergoing unprecedented change, decreasing numbers of officers across all forces are set against a background of increasing complex crime. Fisher and Ritchie (2015) discuss how police forces are constantly reviewing roles and functions to identify cost effective ways of delivering a policing function meeting the governments requirements of reducing crime. Her Majesties Inspectorate of the Constabulary (HMIC) have warned that the police's ability to prevent crime and reduce demand will be seriously undermined if neighbourhood policing teams are eroded but the core purpose of the police 'when somebody needs us in an emergency, we are in a position to go' means that community resources are continuously pulled back in to responding and PCSOs and volunteers are often used to support police work such as guarding scenes or collecting CCTV meaning that there is limited time for community work (Higgins and Hales, 2017). Another concern for the future of community policing in times of austerity are the efforts to restructure forces in order to provide effective policing while saving money. In 2013 possibly the biggest restructure in policing in the UK was 'Police Scotland' which amalgamated the countries police forces who now run centrally as one. Decisions in relation to the police force and how the country will be policed are made centrally which has caused huge problems in recent years and years of community focused work has been diluted. Community knowledge developed by officers who have worked closely with local people for years is at risk due to the changing roles of these officers who are now forced to act in roles very similar to an urban response officer in line with officers working in areas where 'harder policing' is required (Wooff, 2015). This 'crisis in localism' is removing the local accountability required to make community policing successful.

As well as variations on a wide scale it is vital the community policing acknowledges the variations within communities (Fielding, 2009), in the current climate it is unrealistic to assume that our communities have shared interests. In many communities not only are there competing interests but some of these may be illegal and cause further conflict within the community, treating these communities fairly may not always mean treating everyone the same. For years community policing has been faulted for assuming the existence of unitary and easily defined communities (Skylansky, 2005).

Community policing sets out to appeal to the public assuming that the police can engage and share the interests of the community meaning that they can work together to deliver common good, this may be a reassuring idea but is an unrealistic idea in the 21st century. This romantic image has been in decline for decades, social relationships based on residents sharing economic, ethnic and social characteristics are becoming a rarity, police need to also concentrate on the divisions and competing interests to deliver effective policing (Fielding, 2009).

Popularity of the police does not necessarily mean that the community are keen to work with the police to identify and resolve issues (Bullock and Leeney, 2013). Attempts to engage the local community in policing often fall flat, panel meetings, surgeries and parish council meetings, meant to engage communities are met with very low attendance levels with those in attendance described as 'professional meeting goers' meaning that the views of the wider community are not addressed.

This type of meeting is often viewed by community officers as a way of focussing officer attention on specific issues with a 'the more people complain the more resources are thrown at it attitude' which doesn't take everyone into account (Bullock and Leeney, 2013).

In conclusion, community policing is a topic that has been widely researched for a number of years. The majority of the studies conducted in this field are in agreement in relation to how effective community policing should be done and just how important this is. When done correctly community policing has the ability to engage with communities and build relationships with both community groups and individuals that can prove to be beneficial in understanding and therefore effectively policing the local areas to whom they are accountable.

Community policing is not without its issues, in current times of austerity the demands to fight complex crime and to meet performance targets set by the government are a priority. However, successful community policing may be this is not something that is easily measurable and will be overlooked in favour of other styles of policing that look far more impressive in performance figures, as Innes (2006) stated 'what gets measured gets

done' and unfortunately the work completed by community teams is not easily measurable and is far too often overlooked.

Despite there being a vast amount of work on community styles of policing the majority of this work is based on large police forces who, despite recent budget cuts and staff losses, are still able to perform the police function to a reasonable level. There has been very little work conducted in relation to the smaller police forces who have little other option than to rely on the local communities for their assistance in policing the local areas. I would like to look further into how community policing is being affected in these areas as a result of austerity and how this is affecting their relationships with the public.

Chapter 3.

Methodology

Action research

I have been a police officer within Bedfordshire for the past 12 years, although my current role is within learning and development previous roles meant that I had a close working relationship with the neighbourhood officers, or community officers as they are called within Bedfordshire. As a 'response' officer within Bedfordshire I would regularly seek advice from PCSO's in relation to local knowledge or identifying individuals to assist with investigations. This has always been a two-way relationship and police officers from response teams would often be asked for help by community teams which at the time were predominantly made up of PCSOs.

These practices were not something that I thought were out of the ordinary until I attended University as an undergraduate and became involved in conversations with officers from other forces on the topic. From speaking to officers from other forces it was clear that the relationships between these designated teams were very different within Bedfordshire. I could not understand why community officers were not utilised by members of other teams, in my experience they had always been useful in filling intelligence gaps when dealing with a variety of different situations.

Although I am not part of a community team this area of policing is something that has always interested me and was something that I wanted to research further.

As I have previously stated, the benefits of community policing are hard to measure and due to this quite often the successes are overlooked, qualitative research aims to get inside how life is experienced and why or how things matter by means of the researcher engaging with the world that they are researching in an investigative way (Mason, 2018), the research emphasizes on words rather than quantification of data collected (Bryman, 2008).

Epistemological approaches to research look at the origins, methods and limitations of human knowledge (Cresswell, 2009) and require accounts of how knowledge on any given topic can be obtained, this is the way I think that a topic such as community policing can best be addressed. As a serving police officer conducting a research project within the police service in order to look at improving specific areas of how policing works it is suggested that this type of study is a form of action, or participatory research where the researcher works

alongside the participants to generate knowledge and work towards creating effective change (Mason, 2018).

This style of research stems from Lewin (1946) who described action research as '*as spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact finding about the results of the action'*.

Active research is associated with a hands-on approach and is most often used for development within an organisational setting arising from issues and concerns coming from 'real world' activities (Denscombe, 2007), it is used not only to gain a better understanding of a situation but also to involve the individuals that it will affect in the diagnosis and solutions to the problems faced rather than imposing on them solutions to these pre-defined problems (Bryman, 2008).

There are many advantages to this type of research, the continuous cycle of development and change has great benefits within an organisation geared towards improving practice and resolving practical problems at a local level while contributing towards self-development for those involved (Denscombe, 2007).

There is no strict defined method with this type of research but more of a framework for the purpose informing and influencing practice (Elliot, 1991). This can be based around four phases – Planning, acting, analysing and reflecting (Stott *et al*, 2015). During the planning phase I identified the issues that I wanted to address, I identified research questions and developed a plan as to how I would investigate this. The acting phase of the research consisted of implementing the plan of how I would investigate, this consisted of an online survey followed by face to face interviews. Following the acting phase the data collected needed to be analysed, during the initial phase of the online survey further areas for investigation were identified and used as part of the interview phase. When data collection was concluded I moved to the reflection phase, evaluation and writing up my findings with the possibility of influencing change.

Although there are advantages of action research, mainly at an organisational level, there are some disadvantages, often towards the research project itself. Action research generally involves the researcher being directly involved the 'work site', this approach may affect representativeness of the findings. As well as this, settings for such research do not generally allow for variables to be manipulated or for controls to be put in place. It is unlikely that the researcher will be detached or impartial as there tends to be a vested interest as well as preconceived ideas as to where the research will lead, this lack of impartiality or bias can cause problems in achieving true results (McKay & Marshall, 2001).

Throughout this study, although areas for improvement may be highlighted, I am not in a position to influence

or implement change and so the research undertaken will be used to highlight areas that could be addressed but not necessarily for it to be acted upon. As Eden (1996) states '*real world limitations should not deter or prevent the action researcher from trying to achieve organisational change'.*

Using this style of research enabled me to engage with staff and officers within community policing roles to obtain honest opinions of how they believe community policing impacts on public perception and how this has been impacted by austerity.

Designing qualitative research

Prior to conducting this research project I considered how I intended on doing so, Bryman (2008) gives an outline of the main steps in conducting this type of research:

1. General research questions

2. Selection of relevant sites and subjects

3. Collection of relevant data

4. Interpretation of data

5. Conceptual and theoretical work
   5a. Tighter specification of research questions
   5b. Collection of further data

6. Writing up findings/conclusions

Using these guidelines I started by formulating a research question, a research question is the starting point of all research, like the foundations of a building, the type and the structure of any research will be dependant on the question itself (Kumar, 2005).

Before formulating a research question a number of things needed to be considered, initially this was my interest in the subject itself, I would be spending a great amount of time looking at this subject as so it needed to be something that I had an interest in, not only that I found to be of interest but something that I had an existing level of knowledge and understanding for me to successfully undertake this task. It is also important that the work that I would undertake had some relevance to my daily role, this in itself would provide me with access to, and the support of the sample group and the data that this would provide.

As part of my final year of my undergraduate degree I looked at how community policing could be used to improve public perception of the police and build relationships that, due to many different reasons had broken down, this is a subject that I enjoyed researching but at times found this frustrating. The majority of the work conducted on this subject has been done in large police forces with high numbers of resources where a community approach to policing is often seen as a nicety rather than necessity. For the past twelve years I have been a police officer in a small, considered rural police force with very limited resources where community policing is an essential part of daily policing, I have been lucky enough to work alongside small community teams with an invaluable knowledge and understanding of local communities which can have a positive impact on other areas of policing.

In my current role I have little involvement with community policing other than it being something that interests me. Through discussion with other students on my undergraduate degree course, who were all serving police officers or staff, I found that as an officer working within a small force my attitude towards community policing and community officers differed from those working within larger police forces which was something that I found interesting and was my initial reason behind wanting to conduct this research.

My research project looks further into community policing and I will aim to answer the following questions:

1. How much of a priority is community policing within Bedfordshire?

2. How can community policing be used to improve relationships with the community?

3. How has austerity impacted on police – community relations?

Sampling

Once a research question was formulated I began to consider the sample of respondents of which to source data from. Due to the nature of the study the sample group was made up of police officers or staff working within the community policing environment, this type of selection is known as purposive sampling (Kumar, 2005) and as a researcher I believed that this sample group would provide the greatest knowledge and information as well as providing the strongest opinions allowing the objectives of the study to be met. Due to the nature of the data source used I can assume that all participants should have been able to relate to, understand and provide an informed opinion in relation to research questions which is an important part of this area of research (Silverman, 2005).

I will discuss the methods of obtaining data in more depth later on but my initial research was in the form of an online survey. It is important that the sample group was chosen with the avoidance of bias whilst attaining maximum precision of the information collected (Kumar, 2005) in order to do this my sample group were all staff and officers working within a community policing role within Bedfordshire police. This sample group was made up of officers of all ranks and of varying experience both within the policing environment and within the community role itself. The sample group, from which a generalization would be made of the views of the wider population should match the wider population (Miller, 1991), this could be in relation to characteristics such as age, sex, education levels, in relation to this study ensuring that officers of varying rank and job role working within different communities will be addressed.

I am aware that this type of research will always provide 'non-respondents' within the sample group but by giving all staff within this environment the opportunity to take part I hope to have collected data representative of the wider population.

Following on from the completion of the survey a number of the sample group were asked to take part in face to face interviews giving a greater insight to their views. The sample size for the second part of the research was far smaller than the initial survey based research due to not only time constraints but willing volunteers.

There are no rules when it comes to sample size (Patton, 2002) and when using an online survey can provide access to a wide range of participants. The research area of community policing is not a sensitive subject and I could see no reason why individuals would not be willing to disclose information regarding their views. When looking at more sensitive subjects researchers may be faced with more shallow responses meaning that the sample group would have to be far larger to gather an appropriate level of data (Mason, 2018).

One of the greatest limitations in relation to the research is the numbers of participants available, this is down to the size of the force that I am part of. Bedfordshire police is a small police force, at the time of writing this was made up of 887 warranted police officers of inspector rank or below, 53 police community support officers and 587 members of police staff across the entire force.

My sample group came from officers specifically in designated community policing roles which restricted the numbers further. This sample group consisted of 81 police officers (11.4% of officers within the force), 51 police community support officers (96%), 15 police sergeants (11.6%) as well as 7 inspectors (15.6%) and 16 members of police staff (2.7%) totalling 170 individuals. In order to obtain details of the sample group I contacted Bedfordshire polices resource management unit, I was provided with a list of 130 names of persons

working with community policing, after taking into consideration individuals absent from work my sample group consisted of 122 people, due to the non-sensitive nature of the information requested I did not see that this would hinder my research.

Collection of relevant data

As with many qualitative research studies, I intend on using a mixed methods approach to research, it is often believed that a mixed methods approach needs to include both quantitative and qualitative research but this is not always the case in epistemological studies (Mason, 2018). Research techniques such as surveys, interviews and focus groups have been described by some as 'artificial research' with a lack of understanding as to why they should be used when there is already a wide range of data on a subject available (Silverman, 2005) but due to the nature of community policing it is very difficult to record results numerically and I therefore believe that using such means to record views and opinions is a viable way to work towards improvement.

Phase 1 – Survey based research

I initially used questionnaire based approach to my research, surveys generally provide a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions by studying a sample of the population (Silverman, 2005) with the researcher intent on generalising from the sample group to the wider population (Fowler, 2002).

Due to the nature of the work undertaken by community policing officers I used a combination of drop down boxes offering pre-set answers as well as a Likert scale in response to questions posed, this is a psychometric scale designed to measure attitudes by allowing participants to express levels of agreement or disagreement in response to a statement, these types of questioning made analysing the responses far simpler than allowing respondents free text which would have proved to be a long and arduous task. I gave respondents the option of writing in a free text box at the completion of the survey as I felt that this would provide views and opinions that could be further investigated during the latter part of my research and assisted in formulating interview questions.

I chose to develop an online survey rather than something that needed to be completed on paper or sent via email specifically to participants. An online survey can reach a large number of respondents both quickly and at a very low cost (Denscombe, 2007) encouraging those taking part to reveal information, thoughts and feelings in relation to the research questions. As I have already said, due to the sample group I could assume that those

invited to take part would have an understanding of the subject, the online survey was sent out to community policing teams as a link attached to an email explaining the research that I was conducting, anonymity through the online link was highlighted to obtain the most honest views possible without fear that this information would be passed back to leaders within the organisation. The email explained not only the online survey but the face to face interview part of the research and requested officers or staff wishing to volunteer to take part or wanting more information to email me directly. The emails were sent to 122 individuals in total, consideration was given to how these should be distributed, I considered a blanket email to the whole sample group to be too impersonal and did not believe that this would obtain the best results. Due to my current role within the Learning and Development team I have good working relationships with many of the officers and staff within the force and decided to email smaller groups of teams within community policing with a more personalised email as I felt this would increase participation.

As well as being easily accessible, an online survey has advantages when it comes to data coding, there are software packages available that can assist in numerical coding saving a large amount of time for the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2013) in many cases answers can be pre-coded and fit into a range of options to be looked at (Denscombe, 2007), I chose to use Qualtrics, a package that assisted in the creation and the circulation of the survey but also in collating the responses allowing me to compare answers from both drop down boxes and the Likert scale, I was also able to collate free text answers from the package as they were written verbatim onto a spreadsheet to assist in the composition of face to face interview questions.

Qualitative surveys are not as widely used as quantitative surveys but can generate a large amount of data and can appear far less daunting to all involved than a face to face interview (Toerien & Wilkinson, 2004) meaning that the sample size will tend to be a lot greater. Due to the nature of my research I used drop down boxes to establish details of the respondent such as length of service and job role before moving on to questions requiring individual views and opinions provided by a Likert scale suiting the differing levels of knowledge and experience amongst the sample group with the option of a free text box at the conclusion of the survey allowing for any unusual responses (Bryman, 2005).

There are many advantages to survey based research, it is very economical in terms of time, money and resources and completion of a survey is far easier to arrange than a face to face interview or a focus group as it can be done in often a short period of time as it suits the participant. All participants were posed with the same standardized questions leaving very little chance of the data gathered being contaminated through variation in the wording or the manner in which a question is asked (Denscombe, 2007), there is very little scope for data being affected by interpersonal factors which may occur during face to face interaction with respondents.

Survey research also comes with its disadvantages, there are often poor response rates to this type of research with emails or requests for assistance often ignored, as previously mentioned, in order to try to achieve higher response rates the survey, which will be circulated via email will be accompanied by a personalised email to small groups or teams requesting assistance. Surveys may also be returned incomplete or with poorly completed answers if the question is not fully understood (Braun & Clarke, 2013), to reduce this risk the survey was piloted to a small group of participants with the invitation to comment on the layout, clarity and wording of the questions. Prior to the final circulation of the survey adjustments were made based on this guidance. I ensured that the survey was easy to follow, gave clear instruction as to how participants should respond and did not look 'cramped'.

The number of questions was limited as to not overwhelm participants, the use of drop-down boxes and Likert scale responses prevented the survey from becoming too time consuming not only for the participants but for the researcher when analysing the results, I intended that the survey take no more than a few minutes to complete meaning that this is not an arduous task for respondents but also that this prevented being distracted part way through meaning incomplete surveys being returned although the free text box at the conclusion of the survey will give an opportunity to provide more detailed opinions should they wish to. During the survey phase of this research I felt that use of this type of questions would provide adequate data with attitudes being explored in greater depth during the interview phase of the research.

Further disadvantages of survey based research are that are that there are very few opportunities to check the truthfulness of the answers provided (Denscombe, 2007) with no solid grounds for challenging responses, there is a lack of flexibility to a survey and responses provided cannot be further probed or explained (Frith & Gleeson, 2008). In order to obtain the most honest views possible anonymity was highlighted within the accompanying email and an anonymous link used, no personal details were recorded as so participants felt less threatened and more likely to provide honest, open responses throughout (Bradburn *et al*, 2004).

Following an initial survey being piloted to a small group feedback was received and a number of small changes being made, a survey made up of 18 questions was circulated to the sample group, these questions are detailed below:

1. Job title?

2. Age?

3. Gender?

4. Ethnicity?

5. Time in organisation?

6. Time in current role?

7. Main function of your role?

8. In your opinion, what is the most important part of community policing?

9. How important are relationships with your local community?

10. How would you describe your personal relationships with the local community?

11. Does your personal relationship differ from those of the police in general?

12. How could these relationships be improved?

13. How often are you taken from your role to fulfil other policing duties?

14. How does this impact your role?

15. Since undertaking a community policing role have you seen a difference in the amount of time and/or resources put in to the community?

16. To what extent do you feel that current times of austerity have impacted on community policing?

17. Thinking back to question 8 and what you believe is important to community policing, to what extent do you believe austerity has impacted on this aspect of your role?

18. Do you have anything else relevant that you wish to add?

The online survey was circulated to 122 respondents, initially the survey link was 'live' for a period of 14 days but this was extended by a further 14 days due to the email being sent in December when a large proportion of staff would have taken leave. From the 122 emails sent 91 responses were received.

The respondents were made up of a group covering all aspects of community policing with 43 police officers, 31 police community support officers and then smaller numbers of individuals at senior management level, ASB co-ordinators, volunteers and crime reduction staff. 70% of respondents were male and 30% female and these covered a wide age range with 21% between 25 and 32 years and 31% between 33 and 40 years but ranging from 18 years to 57 years plus. The respondents also recorded varying levels of service with 5% having been employed for less than 12 months and 6% having more than 20 years service but covering everything in between.

I hope that by responses that varied across all roles within community policing and covering officers and staff at different points in their careers I would have obtained a generalisation from the sample group to the wider

population.

Analysis of data

Following collection of the data using a survey across my sample group I needed to start interpreting the information received, when using a qualitative method of data collection the interpretation is complex and time consuming hence the initial survey was kept brief and as easy as possible to manage, qualitative surveys can be data rich, providing a wide range of opinions and ideas but as a researcher there will be lots of to consider!

In order to gather my data I used Qualtrics, this software programme allowed me not only to formulate and circulate the survey online but to examine data obtained and compare responses to give me an understanding of how officers feel. This was the only analytical software used during the study, any further analysis of the data was completed manually.

The data obtained from the online survey was basic due to the nature of the questions asked. As soon as it was received I was able to start to 'code' the data that I had obtained, coding is the starting point of a qualitative data analysis. In order to 'code' the information received I was able to take each question and look at the answers provided, with the use of Qualtrics I was able to look at the responses to each question for all respondents but also compare responses from an individual to multiple questions.

When looking at the free text responses I read through the answers given to get an understanding of the views of that individual and then read it again considering and making notes as to whether responses could be something to address further during the interview phase of the research.

In order to store this information and to organise it as best as I can I considered the use the NVIVO software package, although coding of qualitative data is difficult I felt that for the simplicity of the information that I had obtained I did not require something this advanced and the results remained within the Qualtrics package enabling me to link questions from each respondent and compare them.

With consideration of Bryman (2008) once I had started to link the data theoretically, I was able to move onto the next phase of the research guidelines and start to look at collecting further data and tightening the specifications of my research questions.

Phase 2 - Interview based research

As previously stated, surveys or questionnaires are an easy way to generate a large amount of data but there is very limited scope to probe further into any of the answers provided (Frith & Gleeson, 2008), from the sample group participating in the online survey stage of the research I used a number of consenting participants to take part in a face to face interview to gain more information regarding the statements provided in response to survey questions, data gathered provided explanations in depth rather than a word or two (Denscombe, 2007).

Mason (2018) states that qualitative interviewing is used by researchers because ontological positioning suggests that views, knowledge, understanding, stories and experiences are a meaningful reality of what those researchers are trying to explore, qualitative interviewing is a means to generate data by interacting, talking to and listening to individuals generating a fairer and fuller representation of the interviewees perspectives (Cresswell, 2009). Qualitative interviewing is hard, active work (Kvale, 2014) but I believed this was the best way to obtain in depth data from individuals involved in this field of work.

Prior to the interviews taking place I needed to ensure that I could gain direct access to prospective interviewees, I had already made contact with leaders within community policing teams who were happy for me to engage with their teams, a request for further assistance was included within the email accompanying the online surveys to identify participants who were willing to engage further. In response to this request I initially received 16 responses volunteering to take part in the interview phase of the study, I sent a further email the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire requesting assistance, they were also willing to take part in an interview.

I chose to undertake one on one interviews with volunteers at times and dates suited to them. There are a number of reasons that I chose to undertake these interviews individually rather than as a group despite group interviews or focus groups provided a larger amount of data in a very similar amount of time. I met with participants individually to gather data based on their views rather than meeting several persons at once as I feel that this was the best way of achieving honest views from each participant rather than a strongly minded participant over shadowing other members of a group (Denscombe, 2007). Not only this but individual meetings were far easier to arrange than larger numbers of participants and easier, as a researcher to control.

At the start of each interview each person was given a participant information sheet explaining that they were being recorded during the interview (Appendix 1), the sheet explained that the data obtained would be anonymous, each participant was given a number rather than names being recorded for anonymity and also gave details of how they could withdraw from the study at any point. Each participant returned a signed copy of the

information sheet and consent form to myself and kept a second copy with contact details should they need to discuss anything at a later date.

In order to ensure anonymity no names were recorded, all participants were known to me and it was discussed that any accidental use of names would be edited out when transcribing the recordings. The only exception to this was the Police and Crime Commissioner, initially anonymity was discussed but following the interview it became very apparent that due to the responses provided that this would be difficult to maintain, this was discussed with the Police and Crime Commissioner and they were happy to be named, this was documented in a letter from the office of the Police and Crime Commisioner (Appendix 2).

I used a semi structured style of interview to gather this data, each participant was asked the same list of questions addressing the same list of issues but there was some flexibility allowing the interviewee to develop ideas and speak more in depth about the issues that matter more to them. While conducting these interviews I was mindful that each interviewee may require a different approach from the researcher (Oakley, 1981), the interview style was altered dependant on each individual situation but the question set remained the same aside from discussing individual opinions and ideas.

During the interview phase each interview was recorded both on a Dictaphone and on my mobile phone in case of issues with the Dictaphone, as well as recording notes were taken to assist should the recording equipment fail (Cresswell, 2009) whilst not disrupting the flow of the interview but also as a prompt to the researcher.

During each semi structured interview the following questions were asked:

1. What is your role?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been with Bedfordshire Police?
4. How long have you been in your current role?
5. In Bedfordshire, how much of a priority do you think community policing is?
6. How do you think community policing effects relationships with our local communities?
7. Do you think community policing in Bedfordshire differs from elsewhere in the country?
8. In relation to community policing is there anything Bedfordshire do particularly well or particularly badly?
9. How has community policing in Bedfordshire been effected by austerity?
10. Do you think austerity has effected relationships locally between the community and the police?
11. Do you think this differs nationally?

12. How could community policing in Bedfordshire be improved?

In addition to the questions above I was able to explore and clarify responses by asking additional questions, some participants had strong views and gave quick responses whereas other required more explanation.

Following each interview the session was transcribed, despite this being time consuming and at times difficult due to quality of the recordings, as a researcher I believe that this brought me 'closer to the data' as I listened to each interview numerous times (Denscombe, 2007).

The advantages of interviews to obtain data are that a great amount of in-depth information and valuable insight can be obtained, an interview gave interviewees an opportunity to expand on ideas and for me to check and validate the answers provided. Due to the time and location of interviews being suited to meet both parties the response rates are high meaning more data can be gathered, out of 16 volunteers I managed to conduct interviews with 14 as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Although the sample group was far smaller than the survey phase of the research this again covered all areas of community policing from the Police and Crime commissioner, senior management, Inspectors, sergeants on rural teams and those responsible for more urban teams, community cohesion, school liaison and officers and staff working within the local communities on a daily basis. The sample group again ranged in age and service from those very new in service to those with more than 20 years service.

There are a number of disadvantages when it comes to conducting research by interviews, the interviews themselves, transcription and the analysis of data is a time consuming, resource intensive process but allowed me to gain an in-depth knowledge of the information.

Once transcribed, a very simple coding process was used with the data obtained from the interviews, each response was looked at individually and I attempted to categorise the answers provided. When using qualitative data there is no standard response and so data can be difficult, I considered the use of a software program in order to collate these results but chose to do this myself by hand, a software program may have made categorising responses and linking them far simpler but I was more comfortable doing this by hand and linking answers myself by putting together responses on similar topics and comparing them.

For each question, or groups of similar questions I read through the transcript and highlighted responses or parts

of responses. I would write the answers or part answers provided by each participant on to a sheet of paper as so they were all together. This way I was able to compare individual answers to each question simply without having to scroll through each interview transcript. Although this way of analysing data may have been more time consuming than the use of a software programme I felt that I got to know the data far more than I otherwise would have.

There can also be issues with researcher – participant relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2013), face to face interviews mean that the anonymity of a survey has gone and may cause some inhibitions by participants. Through the initial participant information sheet, as well as prior to the commencement of the interview I highlighted anonymity and explained that any recordings will be coded in the report. Another limitation is the size of the police force that this study was conducted within, due to the small numbers of both officers and staff, as well as my current role meaning that I am known to most of the force may have caused a problem. Garton & Copeland (2010) talk about 'acquaintance interviews' and how these may cause ethical issues when gathering data but also that if there is already an existing relationship between parties responses may not be taken seriously, opinions expressed may just be what the interviewee believes the researcher wants to hear (McLeod, 1994).

Although interviews will provide a large amount of valuable data in the form of views and opinions provided by participants there is a risk that the significance of these may be lost when these extracts are used during the reporting stage as they may be taken out of context (Denscombe, 2007) and there may be a risk that as both parties have a key understanding of the topic, opinions or views that are not new may be glossed over meaning information may not be feasible when it comes to the report writing phase (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Due to both the advantages and disadvantages of both research by questionnaire and by individual interviews a mixed methods approach was used, the initial survey enabled me to obtain a wide range of data that would not have been possible through interview alone followed by interviews to allow me to look further in-depth into some of these responses. Whereas the sample size for the questionnaire will be as large as possible, the sample size during the interview phase is limited due to time and resources (Patton, 2002), Gough & Connor (2006) state that between 15 and 30 interviews is common, initially I thought that I may struggle to conduct 15 interviews but did not struggle to find volunteers.

Writing up findings and conclusions

The final part, and possibly the most difficult of this research was the writing up of the results and findings of

my research, a vital part of writing up this is that the research questions and the structure of what I intend to do are clear from the outset (Bryman, 2008) and that the findings were in line with my original research aims.

When writing about research surrounding human experiences and encounters, we use experimental arguments, when using experimental arguments both the data gathered as well as existing theory are used throughout to support the arguments presented. While writing up my findings I tried the literature that I have already looked at in the earlier stages of my research as well as the data that I had obtained during both the survey phase and the interview phase of my research persuasively to convince readers that the arguments that I was trying to put across were credible and plausible. In order to ensure credibility of my work I will looked back at what I had done throughout, I had outlined how I intend to undertake this research from the outset and have been transparent as any adjustments that were made when conducting the study in order for it to run smoothly and fairly and the reasoning behind any changes that had been made.

Walcott (1990) stated that when conducting qualitative research 'the major problem we face is not to get data, but to get rid of it' and it was important that I remembered this, qualitative data, as I had previously said, produces a large amount of data, I needed to ensure that the data that I chose to report was relevant to the original research questions. Although difficult to do, I ensured that data collected that was not relevant was not reported, this ensured that the thread of any argument put across was not lost and that the findings made sense.

Throughout the write up of this research I returned to and considered the original literature and theoretical ideas that shaped the research in order to ensure that research questions are answers to the best of my ability.

Findings

Chapter 4

How much of a priority is Community Policing?

This chapter will explore how much of a priority Community policing is within Bedfordshire and the potential factors affecting this. This chapter is presented in four parts, the first section will look at the importance of community policing across England and Wales in recent years. The second part will explore how much of a priority community policing is within Bedfordshire as discussed by officers and staff at all levels working within community teams locally. I will then explore how the teams within Bedfordshire believe they differ, if at all, to community teams across the rest of the country followed by how officers and staff locally believe that the role of those working within community policing teams could become more specialised.

Community policing nationally

HMICFRS Police effectiveness report (2016) highlighted concerns as to the ability of the police to continue to prevent crime should neighbourhood policing teams continue to erode as they had been despite this style of policing not being what is described as the 'core purpose of policing'. There were concerns that forces across the country had failed to 'redefine' community policing in the context of recent budget cuts despite previously being described as being one of the first countries to have a modernised professional police force at the forefront of community policing (Choi and Lee, 2016).

In October 2018 The College of Policing published their Neighbourhood Policing guidelines in response to these concerns to focus on establishing priorities to reduce crime and fear of crime and to improve public confidence. In the foreword of these guidelines DCC Gavin Stephens, the NPCC lead for Neighbourhood policing, describes Neighbourhood policing as an 'essential element of modern-day policing'. He discusses the Policing Vision 2025 describing how the links between the public and the police are the bedrock of British policing and how the Neighbourhood policing guidelines (2018) were published in direct support of this.

In the foreword to HMICFRS Police effectiveness report (2016) DCC Gavin Stephens states that the implementation of these guidelines, put in place as demand on the police service escalates while resources continue to decrease, must be supported not only operationally but politically. it has been greatly recognised that since the 1960's public confidence in the police has been in decline and continues to move in this direction, this

has been at the heart of political agenda for a long time (Bradford *et al,* 2009). These guidelines were set out to ensure that the Police forces across England and Wales will have sufficient capacity, capability and continuity of resources to carry out their roles effectively in line with sufficient funding and agreed priorities enabling positive relationships with our communities.

How much of a priority is community policing in Bedfordshire?

As I have discussed, the College of Policing have put into place measures to ensure that a community style of policing is given sufficient support to enable priorities to be met on a national level but this is not specific to any individual police force. This next section will discuss how officers and staff working within community teams in Bedfordshire feel that this area of policing is prioritised locally. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire police described community policing as:

'*The most valuable type of policing, everything else on that rests on that, in terms of counter*

terrorism it's all very well investing bells and whistles into counter terror … if you don't have an end

to end process, with community policing, intelligence, really knowing who your communities are,

what's going on, the issues, the views and how you can influence those it's no good having the

investment alone at the top (10)'.

This is in line with Higgins and Hales (2017) who describe community policing as getting '*the bigger picture of what's going on within the local communities',* this research found that the majority of those spoken to agreed with the Police and crime commissioner. As part of the online survey respondents were asked how important community relationships were, 67% of those responding believed that these were extremely important with the remaining 33% describing community relationships as very important.

Police and Crime Commissioners, elected into post by the public are described by Loveday (2013) as being there to serve to inform the public and put pressure on the police directing attention towards local policing problems. Herbert (2011) states that this role will bring police fully to account. During interview the Police and crime commissioner discusses investment into our community policing teams and how they have secured a special policing grant to facilitate this and therefore increase the resources available to our community policing teams across the force in order to improve the service provided to the public:

'*I have insisted that that money cannot be used to fund inflationary pressures … it was very*

clearly my view that, if people are having to put their hands in their pockets at a difficult time to pay for policing on top of the other increases in council tax, they must be given something that is palatable and its absolutely true to say that every community that I speak to …. they all say the same thing, they all want to have more engagement Bedfordshire police and what they mean by that is engagement with community officers involved in their neighbourhood (10)'.

When asked what was the most important part of community policing 19% of respondents believed that this was community engagement ranking higher than anything else but closely following by visibility and problem solving both with 17%.

The police and crime commissioner expressed how they believed that community policing was a true priority because of the need to repopulate the staffing levels to get it back to what it previously had been, as Bullock and Leeney (2013) state, community policing should be there to provide 'friendly faces' and to give the public a name that they can hold responsible which it seems, is the direction that the Police and Crime Commissioner is trying to move towards.

The views of the Police and Crime commissioner were supported by a senior officer who when asked about how much of a priority community policing was said:

'*A growing priority, especially within the force exec and the PCC, over the past few years with austerity, particularly post 2012, there was a big step back from community policing, it was really the first thing to go, around 2016 the strategic direction of the force changed and there was a real identified need that we need to put prevention back into the heart of what we do and as a result we started to build back up our local community teams, now if you look at its prominence in the force executive and the strategic direction of the force I would say that it probably ranks as one of the highest in terms of investment and growth that we've got alongside vulnerability and public perception (15)'.*

This research highlighted that the views of the Police and crime commissioner and the senior management team were not shared by long serving officers in community roles, when asked how much of a priority community policing was within Bedfordshire, an officer said:

'*I don't think it is to be honest, if you look at the current force control strategy that's looking at potential threat risk harm, and rightfully so, I think community policing can feed into a lot of that so if*

we look at, for example, CSE, grooming etc., gangs, serious youth violence there are a lot of cross cutting themes that community policing can deal with and I think community policing has a role to play with each of those but as a general rule I don't see the community policing own any of these and because of that they probably aren't treated as being a priority as such .... I would say that if everything is a priority then nothing is a priority (07)'

The online survey posed the question How often are you taken away from your role to fulfil other duties? 35% of respondents stated that they were frequently required to undertake other duties with a further 18% saying this happened often with 63% of all respondents saying that these incidents impact on their role. A police officer spoke about this:

'If there is a warrant that needs executing be that a drugs factory or through intelligence that has been developed it's the community officers that are put into that, if you are looking at a specific operational requirement generally those officers are taken from community policing although community policing has its own aims and objectives and problem solving with local communities ... you find, quite often that those priorities are put aside, even if it's just in the short term but this is done continuously (07)'.

The expectation that the community teams should undertake all of the extra duties to assist where other departments fall short, or the duties not allocated specifically there is a danger that the successful work done by community policing teams would be diluted, it will not have the impact that it could do if treated as a priority. During the research a number of the longer serving officers working across all areas of community policing expressed the same opinion. Despite the force executives saying that community policing is a priority that it was not treated as such for a variety of different reasons, a senior officer discussed this:

'It's seen with regards to force responsibility in the delivery of policing as being very important but a choice was made due to financial responsibility to withdraw it and concentrate on other areas, we will and have had to maintain a degree of community policing but without the numbers to support it, it's made quite challenging, the COP have guidance in relation to the core roles but that's very difficult, one of the challenges is that it's very different to what we did 10 years ago and its different to the expectations of the partners and the community, they remain with what we used to do not what we can structurally do now, its seen as important but we don't fully resource it (10)'.

When asked whether there had been a change in the amount of time and resources put into community policing online responses were fairly even with 11% thinking that time and resources were much higher than they had previously seen. 26% stated that there had been a slight increase while 32% thought that there had been no change. 19% felt that this was slightly lower and 12% thinking that they were much lower than they had previously seen. During the interview phase of the study the views of the longer serving officers tended to differ from those who had less service. When asked how much of a priority community policing was an officer with three years service replied:

'*There's been a big change, it's quite a priority, that's quite evident, they want numbers there (03).'*

The view of this officer echoed those of each of the officers spoken to with less than 5 years with the organisation. This could be affected by the service that they had seen delivered to local communities during their time in the role. Longer serving officers had often witnessed how community policing had been done prior to austerity whereas the newer officers had joined at a time when community policing had been completely stripped of resources and very little was being done. Resources are being put back into community roles and although the newer officers are seeing this as an increase in staffing and a drive towards community policing the longer serving officers are comparing this style of delivery to how community policing was done prior to austerity hitting. Fielding (2009) described community policing as a kaleidoscope, with the picture changing depending on the perspective. An officer spoke about this detailing how the demands on community policing teams from senior management were unrealistic but maybe not intentionally so:

'*from a strategic management point of view too people that have been promoted to take on these*
roles have probably misunderstood what the pressures are, what the current police force are dealing
with and the expectation from hierarchy are so unrealistic as they haven't been a PC as it is now,
either on response or in community, but their expectations are completely unrealistic (13)'.

Not only differences in opinion between the senior management and those working under them but the unrealistic expectations of how community policing should be delivered in today's current climate will have an effect on the legitimacy of the community policing teams, not only internally but in the eyes of the community also. Trinker (2016) described legitimacy as being the belief that the police generally respected the bounds of their authority, the officers working within a community team need to have self-legitimacy. Bottoms and Tankebe (2013) discussed self-legitimacy describing this as a belief in what they are doing. If the demands placed on a team are unrealistic, which a number of those spoken to believed was the case, and they are unable to complete their role, and to work towards effectively solving problems as they feel that they should then the

self-legitimacy of a team or an individual officer could be undermined.

Kronman (1983) stated that self-legitimacy was fundamental in cultivating and sustaining audience legitimacy meaning that officers need to have a belief in their ability to effectively carry out their role in order for the public to have confidence and trust in them as they do so. Tankebe (2019) found officers with greater belief in the effectiveness of the organisation for which were worked displayed greater self-legitimacy and therefore encouraged positive relationships with communities, especially those communities where relationships with the police may be strained. Wolfe and Nix (2016) found that self-legitimacy was associated with an increased willingness for officers to go out and positively engage with communities. Bradford and Quinton (2014) found that self-legitimacy was a prediction of an officer's commitments to procedural justice and treating suspects fairly, all qualities in a community officer that can assist in building positive relationships with the community and therefore increasing the public's confidence in the police. Across all areas of community policing those interviewed believed that the role and the expectations of them were unrealistic, an officer said:

'I think it's misunderstood to what is achievable with the amount of people that we have up here, the problem with community policing, in its definition, is that it's too wide, with it comes to many priorities and too many functions .... I still think that to this day we don't really know what this means, also you can see why it's a priority, if you took a community *policing model and implemented it properly, you could do a lot with it (13)'.*

As Johnson (2005) stated, community policing had been '*lacking any coherent definition',* this still appears to be the case.

Wooden & Rogers (2014) found that in order for community policing to succeed it needs to have not only the support of the public but support from the officers responsible for undertaking this. When officers working within these teams do not really know what they should be doing they cannot have a belief and therefore self-legitimacy in their role which will therefore effect the ability gain legitimacy from the public. When discussing self-legitimacy of officers and staff working in community policing roles we need to consider organisational commitment. It is rare that officers working in community roles are in such a position for reasons such as pay or status, known as continuance commitment (Lambert *et al*, 2013) but because of loyalty to the role and pride in the job that they do known as affective commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1991).

Many of the officers interviewed did not feel that they were valued by the organisation within community roles which would have an impact on their belief in the job that they do but may also affect their commitment to the

organisation over time. An officer based at Luton airport discussed the way in which community officers are treated at times:

'Community policing is a top priority but it's hard to believe that when you see the constant abstraction of officers, we actually get them up here, we have them backfilling us during Brexit, that's a prime example, yes we get response as well but we have community officers, what does that say to that officer, or those teams, 'your role isn't important you need to go to the airport' – it just sends out the wrong message (13)'.

Pelfrey (2004) found that job satisfaction was strongly associated with endorsement of innovative ideas within policing and not giving staff the time and ability to perform their role effectively will have a negative impact on job satisfaction. Not feeling valued or believing that they are being treated fairly by the organisation will impact on an officer's self-legitimacy and therefore their ability to gain legitimacy from the public.

This lack of self-legitimacy is not highlighting fault of the individual officers but the lack of understanding of what should be expected from the community policing teams. Fielding and Innes (2006) discussed, there are no clear guidelines on how community policing should be delivered, to address this issue The College of Policing published the Neighbourhood policing guidelines (2018) and state that these guidelines should be implemented but these are not specific to any individual force and differing resource levels have not been taken into consideration meaning that again, expectations of officers within community teams may exceed what they have the capacity to achieve.

How does community policing differ in Bedfordshire?

Higgins (2018) completed a report for the Police foundation titled Neighbourhood policing: A police force typology, he looked at the allocation of resources within each force into neighbourhood policing and the makeup of these teams, the report was described as 'a framework for understanding the range of strategies adopted in response to changing resource, demand and political context'. At the time the Police foundation report was published Bedfordshire had been branded inadequate during a HMIC effectiveness report in 2016, Higgins describes Bedfordshire's approach to community policing as '*volatile*' and describes them as '*changing course on several occasions*'. A senior officer spoke about the inconsistency in the force response:

'When we have an inspection coming the profile gets dramatically increased, understanding the

allocation of scarce resources to threat, harm and risk, but the logistical sensitivities of it, so it's often spoken about but we don't have the capacity to do it and the expectations made of the team are well beyond what we can do (11)'

This approach to community policing which regularly redirected officers and staff in their daily role could have left them in a position of feeling undervalued or that they were ineffective in what they were trying to achieve which could have a huge effect on their sense of self-legitimacy (Tankebe, 2019) and therefore how they are perceived by the community. Higgins (2018) suggested two possible reasons behind what he described as 'multiple changes of direction' the first being strategic indecision from those in responsible for community policing, in line with the Police foundation report. This research, in agreement with Higgins (2018), highlighted concerns from a number of those interviewed in relation to the consistency of community policing roles within Bedfordshire. When asked the question 'How much of a priority do you think community policing is?' a community support officer replied:

'I think it seems to go in waves, it goes up and down, we inject a huge amount into community policing and then other things come from above and we're told we need to be doing this so we remove it, we lose it and the public are the first to say 'where's our policing gone?' so then we think, oh maybe we need to go back to how things were, when you have been in 5 maybe 10 years you see how things change, we go from doing community policing really well, it's a priority, to coming away from it to needing to go back to it, its inconsistent (02)'.

Higgins (2018) found that this inconsistent approach to community policing was far less effective to other forces, Durham constabulary, for example, had maintained a consistent approach in their delivery of community policing throughout the study for The Police Foundation and had received an outstanding rating as a result of the HMIC effectiveness inspection (2016) compared to the inadequate rating received by Bedfordshire. There were concerns over the way in which this inconsistent approach to community policing would affect not only the self-legitimacy of the staff working within these roles due to constant inconsistencies and changes in direction therefore being made to believe what they were doing was ineffective but the ability to build relationships with the public which I will discuss in chapter 2, a police officer discussed the issues that they had faced:

'If you have two inspectors in different places with different ideas and they don't talk to each other they will each have different ideas and the teams will enact that .... the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, I think South officers have a very different experience than the North and as we should all be singing from the same hymn sheet that's wrong (04)'.

Bradford *et al* (2009) discussed how the police not being consistent or visible can affect public confidence, this will be discussed further in chapter 2 but these inconsistencies can alter not only how the public feel about the police but how the officers themselves feel about the role that they are being asked to do. If they do not have a strong belief in the role that they are being asked to undertake then this will affect the service that they provide to the public.

The second reason suggested by Higgins (2018) for the multiple changes of direction were the '*unsuccessful attempts to solve the problem of efficiently delivering effective policing services with finite and limited resources'*, this will be discussed further in chapter 3.

A senior officer spoke about why they thought community policing within Bedfordshire differed from other forces in the country:

'I kind of use 2 inter changeable names for it, in Beds we intentionally call it community policing because our communities aren't just divided by the geographical area that they are in, our communities are divided by race, religion, sexuality, ability, gender, we're defined very differently which is why I describe it as community policing rather than neighbourhood policing, so there for example is just a slightly different interpretation of how we do things differently (15)'.

When asked online 18% of respondents stated that problem solving was the most important part of the community policing role. A senior officer went on to consider the work of Higgins (2018) and how they expected community teams to be working:

'We have gone back to, taking on Andy's research looking at the more effective teams doing this are the ones that are perhaps a bit smaller but red circled to actually just do that guideline work, that specific engagement, that specific problem solving, that's what they do, they don't broaden that scope, (15)'.

This is something that was spoken about by a number of those interviewed, Bedfordshire is made up of many communities on far more than a geographical level meaning that the style of community policing delivered has to suit a wide variety of communities. In order for community policing to succeed the police need to have the support of these communities, not only the support but the residents need to feel that they are in partnership with the police (Wooden & Rogers, 2014). A community support officer spoke about issues in achieving this when

dealing wide and varied communities:

'We have got such a diverse area that we cover, you know, a lot of our area is rural but then we have the likes of Luton and Bedford, so it does differ but because it has to, we can't have as many community teams as some more rural areas because we have such big urban areas with such big problems but then we can be put in the same box as somewhere like London that is mainly urban, because we do have rural areas so we have a mix of both and we have to work with both (01)'.

Policing these wide and varied communities were part of the reason that Bedfordshire is one of only several forces in the country to have a dedicated community cohesion team. An officer explains why this dedicated team was put in place:

'In Beds we had a few incidents, in 2013 we had a death in police custody, at that stage we did not have particularly good, or far reaching relationships with our communities … due to austerity levels we had had resources diverted away from community policing leading to a loss of relationships with the local community, we found that to be a testing time, tensions were really high and there was a real 'us and them' feeling between us and the community (07)'.

As part of the online survey when asked how relationships with the public could be improved 40% of respondents thought greater resourcing would give the greatest improvement. Aside from this increased visibility (18%), increased understanding between the police and the communities of what is expected of both sides (15%) and community engagement (9%) all scored relatively highly and make up part of this dedicated cohesion role. Despite this drive to improve relationships when asked how they saw their personal relationships with the local community 88% of online respondents believed that their own community relationships were either good or very good but 63% felt that individual relationships differed from those of the police in general.

A police officer spoke about how the community cohesion role was helping to improve things such as visibility and engagement in order to restore relationships:

'I'm monitoring tensions and how we can work with those communities to mitigate any issues as a result, that's kind of my role but I can only do that by having strong links with the communities so I do a lot of networking and partnership working, as I said, cups of tea and handshakes, but fostering those relationships, some of the stuff that probably ten years ago core community policing would have done, I've been saying for the past few years when introducing myself is that my job is to give

people the impression that they have a 'bobby on the beat' even though that's not the case (07)'.

Topping & Byrne (2016) looked at the Police service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the struggles in policing very different and distinct communities. Although Bedfordshire do not have that specific split between two communities as is dealt with by the PSNI they do police wide and varied community divides, they discuss how each close knit community has what they describe as '*community grapevines*' which community officers need to infiltrate should they want to gain an understanding of what happens, and what is needed within those individual groups. This is essentially the role of the community cohesion team. Topping & Byrne (2016) also discuss how the style of policing delivered to each of these communities must alter in accordance with public interest as community policing should be done to promote public good, of which individual communities will have a different view of, they found that alienation of any individual group may lead to any control of these individual groups being pushed beyond what the state can do, as previously stated in order for community policing to work effectively the support of not only the officers involved but the community itself is required. The community cohesion team within Bedfordshire is a small team of officers and staff with the complex role of trying to build positive relationships with wide and varied community groups, although the team have the ability to do this with a small number of it would be unrealistic to build relationships with each of the community groups which despite the team trying to repair relationships, may cause issues with community groups who did not feel that the police had taken to time to reach out to them as they have done with other groups.

A specialist role?

As previously mentioned, self-legitimacy is fundamental in creating audience legitimacy (Kronman, 1983), not only do officers and staff have to be believable in order to gain the trust and respect of the public but within the police service senior leadership teams need to show those working below them that they are valued, that they have a believe in what they are doing and treat them as such in order for them to effectively undertake their daily roles, this research found that many of those spoken to highlighted that the training provided to community officers did not indicate that community policing was being treated as a 'priority', an officer said:

'I would like community policing to be recognised as a specialism in its own right, the only way for
that to happen would be firstly to offer training in what a community police officer actually does ....
they would be provided with enhanced knowledge, ability and capability but you would get buy in
from those officers (07)'.

A lack of training for community officers has been an ongoing issue for some time, Cosgrove and Ramshaw

(2015) looked at how, despite the importance of engagement and communication in community roles training for community officers were mitigated by the position in the hierarchy of the organisation for which they worked, while armed units, dogs and traffic were given specialist training neighbourhood officers received only marginal attention. It has also been said that while training is offered to police officers, learning and development teams are often unable or unwilling to accommodate training for PCSOs (Trotman and Thomas, 2016) despite them taking on a large proportion of the community policing work. A senior officer said:

"Officers are not necessarily capable of doing the job, it's not seen as a specialist role, training and understanding, truthfully, we pay lip service to it ....They need bespoke training, they need a tenure, the role needs to be attractive, it's not helped by the financing of the role itself, bearing in mind if you were a response officer you would be getting a shift allowance and a 4 on 4 off shift pattern, my team don't get that understandably but it makes it difficult to attract people into the role, new officers coming in want the sexy part of response policing (11)'.

All police officers and staff are a valuable resource and should be treated as such (Qureshi et al, 2017), allowing community officers to undertake a formal qualification could improve internal legitimacy and hopefully make the role more attractive to officers, if an officer is given some sort of reward and made to feel as if they are being treated fairly. In comparison to other specialist teams they are more likely to show increased self-legitimacy which will impact on public relations. In recent years. Due to not only budget cuts but a change in the issues that the police deal with on a daily basis a lot of the skills that were vital in the role of community policing have been lost, an officer said:

'As a force we have become so reactive we've forgotten about the preventative work that we used to be able to do, preventative work went out years ago with the cuts, I think the PCs now just don't know how to prevent crime and how we engage with the public, we not used to engaging unless that person has asked for help, if you ask someone now to go and have a coffee and a chat with someone they wouldn't have a clue what to do, they've never done it before, all the skills we had ten years ago we've lost, it's the nature of policing and what we've been asked to do (13)'.

This change in the style of policing could be down to, not only the service provided in the years of austerity which will be discussed further in chapter 3 but due to a new generation of police officers who may be far more comfortable using technology to liaise with a person rather than sitting down face to face to resolve an issue.

Without a commitment to improve training for community roles it is hard to see how it could legitimately be

said that community policing is seen as a priority not only from those working within such roles but from those working within other departments.

Measuring success

Innes (2006) said '*what gets measured gets done*' and at times this is a downfall of community policing, a police officer spoke about this:

'*with community policing you don't see an impact, with a crime report or a child abuse case you see a victim and an outcome, with community policing its very much about prevention so you may not see an effect for 10 years but if you don't do it there's no legacy, there's no prevention going on so things can only get worse*'.

Talbot (2000) describes public services in the United Kingdom as 'probably the most performance related in the world', this could have a huge impact on the self-legitimacy of officers working in community roles. If officers believe that what they are doing has no impact they will lose faith in what they do. As Higgins and Hales (2017) discussed it is very hard to translate community policing into facts and figures providing data to show what a good job the police are doing, due to this community policing rarely receives the support or the resources that it deserves. A senior officer spoke of how he was working to change this in the hope of improving views of community policing:

'*We can evaluate, we do, on a regular basis audit the quality of problem solving through continuous improvement that allows us to say that the quality of something is good, bad or indifferent and the reason why, the understanding of the criteria as to how we benchmark our problem solving, this is being done with dip sampling and auditing of the activities and how alternative powers are being used, are we moving away from arrests or high visibility but how do they make best use of other legislation or tools in analysing, how well are they analysing problems and making sure at the end of the problem solving cycles a really good evaluation of what they did, how they did it and whether it made a difference (15)*'.

Hopefully if these measures are put in to place and the measurement of the successes of community policing becomes more recognisable this will contribute to community policing becoming far more recognised as a true priority from a ground level upwards.

Summary

Throughout the initial findings chapter it became clear that everyone agrees that community policing is an important. Senior officers and the Police and Crime Commissioner spoke about the importance of community policing and the need to repopulate community policing roles where teams had previously been diminished, Community policing was described as 'Ranking highest in terms of direction and growth'. Although officers and staff of lower ranks believed that this is an important role they did not feel that it was being treated as such. 53% of those taking part in the online survey felt that they were regularly taken away from the role to accommodate other policing functions and that this impacted on their ability to do their job effectively. When discussing how community policing was prioritised and resourcing available responses varied greatly, this was down to the length of service and the previous experience of community policing. Those who had worked in community roles prior to austerity made very different comparisons to those who had first experienced community policing after it had been depleted.

Everybody spoken to thought that community policing had changed over recent years but again, views tended to differ depending not only on length of service but on role within the organisation. Police officers has different views to those working at a management level and felt that not only management but the community had unrealistic expectations of how much community teams could actually do. Many participants felt that too much is expected from our community teams and that these unrealistic expectations may lead to officers and staff feeling undervalued and therefore impact on the legitimacy of the role.

Officers felt that further training would not only improve the service provided to the public but that it would make officers and staff in these roles feel valued and improve the legitimacy of community roles. Senior officers stated that community officers are designated to those roles and not to be taken away but front-line staff felt differently about this.

When asked how community policing differs in Bedfordshire compared with other forces lower ranking officers generally could not compare, those at a management level or those involved with other forces were able to discuss this further. Bedfordshire is a very diverse county, a member of senior management discussed how Bedfordshire use community policing rather than the term neighbourhood as the communities are not always geographical. Senior officers described the approach to community policing over recent years as 'inconsistent' in line with Higgins (2017) report comparing forces nationwide but also internally discussing the differences between areas within the force meaning that the level of service in some communities was far different to others. The community cohesion team within Bedfordshire was discussed and the relationships that they are continuing

to build with communities, this is something that will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Improving relationships with the public?

Chapter 4 explored the views of individuals working within community roles on how important they believed community policing to be. This is not only in the eyes of the officers undertaking these roles but from an organisational point of view which I found impacted on the self-legitimacy of those working within these roles and therefore relationships with the public. The first part of this chapter will explore how those working within community policing roles believe that their role impacts on our relationships with the public. The second part will look at barriers to positive relationships with communities with the last part looking at what can be done to try to repair damage done previously or to break down existing barriers when engaging with communities. The previous chapter discussed legitimacy within the police service, this chapter will look at external legitimacy and how this affects relationships between the communities and the police.

My online research posed the question 'How important are relationships with your local community?', in response to this question 65% of respondents believed that these were 'extremely important' with a further 35% selecting the 'very important' option. Nobody taking part in the survey selected any other option. This chapter will look further in to these views.

How does community policing effect relationships with the public?

The first part of this chapter will address how officers and staff working in community roles believe that the work that they do affects the relationships between the police and the public. When asked this question a senior police officer said:

'Where it's done well and we have good proactive engagement and preventative approaches, problem solving, the community teams really like having recognisable, reachable individuals to build these relationships with…. in pockets we do it very well, for me the brand of community policing that we've got bridges that between identifying community needs, improving quality of life, anti-social behaviour issues and addressing those but also into some really hard edge proactive policing in protection of some of our most vulnerable individuals and some of our most harmful offenders in some of the most 'harmed' areas (15)'.

Myhill & Bradford (2013) discussed how a commitment to a style of policing as detailed above is a good indication of positive public attitudes towards the police. Brown & Fyfe (2010) spoke about how successful

delivery of community policing was about listening to the needs and concerns of individuals rather than solely focussing on crime to reconnect with the public and deal with what is important to them. When speaking to those in charge of community policing they indicated that this was the direction that community policing within Bedfordshire was heading but this is not without its issues. When asked how they believed community policing effected relationships the police and crime commissioner stated:

'It's absolutely critical, obviously it's the conduit, it's the face of Bedfordshire police, good and bad, if
people have an excellent experience with an officer who is courteous and helpful and gets results
they will never forget that, and in their view Bedfordshire police is unequalled…. this is why it is such
a hefty responsibility to be the face of Bedfordshire police for every one of our community officers….
a positive response is what people expect, the reality is that I have to spell out to every community
the void between the style of policing that they anticipate will be provided and that which can
actually be provided, not just in Bedfordshire but within any force in England and Wales in 2019 (10)'.

Unrealistic expectations

Chapter 4 discussed the unrealistic expectations put on community teams by management teams meaning that often these teams were not able to fulfil the role or part of a role as they should. As the police and crime commissioner states this is also a problem with the expectations from the community as to what the police do. Chapter 6 will discuss austerity in greater detail but the public often have unrealistic expectations of what the police can actually do whether that be due to limited resources or the way in which the approach to policing has changed due to changing crime trends meaning that issues previously dealt with are no longer a priority. This can impact on how the public view the police, especially within forces with extremely limited resources. Bullock (2013) believed that community policing was an important mechanism in legitimising relationships between the police and the community but this research found that many of the individuals spoken to, in agreement with the PCC, found a large part of the day was spent on service recovery often attending emergency calls that were unattended earlier in the day. A PCSO said:

'Relationships are faulty between the public and the police and in my particular role I spend a lot of
time telling the public that we do care and that they are not wasting our time and that everything is
looked at (02)'.

The community expects the police to act in a manner which is not only fair but effective in accordance with shared interests (Jackson *et al,*2013) not feeling valued or being let down by the police could have a huge

impact on this. The public do not want to put trust in to an untrustworthy organisation, community members are capable of making intelligent decisions and forming negative attitudes of the police if treated in a way that they deem not acceptable. The online survey asked how relationships with the public could be improved, 14% of those responding thought that a better understanding of either the police or the community would improve these. Improved partnership working and greater communication scored far less with 3% each but show that officers feel that greater communications between the police, partners and the communities could improve relationships.

As Barrett *et al* (2013) found, the public believing that the police are taking them seriously and that they do matter is an important factor in raising public confidence in the police. Miller & D'Souza (2016) spoke about, as the PCC addressed, the public expect a positive response from the police and these positive encounters will have only a moderate effect on the public whereas a negative interaction can prove far more influential. Poorly managed police contact can have a huge impact on public confidence, this may not only be for the individual who was part of this contact but also as an indirect contact. If an individual was told about a negative interaction by a friend or a family member such as incivility or an excessive use of force it would have an impact on the third parties trust or confidence in the police.

Along with this issue of community officers often being responsible for the role of service recovery a number of those spoken to discussed how they felt that at times they were unable to do their job properly. An officer said:

'*Community policing is key to these local relationships, at the end of the day I still hold fast as to my view of the only thing that the public want is to be kept safe, be that prevention of or detection of crime. While community engagement can go some way in improving the public perception of beds police, if we are not meeting those key objectives then what is the point. I do think that one of the limitations, as I touched on earlier, whether it be strategy or capacity of the resources I'm not entirely sure but given current resourcing levels and number of abstractions they are always reactive, so they are always fighting fires (07)*'.

Respondents of the online survey agreed with the officer above. When asked how community policing could be improved 40% of respondents believed that the was to improve this was through more resourcing, by far the highest answer. Further to this, 63% of respondents felt that being abstracted from their day to day role impacted on their ability to do their job effectively.

As discussed in chapter 4, in order to gain the trust of the communities and build confidence in the police, officers in these roles have to have self-legitimacy, not having the confidence that they can do their job to the

best of their ability as they would like to caused concern for several of those spoken to. I discussed in chapter 1 that at times community officers felt that those in charge of community policing had unrealistic expectations of what they could achieve. Not only do these unrealistic expectations have an impact on the officers but on the communities view of the police which is a huge concern within a small police force who, at times, need to rely on the support of the community to assist them with a wide range of issues, a senior officer said:

'I think we encounter difficulties when community expectations are raised, made from a senior command team down they are told that this person owns your area, they should be your first point of contact for community issues …. One of the important parts for us is having a single point of contact I refer to them as the sheriff within an area, so that partners, councillors, internal and external partners know who manages that part of the area for the police, so a single point of contact, they are seen as a figurehead for the area. The work that we do, or the success of it is built on intelligence which comes from the confidence from the public through having that figurehead and us being able to manage their expectations around problem solving and priorities, that they have selected for us, if we cannot deal with those well then they lose confidence fairly quickly (11)'.

Barrett *et al* (2013) found that a factor in improving public confidence in the police was that not only the public need to feel that they matter but that they are dealt with and taken seriously by a competent police officer, by given the public unrealistic expectations of what their local community team can do for them levels of public confidence may be impacted which was a concern aired by a number of individuals spoken to. A senior officer spoke about the negative impact of the public being misinformed and given unrealistic expectations had on the communities managed by their teams:

'They question our honesty, for example, it's on record but the PCC at a town council meeting said that we had 4 PCs and 10 PCSOs dedicated to the people of Biggleswade, which in itself it's true, the numbers are correct and they are dedicated to Biggleswade but they are also dedicated to a number of other areas so the expectation of that community, if they had 4 PCs and 10 PCSOs dedicated to just Biggleswade, which the understanding, quite fairly was, would be that they had a police officer on every corner, they don't see that and I then have to clarify and they ask why they were told one thing, so there is an element of distrust (11)'.

If the public have that element of distrust in what they are being told by the police legitimacy is lost. Hohl *et al* (2013) found that areas where trust had been lost in the police were often hardest hit when it comes to disorder, despite community teams working to improve relationships with the local area this can be easily spoilt by them

being provided with unrealistic expectations. In communities where relationships have previously been good these relationships can be easily damaged should the community believe that the police have acted unfairly or behaved in a manner that the public believe to be unacceptable (Newburn, 2016) which can have a huge impact on the legitimacy of the police and therefore relationships with the local community. Community policing roles should provide accountability to communities (Bullock and Leeney, 2013) and if that is not the case relationships can be ruined which can be a huge concern within small communities with previously positive relationships with the police.

These unrealistic expectations of the police could be a result of what they are being told by not only the police but other agencies but they could also be as a result of what those communities had previously experienced from the police and a lack of understanding as to how policing has changed over time, the police and crime commissioner spoke about this:

'I think that unfortunately they do not understand so many of the issues which leads to a growing distance between the police and the public, for example, they want the experiences and the support that they had in the 60's .... they forget about the elements that they would not be so happy to have in existence whether that be endemic racism, misogyny towards woman, the way in which individuals were dealt with, they also forget the demands on policing that simply didn't exist then, there was no digital technology, there were no smart phones, we have to point out that we've had to invest 1.1 million in a cyber hub and that their children and grandchildren are far more likely to be abused, certainly sexually exploited and groomed in the privacy of their own bedroom and approached on the way to school ... that is another big challenge for me (10)'.

Trying to improve relationships

Despite the changes in modern day policing Reiner (2000) found that generally individuals belonging to an older generation who had grown up in a far different social climate, although they still expected a service similar to one that they had previously seen, still demonstrated high levels of confidence in the police despite the nature of crime being very different. It was in fact the younger generations who had a more negative view of the police. Bowling & Phillips (2007) stated that relationships between young people and the police were often fraught with mutual distrust and stereotyping. Clayman & Skinns (2012) found that often these negative views of the police had been passed on through generations of a family. Several of the officers spoken to during my research discussed relationships with young people and how these could be improved, a PCSO discussed how their role was working in improve these relationships:

'My role is helping to rebuild this, we are giving a view of what the police actually do, we are making
the effort to actually engage with young people rather than stopping them on the streets when they
go out, we are trying to build those relationships ... if these young people had a negative impression
of the police before we are going in and hopefully changing that view, if they see a police officer they
are far more likely to go up to them and not give them the negative response that they were getting,
if they are in trouble they are more likely to call us (01)'.

Clayman & Skinns (2012) found that young people often felt that they were being treated unfairly by the police whether that be through stop and search with no explanation. At times the police can feel duty bound to move groups of youths on due to the fear of anti-social behaviour from local residents (Deuchar *et al,* 2015) which had a negative impact on relationships between young people and the police. Loader (1996) found that the police had very little motivation to think about relationships, and if motivated were not trained to do so. Luckily it seems that community officers within Bedfordshire see the importance of these relationships, a police officer said:

'In reference to community policing that it is very important and the relationship is greatly affected
because we are that first contact that often children see, one of the things that I know I work on and
my team is that we make a conscious effort to engage with youths, the younger they are the more
we try to engage and this has a positive impact on them and their families in general, this is sort of
grass roots strategy, talking to children even if it's just being nice (12)'.

Crawford (2009) found that despite older generations feeling that younger members of society were problematic that youth crime was actually decreasing rather than the other way, Bedfordshire police have increased the numbers of both police officers and staff working in schools to improve relationships with younger people and to engage at an early age with the intention of working with individuals at risk of becoming involved in crime as an intervention.

Chapter 4 discussed briefly Bedfordshire polices community cohesion team, the team were put in place to monitor community tensions across Bedfordshire. Bedfordshire is made up of many wide and varied communities, the community cohesion team were praised by many of those spoken as part of this research, an officer within the team spoke about the relationships that the team have with the public:

'From speaking to community leaders actually they are keen on the police and well respected, as well

as the local authorities, I'm unsure if that's due to the partnership working that we do, it's hard to
put a finger on, it's quite subjective but yes I think we've been successful in building the relationships
... that's not to say that they can't change (07)'

The community cohesion team are working to build and maintain community relationships. Due to the diverse make up of Bedfordshire and in particular Luton the cohesion team work very closely with minority groups. Awan *et al* (2013) spoke about the importance of community policing to engage with minority groups, they discussed how the police should work with community leaders within minority communities to not only gain a better understanding but to build relationships which is what the community cohesion team within Bedfordshire are doing. An officer on the team spoke about this:

'I tend to work on demographics so looking at how things will affect the eastern European
communities or Asian communities or black communities or different religious groups .... Yes we are
working with the white British population but we tend not to have many tensions in those groups, as
a very diverse town we tend to get issues there but we deal with these in the cohesion team, however
because of lack of time and resources and the sheer number of abstractions the geographic
community policing team probably don't have those networks, local knowledge and understanding of
communities where really I should be able to go to (07)'.

Newburn (2016) discussed how important the links between the police and community leaders of groups who would not necessarily engage with the police are should disorder, or potential disorder arise. Now within Bedfordshire community tensions are monitored and these are addressed through positive relationships between the cohesion team and these minority groups. Sunshine & Taylor (2003) stated that community support is achieved by legitimacy and that legitimacy is achieved by being honest and treating people fairly, An officer from the community cohesion team spoke about how they are building relationships with varied communities despite being part of a very small team:

'There is the understanding that I'm there as an illusion, it fosters positive relationships, it gives them
a point of contact but also the understanding that they are not going to see me walking past their
building every day because I do have a much larger area that I have to cover but it gives them a level
of familiarity that they need...I have been at community meetings where I have heard senior officers
or politicians saying that they are putting out x number of officers where in reality there are probably
more people working in their local McDonalds than there are out of their local police station, or at
least available officers and to be honest I think we need to be really upfront with community

members about this – If they don't know how it is they will expect an unrealistic level of service (07)'.

Respondents of the online survey agreed how important police visibility was to relationships. After greater resourcing at 40% improved visibility was how it was believed that relationships with the community could be improved.

The community cohesion team within Bedfordshire were put in place due to a need to repair failed relationships and are one of very few dedicated cohesion teams, this is one way that community policing differs in Bedfordshire from other forces because of the need to repair these relationships before any further damage could be done. By being honest with members of community groups and not giving them unrealistic expectations of what the team can do for them the cohesion team have fostered positive relationships and are seen as a figurehead nationally in relation to tension monitoring, I will discuss this further in chapter 6.

Tyler (2000) found that, if done correctly, a community style of policing fostered legitimacy and improved relationships with the police and social values although it does not have a positive impact on everyone. Murray *et al* (2015) found that the biggest indicator of low confidence in the police was police contact, this is, at times unfair, they state that generally any contact with the police is due to a problem so these negative views could be down to the problem itself rather than the actual contact with the police indicating a failure in preventing that crime rather that the police response itself. Wooden & Rogers (2014) discussed that the greatest amount of policing activity occurred in areas where the majority of residents were living in social housing and that the majority of those described as criminals resided in such areas. Members of communities outside of this only tended to have contact with the police when they were the victim of a crime. Crime reduction tactics put in place to make people safer, such as stop and search of moving groups of youths on often targeted these groups and had an adverse impact on police community relations rather than improving the confidence of other residents. When asked the question how does community policing effect relationships with the public a police officer replied:

'It depends who you ask .... If you ask those on the receiving end of the enforcement side of our
operations it will probably give a negative perception of the police but in communities where we
have asked what they want and delivered it, it will be more positive .... It's hard to tell. We always
feel that we are doing what the communities ask us but is that actually what they want (05)'.

Barrett *et al* (2013) discuss how effective communication with the public can improve public satisfaction but as a small team of officers it is almost impossible to engage with each of the diverse and varied communities in

any specific area. Hohl *et al* (2010) stated that direct and inclusive communication had an impact on improving public confidence and the overall opinion of the police but within a small force like Bedfordshire this can be very challenging, a police officer spoke about this:

'we engage with certain communities better than others, we engage with the Asian community in the centre of Luton probably because it's a large, large community so we interact with them, maybe not so much with the eastern European community, because they tend to keep themselves to themselves and we don't know how to reach out yet .... we don't actively go out and try to speak to them like we do other people (14)'.

This lack of engagement within any part of a community can lead to a negative impact on public satisfaction, community members need to feel that they are valued and taken seriously (Barrett *et al,* 2013). If community teams are taking the time to engage and build relationships with some parts of a community and not others this could lead to community members feeling discriminated against and not having positive relationships with the police. Kawelerowicz and Biggs (2015) made the controversial argument that diversity can reduce social cohesion and in an area as diverse as Bedfordshire this could have a huge impact on not only social cohesion but relationships with the police should community groups feel that they are not being treated fairly.

Summary

Chapter 5 has looked at how community policing effects relationships between the police and the public. Officers discussed how previous cuts to community policing roles have changed the way in which the public view the police and how relationships and trust that was previously in place have gone and that there are difficulties in rebuilding these. Officers and staff spoke about how a lot of the community role now is one of service recovery, not only trying to build past relationships but apologising for what the police have failed to do, whether it be due to lack of resourcing or the simple fact that it is not something that falls within the role of the police.

Those taking part in the online survey stated that increased communication and understanding between the police and the community would improve relationships. An officer also discussed misinformation being passed to communities and the impact that this can have leading to mistrust and loss of legitimacy. Miscommunication was discussed not only between police and the public but also with partner agencies leading to unrealistic expectations of what the police could actually do.

Officers discussed the importance of working with younger members of the community to build relationships and often challenge views that have been passed through generations ensuring that these young people will work with the police rather than against them.

This chapter also discussed the community cohesion team further and how this is used to improve relationships. Officers discussed how the cohesion team works differently to other community teams and believed that honesty was key to these relationships meaning that there were no unrealistic expectations of what the team could do. Engaging with diverse communities and the difficulties that this could bring were discussed, when working within such a multicultural area leaving out any community could impact hugely on relationships and impact on public satisfaction.

Chapter 6

How has Austerity impacted on Community policing?

The 2016 HMICFRS police effectiveness report raised concerns that local policing had been eroded and that many forces had failed to 'redefine' neighbourhood policing in line with ongoing budget cuts and changes to policing demand. These growing demands and increasing complexity of everyday policing are an issue nationally but something that have been felt by officers and staff working within Bedfordshire.

This chapter will discuss the perceptions of the affect that austerity has had on the delivery of community policing within Bedfordshire. The first part will address how officers and staff believe Bedfordshire differs from other forces across the country in relation to austerity, the second part will look at the issues that have arisen within community policing as a result of budget cuts not only to the officers and staff working within these roles but within partnership agencies and the community itself. Lastly, I will look at how these issues cause a risk to relationships with the community and how this is being addressed.

Are Bedfordshire different from other forces?

Respondents to the online survey were asked how much of an impact they felt that austerity had had on the delivery of community policing within Bedfordshire, 61% of respondents felt that austerity had had a major impact on community policing. When asked whether they felt there had been a change in the time and resourcing dedicated to community policing the answers were very mixed with 11% of individuals believing that time and resourcing levels were 'much higher' and a further 11% believing they were 'much lower' with the remaining 78% of responses spread evenly across the more neutral slightly higher, about the same and slightly lower response options provided on the scale. On investigating this further the widely spread responses appeared to be due to the length of service of the respondent. Those individuals who had been in role for longer periods of time had seen resourcing levels prior to austerity by inference would compare current levels to this whereas officers who have joined since austerity had not witnessed community policing at its strongest and can see the increasing levels rather than making a comparison to how it previously had been. Of the 91 completed surveys 82% of respondents felt that austerity had impacted in some way on the role that they do, the survey phase of this research did not explore reasons as to how there had been an impact but this will be addressed during this chapter through data collected during the interview phase of the research.

Fisher and Ritchie (2015) discuss how across the country police forces are constantly having to review roles and functions in order to implement cost effective methods to deliver community policing at the same time ensuring

they meet the governments requirements of crime reduction. A senior officer spoke about the issues faced in doing so within Bedfordshire in current times of austerity:

'Austerity hit us harder than the majority of other forces, that's not to say that other forces weren't hit but we had the disadvantage that we weren't as well funded as other forces across the country, we had, what was described to me by Peter Neyroud as having the metro city market town conundrum, we've got big urban areas, OCGs, drugs, airport, football club, road networks, rail network infrastructure and then you have spates of rural areas and we are funded as a rural area, a county force where we have really complex … sorry I've not even included the terrorist issues … we have some really complex diverse needs so we got hit really hard, and that will take years, yet, to get through, so yeah we were hit differently (15).'

A new brand of Community Policing.

Hesketh and Williams (2017) discuss how in recent years policing has changed dramatically driven by not only austerity but breakthroughs in technology that mean that the role of the police service is unrecognisable to what it was only a few years ago. Casey (2014) describes modern day policing as a world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity meaning that it is vital for police forces to reconsider how things are done across the country. A senior officer discussed the impact that these changes have had on community policing:

'I think there is also what I call the new brand of community policing, which is focused on vulnerability and who our vulnerable are as an organisation but we also need to look at what has been the HMIC focus and national focus on community policing and there has been a shift from concentrations of serious and organised crime to vulnerability, safe guarding, public protection, CSE, missing people, trafficking … which has changed the culture nationally into really increasing levels of understanding and investment into public protection which is what we did here in Beds, and you can say quite rightly considering some of the threats that we were encountering, what it meant was that community policing didn't grow at the same rate or the same level as that area around public protection … that was a national issue as well (15)'.

In agreement with the officer quoted above Hesketh and Williams (2017) state that issues such as mental health, well-being, child sexual exploitation and vulnerability in general are now high on the priority list of policing demand rather than the crime trends of recent years, within Bedfordshire this has meant a huge change on the demands of our community policing teams to juggle these demands of the organisation against what the public

have grown to expect.

Many of those interviewed who were of a lower rank were unable to say whether the effects of austerity on the delivery of community policing within Bedfordshire were any different to other forces across the country due to lack of knowledge of how this is delivered elsewhere.

While nine of the officers and staff interviewed believed that Bedfordshire as a force were worse off than other forces six of these could not provide any rationale as to why they believed this. The main concern of the remaining three was funding due to Bedfordshire being considered a rural force meaning limited resources and diverse areas to police. An officer, involved in working alongside other forces discussed why he believed Bedfordshire was different:

'We are a very small force with budgetary constraints for years, when austerity really started to bite in 2011 our then chief constable made the decision that we needed to maintain and protect our teams, namely front line, I'm not in a place to question that decision and looking back it was possibly the right decision but it led us to lose a lot of our relationships. In effect, we have always been a small urban, almost inner-city force but with a rural level of funding, if you look at the make-up of Luton and Bedford you have some real metropolitan challenges in serious violence and county lines, drug problems, massive socio-economic issues but with minimal funding, not just for the police but for social care impacting on policing, at the end of the day someone has to pick up the slack and it appears to always be us…. we don't have enough to go around and we made the decision to protect the front line (07)'.

Through the online survey 65% of respondents said that austerity had a major impact on community policing in general. A further 27% stated that austerity had had a moderate impact on community policing with 45% believing that the functions of community policing that they felt were most important had been majorly impacted by austerity. Budget cuts appear to have had an effect on most of the officers and staff working within Bedfordshire, a police officer compared Bedfordshire to another force and spoke about why they felt this has hit hard:

'I think Bedfordshire is at the sharper end of things, quite often Durham is held up as the poster boy for police forces on a national level however if you look there you are looking at a force of similar size in both officers and population and although they are a university town they don't have some of the issues that we have, they don't have the same CT footprint, they don't have the same issues with

drugs or knife crime, they don't have the same socio-economic issues that we have but as a force
they get 14 million a year more than we do which equates to 400 officers, so yes, while every force
has been affected by austerity it's probably not to the same level as we have been (07)'.

Community Policing with minimal resources.

Following the drastic cuts made to budgets across policing in 2010 police and crime commissioners were introduced in 2012 and the budgetary constraints around community policing were relaxed meaning that individual forces had more control around not only how much of the remaining budget could be put towards neighbourhood policing but how savings could be made (O'Neill, 2014). Within Bedfordshire, the police and crime commissioner has worked towards finding ways of increasing the budget and their resources for community policing, the police and crime commissioner spoke about how this was being done:

'the number one priority of the plan was to return community policing, I always knew that I would be
restricted in building very significant numbers until I could gain extra funding, I was finally successful,
after a sharp elbowed battle in tooth and claw lasting 2 and a half years at that point in December
last year when I gained a special policing grant for 4.571 million which hadn't been available to any
other force ... at no point had I considered not raising the precept available to me of raising council
tax by maximum available without holding an expensive referendum due to the absolute need to put
more officers, in particular, repopulating community policing (10)'.

This fight for funding is not specific to Bedfordshire, O'Neill (2014) describes a neighbourhood style of policing as providing the style of policing as '*the type of policing which the public seem to crave*' but states that due to austerity the entire neighbourhood policing project across the country is under threat.

Higgins (2017) compared the way in which forces across the country approached community policing and as the officer above had done, compared Bedfordshire to Durham. During the HMICFRS (2016) police effectiveness report Bedfordshire were labelled as inadequate whilst Durham were branded as outstanding despite the forces covering very similar geographic areas. The main concern raised by Higgins (2017) was the inconsistency of Bedfordshire's approach to community policing. The study spanned a period of 8 years looking at the percentage of the work force employed in dedicated community policing roles but also the make-up of these teams. As previously highlighted, Bedfordshire has an inconsistent approach to community policing, at the start of the study in 2008 10% of the work force were employed in these roles, by 2012 this had risen to 20% followed by a sharp fall and by 2016, at the conclusion of the study, only 5% of Bedfordshire police worked

within community policing roles. As numbers of individuals working within these roles decreased the proportion of police staff increased and between 2014 and 2015 when on average 7% of the force worked in these roles over 80% of this function was made up of police staff rather than warranted officers. Across the country Bedfordshire were one of a small number of forces at the conclusion of the study to report a smaller community policing function than it had done in 2012 although in 2016 the number of police officers had increased to almost 40% despite only 5% of the force working within these roles. Having such a small proportion of the workforce based in community roles is a concern. As I have previously discussed, priorities across police forces are changing to focus on vulnerability and wellbeing (Hesketh and Williams, 2017), which can initially fall on to community roles which much be done alongside existing services that the public have come to expect.

Comparing this to Durham, a force deemed as 'outstanding' who remained consistent throughout the study with between 13 and 14% of the force working in these roles with teams made up of equal numbers of police officers and police staff. A PCSO spoke about the problems with having disproportionate staffing allocation amongst these teams:

'We see the impact year after year, resources have diminished meaning as a force we have to prioritise, you see it from the control room down, we are not able to attend incidents, we are not able to do what a victim would expect in terms of timings, things like that, everything had to change, community policing has taken the brunt of it in relation to our neighbourhood teams, for a while we even lost community policing, its only over the last few years ... for some time we didn't have any PCs on our community teams, for a long while, even to think about it now I don't understand how we did it... to have any successful team you need to have all manner of skills, from the supervisors to the PCs with their skill sets and their experience, they have powers and the criminal side of things to PCSOs who have the time to do the engagement and intel gathering but the PCs can deal with the crime (02)'.

Kronman (1983) found that self-legitimacy impacted on audience legitimacy, for community policing teams to be left with such limited resources could cause the staff working in these roles to feel that they are not valued by senior leaders which cause affect audience legitimacy. Pelfrey (2004) found that job satisfaction, which will ultimately affect legitimacy, was strongly associated with endorsement, not receiving this from leaders could have a huge impact on legitimacy.

Losing knowledge and experience.

Many of the longer serving officers and staff interviewed discussed the inconsistency in relation to PCSO's, as Higgins (2017) spoke about, it is important to have both warranted officers and police staff working together to effectively deliver community policing but consistency in PCSO numbers is equally as important, a PCSO spoke about this:

'Not so long ago we lost 60 or 70% of our PCSOs, that was definitely money orientated even if they said it wasn't, literally 6 months to the day that they were made redundant they were advertising again ... All the experience and the relationships that they had in the first place, most of the ones that went were the long timers, so yes they were the more expensive ones but they had the experience, they had knowledge, they had the local knowledge of who we needed to keep an eye on, the had the relationships and just the local knowledge, we have no local knowledge anymore. They come over from Bedford to Luton and don't even know how to get to Houghton Regis (01)'.

Despite initial resistance and scepticism by police officers in relation to PCSOs they have gained a great deal of support from colleagues (O'Neill, 2014) and are recognised as being vital in maintaining a police presence more consistently that ever before (Paskell, 2007). As stated by the PCSO above, as a result of austerity a huge proportion of PCSOs were lost, this was far higher than the average reductions nationally which was 12.5% (Dahni, 2013) but this was not a problem specific to Bedfordshire. McCarthy (2015) found that despite PCSO's having a pivotal role within community policing following austerity there were a disproportionate number cut, far higher than cuts made to other police staff roles across the police service. Many of the officers spoken to during this research expressed concerns over the vast amount of experience and local knowledge lost due to austerity and although Bedfordshire are investing in rebuilding community teams there were concerns from existing officers about replacing experienced officers with new staff, a PCSO discussed a recently trained PCSO joining the team:

'It doesn't fill my team and it will probably make my work load even heavier, not only have I got to train her up and tick things off of a list that she needs to do but I have my own caseload that I have to do, I have meetings that I need to attend (06)'.

Several senior officers spoken to expressed concerns over the level of training given to community resources which they did not feel was sufficient for officers to effectively do their job, Trotman and Thomas (2016) discussed how diminished resources within learning and development teams often meant that they were unable,

or even unwilling to accommodate training other than the absolute basics for PCSOs putting a greater burden on the existing staff. Miller (1999) discussed how community officers were often far more equipped to deal with community issues than anyone else, it is as if they have become omnicompetent but that this was down to experience of such issues rather than any specific training to deal with these issues. Several of the longer serving PCSOs also believed that younger PCSOs were, at times, joining as a stepping stone to join as a police officer, a community PCSO said:

'We've had some good PCSOs but 4 or 5 have left in the past 8 months to be police officers (06)'.

Although these staff were not leaving the organisation it would be a huge loss to a community team and as stated by a PCSO previously any new staff would require on the job training taking time that could be used for other aspects of their role.

Although the community teams wished the PCSOs moving on well, they found that those with this intention did not always want to adhere to community policing roles focussing more on gaining experience to become a police officer. Cosgrove (2015) discussed how individuals using these roles to become police officers often swayed towards the dominant culture aspects of policing rather than the more customer service focused community roles which is the main purpose of community teams.

Trying to rebuild relationships.

Fielding (2009) discussed how community policing should be based on a genuine assessment on the community itself, gained through engagement over time within individual communities, Thomas (2016) believed that those given the time to engage with communities were far more likely to pick up on subtle changes within a community which could lead to bigger things. The loss of such great numbers of dedicated community officers has a huge impact on these relationships. A PCSO spoke about some of the issues in not having the resources available to do the job and how this has an impact on relationships with the community:

'We spend a lot of time doing service recovery and we do get a lot of recognition, we will turn around
a very disgruntled member of the public because they will call in maybe numerous crimes, they've
never seen a police officer, not had a call back, been told that someone will see them but it hasn't
happened … it's for a number of reasons, resourcing, maybe work load but there's obviously
something not right, lack of communication but we will spend a long time doing service recovery,
trying to mend that relationship or trying to build one where that person has had nothing (02)'

It has been recognised for a long time that visibility of the police has a positive impact on public confidence (Sindall and Sturgis, 2014). 18% of online respondents felt that visibility of the police was the most important part of community policing while 19% believed that it was needed to improve public relationships. The role of a PCSO does not in any way replace warranted officers but the two should complement each other, the role of a PCSO should be based on high visibility patrol, reassurance and engagement with the public, things that all too often police officers do not have the time to do (Cosgrove, 2015).

Trotman and Thomas (2016) described the role of a PCSO as well balanced to bridge the gap between the community and the police and in current times of austerity more often than not it is down the support officers to rebuild these relationships, a PCSO discussed how their role and how they are working to try to repair previously damaged relationships:

'I think that a lot of the smaller communities used to have very good relationships with Bedfordshire police but when this was taken away those relationships were sort of lost, I think now we are on the back foot and we are trying to build those relationships again and I think that we are doing that in response to the fact that it didn't work but we are doing it on the back foot, the community are wary that we are going to build these relationships back up and then it's all going to be whipped away again…. there was such a long time without the link from the community to the police that now they are wary of rebuilding these bonds because is that going to be whipped away again …. its slightly different to how we used to do it… but it's getting there (01)'

As previously discussed, within community teams the roles of police officers and police staff can be very different. They can also be viewed differently by the public with PCSOs seen as being reassuring to communities whereas at times policing officers can increase anxiety, indicating that crime is being committed purely by their presence (Rowland and Coupe, 2014). A PCSO spoke about how they felt the 'softer' approach of the community support officers can help to repair relationships:

'You don't always need a power of arrest or a set of handcuffs to make a difference to the public, a listening ear or your mouth is, I've always thought, your best tool if used in the correct way….without that we wouldn't get anything from our communities, the trust and the faith is gone, they stopped reporting crimes which then builds an incorrect picture, if the public think it's pointless calling in and not reporting it's a false picture to us and our bosses, they think there's no problem in that area it's all distorted and disjointed and they'll move resources or think a team isn't necessary and that 'they

can do that' (02)'.

This negative perception is unfortunately something that has come with austerity, although communities want to see a visible police presence they are aware that that rarely happens unless something bad has happened. As the PCSO above discussed, there is a distrust between the police and the community due to previous links being removed.

Due to austerity not only the visibility of the police has been affected but the ability to respond to the publics calls for help, a PCSO talks about how they believe the public feel about this:

'Things may be lost in translation, not passed on for us to carry out a reassurance visit so I think public perception on the whole is that we don't care, we don't have the resourcing but over the past few months I think that maybe the public, maybe they see the extremes that the officers are under, they go out and do some fantastic work in the most difficult conditions so there is an appreciation ... at the same time although they are understanding to a point but vulnerable or repeat victims are thinking 'hang on a minute, police are under-funded or under staffed but that doesn't help when I call 999 (02)'.

These views are something that police officers are met with on a daily basis not only from individual members of the community. These community teams have been stripped so far back that at times they are unable to effectively carry out their role, this could lead to questions as to how seriously the leadership team are taking the delivery of community policing effecting the legitimacy of these community policing teams. It is not only the public that expressed these concerns about the service they are receiving but the agencies working with the police. Frevel and Rogers (2016) believed that the police on their own were no longer in a position to tackle crime and that the only way this could be done was through effective working with partner agencies, An officer working within a town centre team spoke about the role and the issues faced:

'I meet with them regularly (partners) to talk about their issues, if we were allowed to go out and deal with those issues I could make a real impact but the problem is a combination of resources and abstractions meaning that we don't get to deal with them as often as we can to really have the impact, I think we could solve a lot of problems if we had the resources and the time to do it.... that has an impact on we can do as the first thing people say when we get to a meeting is 'we called 999 and no one turned up', so the cuts have had a massive impact on the whole organisation and we try to build these relationships but not everyone sees the difference in the roles, they see the police and

that they are not getting the service from the police as a whole (09)'.

As well as members of the public, cuts to community policing teams affect relationships with other agencies. An officer from the community cohesion team discussed a recent experience of this and how this can impact on relationships with partner agencies:

'I was in the same building as the sub-station and one of the youth workers who works with our high risk nominals, she introduced herself and we discussed funding for a project on gang crime, I asked why she hadn't gone to her local team for these facts and figures and she said that she didn't even know the names of her local Sgt, they work in the same building – how can I offer any kind of explanation to her in relation to that other than the community teams just don't have the time to do that engagement, so we are viewed differently, we are far more well-known but without the level of resourcing, the added burdens, the extractions, the responsive nature of it, we'll never allow those officers to develop those relationships (07)'.

Bradford et al (2016) stated that individuals were far more likely to grant legitimacy to the police if they were treated fairly and respectfully, as detailed by the sergeant above should these partner agencies not even know the team working in the same building it could have a detrimental impact on the relationship between the police and any individual agency.

Being taken away from their daily role to complete other policing functions was a problem for many of the police officers interviewed, an officer spoke about how this effected his team:

'It impacts me in the sense that I have no team, I have no team to do anything, the community engagement side of things is our role….. when response are short we spend half of our day doing their job and I just think 'why is this a community role?' (09)'.

As the officer above said, they question why the work that they are doing should be down to them, if an individual feels that they are being treated unfairly this can impact on job satisfaction and therefore how they effectively carry out their role (Qureshi *et al*, 2017). The online survey found that of the 91 responses over a third of these said that they were frequently used for other things with only 16% of respondents stating that they were rarely or never used for other functions. These abstractions were more common in police officers who are often trained in specialist skills such as public order or licensed search officers but many PCSOs said that they were often used to assist other teams, two thirds of those asked believed this impacted their ability to effectively

do their job.

I previously mentioned the importance of partnership working in order to deliver an effective service to the public, the issues of limited funding and resources are not specific to the police service, a PCSO discussed some of the issues faced as a result of austerity:

'There are a lot more issues that I would say are austerity based, families have a lot less money so I think we deal with a lot more gang related stuff, with kids stealing from teachers, I don't know if these are maybe austerity related or it's just the areas that they are growing up in....there used to be family workers in schools, education welfare officers and a massive support teams behind the scenes these have been cut back to the bones so we are called in more often to deal with stuff that would have been dealt with within the school beforehand (01)'.

Millie and Bullock (2013) stated that the role of the police is now far more complex than merely crime control with only a small proportion of public demands directly related to crime with the police being described as 'peace officers' (Banton, 1964), and the 'secret social service' (Punch, 1979). Unfortunately this wider remit of the policing role tends to fall back onto the community teams. King (2013) discussed the problems surrounding the loss of youth workers and family mentor schemes putting extra pressure on the police and undoing police – community relationships, not only do the limitations within partnership agencies mean that the work expected of community teams to make up this shortfall is increased but it can also have an impact on the ability to deliver an effective service to the public, this was highlighted by a senior officer:

'From a partnership angle, especially community safety partnership there was the same capacity to have a strong network of community safety partners, it was to a certain degree from a strategic angle, you can have all the strategic plans you want but if you have no bugger to go out and do the work it's not going to make the difference, you can have really nice plans, it's not making a jot of difference to the community, and that's where I think we have been which I think is another consequence (15)'.

Whether the shortfalls in service come from the police or the impact that austerity has had on partnership agencies these need to be addressed and effectively communicated to the public, a huge part of public confidence in the police is accountability (Fisher and Ritchie, 2013). In 2012 Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced in order to hold the police more accountable and to provide a link between the public and the police (Loveday, 2013). The Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire discusses trying to communicate

the situation to our communities:

'I think that the public, only recently, have started to wake up to austerity to be frank ... I think it's fair to say that communities are becoming more aware of the difficulties and genuine overstretch of policing as a whole, and that's compounded when people try to seek a response from policing within the county and find that there are not sufficient resources day or night to come out straight away to deal with matters .... we try to communicate this. I don't think that it's a case of how we communicate, it's a question of willingness to listen, if someone wants a police officer they are not concerned with what the officers are doing or why there is a delay, it's not that they don't understand but they don't want to understand, they don't want to listen because they don't accept that that is how policing is provided or that there is an element of a post code lottery in a single county (10)'.

Eleven of those interviewed felt that the number of officers allocated to complete the work load allocated to community policing was simply not enough and that this often impacted on how the public viewed Bedfordshire police. I have previously discussed the Community Cohesion team within Bedfordshire, along with the Police and Crime Commissioner, this small team of officers and staff are working solely on communicating with community groups and building relationships that officers would otherwise not have the opportunity to build due to daily commitments. An officer within the team spoke about the difficulties faced by officers within community teams:

'As I've been saying for the past few years, my role is to give people the impression that they have a local police officer, even though that is not the case, there is an understanding with a large section of the community as to the difficulties that we are facing, it has made things more difficult, it's meant that a number of times when I'm offered complaint or criticism from the public be it – this hasn't happened as it should, officer attendance, answering of 101 or 999, 9 times out of 10 there is a valid cause for concern but it's down to us reaching our capacity, we can't deal with everything and that impacted my role as I have to go in and offer some kind of reasoning to maintain that relationship.... at the minute the local teams do not have the capacity to fulfil those roles and because of that my team will often get a call (07)'

The Community cohesion team within Bedfordshire are recognised nationally as being of a gold standard when it comes to tension monitoring and this is done by building these positive relationships with hard to reach communities. The Police and Crime Commissioner discussed a huge barrier in policing Bedfordshire's

communities:

'One of our key challenges here that you do not have in other forces considered to be rural for example is diversity with over one hundred languages being spoken'.

Bedfordshire is a large, ethnically and culturally diverse town (Higgins and Hales, 2017), residents have differing beliefs and traditions and it is important that community policing teams show respect and understanding to these individual groups in order to build positive relationships. Fielding (2009) discussed this believing that in today's current climate it would be unrealistic to assume that communities have shared interests and that in many communities not only are there competing interests but some may involve illegal activity which can cause further conflict, treating communities fairly may not always mean treating everyone the same. Wooff (2015) spoke about issues with not treating groups as individuals using the example of the restructure of 'Police Scotland' in 2013 amalgamating separate forces to run as one in order to save money which caused huge problems in community focused work as knowledge developed and relationships formed through working closely with individuals over years were put at risk due to roles changing to suit the national policing model rather than those tailored to suit individual communities, within Bedfordshire, with finite resources these relationships are often vital to the success of not just community policing but in the prevention of disorder, a PCSO spoke about the importance of these relationships:

'If there was a murder in Bury Park, instead of trying to speak to everyone we will speak to key people, presidents, community leaders that hear things and are able to relay messages…. We have a few and these are the people that we try to stay in contact with, presidents of mosques, leaders of community centres, there are certain people that you find that pick up a lot of information, ….those that we speak to have a lot of power, sway over the community, if people kicked off there we could call them and they would have a lot of power over them, the mosque will tell them that they are not doing that or if they were to turn against the police they could mobilise a lot of people, the community hold a lot of respect and will go along with whatever they say (08)'.

Although within Bedfordshire the community cohesion team are rebuilding these relationships officers felt that due to the limited resources it is difficult for community teams to build or maintain these relationships on a geographical level due to high demand on what is expected of them. The 2018 Neighbourhood Policing guidelines addressed how community policing should be delivered but this was not specific to any force or any resourcing level. A number of those spoken to believed that a concern within the community policing teams was exactly was expected of them and felt that local guidelines, or a remit, as to what the teams should be doing

should be stricter, a senior officer spoke about the difficulties in not having this:

'I think the biggest challenge would be to make a remit around what community policing should do rather than what they shouldn't, anything can be put into community policing, we do say to the community that we are not going to all of the parish council meetings but when we get there they say 'could you just do this' or 'could you just do that', we do have to tailor what we do, it is politically sensitive, but we can always be the default…. it's what we would have done with more resources in the past, the officers would have known the local care home because there were one of 5 officers within a town, yes they can attend them but that might mean that they then can't attend the schools or they can't go to the WI coffee morning and it doesn't seem important but it means that that relationship with the WI might mean that they have a point of contact and if something should emerge they can contact the police and we could stop it before it started, it's difficult to see the impact of not attending, proving the negative is difficult (11)'.

These unrealistic expectations and no clear guide lines as to what community policing teams should take on impact on the self-legitimacy of the officers and staff involved which will impact on their ability to undertake their role effectively.

Throughout this research I have spoken to officers and staff working within community policing roles, every individual spoken to believed that austerity had impacted on the delivery of community policing. When asked how this could be improved the majority, both online and through interview stated that community policing would only improve with greater resourcing enabling staff the time to undertake community policing roles without being given added tasks and to work with manageable geographic or demographic areas of the community, although many of those spoken to believed that such resourcing was not practical the Police and Crime Commissioner spoke about the need to increase these budgets to improve community policing:

'Community policing, as you well know had been all but stripped out of Bedfordshire's policing … it was definitely the case that Bedfordshire had to cut harder, further and faster to stay in the game, we have one of the smallest front lines to deal with some of the most serious issues in the UK, including the third highest terror threat and serious organised crime cross over from London, County lines activity into the area, existing indigenous gangs, knife crime and violence, a road network and an airport which support trafficking and modern day slavery in the county and all of these are impacted by a lack of community policing to feed vital intelligence from the street back to Bedfordshire Police in my view. This is why the number one priority of the plan was to return community policing (10)'.

Summary

Chapter 6 has looked at how austerity has impacted on community policing. 61% of respondents of the online survey felt that austerity had impacted majorly on community policing. As discussed in Chapter 1, views in relation to changes in time and resourcing dedicated to community policing were dependant on how long an individual had in service and previous experience of community policing but 82% felt that austerity had, in some way impacted on the job that they do.

Those involved in community roles often felt that the remit of community policing was too wide, even following the publication of the 2018 Neighbourhood policing guidelines through which guidance was given but nothing resource or force specific. Officers and staff at all levels felt that funding within Bedfordshire was limited to begin with and several officers discussed that this was down to the force often being considered to be a rural force rather than considering the make-up of the county meaning that when performance is compared to other areas Bedfordshire appear to be far worse off.

Officers discussed how the front line had been protected through austerity, Bedfordshire continued to provide that 'emergency service' but community policing did not fit into that remit and had been impacted massively. The majority of the community policing function had been left to PCSOs and both officers and staff expressed concerns in relation to the inconsistencies when it came to these officers. The majority of PCSOs were made redundant followed by recruitment a short while later, officers and staff discussed the impact that this had had on community relationships and the loss of a great deal of knowledge but also the challenge with trying to train new staff while trying to carry out the role efficiently.

Officers and staff discussed training within community policing and stated that not only was training new members of a hinderance to their designated role but concerns over the lack of training available to officers specialising in community policing believing that officers were becoming competent due to experience rather than any training available to them.

Officers discussed that not only has austerity and a lack of resourcing had an impact on relationships with the public but also on partner agencies. Not only are partner agencies not receiving the service that they had grown to expect, or had been promised, from the police but cuts in funding meant that services previously provided by partner agencies could now be left to the police stretching the community policing function even further. The police being unable to provide the expected service has impacted on the ability to form and maintain positive

working relationships.

The Police and crime commissioner spoke about the importance of effective communication with the public and that at times the police service simply 'reaches capacity' but believed that at times the public do not want to listen to this. As several officers and staff spoke about, when a member of the public calls 999 they expect a response and do not want to listen to reasons why they do not get just that. Unfortunately, as a number of those spoken to discussed, this 'service recovery' tends to fall back to community policing.

A 'buy-in' to community policing is needed at all levels in order to make it work (Miller, 1999), speaking with both the police and crime commissioner and the senior leadership team it appears that this is the direction Bedfordshire wants to move in and efforts have been made to increase funding and therefore resourcing but as yet this is not being felt by the officers at a grass roots level.

Concluding remarks

A number of the issues faced in relation to the delivery of community policing to improve public perception and legitimacy of the police in current times of austerity were highlighted within the introduction and further in the literature review. In addition to this, my research has considered the perceptions of officers and staff working as part of community teams within Bedfordshire police in relation to the impact of community policing on relationships with the public and how these have been impacted by austerity.

This chapter is divided into three sections and concludes the study, firstly the findings in relation to the research aims are summarised followed by the limitations of this research and finally suggestions for possible research in the future.

The first aim of this research was to understand how much of a priority community policing is within Bedfordshire. As part of the Neighbourhood policing guidelines (2018) DCC Gavin Stephens described community policing as an essential element in modern day policing and established priorities to work towards improving public confidence. Along with Higgins and Hales (2017) findings that cuts to Bedfordshire's community policing teams had proved to have significant consequences on the ability of the force to effectively engage in working practices which was echoed by the HMICFRS police effectiveness report (2016) Bedfordshire police had no choice but to improve on their approach to a community style of policing.

The views of the officers and staff working within community policing varied. On speaking to those at a senior leadership level they stated that community policing was ranked as one of the highest priorities at an investment level with the police and crime commissioner discussing obtaining government grants and raising council tax within Bedfordshire to secure funds that would only be put towards improvements in community policing.

When speaking to police officers and staff who were new in service, by this I mean that they had come in to post within the past 3 years, there was a belief that community policing was a priority within Bedfordshire. Within their service they had seen massive investment in to community policing, many of these individuals were working in roles that had been created, or reinvented, in recent times as a result of these investments into reinstating community policing.

These views were very different amongst longer serving officers and staff. 4 of the PCSOs spoken to as part of the study as well as police officers who had longer in service had been a part of, or witnessed, community policing prior to austerity and would compare the way in which community policing is delivered currently to

how it used to be. They had witnessed fully functioning community teams be stripped back to absolute minimum and are now witnessing improvements but are far more cynical of this prioritisation.

These longer serving officers felt that at times the demands of senior management on the community policing teams were unrealistic. Wooden and Rogers (2014) believed that in order for community policing to succeed it needed the support of both the public and the officers themselves, without the feeling that they were being treated as a genuine priority the self-legitimacy of these individuals could be impacted and therefore relationships with the public (Wolfe and Nix, 2016).

The limited resources within the Community policing function were not the only concern of officers. Officers and staff often felt that too much was expected of them to enable them to effectively deliver community policing. Not only did officers feel that the remit of community policing was too wide but that abstractions to undertake other roles often prevented them from doing their job properly. Officers and staff felt that if other teams needed help this help was often found by using the community teams rather than looking elsewhere.

In response to my first research question – How much of a priority is community policing within Bedfordshire? Responses differ a great deal, those at a senior level state that community policing is a priority and state that measures are being put in place to ensure that this is the case. On speaking to police officers and staff of lower ranks they do not see this as the case. Lack of resources, unrealistic workloads and being abstracted from their role to do other things mean that although they are told it is a priority it is simply not seen that way by the community policing teams themselves.

The second aim of the research was to understand how community policing could improve police – community relations. Myhill and Bradford (2013) found that a commitment to a community style of policing was a good indication of positive public attitudes towards the police. Every individual spoken to within this study agreed that community policing could be used to create or improve relationships between the police and the community but found that there were barriers to this.

I previously mentioned the unrealistic expectations that community officers believed were being placed upon them by senior leaders. In addition to senior leaders, the communities themselves can place these unrealistic expectations on the teams. These could be down to promises made that community officers are unable to keep or down to changing crime trends and demands on police with a lack of understanding from the public in relation to these.

Participants of the online survey identified better communication and a better understanding of what the police actually do as a way of improving these relationships. It was also discussed that at times information was miscommunicated to both the community and partner agencies leading to unrealistic expectations of what the police can do often leading to a lack of trust and a breakdown in relationships.

Individuals spoken to working within the more public facing roles within community policing felt that they spent a great deal of time working on service recovery. Miller and D'Souza (2016) discussed how the public have come to expect a positive response from the police and if this is not received their perception of the police will change. It will take officers and staff a great deal of time to recover the confidence that has been lost, negative experiences are far more impactive and community officers feel that they spend a lot of time trying to repair issues that are quite often out of their hands rather than trying to improve or build other relationships. Once there is a distrust for the police legitimacy is lost and it will be hard to restore this (Hohl *et al,* 2013).

Specifically put in place to monitor tensions and improve relationships with community groups, the community cohesion team within Bedfordshire is praised for doing just that. Those working within the team believe that this is possible due to effective communication with these groups, the role of the team is purely to engage with communities, due to this there are no unrealistic expectations placed upon them meaning that their time can be spent engaging with the community and improving relationships.

In response to my second research question - How can community policing improve relationships with the community? Every individual spoken to agreed, community policing can be effective in improving relationships with the community but it has to be done correctly. Community policing can be used to build and maintain relationships if officers and staff given the time to do so. There needs to be effective communication between the police and the public at both a management level and those working on the front line as to what the police can actually do. Community policing teams can forge relationships but unrealistic expectations can cause damage and impact on the legitimacy of the police.

The third and final aim of this piece of work was to understand how austerity had impacted on police – community relationships. As Higgins and Hales (2017) discussed Bedfordshire's approach to community policing during austerity was not seen as an acceptable response meaning that as a force they were unable to effectively engage in working practices. The officers and staff spoken to with long enough service to remember community policing prior to austerity were in agreement with this and discussed the huge negative impact that this had on relationships with the community.

Although this has improved recently, in recent years the make-up of community teams has been heavily reliant on police staff rather than warranted officers. Following austerity cuts were made to the numbers of community support officers, nationally 12.5% of PCSOs were lost (Dahni, 2013), within Bedfordshire this was at approximately 60%, far higher than the national average and a huge concern for a force whose community teams heavily relied on police staff.

PCSOs and officers who remembered community policing prior to austerity spoke about not only the loss of huge numbers of staff but the loss of relationships with the communities and with partnership agencies. PCSOs who had previously good working relationships with the community discussed how these relationships had been taken away as there were simply not enough staff to maintain them. It was also discussed how now that the community teams are in a position to start repairing these relationships there is an element of distrust from the public and legitimacy has been lost. Those working on community teams feel that they spend a lot of time working on service recovery both long and short term to rebuild damaged relationships rather than the role that they should be doing.

Another concern from officers and PCSOs is that now there is an investment into community policing staff numbers will rise but the experience and knowledge has gone, any new staff to teams will need training, which realistically is done on the job, which will increase the workload of the existing staff impacting on the time that they get to spend with the community, so although the numbers within community teams are increasing there will be a delay before new staff are able to effectively do their job and longer until they have positive relationships and local knowledge that has previously been lost.

There were also concerns raised regarding abstractions from community policing roles, unless part of the dedicated community cohesion team, all police officers spoken to stated that they were often taken from their community role to fulfil other duties. Budget cuts have effected all areas of policing and it seems that when areas dealing with a greater risk level are short help is sought from the community teams, the impact of these officers not attending engagements is not seen in the short term but can have a huge impact in the long term.

In relation to my third research aim – How has community policing been effected by austerity? Austerity has had a huge impact on the delivery of community policing and the relationships between the police and the community, although community policing resources are now increasing it will take a long to time regain the legitimacy that was once in place from the community.

Relationships between the police and the public are complicated. Legitimacy granted at all levels is vital to the

success of community policing as this style of policing relies on the willing participation of both the police and the communities themselves (Jackson *et al,* 2013). This research has found that self-legitimacy of those working within community policing is at risk if they do not feel that they are being fully supported by their superiors, this lack of self-legitimacy, or internal legitimacy will ultimately have implications to the legitimacy granted by the community.

Limitations to this research

There were a number of limitations in relation to this study that need to be considered, the first being the limited number of participants. Bedfordshire is a small police force, the online survey was circulated to 122 officers which at the time made up all of the community policing teams within Bedfordshire, although the response rate for the survey was high this is still a small number of respondents. The response rate to the survey was high but this could also cause issues, in my opinion the response rate was high due to working as part of such a small force, I work within a training team and come into contact with the majority of the force on a regular basis. Garton & Copeland (2010) talk about 'acquaintence interviews' and how these may cause ethical issues when gathering data but also that due to personal relationships respondents may not have been completely honest.

Lastly, the interview phase of this research took place between February and March 2019 and all data analysed was collected during this time, at a time in which Bedfordshire police are working to improve community policing a vast amount have change could have taken place prior to the completion of this study.

Recommendations for further research

As detailed as a limitation, the data collection phase of this study was finalised in March 2019 and in the following months community policing within Bedfordshire will have continued to change. At the time of this research the views of the senior management and experienced officers working in community roles differed greatly, further research could be undertaken in the future to see if the views of those experienced officers had changed with the increases in investment towards community policing within Bedfordshire.

Appendix 1.

How can Community Policing be used to improve public perception of the police in current times of austerity?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Carly McIlwain, a serving police officer within Bedfordshire Police.

Background

Being part of a small 'rural' police force where resources are often very limited Community Policing is often used as a necessity rather than a nicety, I am looking at how community policing can improve our relationships with our local communities especially in a time where austerity means that police forces are more stretched than ever before.

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be initially be required to complete an online survey, once I have looked at the results of this I may be in contact to arrange a face to face interview to look further into reasoning behind the answers given.

To participate in this research you must:

Be a serving police officer, or member of police staff, ideally in a community based role.

Procedures

You will be asked to complete an online survey, following this I may ask that you take part in a face to face interview, at a time and location convenient for you to look further into your views.

Feedback

There will be no official feedback provided but I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have either prior to or following your involvement

Confidentiality

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Carly McIlwain, After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed).

Dissemination of results

<Explain, if known, how the results of the study will be published or otherwise disseminated>

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions?

Please contact Carly McIlwain on 07983431154 or carly.mcilwain@canterbury.ac.uk.

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher: Carly McIlwain

Contact details:

Address:

> 3 Sheering Grove
>
> Bradville
>
> Milton Keynes
>
> Buckinghamshire
>
> MK137BD

Tel:

> 07983431154

Email:

> Carly.mcilwain@canterbury.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Person taking consent   Date   Signature

(if different from researcher)

_____   _____   _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

Copies: 1 for participant

                 1 for researcher

Carly McIlwain

Dear Carly

Re: Research Project with Kathryn Holloway

I am writing to you following your Research interview with the then Police Crime Commissioner Kathryn Holloway in February 2021.

I can confirm that for the purpose of this interview PCC Holloway waived her anonymity.

If you require any further information please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Clare Kelly

Chief Executive
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
For Bedfordshire

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