How the University through its Police Student Volunteer scheme helped develop employability skills to prepare students for a career in the police service.

Bronwen Victoria Williams

Supervised by: Professor Howard Riley and Dr Steve Keen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the DPROF Doctorate in Professional Practice at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David

May 2024

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....02/07/24..

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....02/07/24...

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....02/07/24..

Abstract

Within Higher Education in the UK, there has been an increased drive to increase employability with the curriculum. The subject of graduate employability has been debated for over 25 years from the Dearing Report to the Wilson Review, through to the Advance HE Student Success Framework Series. Whilst student and graduate employability is a key area of development for universities and despite an increase in research in this area there has not been a 'one size fits all' model, and indeed there is a tendency for a more localised method of delivery from institution to institution. One such way of engaging students and developing not only generic employability skills, such as communication, team working and leadership skills, but also specialised skills relevant to certain industries, is to encourage students to volunteer within the industry either through work experience, placements, or more structured volunteer work schemes. This has led to many Higher Education Institution's developing and integrating learning and assessment tools within the curriculum and either embedding or 'bolting-on' work experience/placement opportunities. There is very little literature on the student's perspectives of these initiatives, and what does exist mainly focuses on students at the end of their studies or when they are just about to go into employment. There is limited literature on a student's retrospective opinion on whether such employability schemes really did prepare the student for the workplace. There is also limited literature that focusses on employability schemes helping to prepare students to go into the police service. This study expands and adds to the literature by identifying what factors the participants felt helped develop not only key generic employability skills but also industry specific skills needed for their current role and what experiences helped prepare them for the reality of

working in policing. Eleven participants who had volunteered as police student volunteers were interviewed synchronously online, using semi structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data giving rise to five main themes 1. Pre-university experience, 2. Motivation and benefits of volunteering, 3. Challenges and Barriers to volunteering, 4. Academic Experience 5. Skills needed for the workplace. Improvements to the way placements can be embedded into programmes and the importance of working with industry to develop such schemes are offered as recommendations from the findings of this study. Creating a structured reflective assessment to be used alongside the placement or volunteering, to ensure that students can reflect, evaluate and articulate how the experience has helped develop their skills to an employer were also suggestions to emerge from the findings. Enhancements on how to improve the volunteering experience for students wishing to go into policing and how to better prepare them for joining the service also became apparent. The small-scale nature of the study can be seen as a limitation; however, this does give rise to the opportunity for further research in this area, for a larger scale project using a more substantial sample group.

Acknowledgments

There are two people who deserve my sincerest thanks and gratitude for their advice, guidance, and support in helping me write this thesis and they are my amazing supervision team, Howard Riley and Steve Keen. You have been amazingly patient, encouraging and have helped me tremendously and I can't thank you enough.

I must thank all the participants for agreeing to be involved with this project and for giving up their time to share their reflections with me, especially as you all work shift work and have very busy lives. I have loved hearing about how well you are all doing, and I am so proud of your achievements and hope that in some small way we were able to help and support you to get to where you are now.

To my family, I love you all. A massive thank you for all your support and having the faith that I could actually do this. Thank you for allowing me the time to get this done and giving me the space to study. To my parents, Jayne and Jerry, thank you for your continued encouragement, to my siblings, Iestyn and Rhianydd, your turn to keep up! To my beautiful girls, Abi and Charlie, I hope I am setting the right example and to my wonderful husband Steve, a massive thank you for being so supportive in everything I do and always allowing me to reach for the stars.

Contents page

Contents

List of Figures, Tables and Appendices

Figures

Tables

Appendix

Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce this study and its contribution to the employability in higher education agenda and the topic of whether through a police volunteer scheme the University helped prepare its students for the workplace. It will explore what is meant by employability in higher education and the role higher education institutions play in embedding employability into its curriculum or providing opportunities for placements, volunteering, or extracurricular activities. The focus will be on a police volunteer scheme set up by the University to help prepare students for future careers in policing and then to gain insight into those students' retrospective feelings about the experience now that they are employed in the police service. Within this chapter, context will be given around the scheme and the students who participated, background to the research topic, the aims of the study, the research questions and the epistemological position of the researcher will all be provided.

1.1 Setting the scene.

The research focusses on the extent to which Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have embedded employability initiatives into the curriculum of their programmes and the development over the last 25 years of published frameworks to assist HEIs in this undertaking. HEIs have taken different approaches to how employability initiatives have been introduced, whether it is embedded in the curriculum or whether it is an added extra to a course. However very little has been written about initiatives that prepare students to enter the police service.

This study captures the reflections and feelings of 11 graduates (from here on known as the participants) from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), who were studying for a BA Public Services degree, and undertook volunteering as Police Student Volunteers (PSV) or worked as Special Police Constables (SC) with South Wales Police (SWP), alongside their studies and as part of a level 5 credit-bearing work experience module. Demographics of the group consisted of 5 females, 5 males and 1 non-binary from graduating classes 2015 to 2020.

Within this study there is an exploration of how the participants felt the volunteer experience helped prepare them for going into the police service. Key employability skills and insights that the participants consider are needed to work in the police service now they are in the job, will be identified. These will then be aligned to the employability initiatives that UWTSD has already embedded into the curriculum and as extra-activities, to help support and develop students aspiring to join the police. Different definitions of employability skills, the published literature and previous initiatives that have been implemented will be considered. Findings from the study will highlight the benefits of the police volunteer scheme, created jointly by the university and the police force, on preparing students for entering the police service.

1.1.1 The Volunteer Scheme and PSVs

In collaboration with South Wales Police the University created a student police volunteer scheme originally set up in 2012, when the Swansea campus was Swansea Metropolitan University, prior to the merger with UWTSD, therefore the scheme was named METPOL (this was an amalgamated title of Swansea **Met**ropolitan University **Pol**ice Volunteer Scheme). The scheme involved students being vetted by South Wales Police, then the University's staff contact would liaise

with police officers and the Safer Swansea Partnership, to resource police initiatives with the volunteers.

The volunteers were involved in initiatives such as crime prevention walks around highly populated student residential areas in Swansea giving advice and guidance to students about home safety and crime protection, supporting the police during patrol walks on Halloween and Bonfire Night, and handing out leaflets to warn people about Cold Callers. In 2014 the University was involved in helping to set up the Help Point in Swansea, which is an alcohol treatment centre in the city centre, that is open Wednesday and Saturday nights and key Fridays and Sundays throughout the year 10pm to 4am. The Help Point offers triage treatment for minor injuries and looks after intoxicated and vulnerable in the night time economy. It is one of seven such schemes in the UK, including Cardiff, Chester, Hereford, Exeter, Chelmsford and Clapham. (Welsh Government, 2016, MAKE Associates, 2017, Local Government Association, 2019). It was set up using Home Office Innovation funding and is a jointly funded scheme between the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioners Office, the Welsh Ambulance Trust, and Swansea Bay University Health Board. When the scheme was set up the METPOL volunteers had an integral role into the running of the scheme written into the terms of reference. Their role is to patrol Wind Street in Swansea to look out for intoxicated and vulnerable people, respond to calls from the licensed premises when there is someone in need of treatment and help from the Help Point, and to take people back to the Help Point to be treated. Swansea's Wind Street is at the heart of the city's night time economy, where most of the centre's pubs, restaurants, bars and club are located. The area has become a predominately pedestrianised area to encourage visitors to the area to enjoy a family friendly safe place both during the day and in the night (Swansea Council, 2021).

Since its inception the Help Point has helped approx. 1000 people a year, reduced admissions to A&E from the city centre, with only 14% of those treated needing to be taken to hospital, reduced the number of ambulance calls coming to the city centre and reduced violent crime in the city on those nights (SW PCCO, 2015).

The police student volunteer scheme proved to be so successful and a vital resource for the police in Swansea, that management of the students was moved from university staff to a designated Student Liaison Police officer in 2018 and the volunteers fell under the broader remit of the Police Student Volunteer or for the purpose of this thesis, PSVs (this is not to be confused with the wider Police Support Volunteer role), in line with the wider forces volunteer schemes. However, the collaborative relationships remain with the University and the police force, for the recruitment of the volunteers and support with training and duties. The PSVs remain a vital resource for the police and still play an integral part at the Help Point, which helps develop the students' key employability skills alongside their studies.

1.2 Background and Rationale for the Study

The subject of graduate employability has been debated for over 25 years from the Dearing Report (1997), the Wilson Review (2012), to the Higher Education Academy's Pedagogy for Employability (Pegg *et al*, 2012), and most recently Advance HE's (2024) Student Success Framework Series. Whilst student and graduate employability is a key area of development for universities, with an increase in research in this area there has not been a 'one size fits all' model, and indeed there is a tendency for a more localised method of delivery from institution to institution (Pegg *et al,* 2012). One such way of engaging students and developing not only generic employability skills, such as communication, team working and

leadership skills, but also specialised skills relevant to certain industries, is to encourage students to volunteer within the industry either through work experience, placements, or more structured volunteer work schemes (Crebert *et al,* 2004, Brooks & Youngson, 2016). This has led to many HEI's developing and integrating learning and assessment tools within the curriculum and either embedding or 'bolting-on' work experience/placement opportunities (Brewis & Holdsworth, 2011, Heyler & Lee, 2014, Lee, Foster & Snaith, 2016).

Key reviews on graduate employability, namely Tomlinson (2012), Lee *et al.* (2016), Holman & Richardson (2021) and Tight M. (2023) show a focus on student expectation on future career progression, especially in the current economic climate, where the number of graduate jobs is significantly lower than the number of graduates, and the cost of the higher education experience is increasing. Therefore, HEI's are integrating employability across curricula with a need to embed across subjects, using work-based components, as well as the use of specific employability modules. There is also a focus on strong collaborations with industry to develop employer focused initiatives (Minocha *et al,* 2017).

Despite the many studies in this area there is no single definition of employability. Yorke (2006, p8) defines it as "*a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment*". Saunders & Zuzel (2010) found that skills such as enthusiasm, dependability and team working were ranked higher than subject knowledge skills by employers as needed on entry to a role. This is supported by the CBI (2018) where employers stated aptitude and readiness for work with resilience, communication, and problem-solving among their top priorities when recruiting. The CBI (2019, p7) use the phrase "*work ready*" which encompasses character, knowledge and skills that make them fit

for the workplace. Dalrymple *et al.* (2021) discusses the achievement of specific skills, competences, and graduate attributes This theory is a continuous process of development for an employee, which for the purpose of this study is about embedding the development of potential employees whilst at university. Ritter *et al.* (2018) argues that universities must meet stakeholders' needs by better preparing students for the demands for soft skills by employers such as interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and communication skills, in order to meet the demands of constant change in industry. In support of this Saunders & Zusel (2010) found in their research that employers put less value on technical competence and a higher value on personal skills. Brooks (2012) writes that it is not possible to achieve a single definition due to the complex nature of skills and specific requirements and contextualisation needed by industry.

It was reported in the CBI (2018, p12) Education and Skills annual report, 'Educating for the Modern World', that 66% felt young people leaving school, college or university were not work ready, placing further pressure on Higher Education to address this issue. Indeed, due to the rising cost of higher education, students are investing in a university education to improve their employment prospects and expect a return for their money (Saunders & Zuzel, 2010).

Over the last nine years graduate recruitment has taken a significant hit firstly due to Brexit and then latterly due to COVID-19. According to High Fliers (2015) the levels of graduate employment had risen by 8.1% with graduate starting salaries reaching a median of £30,000. However, after Britain voted to leave the European Union in the summer of 2016 graduate recruitment fell by 4% and the salary median stayed at £30,000 (High Fliers, 2019). This figure was further hit by COVID-19 where employers cut their graduate recruitment by 15.1% in 2020, with some organisations

not taking any new graduates on in 2020. These unprecedently low numbers have created a lot of uncertainty about graduate recruitment for 2021 and beyond, although according to High Flier (2021) the Public Sector are predicted to be the largest recruiters of graduates in 2021, with approximately 5,400 vacancies for university-leavers. Skorková (2016) states the key competencies required for the public sector are motivation, teamwork, leadership, and time management.

From the current research there is a distinct lack of research that focusses on student perspectives of employability initiatives that have been implemented, those that do exist focus on their perspectives at the point of graduation and first gaining employment (Brooks & Youngson, 2016; Silva *et a,l* 2018). There are limited studies that focus on graduates' perspectives once in the job and their reflections on the university's employability initiatives and how well they prepared them for the workplace, and not any that focus on those wanting a career in the police service. The reason for a lack of literature that focuses specifically on policing may well be down to the fact that it is a relatively new area in HE due to the College of Policing creating a licensed degree programme. Whilst Police science programmes have traditionally existed, the new degrees have a focus on professional policing and preparing students to enter the police service, thus making this a unique area of study.

Thompson (2017) stated that in terms of placements, work experience or volunteering, there were obvious courses that lend themselves to be able to offer such opportunities, such as business, hospitality, sport, health and social care programmes. According to UCAS (2024) there are 44 providers in the UK that offer policing degrees, however, there is limited research in initiatives that offer to develop

employability skills for students wanting to go into policing (Pepper & McGrath, 2019), and even less on any initiatives for students to gain experience in this area.

1.3 Aim of the Study

Therefore, there is a clear gap in the literature in this area, which this study aims to fill. The aim of this study is to investigate how the University, through its Police Student Volunteer scheme, helped develop employability skills to prepare students for a career in the police service. The focus was to research past students who had joined a police service, it transpired that this would predominately be linked to South Wales Police as all but two of the participants had joined South Wales Police after graduation, with one transferring back to Wales after completing their probation, it was not intentional to just focus on one force. Through the interviews the study aims to find out from past students how they felt the scheme had prepared them for the workplace and to offer recommendations on improvements to such schemes and further research into this area.

The study contributes to extending the research on employability by adding to previous studies but with the focus being on students studying with the aim of joining the police. This will be done by interviewing past students to collect their reflections and feelings about the volunteer schemes they undertook whilst at university, to gain insights into how they felt it developed their employability skills and prepared them for the workplace now they are in the job. It will also gain an understanding of what they feel are essential skills to do the job they currently do, and whether these skills match the current literature on employability skills and whether they were developed during their time at university.

The University is now offering the Professional Policing Degree (PPD) which has been licensed by the College of Policing, originally as part of the Policing Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) which now comes under the new Police Constable Entry Routes (PCER), to prepare students to enter the police service. The findings of this study will be used to further develop this programme and its employability initiatives and provide an opportunity for further research to evaluate the implementation of such recommendations. It is hoped that this study's findings will be a useful contribution to the area of higher education employability research as well as informing other providers delivering policing programmes.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the aim of the study, in finding out how the university, through its police student volunteer scheme developed employability skills to prepare the students for a career in the police service, the following three questions were formulated.

RQ1: What core skills do graduates really need for the workplace?

RQ2: In what ways did the police student volunteer scheme help develop these skills?

RQ3: What most helped the participants once they were in the workplace and what is needed to better prepare policing graduates for the workplace?

The findings and conclusions will contribute to the limited existing knowledge in the area of employability initiatives in higher education for students wanting to go into policing.

Flick (2018) stated that for a successful research project the research question should be clear and well formulated, with an idea of what is and what is not important to the research. There should be clarity in the question and a strong understanding of the existing literature around the research area. Cresswell & Cresswell (2018, p134) suggest that the question should begin with '*What or why to convey an open or emerging design"* and they suggest focusing the study at the beginning on a single phenomenon. In this study the first question allows for setting the scene and establishing a grounding of what employability skills are. The second and third are more specific and focus on the volunteer scheme and how the participants described their experience and what they felt they had gained from it.

Bryam *et al,* (2021) described any social research as a way of searching for answers, of having noticed a gap or inconsistencies in the literature around a particular social phenomenon which generates the desire to formulate questions to address the gap or inconsistencies. Within this study a gap has been identified in the literature of studies that review students' perceptions of employability initiatives after they have gone into practice. This study aims to gain a greater understanding of the graduates' perceptions, now that they are in the job and have a better understanding of the role and the skills needed for that role, of how the police student volunteer scheme developed their employability skills to prepare them for a career in the police service, what elements of the scheme most helped them develop their skills and what could be improved. The analysis of the findings seeks to fill the gap that has been identified regarding employability initiatives aimed specifically at those wanting to enter the police service, and what specific skills and preparation are needed for that career path. Additionally, it would provide information to other institutions on

what skills students wanting to go into policing need to develop whilst at university to better prepare them for entering the profession.

1.5 Researcher reflections

My personal interest in the subject area of embedding employability in higher education was influenced by personal and professional experiences.

My personal relationship to this research area is discussed in detail in this reflexivity section and will be written in the first person.

In 2012 I completed a master's degree with a focus on preparing law graduates for practice, and what the role of the university was in this endeavour. From that research I was able to take lessons learnt and apply it to my own practice as a university lecturer. For law students, the opportunity to gain vacation placements and work experience in law firms is much easier than for other programmes such as policing.

As a law lecturer, having worked in the local area, and being a sitting Magistrate, I was very well connected to the local law firms and was able to secure and promote placements for law students, the practice of summer placements is well established and therefore it was easy to embed a work experience module into this programme.

However, I also taught and then programme-managed the BA Public Services, with most students studying this programme wanting to go into the police service.

The process for police recruitment is a complex process with a number of elements that need to be satisfied before becoming a police officer. The initial application process starts with a Situational Judgement Test and Behavioural Styles Questionnaire (BSQ), and if candidates are successful, they then have to go onto

complete an assessment day, which involves scenario role play, an interview, and written and mathematical tests. I was finding that many of the students were not getting past the situational judgment tests and if they did, they were not passing the assessment centre, as they did not have sufficient knowledge about policing or life experience, nor were they able to articulate their experiences in the interview. These were the initial stages which would then have had led to the interview and pre-employment checks.

Therefore, I decided to do two things. Firstly in 2013 I worked alongside South Wales Police and the University of South Wales to create a collaborative partnership to deliver the CKP, which we did by embedding the Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) into the Public Service degree as a policing pathway, using the police's licence to assess it. In 2015 we gained accreditation by Skills for Justice to deliver the CKP ourselves. The CKP was introduced in 2013 as a pre-employment qualification for the 42 police forces in England and Wales which was a level 3, 23 credit qualification covering essential policing knowledge. This was a standalone qualification that potential police candidates could pay to do prior to recruitment, however we decided to embed into our curriculum which provided an extra benefit to the students and was a considerable saving for them. The CKP was superseded by the Policing Education Qualification Framework (PEQF), which provided three distinct routes into police: the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP) and the BSc Professional Policing Degree. This did not come into effect until 2019 and therefore is not considered in this research project, due to all students starting higher education before this change in entry. As a matter of note the PEQF has been further developed to include a 4th route

which is not an accredited qualification and therefore the framework is now known as the Police Constable Entry Route (PCER).

Secondly, I identified that they needed to get some experience and gain insight into policing. I worked with South Wales Police to set up the police student volunteer scheme, and then was part of the team to set up the Swansea Help Point and designed a clear role for the student volunteers, which launched in 2014.

Once this scheme was launched, we started to see the students being recruited into the police on their first application. However, we can always learn, and I really wanted to know if the scheme we had set up, had really helped prepare them for the job.

Throughout the whole study I was acutely aware of my own bias, I had been involved in setting up the whole scheme, I had been the driving force to have a student volunteer scheme in Swansea. I had worked with the South Wales Police to create opportunities for student volunteers to be involved in, I had gone out on all the patrols in the first instance so that I could see what the students would be required to do. I was part of the working group to set up the Help Point and worked all the first shifts to make sure that the students were fully embedded into the scheme. Using my master's research findings, I was trying to embed employability opportunities for my students wishing to go into the public sector and in the case wanting to go into the police. My master's research found that the more experience students had prior to entering the workplace the more developed their key employability skills were, as a result in my mind if the students volunteered as police student volunteers, then it would only follow that they would be better prepared. This mindset I had to recognise would be the bias I was entering into this project with. Therefore, I needed to make

sure that I actually listened to what the participants were telling me. When I began interviewing, I had to make sure that I didn't lead the questions too much and let the participants talk about their experiences and how they felt about it and listen to what they thought they had learnt from the volunteering. As the interviews went on, I was very surprised by how much credit was being given to the academic modules in helping develop their employability skills, such as communication and teamworking, through the group work and presentation assessments that had been embedded throughout the curriculum. The study has shown me what the participants felt was important to them, such as the outdoor activity modules and the fitness classes, despite them admitting they didn't like them at the time, they reflected on how important they were in developing their skills and preparing them for the physicality of their current roles.

Whilst I have undertaken qualitative research before and used interviews, I have learnt from this study the importance of consistency in asking questions and to make sure that in every interview the same questions are asked, in order to keep on track. While it is easy in an interview with people known to the researcher to get carried away and go off track, a researcher needs to have answers to the same questions if they are going to be able to evaluate the data afterwards.

This research has enabled me to continue my research into employability in HE and make sure that going forward, through programme validation, there are modules that give credit for volunteering embedded into all levels, so that students get the opportunity to continually gain professional experience whilst they study.

1.6 Organisation of the Study

This introductory chapter sets the scene for this study by outlining its purpose, the background, and the context for the research, in order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the study, and aid in the comprehension of the findings.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive literature review of current research defining employability that has helped identify the gap in knowledge that this study seeks to address. It will include the role of HEIs and the frameworks that have been designed to assist HEIs in embedding employability into the curriculum and the impact of placements, volunteering, or extra-curricular activities on developing these skills and preparing graduates for the workplace. The literature review has thus enabled the research questions to be developed which then as shaped the method of enquiry that is needed to achieve the aims of the study, leading to the next chapter that addresses the domain of Methodology. This third chapter details the methodological approach taken within this study and the justification for the ontological and epistemological position. Information about the participants, the sample and data collection procedure are also set out. The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study and the five themes identified through the thematic analysis. While the fifth chapter provides a discussion of the findings by analysing them considering the current literature and providing the evidence for the submissions in the final chapter. The final chapter presents the conclusions that have been generated from the study and which give rise to the contribution to new knowledge within the study of employability and its place in higher education. Also included in this chapter is a conclusion of the study as a whole, mentioning limitations and providing recommendations for further study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review and discuss existing literature, on the theory and previous studies, surrounding employability skills and their place in Higher Education (HE). A systematic literature review was conducted focusing on what is meant by employability and the role of higher education in embedding employability skills into its curriculum. The resultant literature is discussed in this chapter and provides an overview of employability in higher education. This chapter explores the development of employability definitions before presenting literature focusing on the role of higher education in embedding employability into HE delivery. The middle section shall then discuss the research looking at the creation of frameworks for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to use to support the delivery of employability skills in HE. The research will also include literature that gives definitions of the core skills required in public sector roles such as policing. The latter section of the review will present methods and results of how HEIs have tried to implement ways to embed employability skills into curriculum, and how students have responded to these methods and their reflections on how helpful they have been in getting them ready for the workplace. Gaps identified in the literature, especially around employability initiatives for students wishing to go into a career in policing will be highlighted.

When undertaking research, a comprehensive literature review is a must to:

> demonstrate essential theories, arguments and controversies in the field and highlight the ways in which research in the area has been undertaken by others (Gray, 2018, p98).

A literature review according to Fink (2010, p3)

> is a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners.

According to Werkmeister Rozas & Klein (2010, p1) a literature review continues "*to offer a valid and important way to identify existing patterns and gaps"*, such gaps in the literature is what this study will then aim to address.

The main field of interest of this literature review is employability within a higher education setting. A review of two main databases was conducted using Google Scholar and the University online library to find literature on employability in higher education. The Advance HE website was also used as an area for searching. The keyword search terms were a combination of 'the role of higher education', 'employability in HE', 'Graduate attributes', 'Student volunteering' In addition to the electronic search, secondary searching occurred from the reference lists of the primary articles identified. This search included an initial reading of the title and read through of the abstract and conclusion to review the value of the article in relation to the need of this study. If an article seemed to be of value, then further reading of the body of the text was undertaken.

A basic search on the University Library for 'Employability in HE' produced 11,818 articles and 274 textbooks, to narrow that search the filter to include only those relating to Higher Education was used, which reduced the search to 2,431. Further filters were used to narrow the field, such as Universities, graduates and UK. Using 'Graduate Attributes in UK HE' as another key word such revealed 230 articles and was refined down to Higher education which took it to 81 articles. Further articles

were excluded if they were deemed of no relevance or were not specific enough to university graduates or furthered definitions of the key terms.

2.2 Defining Employability:

It is now evident from the many sources researched that having a degree is no longer enough for employers (Tomlinson, 2008; Smith, Ferns,& Russell, 2016) and that they are seeking graduates who possess an array of additional core skills and competencies. Bhardwa (2021) states that on interviewing top recruitment managers from Jaguar Land Rover, PWC and Siemens the key things that employers are looking for on top of qualifications are problem-solving skills, time-management, good communication skills, team-working, enthusiasm, motivation and being able to bring fresh ideas to the table.

Defining employability is not so straight forward and over the last 30 years, there have been an abundance of definitions, that include graduates gaining a set of skills that would make them more likely to gain employment in their chosen field as they have developed a set of skills that employers desire (Dearing Report, 1997, Yorke, 2006, Billing, 2007). Harvey (2003) stretches this further to include a development of critical reflection that would further enhance learning, others see it as including career management and focus (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), which include CV and presence building, whilst Bowden *et al* (2000) want to prepare students to be good citizens and actively contribute to society. This is supported by Cole & Tibby (2013) who assert that it is not just about preparing students to go into initial employment but to develop a foundation to build lasting careers and participate in society.

Becker (1962) seems to be one of the first to directly link on-the-job training or development of skills whilst learning to an increase in productivity and career

progression and earning capability. Becker defined this as Human Capital Theory (HCT), the investment of training in people to increase their knowledge and skills, to have a future impact on their earnings, progression, and opportunities. Ben-Porath (1967) supports Becker's findings relating to training and development of skills as being an investment in oneself, he purports that "*People make most of their investments in themselves when they are young*" (p352). The studies further show that although investments in health and nutrition have an impact on self-development, education consistently emerges as the prime human capital investment for empirical analysis and from those studies it is clear that they surmise that education combined with productivity skills, (human capital investment) increasingly improves the economic capabilities of people (Shultz, 1971; Sweetman, 1996; Marginson, 2019). The idea of investing not only in the education of people but also developing professionally focussed core skills underpins the notion of employability.

Yorke & Knight (2006, p8), defined employability as:

> A set of achievements – skills, understandings, and personal attributes – that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy.

Pegg *et al.* (2012) sees this definition as being in two parts. The first being that the gaining of employment is a graduate outcome that can be measured and published by universities to promote their courses. The second being employability which is about the knowledge and skills acquired that contribute to lifelong learning and career development. Glover *et al* (2002) support these two parts, with the first being '*graduateness*' which is the effect that completing higher education has on an

individuals' skills, knowledge, and attitudes, and the second being '*employability*' which is the enhanced capacity to secure employment (Glover *et al,* 2002, p294).

In an attempt to define what is meant by employability skills with a review of the existing literature at the time, Andrews & Higson (2008, p413) created the following list of skills identified as needed by employers:

- Professionalism; -
- Reliability; -
- The ability to cope with uncertainty; -
- The ability to work under pressure; -
- The ability to plan and think strategically; -
- The capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking.
- Good written and verbal communication skills; -
- Information and Communication Technology skills.
- Creativity and self-confidence; -
- Good self-management and time-management skills.
- A willingness to learn and accept responsibility.

It is important to recognise the difference between the words; employment, being employable and employability, the distinction is important in how the labour market sees graduates. Being employable and in employment is about specific skills needed for a specific job such as a lawyer having specific legal professional skills or an IT employee being competent in databases or coding (Marginson, 2019). Whereas employability is broader and helps develop skills not directly related to current employment status, but to prepare for and be transferable to any industry, it's about their potential to get a job (Menon, Argyropoulou & Stylianou, 2018: Artess *et al,* 2017) which affirms the list that Andrews & Higgens suggested in 2008 and Becker's HCT in 1962.

In Wales the Government (2022) published its Plan for Employability and Skills which seeks to signal clear policy and investment priorities, focus activity of partners to

leave a positive legacy for future generations. The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 establishes the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER), which will replace the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) from August 2024. The aim for CTER is:

- Take a whole system approach to research and innovation funding with an ability to provide funding to a wide range of HE and FE institutions.
- Protect the interests of learners, ensuring vocational and academic learning are equally valued.
- Align education and training more closely with the needs of employers.
- Monitor performance and governance whilst protecting the academic freedom of institutions.
- Monitor and promote improvement in education and training providers.
- Increase the availability of Welsh-medium tertiary education and to encourage individuals to learn through the medium of Welsh. (Gov.Wales, 2024)

The Welsh government recognises there is a need for HEIs to adapt to the changing needs of the economy and the increased demand for highly skilled workers. Learning at HE level needs to provide opportunities to develop higher skills and put an emphasis on vocational education and training as a route into higher learning. There seems to be a push to merge and align further and higher education together with the focus being the creation of industry driven programmes and routes for learning (Gov.Wales, 2015).

However, a word of caution, universities can only do so much, as ultimately, they are not actually employing the students, it is the employer who does this, a fact that should not be overlooked. It is important to bear in mind that external factors such as type and demand for certain jobs, are not something universities have control over (McCowan, 2015; Hartmann & Komljenovic, 2020).

It is clear that employability is a vast and broad subject area and the research that exists on employability can also be observed from different perspectives not just focusing on graduates and student employability, but looking at employability skills

more widely, from a behavioural point of view that is applied to anyone entering employment, not just from a student perspective (Fugate Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004). However, this review will focus on student employability.

The Skills and Productivity Board (SPB), on behalf of the Department of Education was set the task of identifying the current and future skills needed and identified core transferable skills as being communication skills, digital and data skills, application of knowledge skills, people skills, and mental processes (SPB, 2022). What this report also found was that these skills were of higher importance in highly skilled occupations rather than in low-skilled manual occupations, thus reinforcing the need for these skills to be developed alongside higher education learning. Recent research places a greater focus on the need for critical thinking skills, a skill that is considered something to be developed at a higher level in HE, and an attribute associated with graduate level thinking (Desai *et al,* 2016, Stone *et al,* 2017, Cloete, 2018).

The literature suggests that employability is not just about key skills and is more complex, it captures both academic intelligence and practical intelligence and that these are not just learnt in education but is a lifelong learning journey for a person throughout their career (Yorke & Knight, 2006).

The many skills attributed to employability and the literature supporting this have been taken across a variety of discipline areas, but there is a lack of literature that focusses on the skills needed for careers within the public sector and specifically for this study, policing, there is a clear gap in the literature regarding this field, and what the role of HEIs is to work with organisations like police forces to create such initiatives.

2.3 The Role of Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

There has been much written about the role of universities and its obligations to students, whilst maintaining the credibility of higher education status which includes a commitment to innovation in teaching and learning alongside research excellence. Some argue that the main role of higher education is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and there are those who contend the notion that its purpose is for research and development alongside the development of a skilled workforce (Kettis *et al,* 2013; Rich, 2015). Tight (2023, p564) argues that is it naive to think that a university's role is develop the "*individual thinker within a disciplinary perspective*", it is also not a "final *preparation for a lifetime of productive work*" or "*the final stage of pre-career education*" (Chi Hou *et al,* 2021, p294), and there needs to be a sensible balance between the two.

For students it is divided into those who see it as a route to learning and acquiring knowledge and those who see it as a training ground for the workplace (Artess, Hooley, & Mellors-Bourne, 2017). Speight *et al* (2013) argues employability is seen as a threat by many stakeholders to discipline specific learning. Tight (2023) suggests that the scope and strength of the discipline or subject being studied gets lost when universities focus on employability.

O'Byrne & Bond (2014) think there is an imbalance between the role of universities to impart knowledge and wisdom with the competing needs of stakeholders who see role of HEIs to create employable graduates. While Barkas & Amstrong (2022, p51) argue that there is an "*emphasis on graduates being 'employable' over the value of the knowledge and social skills gained from a higher education*". This creates a challenging environment for universities who must meet the competing demands of a

complex range of stakeholders including governments, employers, students, and researchers (Tomlinson, 2008, McCowan, 2015; Barkas & Amstrong, 2022, Tight, 2023). O'Byrne & Bond (2014) suggest that the three competing demands for universities, from employers, academics and students, create a trialogue, that although compete with each other, at the core have the same values, that creates the modern university.

According to Boden & Nedeva (2010, p37) the government places greater pressure on universities to embed employability:

> Traditionally, universities regarded graduate employment as an aspect of institutions' relationship with the labour market, and one where they enjoyed a significant degree of discretion. Now, employability is a performative function of universities, shaped and directed by the state, which is seeking to supplant labour markets.

Hartmann & Komljenovic (2021, p723) support this view and see the government's influence on the changing focus of higher education as a;

> Political agenda that wants to redefine what counts as the core environment for universities and to strengthen the influence of employers and labour market needs on higher education.

Gourlay & Stevenson, (2017) contend that the move to embed employability into the curriculum is driven by the commercialisation of higher education, with the introduction of fees, students want to see a return on their investment.

> This has arguably further entrenched the highly problematic notion of the student as fee-paying 'customer' seeking value for money, engaged in a financial transaction with the university for private gain in terms of employability as an individual. The degree – and to an extent the graduate – is cast as a product, with universities forced to act as competitors fighting for market share (Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017, p391).

Students are paying more for their education and therefore expect a greater return be it in academic quality, employability or the facilities offered to them (Grove, 2015).

Traditionally student success was associated with academic success, the achieving

of good degrees (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2018) which is one of the many measures used when ranking universities. However, for most students they are now more interested in attaining a full-time graduate-level job in their chosen field within months of graduation, indeed students seem to have a much narrower definition of employability, seeing it as a means to an end in being able to find a job (Tymon, 2013).

Potential applicants are making their decision on what university to apply to on the many lists of rankings of universities. These lists are compiled from publicly available data, all government-funded academic institutions in the UK must submit student-related data to HESA (the Higher Education Statistics Agency). HESA collects data on a multitude of student information, one being graduate outcomes. The Graduate Outcomes survey is one such survey which asks all graduates who completed a higher education course in the UK to take part in the survey 15 months after they have finished studying. The survey wants to find out if the graduate is in employment, has undertaken post-graduate study or doing something else, and it wants to establish how their studies contributed to what they are doing (Graduate Outcomes, 2022).

While students pick which university they wish to attend for a number of reasons, with the cost of living so high, there is now a greater emphasis on getting employed after graduation, which increases the pressure on universities to increase employability and employment opportunities.

This is not a new concept, the Robbins report (1963, p150) stated that one purpose of higher education was to:

Provide varied education of high quality, both to satisfy national needs, so far as these can be estimated, and to fit young people to take their place in an increasingly complex social and economic structure.

However, it also held the contradictory view that vocational focused education should remain at a training college level rather than at university level.

In the intervening years since the Robbins report, there has been much change in how the role of universities are viewed and by the 1990s as outlined in the Dearing report (1997, p130), higher education institutions should make sure that:

…learning should be increasingly responsive to employment needs and include the development of general skills, widely valued in employment.

This was further endorsed by the Department of Business and Innovation and Skills (BIS) who stated that universities are important mechanisms for generating and preserving, disseminating, and transforming knowledge into wider social and economic benefits (Higher Ambitions, 2009). The report identified a critical need for strong relationships between universities and employers. Rich (2015) contends that higher education must either increase a student's earning capability or be the vehicle to increased economic contribution or perform an essential social function. Collini (2012, p197) writes that universities play an important role in its research contribution, but due to changes in funding, this contribution will be done by the larger universities, those '*at the upper end of the reputational hierarchy*' with the vocationally focused courses resting with those universities less favoured. Research has shown that there is a marked difference between pre- and post-92 universities in terms of employability focus (Brewis & Holdsworth, 2011: Heyler & Lee, 2014: Lee, Foster & Snaith, 2016).

It is also important to note that it will depend on the subject being studied as to what extent employability is embedded into the curriculum, some subjects naturally lend

themselves to be able to include practice-based assessments, include placements, and use of scenario-based practicals to demonstrate theory into practice. Jackson & Tomlinson (2022) found in a study of students across a variety of subject areas that those studying Arts/Humanities had fewer opportunities for practical work experience. It would seem obvious that subjects such as business, hospitality, sport and health and social care naturally lend themselves to being able to offer placements. Universities offering these courses usually engage with industry to provide placements, as this has historically been common practice for these subjects and those industries rely to some extent on internships/placements to boast resources (Thompson, 2017). There is limited research on how universities create opportunities to develop employability for courses such as policing, and how universities engage with the police to develop such schemes. The research seems to also highlight the need for and the importance of industry engagement for successful initiatives.

2.4 Industry engagement in developing employability in HEIs.

Much has been said about the need for balance between the demands and needs of academics in higher education, the aspirations of the students and the expectations of employers. Therefore, one would expect there to be high levels of collaboration and cooperation between universities and industry to develop curriculum to ensure that the required skills and competencies are embedded. In research undertaken by Bolden *et al* (2009) which reviewed 27 case studies of HE-employer engagement initiatives, it found that there was disparity between the approaches HEIs took in the form and type of engagement they had with industry. The motivations for employers to work with universities can be seen as the need to *" improve the supply of graduates and enhance productivity and/or ways of working"* (Bolden *et al,* 2009) or

simply as a recruitment channel (Suleman, Videira, & Araújo, 2021), which for integration and collaboration is unsatisfactory for consistent and successful initiatives to thrive.

A report by UKES (2009) stated that there was a need to involve employers in the development of curriculum, to draw on the expertise and authority of employers to develop content, to engage with them and bring them into the classroom and aid in providing placements for the students. The report commented on the fact that while there are generic employability skills identified for all professions, to become relevant to a chosen profession there is a need for students to experience the culture, style and attitude of that particular workplace. Therefore, it is crucial students gain experience in the workplace to learn more about the profession and prepare them for practice, which requires close collaboration with the employer. Bolden *et al* (2010, p12) further found that employer engagement in developing employability opportunities needed to be integral to the planning and development and not a '*bolt on'* or separate activity.

Research undertaken by Poon & Brownlow (2015) further supported the needed for integrated employer engagement, they identified the need for a larger role for employers to play in curriculum design, which includes providing practical experience for students and being involved with lectures and workshops. A Portuguese research project by Suleman, Videira, & Araújo (2021), whilst supported the need for employer engagement identified a number of barriers to a seamless integration of employer collaboration, these included differences in organisational goals and culture between the employers and universities and the acknowledged trade-off between costs and benefits. Highlighting the need for compromise within the collaboration between employers and universities in terms of the language and goal setting and also a

focus on what the costs are to this engagement for both parties. Currently there is little research available evidencing how police forces work with universities, to develop opportunities for students to gain insight into the profession and to help prepare them for a career in policing. This study hopes to address this issue and enhance the literature.

From the limited research in this area of employer engagement with higher education, there is clearly a need for this engagement and there are many positive benefits to students from this engagement, in terms of a greater understanding of specific professional understanding, and more work-based class-based learning. However there needs to be an understanding of the different cultures and practices of both parties and a desire for compromise and further collaboration, with a clear understanding of the cost and benefits to both stakeholders.

2.5 Employability Frameworks:

It has been recognised by the literature that student and graduate employability is a key priority for universities, however despite an increase in studies there has not been a 'one size fits all' model, and indeed there is a tendency for a more localised method of delivery from institution to institution (Pegg *et al,* 2012). Indeed, Knight & Yorke (2003, p2) reflected that:

> The complexity of employability and the variety that exists in curricula in UK higher education mean that no single, ideal, prescription for the embedding of employability can be provided. Embedding has to be undertaken with reference to the curricular context.

The need for consistency and to push the employability agenda has led to a number of models and frameworks to be developed.

In the creation of their USEM model of employability (Understanding, Skilful Practices, Efficacy and Metacognition) Knight & Yorke (2003) recognised the role of students, academics, and industry in the creation of sustainable graduate employability, which develops subject specific knowledge matched with professional skills needed for practice.
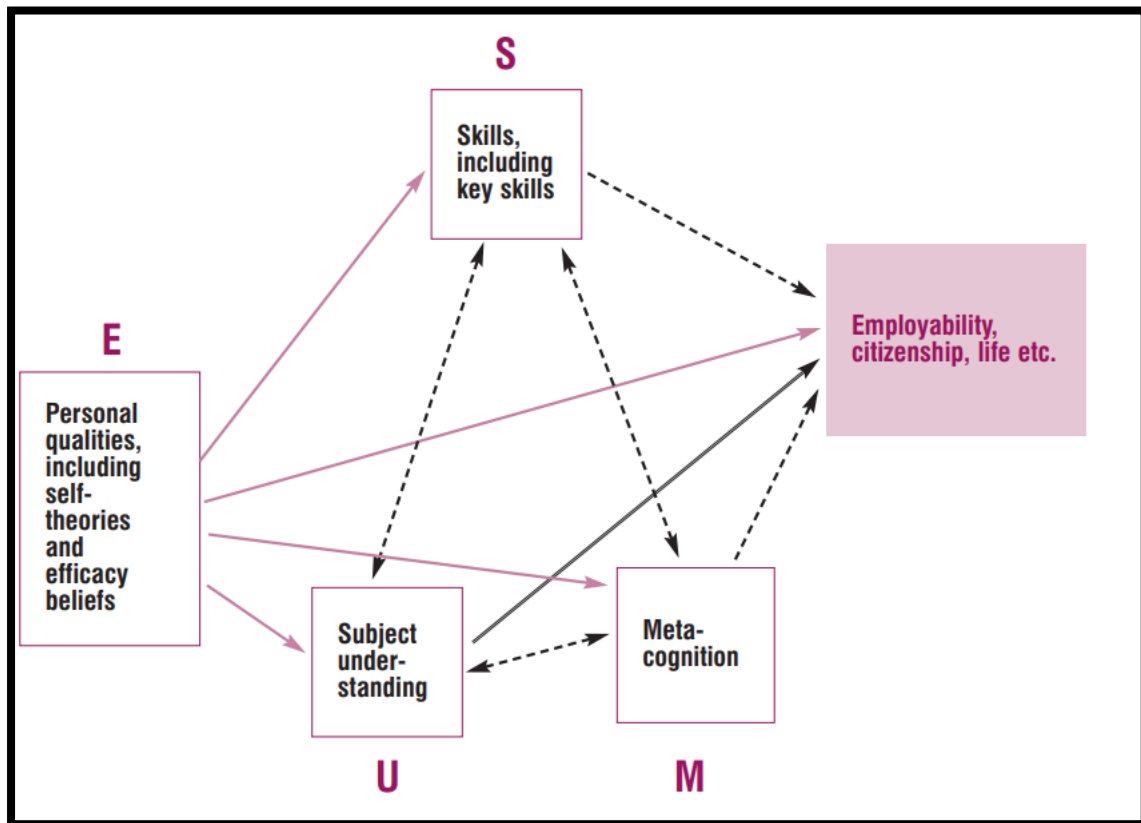
Figure 1: USEM model of employability (Knight & Yorke, 2003)

Dacre Pool & Sewell (2007) put forward the CareerEDGE model of Graduate Employability which they claimed was more accessible in explaining what was meant by employability than the USEM model. This model explained that for a student to gain a successful career after university then they needed to show; development learning, experience (work & life), degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, generic skills, and emotional intelligence.
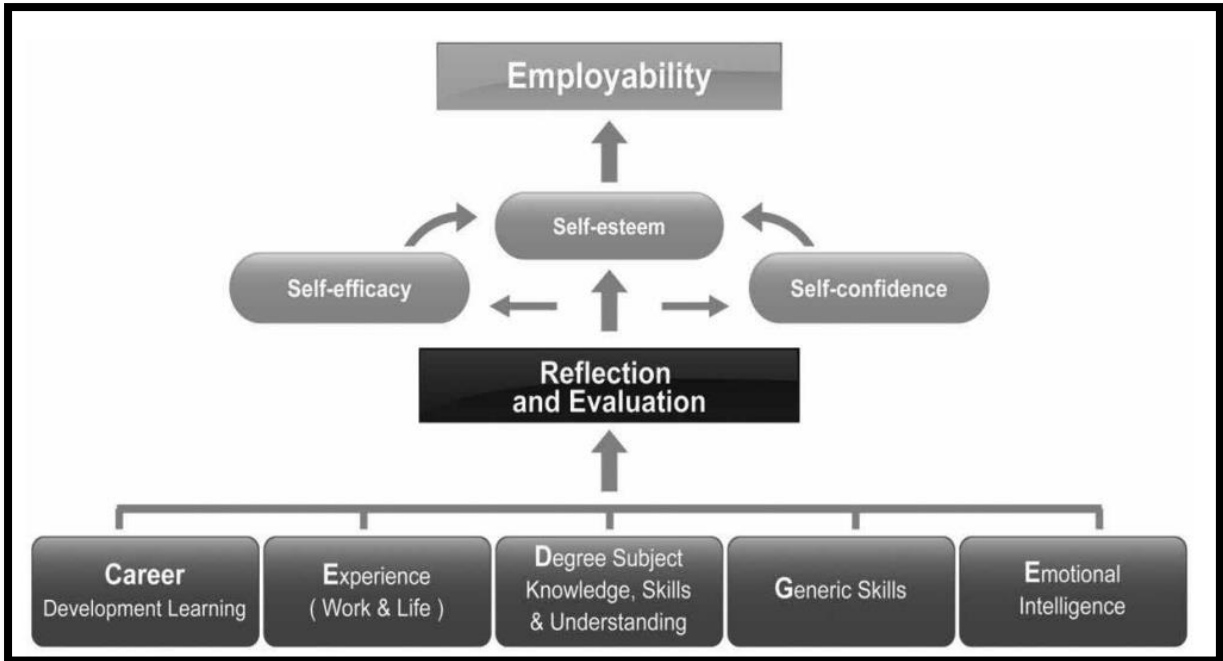
Figure 2: CareerEDGE model of Graduate Employability (Dacre, Pool & Sewell 2007)

Bridgstock's (2009) added to the employability models and suggested that there needs to be greater importance on career management skills rather than generic soft skills. She states (p36):

> Career management skills and knowledge are essential to employability in that they play a large part in determining which, to what extent, in what manner, when and where, generic, and discipline-specific skills are learned, displayed (e.g., in applying for a job) and used.

The CBI/NUS (2011) produced a resource looking at Positive attitudes, which had the main aim of engaging students in their own employability, allowing them to take ownership of their employability development as soon as they start university. This approach focused on team working, communication, digital skills, problem solving and commercial awareness.

The 'Embedding employability in higher education' framework, designed by the HEA in 2013, empowered universities to consider their own interpretation of employability

and how it best worked for their staff and students. The framework provided a flexible approach to employability which allowed for reflection, review, action, and evaluation (Cole & Tibby, 2013).
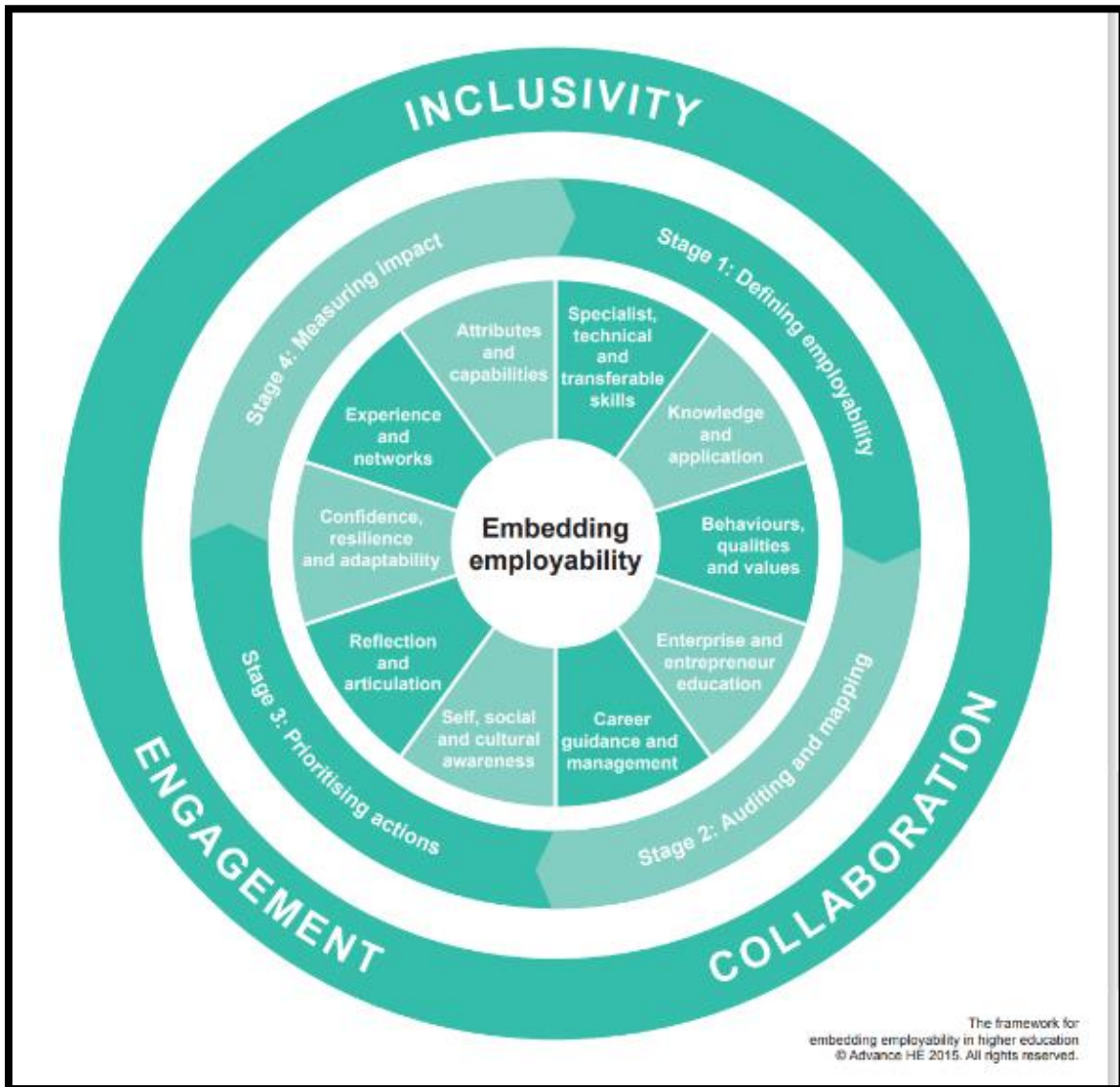
Figure 3: *Embedding employability in higher education* framework HEA 2015

Most recently, Advance HE has been developing the Student Success Framework Series, which will made up of 9 frameworks which will released within 2024. The aim of the series is to support institutions in shaping policy, processes, and practices around the area of student success. The first in the series is the Essential

Framework for Enhancing student success released in January 2024 (for full

diagrammatic details see Appendix 1), the rationale behind this new framework is:

> To be effective, employability should be embedded into all aspects of
> education, from the curriculum to the wider student experience. By
> recognising employability as one of the '3Es' of Employability, Enterprise and
> Entrepreneurship and identifying these within all aspects of higher education,
> we can help ensure that all students have the skills and knowledge they need
> to succeed (HEA, 2024, p2).

The framework recognises partnership between internal and external stakeholders to

develop opportunities and development for embedding employability into the

curriculum and the wider university culture (HEA, 2024, p5). From an institutional

perspective the strategy, policies and practices of the provider should support

embedding employability (HEA, 2024, p7). For Educators the framework identifies

areas of focus for course or programme teams to ensure they can take a holistic

approach to employability, connecting it with pedagogic practice within and across

the curriculum (HEA, 2024, p9). For students the framework identifies the attributes

and competencies a student should have the opportunity to develop and practice to

enhance their success as illustrated in Figure 4 below:

Figure 4: HEA Essential Framework for Enhancing student success for Students (2024, p11).

Whilst there have been many versions of the frameworks, they are generally consistent with one another and contain skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking and creativity skills, communication and teamworking skills, multicultural competency, leadership, empathy and compassion (Metz, 2011, Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2021). The need for such skills is not new and they change alongside advances in technology and the way business is conducted (Stone *et al,* 2017). The

frameworks provide guidance, they are very generic in structure, and are very much open to interpretation. It clear from the research that there are inconsistencies amongst universities in their approach to employability and how much focus they place on it within the curriculum.

One crucial element in the success of any scheme is the support from academic staff and the universities' leadership teams, without this support to implement such initiatives, the frameworks and models will be simply redundant. Academics need to be involved in the process and must want to embed employability into their modules (Rich, 2015). They also need to be given the time and opportunity to develop links with industry and create initiatives and schemes to develop employability skills which engage the learner. Relying on the goodwill of the academics is very unsatisfactory (Wingate, 2006) as it contributes to inconsistency across programmes and institutions. There are many critics that worry the emphasis on employability takes away from the pursuit of knowledge and truth, the ability to question, to seek creativity or enlightenment or to be critical and question the social, economic, or moral complexities of life (Jameson *et al,* 2012, Giroux, 2010). The lack of clear definition does not sit well with some academics who feel it is a meaningless buzzword. Others are concerned that higher education has become a consumer market with students as customers and wanting a return on their investments. There is a worry that it reduces the independence of the university who are then working 'for' employers to churn out employees (Kalfa & Taksa, 2015; Rooney & Rawlinson, 2016, Reid, 2016).

The UKCES (2009) report reflected the importance of training staff and developing their skills to enable them to develop and deliver employability services, Cole & Tibby (2013) further provided guidance to develop a coherent institutional approach to

employability service provision which also placed a strong emphasis on staff development, and a framework for monitoring current practice, identifying gaps in knowledge and provision, and the need for self-assessment, action planning and reviewing of provision. Rees (2021) undertook research on how Swansea University viewed employability and concluded that best practice within HE was a combination of having an institutional employability outlook, embedding subject specific activities, with career specific workshop, engagement with employers, and proactive professional careers and advice service.

Since these reports it appears that most universities are now strategically taking the lead for this and creating employability strategies that no longer rely on ad hoc implementation, but a university wide policy which includes training and support for staff to achieve an embedded employability agenda (Bangor, 2022 Kent, 2022, UWTSD, 2022). It remains to be seen how successful these relatively new policies are, as literature is limited in this area, creating the need for further study of such initiatives, which further highlights the gap that exists.

2.6 Graduate attributes

There has been a focus on developing graduate attributes at university, a term often described as life-long learning, which are described as generic, transferable, or soft skills leading to and enabling graduate employment. This has seen a shift to a more holistic view of 'graduate attributes' that include 'softer' transferable skills and person-centred qualities, developed in conjunction with subject specific knowledge, skills and competencies. It could be argued that the boundaries between employability skills and graduate attributes have become blurred so that the terms

have become used interchangeably (Oliver & Jorre De St Jorre, 2018; Scott & Willison, 2021).

Trought (2017) listed the ten key graduate attributes required by business as: Time Management, Team-working, Business and Customer, awareness, Problem Solving, communication, application of IT, Data analysis, Leadership, Enterprise and Emotional Intelligence. Research by the McKinsey Global Institute (Dondi *et al,* 2021 p2) identified the future skills needed due to the digitalisation of many aspects of industry, and classed them into four categories, 'cognitive, digital, interpersonal, and self-leadership' with 56 foundational skills under one of the four category headings (as shown in Figure 4 below). These are high-level skills associated with those needed for the higher-level jobs rather than those needed for manual and physical roles, thus, putting a greater emphasis on graduate attributes and skills.

Cognitive

Critical thinking
- Structured problem solving
- Logical reasoning
- Understanding biases
- Seeking relevant information

Planning and ways of working
- Work-plan development
- Time management and prioritization
- Agile thinking

Communication
- Storytelling and public speaking
- Asking the right questions
- Synthesizing messages
- Active listening

Mental flexibility
- Creativity and imagination
- Translating knowledge to different contexts
- Adopting a different perspective
- Adaptability
- Ability to learn

Interpersonal

Mobilizing systems
- Role modeling
- Win–win negotiations
- Crafting an inspiring vision
- Organizational awareness

Developing relationships
- Empathy
- Inspiring trust
- Humility
- Sociability

Teamwork effectiveness
- Fostering inclusiveness
- Motivating different personalities
- Resolving conflicts
- Collaboration
- Coaching
- Empowering

Self-leadership

Self-awareness and self-management
- Understanding own emotions and triggers
- Self-control and regulation
- Understanding own strengths
- Integrity
- Self-motivation and wellness
- Self-confidence

Entrepreneurship
- Courage and risk-taking
- Driving change and innovation
- Energy, passion, and optimism
- Breaking orthodoxies

Goals achievement
- Ownership and decisiveness
- Achievement orientation
- Grit and persistence
- Coping with uncertainty
- Self-development

Digital

Digital fluency and citizenship
- Digital literacy
- Digital learning
- Digital collaboration
- Digital ethics

Software use and development
- Programming literacy
- Data analysis and statistics
- Computational and algorithmic thinking

Understanding digital systems
- Data literacy
- Smart systems
- Cybersecurity literacy
- Tech translation and enablement

Figure 5: McKinsey Global Institute Future Skills (Dondi *et al,* 2021).

Digital innovation is now more prevalent than ever before in both the private and public sectors which will transform the economic landscape (Welsh Government, 2019). The Welsh Government (2019, p6) instigated the Review of Digital Innovation for the Economy and the Future of Work in Wales to better understand the rapid advances of digital innovation and what challenges and opportunities this presented. This established Wales 4.0 which put digital at the heart of everything the

government does rather than "*seeing 'digital' as an isolated topic*". This advancement of digital innovation as a twofold impact on education, firstly it impacts lifelong learning (Welsh Government, 2019) which will become key for those who will need to retrain and acquire new skills to keep up with the changing nature of their current or new jobs roles. Secondly schools, colleges and universities will need to develop new learning to embed in curriculums to prepare learners for the new world of work.

The Nesta (2017) report on the future of skills employment in 2030 found that workforces for the 21st century need a combination of interpersonal and cognitive skills with an emphasis on cognitive competencies, learning and decision-making strategies and digital skills, systems analysis and systems evaluation. Connected to this is the need for people to be ethically informed citizens.

Multicultural competence has become an emerging graduate attribute, it is seen as a key graduate attribute for learners to develop the ability to work in teams, understand different perspectives, participate in a culturally diverse global economy and society, address inequality, and promote social justice (Berdrow & Bird, 2018, Page *et al,* 2019, Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2021 Peel *et al,* 2021).

The discussions about whether graduates are expected to exit their studies in work-ready mode and with demonstrable levels of employability (Clarke, 2018) are extensive and has led to the creation of the terminology 'graduate work-readiness' (GWR). GWR as a concept is similar to those used to define 'employability' or 'graduate attributes' (Prikshat Kumar & Nankervis, 2019). GWR has been developed into a work-readiness competence model (WRICM), which comprises of four main factors: intellectual, personality, meta-skill, and job specific with ten sub-categories covering different skills which have been defined by industry as essential for

employment. However, the influencing perceptions in the design of WRICM is predominantly from HR executives and middle-level executives and therefore could be seen as not a universal perceptive fit for all industry (Prikshat Kumar & Nankervis, 2019).

Tymon (2003, p845) makes the distinction between skills and attributes, stating that skills include "*manual, diagnostic, interpersonal or decision-making skills*" and that skills are widely accepted to be something that can be learnt through training However he goes on to define attributes as personal traits, which are deep rooted and formed from early childhood, therefore making the point that they are not easily developed in a three year university programme or that it takes longer than three years to re-programme deep rooted traits (Tymon, 2013).

2.7 Employability Strategy at University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The focus of this study is whether the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) is helping to prepare its graduates for practice and has used one volunteering scheme run alongside the BA Public Services degree programme as its sample. Therefore, it would be appropriate here to look at the literature that is available on how UWTSD has embedded the various frameworks and research developed on employability and HE into its core business. UWTSD published its Employability strategy in 2022 to cover the period 2022-2026. UWTSD is committed to preparing all of its students for employment and sees supporting students as a key priority. The university has taken the lead from the Welsh Government, HEFCW and Advance HE when preparing its employability strategy.

The UWTSD Employability Strategy (2022-2026, p4) states that it:

Will ensure that employability is embedded at the core of our learning and teaching, enabling students to be lifelong learners and to succeed in their chosen employment path.

The university seeks to provide students with a number of employability opportunities whilst they study, through options such as work placements, internships, or volunteering. Staff are encouraged to engage with industry in order to create work-based problems for students to solve through assessments, these may also include enterprise activities. The university also offers many extra-curricular activities to increase a student's exposure to industry and networking opportunities. One such initiative for students is the Police Student Volunteer scheme, which has been running since 2012, up until now the success of the scheme has not been evaluated to gain insight into whether it has been successful in preparing students for a career in the police service.

Currently, the university does not have a fully coordinated all-University approach to how employability skills are developed and delivered. The new Employability Strategy seeks to address this by putting employability at the heart of teaching and learning, training staff to be able to do this, developing links with employers and industry. Figure 9 highlights the key objectives of the UWTSD Employability strategy (2022).

Figure 6: UWTSD Employability Strategy Objectives

2. 8 Competency Skills defined for the Public Sector

It seems prudent when discussing graduate attributes and the skills required to go into work, to look at what the public services have defined as core skills and competencies to work in the sector.

The Ministry of Justice (2008, p6) discusses key skills as core competencies and defines them as:

> A competence represents the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to perform effectively in a given job, role or situation.

A review of the many competency frameworks published by various departments of the civil service and public sector show that the most common competencies identified are focusing on the customer/ client (MoJ, 2008, OECD, 2014, HMPS,

2018), developing our people (OECD, 2014,COPFS, 2022), using evidence to make decisions and setting direction (GCS, 2016, COPFS, 2022), demonstrate flexible, creative thinking (GCS, 2016) planning and managing resources (MoJ 2008, HMPS 2018), working as a team and engaging people (MoJ, 2008, GCS, 2016, HMPS, 2018), leading and communicating (MoJ, 2008, Home Office, 2014, COPFS, 2022), financial management and delivering value for money (Home Office, 2014, HMPS, 2018), and digital competence (MoJ, 2008, OECD, 2014, HMPS, 2018).

All the public sector departments and supported by the CIPD (2024) stated that they use the definition of competences to help them define what an individual should be doing and how they should go about doing it, to meet the needs of their role, for several uses, such as recruitment, performance management, learning and development and career progression.

The College of Policing (2016) set out a Competency and Values Framework (CVF) which set out nationally recognised behaviours and values. The framework provides clear expectations for those working in policing.

The circular diagram shows:

Central circle: **VALUES**

Inner ring values: Transparency, Impartiality, Integrity, Public service

Outer segments and behaviours:
- Intelligent, creative and informed policing: We are innovative and open-minded; We analyse critically
- Resolute, compassionate and committed: We are emotionally aware; We take ownership
- Inclusive, enabling and visionary leadership: We deliver, support and inspire; We are collaborative

Figure 7: Competency and Values Framework for policing College of Policing (2016). From Table 10 above it shows the six competencies that are clustered into three groups, each competency has three levels that show what behaviours will look like in practice. The whole framework is underpinned by the four values: transparency, impartiality, integrity and public service (College of Policing, 2016). Within policing there is strong focus on ethics and integrity, however listed in the behaviours attached to the competencies are critical analysis, communication, team-working, leadership, and the importance of effective reflection. The College of Policing (2024c) further define the expectations and skills needed for all roles with the police

service through the Policing Professional Profiles (PPP). For all roles within the service there is a defined profile which includes key accountabilities, behaviours, education and skills that are required for each role. For the role of Police Constable, the entry level for all officers, some of the prescribed skills that are needed are; strong communication skills, good team working skills, emotional intelligence to manage conflict and defuse difficult situations, problem solving skills, be able to review and reflect, good time management skills.

Changes in technology, the environment and social changes such as a rise in inequality have been identified by the College of Policing (2020) as increasing the complexity of issues facing policing. To prepare for the challenges being faced the College have recognised a need for staff to be able to think innovatively, to anticipate emerging issues and to develop polices and interventions to address these them.

The Policing in England and Wales: Future Operating Environment 2040 report sets out to identify what policing in 2040 will entail, how best to prepare for the challenges ahead and what the expectations and skills required of staff will be. Most notably from the report is the need for problem solving and decision making, critical thinking, analytical and digital skills to meet the demands of a technologically changing environment (College of policing, 2020).

Therefore, currently the consensus for graduate attributes, key skills, core competencies, presented by the research across the educational, business and public sectors all put great significance on team working, leadership, communication, digital, problem-solving skills, whilst adding ethical and cultural understanding as emerging attributes.

There is very limited research in regard to employability initiatives that have been embedded at higher education for policing students, one paper identified was by Pepper & McGrath (2018) which focussed on the embedding of the College of Policing's Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) within a university programme. As mentioned in Section 1.5 the CKP was introduced in 2013 as a pre-employment qualification for the 42 police forces in England and Wales which was a level 3, 23 credit qualification covering essential policing knowledge. In Pepper & McGrath's (2018) report they reviewed one university's initiative to embed the CKP into their police science programme as a way of increasing the employability of their students. The results showed that embedding the CKP into a module assisted in the development of the students' interest in policing roles and developed their confidence in applying for roles straight after university and there were some limited findings that it increased the employment prospects of the students involved in the research. However, with the introduction in 2019 of the Policing Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) the CKP has now been superseded and the routes into policing are more formalised in terms of policing practice education (College of Policing, 2020). The way police officers are recruited may have changed but fundamentally the role of an officer has not changed, therefore the need for certain skills remains. There is little literature available that defines in detail what those skills are, and certainly not from the perspective of those doing the job having come through a degree programme.

2.9 Developing a Student's Employability Skills

In order to develop the skills and competencies described, many universities have either embedded work experience or placements in the curriculum or encouraged students to undertake volunteering or extracurricular activities.

2. 9 .1 Volunteering

It has been recognised that engaging students to volunteer within industry either through work experience, placements or more structured volunteer work schemes not only develops generic employability skills such as communication, team working and leadership skills, but also specialised skills relevant to those industries, thus creating opportunities for employment and career development (Crebert *et al,* 2004).

Volunteering is a generic term that can be categorised as formal or informal volunteering (Lee & Brudney, 2012, p160), with formal volunteering being defined as "*any contribution of unpaid time to the activities of organizations or established entities",* and informal as "*any unstructured giving of one's time"* (Dean, 2022 p572*)* or assistance that is given directly to someone such as a friend or neighbour not through a formal process. For the purpose of this study when discussing volunteering it will be as part of a formal process working with organisations.

Research shows that volunteering has been brought to the forefront of university planning as they recognise the importance of volunteering to building employability skills. Between 1970s-2000s a lot of volunteering that students traditionally undertook had been organised by the students themselves and challenged through the independent Student Community Action (SCA) groups, which were supported by the Student Unions (Brewis, 2010). Traditionally the focus for the volunteering was community 'action' and was about making a difference to the community rather than enhancing employability. In the years 1997-2009 the Government became focussed on student volunteering establishing the Higher Education Active Communities fund and then the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund to promote volunteering by students. Programmes such as, the National Young Volunteers Service was used to

channel such funding (NatCen, 2011). Within this time there was a move towards making volunteering more integrated and linked to the curriculum, that volunteering was managed, professionalised and that it was seen as a resource for the services providing the opportunity to students to gain valuable insight.

Traditionally volunteering was something that people did to give back to society, or as part of a religious/ ethical need to do something good for the community (Hyde *et al,* 2016; Smith *et al*, 2010). For a lot of students, volunteering with charity and community projects, was seen as a way to improve their CVs in order for them to compete in a competitive graduate market (Handy *et al*, 2010; Holdsworth, 2010). However, research shows that students involved in long term volunteering reported greater altruistic motivations and benefits, than those students who volunteer for short term projects or episodic volunteering (Smith *et al,* 2010: Hyde *et al,* 2014).

Volunteering can involve many different types of activity, from working with children, physically building, or clearing land for infrastructure used for community projects, working with minority groups to helping and supporting the elderly, these projects can take place locally or abroad and will depend on a student's ability to travel. Each project will differ in terms of the integration of the volunteer in the delivery of the project (Planty, Bozick & Regnier, 2006). These opportunities, situations and projects enable students to develop core personal and academic skills (Handy *et al*, 2010; Holdsworth, 2010; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010). Further, the research shows that students who actively engage with local projects gain from a more robust learning environment than traditional classroom-based learning and is more beneficial to the development of graduate attributes (Mason O'Connor, Lynch & Owen, 2011).

Research also shows that students who stay at home to study are far more likely to be involved in community projects for the long term, and therefore often it is not classed as student volunteering but the more general community volunteering (Smith *et al,* 2010).

Research, on the benefit of volunteering on those searching for jobs, carried out by Cambridge Policy Consultants, in partnership with System Three Research, on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which involved a survey of people who had been in contact with the Employment service between July 1999 and June 2000, concluded that only a quarter of participants said they were volunteering to improve their job prospects, other reasons were for charitable causes and personal reasons. Over half of the volunteers believed that the experience would help get them a job or had helped increase their confidence. The study found that the most likely to benefit from volunteering by increasing job prospects were the young and who had undertaken more than 50 hours of work. Further studies have supported the point that the more time spent volunteering the greater the benefit to the young person as it allows for skills to be become more developed and for them to gain deeper insight into the project and the agencies involved (Handy *et al* 2010: Goodman & Tredway, 2016). Smith *et al,* 2010) recorded that those students who had volunteered for a long period of time thought they had gained a greater personal benefit.

Some studies show that the primary motivation for volunteering was to gain employment and to increase job prospects supporting the benefit of students having volunteering as part of or alongside their studies (Hirst, 2002: Barton, Bates & O'Donovan, 2019). However more recent studies found that while increasing career prospects is a prominent motivator for volunteering, students also saw it as an

opportunity to develop their self-confidence, work alongside other people and learn how to react to challenging situations. When questioned those students whose motivation was to give back to the community experienced more development in these areas than those whose main motivation was career orientated (Holdsworth, 2010: Smith *et al,* 2010). Mason O'Connor, Lynch & Owen, 2011) indicate that where universities integrate teaching and learning with community engagement it creates opportunities to further develop graduate attributes not just for employability but also for citizenship, resilience and personal development.

Holdsworth & Quinn (2010, p123) state:

> While there are subjective data on how students feel they have benefited from volunteering and in many cases, students do get jobs through volunteering (e.g., youth and conservation work), the absence of a control group means that statistically the case for employability is to be proven.

It has been discussed that some discipline areas lend themselves to work placements, however for some discipline areas, it is not possible to obtain work placements, and therefore volunteering is one way of gaining valuable insight into a profession. Policing is one such area, that due to vetting and health and safety issues, work placements are not common practice, however volunteering within the police is. According to the NPCC (2019) volunteering in policing is seen as playing a critical role in meeting the increased challenges of policing, being a bridge between the police and communities and representing the diverse needs of communities and promotes inter-cooperation in the delivery of policing (Gravelle & Rogers, 2010). Traditionally there have been two types of volunteers in the police, the Special Constabulary and Police Support Volunteers, however over the last decade the Police Student Volunteer has been developed, to recruit students and enable them to volunteer alongside their studies. With 43 forces in England and Wales the

experiences of volunteers do vary, and how each force structures the volunteer experience differs from force to force (Pepper, 2020). The demands on volunteers and what is expected of them can be a barrier for some who have limited time, but still want to gain experience and/or give back to the community. Recent research by the NCVO (2024) that surveyed volunteers within the public sector, such as those who volunteer in hospitals and libraries, as police specials, magistrates and school governors, reported that while satisfaction rates were high, they did feel their experience was too bureaucratic. The report also detailed how the volunteers within the public sector, as opposed to the charity sector, felt that their input was more like work, as the organisations relied more on them as a resource putting more pressure on their time, thus reducing the enjoyment factor of volunteering. It therefore important to get the balance right for volunteers who want to give up their time to either gain experience or give back to society and the expectations of the employers to how much they can rely on volunteers as a resource.

Studies on what motivates people to volunteer within a police force are limited, and what does exist concentrates on Specials and Support Volunteers not student volunteers. Past studies show that Police Specials were predominately career motivated with most wanting to become full time police officers (Pepper, 2014), whereas traditionally support volunteers were older and seeking post-retirement roles (Ramshaw & Cosgrove, 2019; Pepper, 2021). In terms of student volunteering there is little research that looks solely at this category of police student volunteer, one recent study by Pepper *et al* (2024) found that students studying for a Professional Policing Degree, were keen to volunteer with the police whilst they studied, but cited the time taken to undergo vetting meant that motivation and amount of time to be able to volunteer decreased. This was further compounded by

the need to balance academic study, with paid work to finance study which further reduced the time for volunteering. However, those that did volunteer whilst studying did identify that the experience gave them greater insight into policing, that it helped understand the different types of roles available and that it assisted in self-development of skills. This study only concentrated on those currently studying and not those who had gone through the process and were now in the job. It also did not ask the questions on what skills they had specifically developed through the volunteering, creating the gap in literature that this study aims to address.

2.9.2 Work Experience:

Studies show there are a number of different types of placements from informal and formal university placements linked to academic departments, but across the UK there are inconsistencies of provision. Often the organisation of placements and opportunities fall to certain staff where the work is not necessarily funded nor recognised by senior university staff, leaving staff who work hard to develop volunteering/placement programmes feeling undervalued (Brewis & Holdsworth, 2011). Further the development of such opportunities was often not recognised as a formal role in many of the HEIs meaning there were inconsistencies of provision across the sector. Historically the value that some HEIs placed on the need to undertake a placement to enhance employability contrasted between the pre and post 1992 universities. Elite' universities tended to focus on the degree itself and how employers regarded the degree whereas post-1992 universities focussed on how they had embedded employability within the curriculum (Heyler & Lee, 2014: Lee, Foster & Snaith, 2016)

When discussing placements, the focus is often on sandwich courses and placements of a long period, such as a year in industry involving up to 12 months in the students' desired industry (Brooks & Youngson, 2016). However, placements of shorter periods can also be a positive learning experience for students and help develop a student's skills (Knight & Yorke, 2004: Dey, Lindsay, & Thomson, 2017). Practical experience gives students the opportunity to put theory into practice and to gain insights into the profession that can't always be learnt in the classroom (Wilton, 2012: Rouse, Morrissey & Rahimi, 2012: Holman & Richardson, 2021). The use of placements that are embedded into the curriculum varies from discipline to discipline as not all courses at university level lend themselves to being appropriate or possible to include a placement or sandwich year. The obvious courses to have placements are education and medical courses, but many businesses, hospitality, sports, health, and social care programmes also include sandwich years (Thompson, 2017). The research across HE into this area is varied and it is hard to come to a consensus on the impact of placements on graduate employment and development of employability skills for all disciplines compared with those who do not undertake placements. Silva *et al* (2018) undertook a longitudinal study on several graduate programmes in Portugal with embedded placements at undergraduate level. The study highlighted the need for increased work base learning and experience within the curriculum and the need for employer engagement in developing programmes. The results of the study demonstrated that programmes that include placements tend to significantly enhance graduate employment. Brooks & Youngson's (2016) study of 1475 students across six subject areas concluded that students undertaking placements were at a distinct advantage in comparison to non-placement students. Andrews & Higson's (2008) study of business student placements found that UK students thought their

placements helped to raise their assessment grades as they could better apply theory to practice and that it increased their job prospects after graduation.

However, Silva *et al* (2018) highlighted that the structure and learning within the placement was important, and that a student's experience and benefit from the placement could vary. Brooks & Youngson (2016) contended that a placement was not the sole reason for increased benefit, as data shows students who do not undertake a placement can equally gain high level graduate jobs. Although overall those who do a placement collectively are at an advantage. They therefore questioned if placements were compulsory, whether all students would see the same benefits, or whether having placements as optional means that it attracts students who are motivated and have a desire develop their skills and enhance their own CV.

In one study by Irwin *et al* (2019) the focus was on stakeholder perception of work experience in terms of duration, type, and location. It was found that the type of experience was an influence, with internships viewed more positively when the job role was a high-level graduate role. The duration of experience did not make a significant impact on perceptions.

There are many critics to the extent to which generic skills and competences that have been embedded into the curriculum can be successfully transferred to the workplace (Crammer, 2006: Boden & Nedeva, 2010). It is widely accepted that other factors outside of HE also contributes to a graduate's employability, such as age, disability, social background, gender, race, religion, social networks and university status, these can have a greater impact on employment than learnt skills (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006: Mason, Williams, & Cranmer, 2009; Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015; Tomlinson, 2007: Clarke, 2018).

While some studies show that those students who undertake placements, work experience or sandwich years have a greater advantaged in the labour market compared to their non-placement peers, placements can also lead to a greater understanding of the work place and life-long learning, however the positive impact of a placement does depend on the quality of the experience for the student (Bowes & Harvey, 1999: Blackwell *et al,* 2000). Other studies report that there is very little empirical evidence to show that volunteering actually achieves the goal of improving skills and employability (Hill, Russell & Brewin, 2009: Tymon, 2013, Tight, 2023).

2.9.3 Extracurricular Activities

Speight *et al* (2013) put forward the concept of life-wide learning, which recognises that students learn in different spaces simultaneously, not just on campus, but off campus and in employment undertaken during study (Barnett, 2010). This concept therefore acknowledges that learning takes places alongside and outside the traditional boundaries of the higher education degree. Such extracurricular activity can sit alongside the traditional and formal curriculum of a university programme, and students can develop the skills and attributes needed for the workplace from these life-wide activities (Jackson, 2011). Thompson *et al* (2013, p136) define extracurricular activities as:

> Activities and events that students engage in, which are not part of their formal degree classification such as hobbies, social groups, sporting, cultural or religious activities and voluntary or paid work; these things are part of the wider 'student experience.

Studies suggest that students who undertake extracurricular activities do not always appreciate the significance of the experience on developing their employability skills, and that without institutional support to guide their reflection they are unable to articulate their development (Stevenson & Clegg, 2011, Jackson & Tomlinson, 2022).

For some student's extracurricular activities were considered social activities and not related to increasing employability and helping with their future careers (Thomason *et al,* 2013, Jackson &Tomlinson 2022). Clark *et al* (2015) found that females predominantly engaged with paid work and males tended to involve themselves in sporting activities.

Unlike the majority of studies that look at employability initiatives with university students, the study by Clark *et al* (2015) decided that there was a need to gather the views of graduates in an attempt to better understand the impact of extracurricular activities on employability. Studies such as this are few in number, where they focus on the reflection of past students on their employability activities at university. This was a mixed-method study of 620 students who had graduated between 1990 and 2010 Lancaster university and focussed on the extracurricular activities undertaken not embedded employability schemes or placements, with many of the activities being sport or social clubs and paid part time work. However, the respondents identified the main benefits from the extracurricular activities were developing work-related knowledge, interpersonal skills and communication skills which the respondents felt had helped prepare them for the workplace. The results of this study did show that the extracurricular activities undertaken did develop employability skills but not all activities affected skills equally, and that for most it was the generic personal skills that were developed rather than industry specific skills and not all students were able to articulate what they had learned and developed.

2.10 Reflection on experience

To succeed a graduate needs to convince a potential employer of their employability; therefore, it is imperative that they are able to articulate and exemplify

the competencies they have developed whilst at university (Tight, 2023). In order for students to be successful at this research shows that reflection on their experience has been established as being important for the student to be able to articulate their skills development. Mello *et al* (2021) found that reflection enabled the students to confirm prior career choices or opened new horizons for them. For many students they do not fully recognise, reflect on, evidence, and evaluate their own skills, either before, during or after university. They are often also unable to articulate specific examples of how they can demonstrate competency in such skills at interview or in job applications (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Therefore, it is important that as part of any placement, reflection forms part of the assessment or the conclusion of the experience, often this is part of embedded placements (Thompson *et al,* 2013). Dunne (2017, p40) found that where programmes included workshops or lessons prior to starting a placement or work experience that put emphasise on graduate attributes helped students by "*providing a focal point to frame their work-placement experiences in their reflective assessments*". Challenges for students are that they are not able to develop reflective approaches, when means they are unable to gain real insights into the skills they have developed in the workplace (Smith *et al,* 2007). Dunne (2017) suggests that sessions on reflection and developing reflective practice is needed for the students to fully understand the impact of the experience of their self-development. Blaquière, Nolan & Wray (2019) contend that a student needs the ability to articulate what they can offer an employer in terms of skills and being able to evidence with examples is crucial to establishing employability. Reflection therefore plays a key part in the student being able to pinpoint the exact experiences that they can use to depict where they have developed such skills, and therefore it needs to be part of the HE programmes within a placement or volunteering module,

to allow for *"metacognition to be achieved"* (Blaquière, Nolan & Wray, 2019, p32).

Jackson & Tomlinson (2022, p1132) found in their study that there was a need to

"*provide mechanisms by which students can document, reflect on, and articulate*

their participation and the value gained from these experiences".

2. 11 Limitations to employability initiatives

At the start of the literature review Human Capital Theory was discussed as being a

forerunner to employability definitions and the resulting frameworks. Becker (1962)

presented the idea that investment in people's education, on-the-job training and

internships would increase the career prospects of the person and thus increase

their earning capability. In the intervening years this theory has been put to the test

with increased social mobility and increased numbers of people entering higher

education. Therefore, the reality is that investment alone is not the only factor that

increases career opportunities and earning capability.

Since the early 80s in the UK there has been a governmental push to get 18-year-

olds into higher education, participation in 1988 was 15%, raising to 30% in 1990

(Chevalier & Lindley, 2009) to an all-time high, but still under the optimistic 50% of

the 1980s, of 38.5% in 2023 of 18-year-olds entering Higher Education (Bolton,

2024). With graduate recruitment returning to pre-pandemic levels with the latest

recruitment targets for the country's leading employers showing that graduate jobs

available in 2023 are expected to increase by a further 6.3% (High Flyers, 2023),

progression for students seems optimistic.

However, not all graduates enter professional jobs, and having access to higher

education is not a guarantee of a high earning job (Marginson, 2019). There is some

argument that where a person comes from, where they are born and what university

they attended will have an impact on graduate prospects, indeed in 2022-23 Manchester, Nottingham, Birmingham, Bristol, Warwick, Leeds, University College London, Cambridge, Durham and Southampton were the top ten universities targeted by the largest number of top graduate employers (High Fliers, 2024).

Bourdieu (1984) first brings to the fore the impact of social capital on career progression, the idea that family, cultural and social connections, bring about favourable opportunity and success to a person's career pathway (Coleman, 1988; Marginson, 2019) instead of it being based solely on a person's education and skill set. There is a vast amount of literature on what is meant by social capital, it is being mentioned in this review to highlight the importance of social networks and how it influences a person's career progression, rather than an in-depth study of the theory. Coleman (1988) defines social capital as being about relations between people and firms, that the social connections between parties can enhance relationships, whether these are human transactions or business transactions. The idea is that the closer and better relationships between parties enhances trust, willingness to work together and share information and create greater productivity (Adler & Kwon, 2002). As a result, social capital is seen as enhancing human capital in creating greater opportunities. Social capital also brings about inequality in opportunity for those who are born into less affluent families, live in less socially mobile areas and do not have access to strong network of contacts.

A study by Lehmann (2019) explored the employment outcomes of working-class first-generation students in Canada, and concluded that such students were disadvantaged, both in finding graduate jobs and access to placements. Lehmann concluded that unless there are bursaries or paid opportunities, then undertaking a placement is not an option for working-class students who lack their own access to

opportunities and whose financial situations often make it impossible to work for free. In the UK Student finance for students who undertake a placement year is limited. In England a student can apply for a maintenance loan of £1,850 which is greatly reduced from the £8,400 they get when studying (gov.uk). In Wales students can access more funding but the fees are still reduced for the placement year to £5,360 from the £9,950 (studentfinancewales.co.uk), this is even though the student would still need to pay accommodation and living costs and usually placements are not paid. Purcell *et al* (2013) provides evidence to suggest that students from lower socio-economic classes and first-generation entrants are less likely to undertake placements due to a lack of time, financial resources, and networks (Bathmaker *et al,* 2016, Hordosy & Clark, 2018)

Clegg, Stevenson, & Willott (2010, p616) when discussing the type of student who were most likely to undertake placements were;

> Based on an image of the student as full-time, funded, without caring responsibilities, and discursively positioned as white, able-bodied, normatively male and single.

Affirming the inequalities that exist for students from low-income families to access placements especially yearlong placements.

There are also concerns about the equity of students from lower social and economic background being able to engage with extracurricular activities due to their lack of cultural and social capital and their personal circumstances that may restrain them from engaging (Bathmaker *et al*.,2016). Engagement in extracurricular activities can also vary due to age and gender of the students, for example Stevenson & Clegg (2011) found that caring responsibilities reduces participation in

extracurricular activities by females significantly. Therefore, it could be said that employability opportunities such as placements or extracurricular activities become the option for the privileged, despite the best efforts of HEIs to create the links with industry and develop opportunities for placements.

2.12 Managing student expectations.

Research into student perspectives is not just about how the students viewed their experience but also their perceived employability, Berntson (2008) defines perceived employability as the belief that their chances of getting employed are good. Fugate Kinicki & Ashforth (2004) supports this point claiming employability includes behaviours such as proactivity and adaptability which influences their attitudes and improves career success. The idea is that if a student believes they are doing all they can to be successful in the graduate market they will be. It is widely accepted that placements, volunteering, and other employability initiatives increase the confidence of graduates and perceived employability is borne out of that confidence. Caricati *et al* (2016) tested whether a graduates' perceived employability mirrored their real likelihood of finding a job, the results showed a positive correlation, as would have been expected. However, one important factor to keep in mind is that there is limit to the graduates' employability which is determined by the fragile and fluctuating nature of the labour market (Berntson, 2008: Caricati *et al,* 2016). Jackson & Wilton (2017) assert that universities have a responsibility to make students aware of how labour markets are developing and changing during their undergraduate studies so that their expectations are managed when applying for jobs. Further Jackson & Collings (2018) indicate that unpaid placements did not produce an increase in full-time employment rates, but paid employment during the final year of undergraduate study did produce higher full-time employment rates.

However, as already mentioned, paid placements are not as easy to get, as employers realise, they can get away with offering unpaid placements and internships.

In a study by Jackson & Tomlinson (2022), 352 students from a variety of disciplines were asked about what they classed as the most important benefits to them from work experience/ extracurricular activities undertaken at university. The results showed that they viewed "*insight into the world-of-work, confidence in undertaking future roles, network contacts, professional profile and motivation and goal setting for future employment*" (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2022, p6) as the most important aspects. The study also found that the majority of the students thought that any work experience needed to be related to their course rather than undertaking any non-discipline specific activity.

2. 13 Measurement of employability - Student Perspectives

The Advance HE Framework for Embedding Employability in Higher Education (2013) saw student engagement as a key part of stakeholder engagement, subsequent research as shown that the student voice and student perception of employability initiatives are valid sources of measurement (Dalrymple *et al,* 2021). From this insight universities can adapt, modify, and expand provision to increase the skills needed for the workplace and further develop qualities students identify as not being fully evolved during their undergraduate studies. Studies asking students about their motivations for picking a course or what their top priorities are whilst at university have shown that the opportunity to undertake a placement was top of the list (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006: Tymon, 2013). In research undertaken by Tymon (2013) with business students across all levels, students clearly recognised activities

that were embedded in the programme such as presentations, group work and assessment deadlines as being able to develop key skills such as communication, team working, time management and confidence. Thus defining attributes already defined as employability skills (Yorke, 2006: Trought, 2017: Dondi *et al,* 2021). However, they did not place these embedded activities on the same level of importance as placements or work experience for developing and improving their employability skills. Asking the question do students realise and recognise the importance of these activities whilst they are studying (Tymon, 2013).

In a 2020 report for Higher Education, Careers and Employability Service (HECSU) UK graduates were asked to take part in a study researching how their career aspirations had changed whilst at university. Over half of the participants stated that their career interests had changed, with many saying they gained clarification on a single specialism or became more decided, some graduates claimed to have changed industry focus entirely or became unsure as to the direction they wished to pursue. The report recorded that influences on career interests were predominately down to curriculum, but that placements/work experience/ extra-circular activities also had an impact on choices (Quinlan *et al,* 2020) These finding are important in the context of setting the employability agenda, and indeed graduate attributes, as it affirms the need for transferable skills.

Prospects (2023) has undertaken analysis of the Graduate Outcomes Survey for students graduating in 2020 and reveals that the job market for graduates is solid and has not been as badly hit by Covid-19 and the 2022 Recession as predicted. While these results are encouraging in terms of graduates entering employment after graduation, other results show the importance of the student voice and what they are staying about their university experience and how it prepared them for employment.

There is not a lot of data collected from the student perspective, but the Graduate Outcome survey does ask some questions, such as the extent to which they are using what they learnt in their studies in their current activity. Essentially asking how prepared where they for their current role by what they learnt at university. This is crucial for understanding the success of embedding graduate attributes alongside specialist knowledge at HE. The survey showed that 70% of students felt they were utilising what they had learnt in the current role (Graduate Outcome Survey, 2022). However, it is still a competitive market and the need for graduates to compete means they must have more than their contemporaries to offer to a prospective employer, therefore universities need to acknowledge the importance of the student voice in such surveys to help develop programmes of learning and employability opportunities.

Most studies have focussed on student perception of the initiatives either during their studies or at the point where they have finished their studies, rather than asking employed graduates how prepared they were for work. However, there are limited studies in this area. For instance, Fenech, *et al* (2019) found in a study of female Emirati students that they felt that they had gained the required skills for employment but that they did not feel they had gained personal skills such as confidence and stress management. Menon, Argyropoulou & Stylianou (2018) undertook at study involving employed graduates from Greece and Cypris, examining students' perspectives on how their higher education experience prepared them for employment, and whether they had acquired the pre-requisite skills and competencies for their current role. From the findings most of the graduates were critical of the knowledge they acquired stating it was too general and not specific enough to the workplace. However, they were more positive about the non-

knowledge skills they acquired, it has been well documented that these soft skills are well received in the workplace and are transferable. The study by Menon, Argyropoulou & Stylianou (2018) was limited to a small cohort of participants, across a wide range of subject areas and across two countries, so the findings are limited, it is also important to note that both countries are financially unstable, and the graduate labour market is in flux.

The majority of the studies that have tried to measure employability have done so by focussing on employability in terms of graduate earnings, occupational status, and the time into employment (Dalrymple *et al,* 2022). Tight (2023) suggests that focusing on whether a graduate is employed is not a satisfactory measure as the student may have got the job anyway, so it is little use in measuring how useful the employability initiative was. Therefore, there is clearly a gap in the literature that focuses on whether students feel they were prepared for the workplace by the university now that they are in the job, and there is even less on initiatives preparing students for careers in policing.

2. 14 Summary

It is clear from the research that while there are many different explanations, many types of frameworks, the core skills identified as needed for the workplace are critical thinking and problem solving, communication, leadership, digital competency, cultural understanding, and team working. The skills that are needed must adapt to the social, political, and technological environments that are constantly changing and evolving. The role of governments is to help support and drive forward policies to

guide these changes and define the role of educators in this demand. The role of all HEIs is to ensure that graduates contribute positively to social, environmental, and economic progression. Employability is one of the driving forces that can enable this, providing all graduates with the range of skills, values, behaviours, attributes and experiences needed to succeed in an increasingly complex world (Norton 2022). It can no longer be said that employability is an emerging issue as the research shows this is something that has been discussed and developed for decades, and it seems will continue to evolve and be defined.

For HEIs to learn what works research is needed to test and measure success of initiatives that have been instigated to help develop such skills. From the research and the methods of measuring, the focus has been on the immediate, the point at which the student learns the skills, the time taken on gaining graduate employment and the perception of the student's own development whilst at university. There have not been many studies that have revisited the student once they are settled in employment to reflect on whether the employability focussed efforts of the university did in fact prepare them for practice. This study, whilst a small-scale study focusing on a small cohort of students, aims to investigate whether the police student volunteer scheme set up for the students to work with the police to allow them to develop the core skills identified as being essential for the role did in fact help develop these skills and better prepare them for employment. How this research was conducted, and the methodological approach used will be covered in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain how the research for this study was designed and carried out. It includes a review discussing the available research paradigms and identifies the chosen ontological and epistemological approach employed in the research. Its focus is to introduce the research method for this qualitative phenomenological study regarding the volunteer scheme that was developed for Public Services students, namely the Police Student Volunteer scheme set up with University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and South Wales Police, and it evaluates the students' perspectives of the skills they developed and how this helped prepare them for employment in the Police Service. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the core skills the graduates felt they really need in the workplace and whether through the police student volunteer scheme they had developed those skills.

The applicability of phenomenological theory and an interpretivist approach for this study are discussed in-depth in this chapter. The research plan, including a review of methodology, participants, procedures, analysis method, and ethical concerns are also primary components of this chapter.

3.1.1 Research Question

The purpose of this study is to investigate the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What core skills do graduates really need for the workplace?

RQ2: In what ways did the police student volunteer scheme help develop these skills?

RQ3: What most helped the participants once they were in the workplace and what is needed to better prepare policing graduates for the workplace?

3.2 Research Philosophies

Qualitative research is often criticised as not being as scientific as quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), however the need to understand how society lives and behaves calls for a different way of researching. Flick (2007, p6) states that qualitative research concerns the '*the world out there'* by researching social phenomena from '*the inside'* by analysing experiences and histories of people, their interactions and materials documenting them. The need to have an explanation for how people act, why they act the way they do and in what context, is essential to any social research.

This can only be achieved effectively with participant interaction, any attempt to solely quantify data in this field will only lead to poor understanding of the phenomenon (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). The need to learn from the experiences of the participants, learning from their 'words' and then apply it to a particular practice sets social research apart from purely scientific experiments (Braun & Clarke, 2013). For this thesis it is the experiences of the participants, being part of the police student volunteer scheme whilst at university in helping them develop employability skills to help prepare them for a career in the police service, that we want to understand.

A paradigm is defined as a "*basic set of beliefs that guide action*" and can be specified by the parameters: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Denzin *et al,* 2023). The five major interpretive paradigms of qualitative research are positivist,

post-positivist, critical theory (including feminist theory), constructivism, and

participatory action as laid out in Table 1 below:

Issue	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theory et al.	Constructivism	Participatory[a]
Ontology	Naïve realism— "real" reality but apprehendible	Critical realism—"real" reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendible	Historical realism— virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time	Relativism— local and specific co-constructed realities	Participative reality— subjective-objective reality, cocreated by mind and given cosmos
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; findings true	Modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional/ subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional/ subjectivist; co-created findings	Critical subjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos; extended epistemology of experiential, propositional, and practical knowing; cocreated findings
Methodology	Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/ manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Dialogic/dialectical	Hermeneutical/ dialectical	Political participation in collaborative action inquiry; primacy of the practical; use of language grounded in shared experiential context

Table 1: Basic Beliefs of Alternative Inquiry Paradigms (Denzin *et al,* 2023, p76)

These paradigms become more complicated with multiple versions and further

defined with Critical race; Indigenous, Critical Pedagogy, Postcolonial, Poststructural

Diffraction and Queer theory being added, as shown in Table 2 below:

Paradigm/Theory	Criteria	Form of Theory	Type of Narration
Positivist and post-positivist	Internal, external validity	Logical, deductive, grounded	Scientific report
Constructivist Phenomenology	Trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, confirmability	Substantive- formal, standpoint	Interpretative case studies, ethnographic fiction
Feminist	Afrocentric, lived experience, dialogue, caring, accountability, race, class, gender, reflexivity, praxis, emotion, concrete grounding, embodied	Critical, standpoint	Essays, stories, experimental writing
Critical race; Indigenous	Afrocentric, lived experience, dialogue, caring, accountability, race, class, gender, the scared	Standpoint, critical, historical	Essays, fables, dramas, stories, performances
Critical Pedagogy	Emancipatory theory, falsifiability, dialogical, race class, gender	Critical, historical, economic	Historical, narrative, critical race
Postcolonial, Poststructural Diffraction	Cultural practices, praxis, social, texts, subjectivities	Social criticism	Cultural theory-as-criticism, performance, matter; intra-action; apparatuses

Queer theory	Reflexivity, deconstruction	Social criticism. Historical analysis	Theory-as-criticism, narrative, autobiography

Table 2: Interpretive paradigms (Denzin *et al,* 2023, p23)

Merriam & Tisdell (2016, p12) summarize the paradigms into four, positivist/post-positivist, interpretive/constructivist, critical and postmodern/post-structural and view each in terms of purpose, type and reality as displayed in Table 3 below:

	positivist/post-positivist	interpretive/constructivist	critical	postmodern/post-structural
Purpose	Predict, control, generalise	Describe, understand, interpret	Change, emancipate, empower	Deconstruct, problematise, question, interrupt
Type	Experimental, survey, quasi-experimental	Phenomenology, Hermeneutic, ethnography, grounded theory, naturalistic, qualitative	Neo-Marxist, feminist, Participatory action research (PAR) Critical race theory, critical ethnography	Postcolonial, post-structural postmodern, queer theory
Reality	Objective, external, out there	Multiple realities, context-bound	Multiple realities situate in social, political, cultural contexts (one reality is privileged)	Questions assumptions that there is a place where reality resides "Is there a there there"

Table 3 Epistemological perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, P23)

The long and multifaceted nature of research means that there is no single, standardised all-encompassing definition, however, there are common features that run through the majority of research, Sekaran & Bougie (2013, p4) define research as a "*systematic and organised effort to investigate a specific problem*".

While Myers (2020, p5) argues that it is a way for researchers to understand the "*context within which decisions and actions takes place*". Merriam & Tisdell (2016) see it as a means to gain knowledge that can contribute to improving practice or addressing a particular issue or problem. Learning from the participants experiences of the police student volunteer scheme will help improve the scheme and allow the university to better prepare students for a career in the police service.

Before starting any research, the researcher needs to "*begin with examining their own orientation to basic tenets about the nature of reality*" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p14) and to be clear about the paradigm that shapes the inquiry.

A Paradigm provides the overarching framework for research and encompasses the beliefs, assumptions, values and practices shared by a research community (Kuhn, 1970), it is "*the basic belief system or worldwide view that guides the investigator*" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p106). Myers (2020, p27) asserts that paradigms are "*philosophical assumptions*" and that researchers should make these explicit when embarking on research as they "*provide the foundations for everything that follows*".

Guba & Lincoln (1994, p105) suggest that the term paradigm is not secondary to the term qualitative research and that qualitative research is a description of method and that "*both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm*". Guba & Lincoln (1994, p116) further contend that the paradigm is crucial and that all researchers need to be "*clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach*". The paradigm that has influenced this study is an interpretive/constructivist approach, that sets out to describe and understand the experiences of the participants through their volunteering alongside their studies, and how they have reflected on this and its impact on helping them be ready a career in the police service.

A common assumption is that the Interpretivism paradigm is synonymous with qualitative research, Trauth (2001, p7) states that "*interpretivism is the lens most frequently influencing the choice of qualitative methods*". Myers (2020) and Crotty (1998, p15) contend that it is not a justified stance and that in the past qualitative research has been carried out in an "*utterly positivist manner*", i.e. that people collect

qualitative data, but then look to "*count*" incidences of a particular phenomenon – i.e. how often a word of phrase is used, rather than interpreting the data.

As shown in Table 1 (above), the five major paradigms for qualitative research are Positivism, Post-positivism, Critical theory, Participatory, and Constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, Denzin & Lincoln, 2023). Orlikowski & Baroudi (1991) suggest three metatheoretical assumptions, of Positivism, Interpretivism and Critical. Goldkuhl (2012, p136) adds Pragmatism and suggests that:

> That a qualitative researcher must either adopt an interpretive stance aiming towards an understanding that is appreciated for being interesting; or a pragmatist stance aiming for constructive knowledge that is appreciated for being useful in action.

From careful review of the literature, it is evident there are philosophical distinctions between these epistemologies and that it would be assumed that within a study one perspective would be adopted, in practice it is not always so clear cut, and that there is a possibility that more than one philosophical position could be accommodated within a study (Myers, 1997)

Gray (2018) recognises the many different research theoretical perspectives but argues of them all, for qualitative research, positivism and interpretivism are the most influential in establishing the epistemology behind the research and the methodologies that emerge from them.

Positivism is the paradigm that has dominated research for many years. It is generally assumed that positivist research is concerned with a reality that is objectively given (Myers, 2020), that reality consists of what can be seen, felt, touched (Gray, 2020), that an "*apprehendable reality is assumed to exist*" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p109), this nature of reality can also be described as the ontology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and that positivism is linked to empirical science (Crotty,

1998). However, Bryman (2008) suggests that it is difficult to define positivism as there are many versions used and there are still disagreements to what it comprises.

As stated by Crotty (1998) positivism historically is linked to scientific empirical research, where a hypothesis is tested using measurable variables, in controlled environments, and viewed objectively, it was also the dominant epistemological paradigm in social sciences, for example in the field of business and management (Lee, 1994, Orlowski & Baroudi, 1991, Myers, 2020). Schwandt (2000, p193) purports the purpose is to *"offer causal explanations of social, behavioural and physical phenomena"*. For most, positivism is inquiry that operates within a strict set of laws (Gray, 2018) and is the accumulation of data that provides the basis of those laws (Bryman, 2008).

In the field of Psychology in the early 20th Century the positivist paradigm dominated the discipline in the scientific collection of data (Clarke & Braun, 2013), Howitt & Cramer (2010) view this approach as being not a true reflection of psychological research and that in the second half of the 20th Century a more interpretative qualitative technique was used. They contend that positivism really only applies to the physical sciences and that study of psychology is not about collecting data on abstract dimensions but on being able to understand human responses and how they influence and are influenced by internal and external factors, in order to inform knowledge, which requires a qualitative technique of collection (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Although there are challenges for a positivist approach in social sciences it would be unjust to say that there is no place for it, and that a new post-positivist paradigm has emerged that emphasises probable facts or laws rather than accepted facts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, Gray, 2018). The nature of this study is to describe and

understand the experiences of the participants, making it less suitable for a positivist approach and lending itself to an interpretivist approach.

At the other end of the epistemology scale is interpretivism which, in contrast to the positivist need to offer explanations in order to establish strict laws, *"looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social lifeworld"* (Crotty, 1998, p67). It is concerned with the understanding of the complexity of human action (Bryman, 2008; Schwandt, 2000), to understand the meanings that people assign to situations (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991) and allows the researcher to make sense of patterns of meaning (Clarke & Braun, 2013), making it a better approach for this study, that sets out to understand the experiences of the participants.

The epistemology of interpretivism is closely linked with constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Gray, 2018) where the aim of the inquiry is to understand human behaviour as opposed to being able to explain it in line with the positivist approach (Bryman, 2008; Meyer, 2020) This approach is advocated by Max Weber's (1864-1920) *Verstehen*, (translated from German simply means understanding),that accepts the subjective point of view (Weber, 1947). It is generally acknowledged that researchers of social science do not stand *"outside"* of the subject matter looking in but that to really understand a particular phenomenon is to look at it from "inside"' (Myers, 2020, p45). Gidden (1976) sees social science as having a 'subject-subject relation' rather than 'subject-object relation' or as Meyer (2020, p45) puts it as *"speaking the same language as the people being studied; in order to be able to understand the data"*. Merriam & Tisdell (2016, p9) assert that reality is socially constructed from the multiple realities or interpretations of a single event, contending that researchers do not *"find"* knowledge they construct it. Patton (2015) explains

that the experience that someone has, includes the way in which the experience is interpreted, that there is no "*objective*" experience that stands outside its interpretation, for this study the 'experience' is the police student volunteer scheme and how it developed core skills and helped prepare the participants for a career in the police service.

This view is the crux of the criticism of interpretivism, that the researcher is too involved in what they are researching, that the knowledge is created in interaction among investigator and respondents rather from an objective investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), it considers that the researcher has to give up their "*neutrality*" and take part in what they are observing (Flick, 2007, p6). There is a question to the reliability to what is found from such research, if as Merriam & Tisdell (2016) suggest that there are multiple interpretations of a single event then how can the findings be relied upon, as other researchers may come up with multiple different interpretations from that same event. However, Patton (2015) counters that results of research are used to adapt and improve practices, but that these can be continuously improved, meaning that the results achieved through qualitative inquiry are not to be carved in stone infinitum but to be an evolving process of continuous discovery.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences, and reflections of the students who volunteered alongside their studies, therefore a qualitative approach was the most appropriate research design. Qualitative approaches seek to discover and develop new concepts rather than proving preconceived ideas about the people and events under investigation (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002).

A concern from critics of qualitative research is that personal bias shapes the way an inquiry is managed, and some feel, for example in respect of social research for

policy change, this can give the researcher unfair power to shape policy under their own agenda (Silverman, 2016) Indeed Hammersley (1995) asks the question; Is social research political? Should it be political?

It is clear that it is important that researchers consider the degree to which bias was recognised and then prevented or reduced by proper study design and implementation (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010) Although Glense & Peshkin (1992) argue that subjectivity is a strength on which to build the research. In this study the bias of the researcher was recognised, their involvement with setting up the scheme, meant that they were invested in hearing the successes and could make them deaf to any criticism. By identifying their own bias, it meant that questions for the interview were designed to give the participants the opportunity to raise criticisms and the time to elaborate on issues, thus achieving balance in their answers.

The literature suggests that qualitative research is an umbrella term, and that qualitative research takes many forms. Patton (2015, p85) identifies "*sixteen different theoretical approaches to qualitative inquiry*", these include ethnography, grounded theory and realism which seem to be common approaches, but he also includes less common ones such as semiotics and symbolic interaction. Tesch (1990) distinguished 27 forms of qualitative research including ethnography and case study. While Wolcott (1994) differentiated qualitative research strategies according to six styles of collecting data (archival strategies, interview strategies, non-participant observation strategies, participant observation strategies, field study, ethnography). Gray (2018) suggests five approaches of symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, realism, hermeneutics, and naturalistic inquiry. Bryman (2008) includes hermeneutics, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism. Miles & Huberman (2019, p6) argue that while a 'core' of recurring features exists across qualitative

research, they are "*configured and used differently in any particular research tradition*". Silver & Lewins (2014) distinguish between three traditions: interpretivism (including phenomenology, social interactionism, semiotics, deconstructionism, ethnomethodology, and hermeneutics); social anthropology (including ethnography, life history, grounded theory, ecological psychology, narrative studies and case-study analysis; and collaborative social research (action research) It is clear that there is no consensus but there are recurring themes to qualitative research approaches such as: ethnography, grounded theory, hermeneutics, case study and phenomenology.

There does not appear to be a definitive way to describe qualitative research study, it seems to be very much determined by the researcher and the framework and focus of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p41) suggest that:

> When determining the specific types of qualitative study for your investigation, it is helpful to examine numerous sources of literature in order to sort out the nuances in justifying your particular selection.

Merriam & Tisdell (2016, p42) further summarise the types of qualitative research as studies here as:

> Phenomenological study is interested in the essence or underlying structure of a phenomenon; ethnography focuses on a sociocultural interpretation; grounded theory strives to build a substantive theory, one 'grounded' in the data collected; hermeneutics uses people's stories to understand experience; and a case study is an in-depth analysis of a bounded system.

When deciding on which is the most appropriate approach to take for a qualitative study such as this, it is important to understand each approach and then establish which one is the most appropriate. Each approach is assessed here:

3.2.1 Ethnography:

Crotty (1998, p7) defines ethnography as an inquiry that:

seeks to uncover meanings and perceptions on the part of the people participating in the research, viewing these understandings against the backdrop of the people's overall worldview or 'culture'. The researcher strives to see things from the perspective of the participants.

Queirós *et al* (2017) see the biggest advantage of ethnography is that the researcher achieves an in-depth knowledge about the situation in analysis. But argues that such a study requires a huge investment of time, and the results produced by the study can be very diverse, inconsistent, and therefore unreliable. Ethnographic study requires long periods of time in the field in an organisation, as part of a community or group, and are commonly used, the key focus though for it to be an ethnographic study is that '*the lens of culture must be used to understand the phenomenon*' (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p31).

Observation plays a key part in an ethnographic study, often ethnography is substituted as a term for participant observation (Bryman, 2008). However, it would be misleading to think that ethnography is just observation of behaviours of groups/people over a period of time. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) contend that it also involves interviews, conversations analysis of documents, records and a keeping a reflective diary, this allows the researcher to keep an account of their feelings, ideas, impressions, or insights on the events they are observing. The definition also refers to the writing up and outcomes of the project being a part of ethnography. (Bryman, 2008)

Critics of ethnography ask the question "*To what degree can ethnographic accounts legitimately claim to represent an independent social reality*?" (Hammersley, 1992, p.2) There is a question on what the purpose of the study is and the reasons for conducting them, which depends on the context in which the explanation is being developed. Hammersley (2006) argues that the research indicates that how people

behave in the situations being studied are entirely a product of those situations, rather than of who they are and what they do elsewhere, the issue being that there is simply not enough observational data about the rest of their lives. Myers (2020) contends that a limitation to such fieldwork is that you can only study a small group at any one time, so there is a question to the validity of the findings, unless much wider and larger data collection is undertaken. Emerson (1987) supports this point and suggest that some researchers do not spend enough time in the field to get a meaningful result. Other criticism or perhaps word of warning is that being immersed into a community requires the researcher to have excellent social and observations skills, therefore it is not an approach suited to all (Myers, 2020). The fact that the researcher is immersed into a culture may not always achieve the insight expected, it may be impossible, for example, for a male researcher researching the treatment of women in the workplace to fully appreciate the prejudice women feel, as they would have no experience of this kind of discrimination and how subtle is can be. The same could be said for a researcher to investigating race discrimination. Often the discrimination is insinuated, and is not open but underhand, meaning that someone not attune to such behaviour may not pick it up and therefore would report no such discrimination taking place in the organisation. While this approach seeks to understand people's experiences, for this study the experience of the police student volunteer scheme, the emersion of the researcher into the situation and in the in-depth involvement is more than is required for this study, and therefore this approach was ruled out.

3.2.2 Grounded theory:

Strauss & Corbin (1998, p23) define grounded theory as a theory that is,

discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon.

Bryman (2008, p541) contends that "*grounded theory is not a theory – it is an approach to the generation of theory out of data*".

Grounded theory has commonly been used in education, health, and organisational studies, it is good for addressing questions around regular, repeated processes, looking at how things change over time (Myers, 2020). It does not begin with a research question or proposed hypothesis, but that new understandings or theories emerge or a built from the analysis of data (Gray, 2018, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Crotty (1998, p78) defines it as "*a process of inductive theory building based squarely on observation of the data themselves*".

The researcher will have knowledge about the area being studied but they should not have any "*preconceived theoretical ideas'* before starting the research, so extensive literature reviews although not forbidden are discouraged to '*not stifle creativity"* (Myers, 2020, p129). There will be a defined purpose to the study albeit one that can be adapted as the study evolves.

The data collected comes from interviews, observations, and document materials, and then needs to be analysed. Strauss & Corbin (1990) provide clear guidance on 'how to' analyse the data using a four-step process of open, axial, selective and coding.

Advantages of using grounded theory are that it encourages systematic and detailed analysis of the data from an early stage which then sees a constant interplay between the collection and analysis of data. It allows the researcher ample evidence to back up their claims (Myers, 2020). However, critics state that grounded theory is limited in producing new substantive theories or provide original contributions to

knowledge and that often researchers can be overwhelmed by the amount of data

and it "*can be difficult to see the bigger picture*" (Myers, 2020, p134; Gray, 2018).

This sort of research it could be contended, is better used where the data collected is

of something new, rather than a collection of already analysed data, otherwise there

is no new knowledge created, for example the impact of online delivery of education,

due to the pandemic on children, as opposed to investigating home schooling *per se*.

For this study interviews are the only data being used, and that it involves less data

to be analysed than is required for grounded theory. There is not a bank of already

collected data to be analysed and linked so it would not be the most appropriate

approach and was disregarded.

3.2.3 Hermeneutics:

 Hermeneutics involves the study of written texts, and the term is often substituted

with narrative inquiry (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The narratives are the stories and

biographies of people's lives that are whole journeys with a beginning, middle and an

end.

> Hermeneutics provides a theoretical framework for interpretive understanding,
> or meaning, with special attention to context and original purpose…….
> Hermeneutics offers a perspective for interpreting legends, stories and other
> texts. (Patton, 2015, p136-137).

Hermeneutics is about interpretation of social reality rather than explanation or

description, that social reality is too complex to comprehend through observations

but that it must be interpreted in order to fully understand (Gray, 2018) The essence

is that the researcher, in their analysis of the texts, brings out the meaning from the

perspective of the author, so requires an understanding of the historical and social

context of the circumstances in which the text was produced (Bryman, 2008). Crotty

(1998, p91) argues that skilled hermeneutics inquiry "*has the potential to uncover meanings and intentions that are, in this sense, hidden in the text*".

The data that are collected are texts which can be communication such as stories, first-hand accounts of experiences, conversations, biographies, these are then analysed and interpreted in a variety of methodological approaches such a biographical, psychological and linguistic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Schleiermacher (1768-1834) a German theologian used a twofold dimension to interpretation, firstly focusing on the language of the speech, the intonation, pitch, pauses and its structure to identify the meaning and what the speaker wants to convey. Secondly the psychological approach concentrates on the speaker's thoughts and motivations behind the words, and allows the researcher to be able to "*elucidate not only the intentions of the author but even the author's assumptions*'" (Crotty, 1998, p93; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

Traditionally Hermeneutics was used to interpret the bible and other religious texts. However, more recently this has been developed to include a wider definition of 'text', so that over the last few years there seems to have been a marked growth of hermeneutics-oriented research in several business-related scholarly fields, such as accounting, business communication, management information systems, marketing and organisational behaviour and theory (Gopinath & Prasad, 2013)

One fundamental concept of hermeneutics is the 'hermeneutic circle', Crotty (1998, p92) contends that to understand the whole requires a grasping of its parts and "*comprehending the meaning of parts through divining the whole*".

Gopinath & Prasad (2013, p215) clarifies this in the context of business:

> In other words, any text—such as a corporate document or an organisational event ('the part')—can only be understood by situating the said text within the overall totality of its cultural and historical context ('the whole') and understanding 'the whole' only takes place by means of understanding the various 'parts' that constitute the 'whole.

In a business context, the interpretation of text to gain greater insight into a company-based problem comes with challenges. If the text required is that of interviews and conversations with staff over a company policy, there is inevitably going to be contradictions and different conflicting interpretations of a fact. Myers (2020, p232) contends that the hermeneutic process "…*should continue until the apparent absurdities, contradictions and oppositions in the organisation no longer appear strange but make sense*". This is an essential but very time-consuming exercise and as the production of text can be infinite, the issue is it can be difficult to find an end point. Another disadvantage is that there may be more than one interpretation of the text, it is possible to have contradictory views of the same phenomenon, and the researcher needs to be able to justify why they have disregarded or discounted one over the other (Bryman, 2008). It would suggest that this type of research is better suited to projects such as investigations into historical events rather than issues that could be infinite due to differing of opinions, or one that has too many moving parts to be able to understand the whole. Therefore, this approach was discounted for this study, as it did not involve the type of text usually associated with hermeneutics.

3.2.4 Case Studies:

Yin (2014, p38) states that "*case study is a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context*".

Yin (2014, p16) defines further:

A case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.

Bryman (2008, p57) contends that the aim of case study research is to "*generate an intensive examination of a single case, in relation to which they then engage in a theoretical analysis*".

Yin (2003, p xiii) states that "*case studies have similarly been denigrated as having insufficient precision (i.e. quantification), objectivity or rigor*" he goes on to say (p1):

Each strategy has particular advantages and disadvantages, depending on three conditions:

a) the type of research question,
b) the control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and
c) the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena. In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

Depending on the topic of research the case study can be a person, an institution, an organisation, a community or even an event (Flick, 2007). Tight (2010) states that case study research involves a detailed examination of a small sample of interest usually from perspective. Data is usually collated from a variety of methods such as archives, interviews, surveys, and participant observation, it is important that to avoid being overwhelmed by the volume of this data a clear focus is developed prior to collection (Gray, 2018).

Bryman (2008) raises the question of general validity in case study research; how can the findings from a single case be representative of that area of study to be able to be generalised? However, he answers his own question with that researchers do not think that a case study is a sample of one, but that its "*purpose is not to generalise to other cases or to populations beyond the case*." (Bryman, 2008, p57).

The use of case studies tends to be deductive rather than inductive, beginning from a theoretical premise or stance and according to Gray (2018) is often a demanding and difficult approach. Williams (2000) suggests that case study researchers are able to generalise by drawing on findings from comparable cases investigated by others, Miles et al (2014, p33) concur:

> by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and is possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings.

While the police student volunteer scheme could have been used as a case study at the point where the students took part or had just finished, this study is looking at it from the reflective perspective of the students, who have all graduated over a number of years and gone into the police service. It therefore becomes a number of reflections and not just one case or period of time. As a result, this approach was discounted for this study.

3.2.5 Phenomenology:

Following the review of methods available, this qualitative study was undertaken using a Phenomenological theory method.

Bryman (2008, p15) defines phenomenology as;

> …philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world.

Even within an approach there is no definitive clarity on what phenomenology is, as Dowling (2005, p131) states "*it is not only a research method as that employed frequently by qualitative researchers; it is also a philosophy*". Early developers such as the German Philosopher Husserl (1859-1938) quotes pure phenomenology as

"…*the science of pure conscientiousness*", Merleau-Ponty,(1962).defines it as the study of perceptions and consciousness, while Van Manen (1990, p10) asserts "*Phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes a 'something' what it is – and without which it could not be what it is*".

The essence of the phenomenological approach is to explore how human beings make sense of experience and how they transform that experience in consciousness (Spiegelberg, 1975) both individually and as a shared experience (Pattern, 2015). The aim of phenomenological qualitative research is to deal with experiences and meanings and *"to capture as closely as possible the way in which the phenomenon is experienced within the context in which the experience takes place"* (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p26). In this case the 'experience' was the police student volunteer scheme and how it prepared the students for a career in the police service. Phenomenological research produces "*thick descriptions*" of the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Gray, 2018, p31).

Phenomenology can be divided into two branches: descriptive, or classical phenomenology, and interpretative phenomenology (Wills, 2001; Morrell-Scott, 2018). Husserl (1931), considered as the founder of Phenomenological research, concentrated on the description of the lived experience, the participants feelings, hearings, and beliefs about what they have experienced. In this instance bracketing comes to the fore so that the researcher can transcend any of their own bias to fully focus on what is being described (see Section 1.5), although being totally objective is recognised as not being achievable (Morrell-Scott, 2018).

Interpretive phenomenology can be termed as the researcher interpreting and understanding the participants lived experience, often going further with the

researcher trying to experience what the participants themselves have experienced (Polit & Beck, 2010, Morrell-Scott, 2018). It concerns learning from the shared experience and trying to make sense of it (Willis, 2001).

Phenomenology has a strong emphasis on inductive data collection, which according to Gray (2018) allows for greater understanding and depth of a phenomenon. Lochmiller, defines inductive thematic analysis as the identification of patterns, this is supported by Bruan & Clarke (2006, p79) that describe it as *"a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data"*.

Phenomenological reduction and Horizontalization are strategies that are used to make sure that all details are treated with equal value and to understand all phenomena at the same level by not prioritizing any one phenomenon (Davidsen, 2013).

Moustakas (1994) describes this process of phenomenological reduction as the horizontalization of the data. Moustakas recommended that "*to carry out this step the researcher needs to be receptive to every statement of the co-researcher's experience, granting each comment equal value*" (Moustakas, 1994, p.122). This process involves highlighting the statements that referred to the phenomenon investigated, and keeping them separate, these are then often referred to as the horizons (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). When analysing the interviews for this study, coding was used which highlighted statements that related to the key themes, such as benefits of the scheme, skills learnt, exposure to diversity.

The type of study best suited for phenomenological research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon (Cresswell, 2013), Merriam & Tisdell (2016, p28) see it as best suited

97

to the study of "affective, emotional and often intense human experiences". It is the shared experience of the police student volunteer scheme that is being researched within this study.

Criticism of Phenomenological research is that they are often based on small case studies that give rise to generalisations and that due to the unstructured nature of the data collection, they are often difficult to replicate (Gray, 2018). However, this can be countered with the point that if a consistent approach to the research is applied there is no reason why it cannot be transferred other settings and contexts to allow for similar projects to be undertaken (Lincoln & Guba, 1994, Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018).

3.3 Reasons for Choosing Phenomenological Approach to the Research

It is clear that there are many types of qualitative research and the above are just a few of the most common. Whilst the types discussed are quite distinct from each other some studies can be conducted using a combination of the different types, for example a researcher may conduct an ethnographic case study, by focusing on the cultural dimension of a particular program (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research can involve a variety of empirical information that has been gathered to describe events, meanings and emotions of people's lives, and therefore often researchers use more than one interpretative practice within a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013)

This study has chosen the phenomenological approach because it is concerned with being able to interpret and understand how the students felt about their common experience of the volunteering, how well they felt it help prepare them for a career in the police service (Willis, 2001; Furtak & Barnard, 2021). Unlike the Grounded

Theory approach, it is not about interpreting large amounts of data already collected on these experiences. This study seeks to gather the participant's subjective meanings of their shared experience and how they made sense of it (Crotty, 1996). As explained above it also does not fit with ethnography due to the lack of need for the emersion of the researcher into the situation and in the in-depth involvement to understand the cultural lens of the phenomenon. Neither does it involve the analysis of large banks of text that is required using a hermeneutic approach. Using a case study approach would have been appropriate if it was focusing on the volunteer scheme itself rather than the reflective accounts of the participants experience across a wider period. Therefore, the phenomenological approach was considered the most apposite approach to take.

For this study, the interviews were used to gain the insights into the experiences, then thematic analysis was used to identify any patterns that arose from those experiences. In order to understand the meaning of the experience the primary method of collecting data is by interviewing. Before embarking on these interviews, it is common practice for the interviewer to evaluate and reflect on their own biases, their own experiences to enable them to identify their own prejudices and assumptions. Merriam & Tisdell (2016, p27) define this as *epoché* from the Greek work meaning to refrain from judgement. Moustakas (1994) and Van Mann (1990) also identify epoché (or bracketing), which allows for a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination. This forms Husserl's "transcendental phenomenology" which focuses less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants.

3.4 Method of Analysis

A qualitative design has been chosen for this study, and as discussed earlier in the chapter, qualitative research gives rise to the collection of a lot of data: of rich descriptions and explanations, viewpoints, and storytelling (Grey, 2018, Miles, 2019), which researchers need to then make sense of and give meaning to. For this study consideration has been given to the choice of qualitative method of analysis implemented.

It seems that the challenge in qualitative data analysis is that there is not a well-established and widely accepted practice of how the data should be analysed, other than it is generally inductive, involves the data being coded and finding meaning (Bryman, 2008, Merriman & Tisdell, 2016, Grey, 2018).

Merriman & Tisdell (2016, p202) state that qualitative data analysis is:

> A complex procedure that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation.

It seems however that there is a consensus that data in qualitative research needs to be classified or coded or "*aggregated into smaller segments of meaning for closer consideration, reflection and interpretation*" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p414). While some researchers see qualitative research as being about telling a story and providing descriptions (Wolcott, 1994), for others, descriptions are just the foundation, and from them the researcher needs to go further, they need to interpret, to understand what the data are saying and explain what is being suggested (Gray, 2018). Whilst there are no clear-cut rules, some guiding principles or strategies have emerged, such as analytic induction, coding, reflexivity of the researcher (see Section 1.5), content analysis, thematic analysis, narrative analysis and grounded theory (Grey, 2018, Bryman, 2021).

3.4.1 Analytic induction

Analytic induction was first developed by Znaniecki (1928), and further developed by Cressey (1953) and Lindesmith (1968). Analytic induction involves the collection and analysis of data to identify patterns and develop conceptual categories. The process starts with a loose definition of a research question, then cases are proceeded to see if they can create a hypothetical explanation of the research question. If all cases conform, then the hypothesis is confirmed. However, if there is one case that deviates from the hypothesis then either the hypothesis is redefined and rewritten, or it is reformulated to exclude the negative case (Robinson, 1951, Katz, 2001, Bryman, 2021, Flick, 2007, Grey, 2018). What analytical induction essentially does is show what conditions are needed for a phenomenon to occur and what conditions are not, however with an ever-changing society, there is no guarantee that those are the conditions that will be needed in the future. Therefore, an essential case today may be classed as deviation case in the future thus leading to the need for a reformulation of the hypothesis (Robinson, 1951 Katz, 2001).

3.4.2 Coding

One of the major challenges in qualitative research is converting the often-overwhelming volume of the written data that are collected into clear and concise analysis. While there are no hard and fast rules as to how to code these data there are a number of general principles that have been developed (Grey, 2018). Bazeley & Jackson (2019) have developed a step-by-step guide to aide researchers once the data have all been collected.

- Transcribe the data.

- Read and reflect – before any coding takes place the researcher should read over the text and become familiar with it, identify any reoccurring themes that have come up and note anything that is interesting, unusual, or significant.
- Explore and Play – go through the data and see what themes are thrown up, does anything connect between themes?
- Code and connect – this now starts to happen as the reading and exploring will make the researcher become immersed in the data. The codes then can be compared, a hierarchical list of codes can be created and links to literature can be defined.
- Review and refine – as coding takes place new codes will emerge and will be refined or will merge with existing codes.

It is important to remember that coding is not analysis, it is a mechanism to reduce the vast amount of data (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, once coding has taken place, the researcher then needs to analysis what the data are saying.

Bazeley & Jackson (2019) suggest this is done in three stages;

- Describe – this is the description of each theme that has emerged from the data and how the interviewee's account added to the theme either by supporting it or contradicting it.
- Compare- this requires the researcher to look for differences across the participants accounts, are their differences between the demographics of the accounts given, did external factors impact the responses given. Look at who said what and why.
- Relate – the researcher needs to look for connections and ask questions about them.

Once the researcher gets to this point, they should have a clear idea of what the data are saying, however, it may also lead them to go back to the data and refine the analysis, this creates the cycle of the analysis, which allows for redefining and strengthens the conclusions (Grey, 2018). For this study, familiarisation of the data was undertaken, with the transcripts being read and re-read many times whilst listening to the recordings, this allowed for, not just familiarisation to take place, but also to verify accuracy of the transcripts, especially where for example Microsoft Teams could not pick up Welsh names. NVIVO was then used as the software program to help in the coding of the data. The transcripts were uploaded to NVIVO,

and using the coding function, the transcripts were analysed attaching data content to the codes, such as, career aspirations, volunteering, benefits of volunteering, skills developed, weaknesses to volunteering and so on (see Appendix 5). Once this had been completed for all 11 transcripts, the codes were further analysed putting them into the main themes, it was then easy to see all the references from all transcripts under each theme.

There are many criticisms of coding, the most common ones are, that by coding the data the context of which the account being coded sits in gets lost, that the data gets fragmentated, and that the narrative flow of what people say is lost (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, Grey, 2018, Bryman, 2021). In order to counter this, further checks were made when analysing the codes, which involved going back over the transcripts and re-reading the coded paragraphs in situ so that meaning was not lost or taken out of context.

3.4.3 Reflexivity of the researcher

Reflexivity is a common aspect of qualitative research and is defined as the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched and how the researcher shapes how the subject is researched (Grey, 2018, Abrica, 2019). Reflexivity forces the researcher to question how their own experiences have influenced the way in which their research has been shaped (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

It is a criticism of qualitative research that it is subjective as the researcher is not a "*disinterested bystander*" (Grey, 2018, p689) and that their "*subjective experiences shape their interpretation of participants and their realities*" (Abrica, 2019, p881). However, others see this as a strength, Gordon (2005, p280) states that:

> Through interrogation and disclosure of preconceptions and attitudes, researchers reveal their positionalities, and this openness becomes a strength of qualitative work tying it to an interpretivist paradigm.

Often when planning research, researchers can be blind to their own emotional involvement and motivations to study a topic (Allan & Arber, 2017). Pillow (2003, p176) suggests that researchers need to ask themselves "*how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis*". Other practical steps that researchers can take when planning their research such using multiple researchers in a project. Having more than one perspective allows for discussion and sharing of ideological perspectives. It also forces researchers to be transparent about their own standpoints (Grey, 2018).

However, there are extremes to reflexivity and that researchers need to be careful that they don't become too self-absorbed, indulgent, and narcissistic which takes the focus away from the topic being researched and becomes the focus itself (Pillow, 2003, Gordon, 2005, Grey, 2018, Abrica, 2019). For this study the reflexivity of the researcher has been explained in Section 1.5, which identified the researcher's bias, which was linked to being significantly involved with setting up the volunteer scheme and being invested in its success. Therefore, there was a clear need to make sure not to lead the questions and really listen to what the participants were saying, to gather their descriptions of the experience.

3.4.4 Content analysis

Content analysis is more of a hybrid method of analysis, it is a deductive approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. It is an approach used to quantify content and involves systematically and objectively identifying and describing classes or categories within the text. These codes are then

analysed using a statistical approach. (Berelson, 1953, Drisko & Maschi, 2016, Bryman, 2008; Grey, 2018). Content analysis may involve data such as newspaper articles, television programmes, company reports, memoranda, and content that has not been specifically created for research purposes, therefore minimising the researchers own bias in the data set. This is often referred to as *unobtrusive measures* (Webb et al, 1966) which is where the researcher is not considered by the participants in the study or event (Bryman, 2021). Many see this as an advantage of content analysis. While others find content analysis lacking in answers for the questions being researched, that it doesn't address the 'why'. Jagger (2001) states that this type of analysis leads to assumptions rather than specific findings and interpretations may be missed that would have appeared inductively (Flick 2007), which is why it was ruled out for this study, which aimed to gain insight from the participants.

3.4.5 Grounded theory

Grounded theory has been discussed within research philosophies, as stated by Bryman (2008, p541) "*grounded theory is not a theory – it is an approach to the generation of theory out of data*" and has become a widely used framework for analysing qualitative data. Coding is a central process in grounded theory, data is broken down into component parts as it is collected. Cobin and Stauss (2008) put forward three approaches to coding as open, axial and selective coding, whereas others use initial and selective or focused coding (Charmaz, 2014). The approaches may vary but put simply they are approaches to generating codes from the data, often detailed line by line coding, creating categories from these codes and then the data is re-explored and re-evaluated within the selected codes in an attempt to be able to conceptualize the phenomenon being studied. Grounded theory usually starts

from a position of no theoretical stand point or hypothesis, and data is collected and analysed as it comes in, introducing a deductive element, which can often prompt the sampling of new data, however this can be onerous on the researcher who can become bogged down within the process (Charmaz, 2014), Cobin and Strauss (2008) advise the alternation between collecting and analysing in order to allow for clarity. It can seem that the categories and relationships can be continuous and prompt more and more data to be collected, in a never-ending cycle, and questions whether it is concepts that emerge rather than theory (Bryman, 2008, Grey, 2018). The focus of the study was the police student volunteer scheme and the participants' reflections on that experience rather theorising about their experiences in relation to their social context. It took an inductive approach and therefore grounded theory as a method of analysis was not appropriate and rejected.

3.4.6 Narrative analysis

Unlike content analysis and grounded theory that can fragment and decontextualize data, narrative analysis is concerned with the story that is being told, the lived experience of the interviewee (Grey, 2018). The narrative analysis is sensitive to the "temporal sequence" that people include in the stories of their lives (Bryan, 2008, p556). The data are usually collected through unstructured interviews, giving the interviewee the chance to tell their story; however, the interviewer is part of the process as they can guide and elicit more information by asking to follow up questions. Narratives collect a variety of viewpoints and perspectives, which can be contradictory of each other, thus the analysis and interpretations can themselves constitute a narrative (Gray, 2018). This approach was not suitable for this study as it did align with the use of semi-structured interviews and the need to understand the volunteer experience, rather than any wider narrative on the participants student

experience which would have come out in the stories being told, and the focus of the volunteer scheme could have been lost.

3.4.7 Interpretative phenomenological analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) has its roots in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography and is concerned with the examination of how people make sense of a major life experience or an experience that becomes a significant life experience to a person (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2022).

Within IPA the role of the researcher is significant, and some see this as the researchers not being able to distinguish the data from themselves (Willig, 2013). The aim of IPA is not to just describe the data but to go beyond and therefore becomes interpretative and implicit, it is not just concerned with the lived process, but also with the wider context of personal and social relationships (Joffe, 2012). Whilst there are similarities with IPA and thematic analysis with the use of step-by-step processes of analysing transcripts, and identification of themes (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2022), IPA goes further with a focus on patterned meaning as well as the individual experience. Therefore, it was not chosen for this study, as while this study is interested in the participants' individual experiences, its focus is on the general themes that emerge from those experiences.

Whilst other methods of qualitative data analysis have been discussed they have been rejected for this study as not being suitable and thematic analysis was chosen as the method for analysis.

3.5 Chosen method of analysis – Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen as the method for analysis. It has been argued that thematic analysis does not have a "*identifiable heritage*" and that it can be found in most other qualitative analyses and therefore it cannot be claimed to be an identifiable approach in its own right (Grey, 2018, p554). However, others disagree with this and states that thematic analysis is a standalone recognised method, that enables an understanding of the meaning that is made of the phenomenon by groups studied (Joffee, 2012, Ryan & Bernard, 2000). It is a method used to identify, analyse and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is applicable to this study as the aim is to draw out themes from the participant's reflections on what skills are needed for the workplace and whether those skills were developed through the volunteer experience.

Others have argued that thematic analysis is a method for analysis that is independent of theory and epistemology and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has been described as underpinning most methods of analysis in qualitative research, (Willig, 2001). Thematic analysis can be defined as a way of interpretating qualitative data to find patterns of meaning across the data, establishing "*valid models of human thinking, feeling and behaviour*" (Joffe, 2012, p208; Crowe *et al,* 2015). Thematic analysis is used to interpret the meaning of a given group's conceptualisation of the phenomenon under study (Joffe, 2012). Thematic analysis provides the researcher the opportunity to give clear descriptions of patterns and themes collected from the data and is widely used as an effective qualitative research tool in social research. Thematic analysis is flexible and can be used for analysing most types of qualitative research data, such as data collected through interviews (Gupta *et al,* 2018).

This is applicable to this study as the aim is to gain insight from the participants' conceptualization of their experiences at university and during the police student volunteer scheme and whether it helped develop core skills needed for their current job.

Themes that emerge can be formed deductively in circumstances where the researcher brings theoretical ideas to the research, or they can develop inductively from the raw data (Joffe, 2012). Charmaz (2014) defines it as the idea that theoretical ideas derive from the data rather than being formed before the data are collected.

Inductive thematic analysis is the approach used in this study to identify themes that emerged from the data collected from the interviews, without the application of pre-existing coding framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis allows for interpretation of important aspects of the research topic in an organised format (Boyatzis 1998). A theme can show important aspects of the research topic and represents a level of patterned meaning of the data (Gray, 2018).

Inductive thematic analysis uses the coding process of research data, in this case the interviews, and does not buy into any pre-existing concepts of the researcher (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It is also important to not fall into the habit of merely paraphrasing the data and to be mindful that the analysis might be unsatisfactory, the researcher needs to think about what the central concept is, and ensure the themes conform to that concept. (Gray, 2018). However, Braun & Clarke (2006) caution that a purely inductive approach is not entirely achievable as researchers are unable to say with certainly that they can dissociate themselves from their own biases. It is also true that researchers are guided by their research

questions and their knowledge of previous work in this field. Joffe (2012) argues therefore that there is usually an adoption of both approaches during analysis, that the researcher acknowledges their own preconceptions but is open minded to new ideas.

In this study the researcher acknowledged or 'bracketed' their preconceptions, their involvement in setting up the volunteer scheme and the work that had gone into and the reasons for it, such as the need to develop employability skills, and set them aside. Bracketing is the identification and temporary setting aside of the researcher's assumptions (Fischer, 2009). By identifying preconceptions is made it easier to set them aside, these preconceptions were written down before the analysing process began, which was a way of being able to keep such preconceptions out of mind when handling the data. Reviewing the data many times also allowed for new ideas to emerge.

3.6 Data Collection

When designing any qualitative research project then the best method of data collection needs to be carefully considered. Qualitative data collection can consist of gathering multiple forms of data through methods such as interviews, observations, collection of documents and records (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018).

For this study the most appropriate form of data collection was the use of interviews, as the research questions being asked required reflections and opinions of past students on their experience whilst at university, now they were in the job. Therefore, using observations that note behaviour and activities of individuals at a certain point, and the collection and reviewing of public or private documents or audiovisual and

digital material were deemed not appropriate as methods of data collection and could be ruled out for this study.

As a result, data were collected using interviews and the questions used for this interview can be found in Appendix 1. All interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams which were recorded and transcribed using the Microsoft Teams software. Focus groups were ruled out as it was felt that a group response and the need for interaction as a group (Clark *et al,* 2021) was not required and that gaining the rich descriptions from the individuals would provide the necessary data, which ruled out using a focus group.

Using interviewing data collection techniques is not without its pitfalls, as Fontana and Frey (1994, p361) say "*asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first*". Watt (2007, p90) noted in her study into why families chose home-schooling over state provided education, "*There was no doubt that my presence was influencing the nature of the knowledge generated in this interview situation*".

Fontana & Frey, (2000, p646) contend:

> Increasingly qualitative researchers are realizing that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two or more people leading to negotiated, contextually based results.

According to Bevan (2014) interviews are considered the primary method for data collection in phenomenological research, for this study these were carried out with past students from the university who undertook volunteering whilst at university and are now currently employed in the Police Service.

However, whilst interviews are widely used there seems to be little in terms of instruction on best practice,

Giorgi (1997, p245) stated that "*questions are generally broad and open ended so that the subject has sufficient opportunity to express his or her view point extensively*". It is important that the interviewee does not just describe events but that they also reflect on the meaning of the experience. The aim is to find out if the volunteer work helped develop skills that are needed for the workplace, and whether there were specific occasions within the experience that were more beneficial, or developmental than others. Seidman (2013) and Brinkmann & Kvale (2015), both used phenomenological theory as a way of justifying the phenomenological interview and use the structured interview as a preferred approach. Bevan (2014, p138) states that: "*phenomenological theory has sufficient structure to examine an experience through interview in an explicit way, which can be done flexibly*".

Within the phenomenological interview the interviewer needs to undertake phenomenological reduction or epoché (Bevan, 2014) or "bracketing" (Husserl, 1931) which requires the researcher to abstain from the use of personal knowledge and set aside what is already known about a given phenomenon. It is common practice for the interviewer to evaluate and reflect on their own biases and their own experiences to enable them to identify their own prejudices and assumptions (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). Dispensing with these beliefs and knowledge allows for the collection of the participants' descriptions of experience and an acceptance of how they have described their world which maintains a fundamental level of validity (Willis, 2010). Within this research the researcher needed to recognise that as they set up the volunteer scheme, their natural instinct was to want favourable feedback from the participants, but they needed to make sure that they listened carefully to their feedback and not frame questions too closely to what they wanted to hear. According to Cresswell & Cresswell (2018) the researcher's presence may also bias

the participants responses to the questions, this was a reality within this study as the researcher had worked with all the participants during their volunteer experience.

For this study the interviews were semi-structured to give the participants time to describe their experience of volunteering but also allow them time to reflect on that experience. The participants were also asked to be as honest as they could with the researcher asking for their candid responses in order to get a true reflection of their experience, despite the closeness of the researcher to the volunteer scheme. It was important that there was mutual respect in the need for honesty.

The interviews started with an opening question about the participants' professional role, what they were doing and for how long, so that their current career could be ascertained, then the discussion moved into their volunteering experience whilst at university. All interviews started with the participant giving verbal informed consent to the information being used for the research project, consent forms had been emailed out previously to be completed, but verbal consent was also sought. Each participant took part in a single interview session, which lasted between 45-60 minutes.

3.6.1 Using thematic analysis for interviews.

An essential part of the thematic analysis of interviews is getting the interview transcribed, indeed transcribing is often thought of as a reinforcement of the understanding and interpreting of the data (Reissman, 1993; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Gupta *et al,* 2018; Furtak & Barnard, 2021). In this case the recording of the Interview *via* Microsoft Teams allowed for automatic transcribing of the interview. However, not all words were transcribed correctly, so the researcher had to listen to the recording and correct the transcript, which allowed for active listening of the

interview and further enforcement of what was being said, an essential element of the first of Braun & Clark's (2006) phases.

Braun & Clarke (2006) identified six phases for inductive thematic analysis to take place:

- Phase 1: Familiarization of the data
- Phase 2: Generating initial codes.
- Phase 3: Search for themes
- Phase 4: Review of themes
- Phase 5: Define and name themes.
- Phase 6: Produce report.

The first phase involves the researcher familiarising themselves with the data. This is achieved by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, often this may need the researcher to re-listen to the recording of interviews and review the transcript at the same time. This will also allow for some initial coding to take place.

Phase two involves generating initial codes systematically across all the data. This can be done manually by colour coding extracts of the data, using word documents to collate extracts, or using software packages such as NVIVO. Initial codes are generated by keeping the research question in mind. For example, while reading the transcripts the researcher needs to focus on what is this participant saying in relation to what they have learnt from the volunteering experience.

Phase Three involves searching for themes. From the codes that have been generated they are then collated into potential themes, putting all the relevant data together under that theme. Once a theme has been defined then extracts and quotes are used to support the theme.

Phase four is to review the themes, to check that they are valid, there is enough evidence within the transcripts to support the theme, it may appear on re-reading

that two themes are interlinked and ae then merged to create a new theme. It is through this process that the themes become developed to allow examination of the relationships between themes and to start to create the narrative.

Phase five involves the process of defining theme and synthesis, generating clear definitions, it is the point at which there is shift from merely describing the data to when meanings have started to emerge and "*cohere around a central idea or concept*" (Bruan & Clarke, 2008, p694).

The final phase requires the researcher to relate the data back to the original research question and link it to existing literature.

3.7 The Participants

This project employed convenience sampling, as this is the most unproblematic method of deciding on a sample (Edgar & Manz, 2017). The participants identified as the sample were those who met the following criteria:

- They had attended the University of Wales Trinity Saint David

- They had studied for a BA Public Services degree,

- They had volunteered as a Police Student volunteer or as a Special Police constable with South Wales Police,

- They were in employment as either Police Staff or Police Officers after graduation.

This criterion does create a uniqueness in terms of the expected size of any potential sample, it is very specific but needed in order to address the aim and objectives of the study in how the university, through the police student volunteer scheme, helped prepare graduates to enter a career in the police service.

Participants were recruited using the researcher's social media accounts, which had allowed them to maintain contact with the graduates since leaving university. Participants were then emailed the participation information sheet (Appendix 3) and the informed consent form (Appendix 4). Interviews were then arranged at convenient times for the participants via Microsoft Teams.

It had been hoped that the researcher would have been able to interview 20 participants, however the final number of participants was 11, Whilst this was unfortunate and not as planned, the dataset collected from the 11 interviews was sufficient to gain in-depth reflections.

 A number of measures were taken to try and get 20 participants to take part in the interviews, initially 28 students were identified as meeting the above criteria.

Once the ethics approval had been given for the project in September 2022, and the design and structure of the interviews finalised, messages and emails were sent to all identified potential participants to ask them if they would be willing to take part in the project in October 2022. The timeline for data collection had been designed to arrange the interviews in the October, with a hope many would be done in November but also to plan more after December and book them in January and February, this took into consideration that December is a very busy month for the Police, and they would have less time to freely give to partake in interviews. Therefore, the requests were sent at the beginning of October to arrange interviews as soon as possible. Those participants who came back straight away were then emailed participation information sheet (Appendix 3) and the informed consent form (Appendix 4) and then interviews arranged. The first batch of responses in October led to 6 participants having interviews arranged in November 2022, with 2 pre-arranged for January

2023. Further messages and emails were sent out to participants that had yet to responds in January 2023, where a further 3 participants had interviews arranged in February 2023. In March and July 2023 two final sets of messages and emails were sent out to try and boost the numbers of participants, to no avail. However, replies were received from 4 potential participants who stated that they had left the police and therefore no longer met the criteria, another 4 initially agreed to be involved but due to the nature of their shift patterns and busy personal lives, they never got around to confirming a date to conduct the interview, one also went on maternity leave so couldn't fit in the interview. 11 interviews in total had been completed by March 2023, after the coding process had taken place in September 2023 and no new themes had emerged and along with timings it was decided that the richness and depth of the data was sufficient enough not to keep contacting any more potential participants.

Table 4 below shows some basic details about the participants:

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Date graduated	Current role	Force and Length of service	Part time job whilst at university	Type of volunteer	Degree Classification achieved	Country of birth
1	Male	White British	2018	PC	SWP 4 years	yes	PSV	Upper second	Wales
2	Female	White British	2020	PC	SWP 2.5 years	yes	PSV/ SC	Upper second	Wales
3	Female	White British	2017	Police control room supervisor	SWP 6 years	yes	PSV	First	Wales
4	Male	White British	2015	PC	SWP 7 years	yes	PSV	Lower Second	Wales
5	Male	White British	2015	PC	SWP 7 years	no	PSV	Upper second	Wales

6	Female	White British	2017	PCCOs project manager	SWP 6 years	yes	PSV	First	Wales
7	Female	White British	2019	PC	SWP 2.5 years	no	PSV/SC	First	Wales
8	Female	White British	2017	PC	SWP-formerly Kent Police 7 years	no	PSV/SC	Upper second	Wales
9	Non-Binary	White British	2017	Data Analyst-formerly a PC for 2 years	Brighton Police 2 years – 6 years with the force	no	PSV	First	England
10	Male	White British	2017	PC-temporary PS	SWP 6 years	no	PSV	Upper second	Wales
11	Males	White British	2018	PC	SWP 5 years	yes	PSV	Lower Second	Wales

Table 4: Details of Participants KEY: PC – Police Constable   PCCO – Police and Crime Commissioner Office   SWP – South Wales Police   PSV - Police Student Volunteer SC- Police Special Constable

Table 4 shows demographic details about the participants, the only protected characteristics that were recorded within this study were gender and ethnicity, the focus of the study was not to look at it through any particular demographic lens and the criteria for the participants set out above concentrated on their degree course, volunteering and career progression.

All of the participants interviewed undertook a BA (Hons) Public Services degree at the university between 2013 and 2020. 2 of the participants achieved a lower second 5 achieved an upper second, with 4 achieving a first-class honours degree, with female participants and the non-binary participant achieving Firsts.

Chart 1 to show particpants by gender

■ Male ■ Female ■ Non-binary
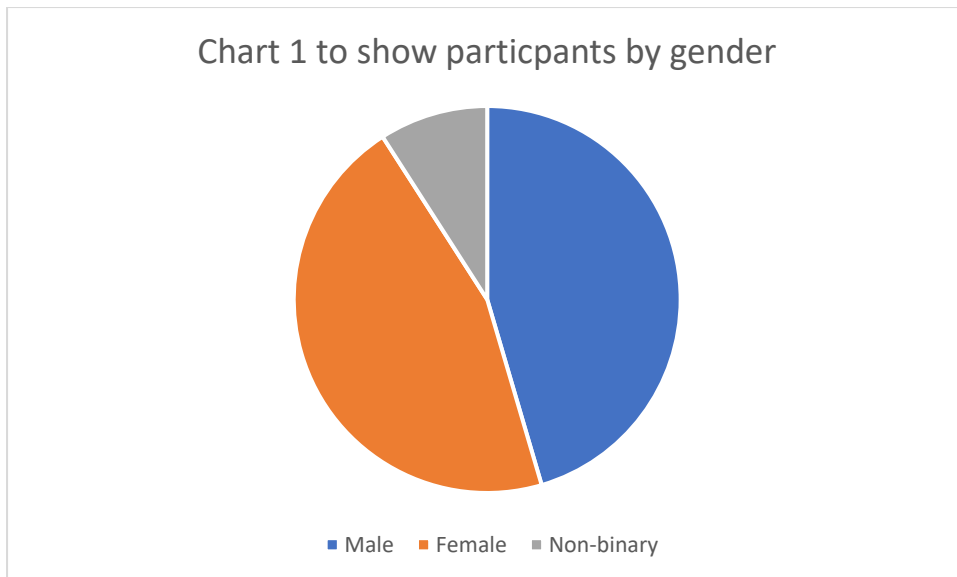
There is an even split between the genders of the participants, 5 male, 5 female with 1 non-binary as shown above in Chart 1.

All participants have gone into roles within the police service, with 10 out 11 working with South Wales Police and all undertook volunteering with the police whilst at university, all were Police Student Volunteers (PSV) however 3 went on to become Special Constables, leaving 8 as PSVs.

Of the 11 participants, 10 were born in Wales with one born in England. None of the participants identified as BAME, all were White British. This was not uncommon for this degree programme, that usually only had less than 5% of its cohorts identifying as BAME. Considering the national statistics for Wales this was not unexpected. Wales is a diverse country, consisting of urban, rural and coastal areas, with the two largest cities being Swansea and the capital city, Cardiff. The population of Wales is approximately 3,107,500 people according to the 2021 Census, with 6.2% identifying as BAME and other ethnic minorities (ONS, 2021). In many rural areas of Wales this figure is much lower with some towns recoding no ethnic minorities living in the area.

51.4% of households in Wales were classified as deprived, with some of the poorest areas being in South Wales. With most of the participants in this study coming from small towns and rural areas of Wales, it is not surprising that they did not come from BAME communities and that their exposure to diversity varied greatly between the participants.

All the participants have gone on to work in the police service, of the 11 participants eight have gone on to become police officers, of the remaining three, one became a data analyst, one went to work in the service centre, and one went to work as a project a project manager in the Police and Crime Commissioners Office. From the interviews the reasons for their career choices are given, and the role of the police student volunteer scheme in helping shape those decisions.

From the list there is one participant with outlier characteristics. Participant 9 is the only participant that is non-binary, working for a different force and the only one who is from and lives in England.

3.8 Description of Interviews

In qualitative research, sample sizes are usually smaller than in quantitative research, this is because data collection in qualitative research is more concerned with in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Such studies are not overly concerned with making large generalizations and testing hypotheses but more on the inductive process and theories that emerge (Dworkin, 2012).

There is no general consensus on how many interviews are enough, Roscoe (1975) recommends working with not less than 30, Dworkin (2012) suggests no less than 25, Bryman (2008), Flick (2009) and Gray (2018) acknowledge that the larger the

sample size the more representative of the population being measured. Adler & Adler (1987) contend that there are occasions where a small number of subjects can be valuable and represent adequate numbers for specific research projects. However, researchers do concede that the impact of external factors on sample size, such as time and cost, may have a bearing. Whilst numbers are important in any data collection, it is important to make sure that any data collected are relevant, and many consider saturation when designing their research (Flick 2009). Saturation is the point at which the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data, the point at which no matter how many more people are interviewed, no new theoretical insights will be achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Dworkin, 2012: Baker & Edwards, 2012; Gray, 2018).

The participants for this study have been identified through a specific criterion and therefore the sample size was expected to be small, however any data collected would be relevant to addressing the aims and objectives of the study.

The interviews were undertaken on Microsoft Teams and the recoding and transcript function was utilised to make a record of the interview (Appendix 4 an example transcript). Microsoft Teams can be used for interviews where the discussions can include sensitive data and requires confidentiality. The recordings of the interviews are stored on the Teams event along with the transcript, however only participants to the timetabled meeting on Teams can access them, which in this case would be the individual participant and the researcher. Once the need for access to the transcript and the recording is over, i.e. once the thesis has been completed, the meeting can be deleted from the calendar. This will also delete the transcript and attendance lists and therefore will no longer be available, thus adhering to any specific data protection requirements. Planning interviews via Teams is a relatively simple

process, and since COVID-19 most people have become adept to using such a platform. Using Teams is also very cost effective as it reduces the need to travel to meet the participants, it also takes away any nervousness as the participants can control the environment in which they want to be in to conduct the interview. Whilst it is a convenient process, it does take away the personal interaction of a face-to-face interview, which allows for body language and non-verbal cues, and the ability to build rapport with the participants.

Taking into consideration that all participants are working within the Police Service and on shift patterns, the ease and convenience of using Teams meant it was the most appropriate way to conduct the interviews. The time planned for each interview was 1 hour which gave plenty of time for the interviewee to give thought to the questions and answer them. All participants had been given the premise for the interview prior to the interview so they had been able to think about the topic area beforehand. The interview concentrated on their time at university, the volunteering they undertook and what they learnt from the experience and how it helped with their current role. The participants were also asked now that they are in the job what they thought were the most essential skills needed to do the role.

3.9. Method of analysis summary

This study is a qualitative study and as Jones (2007 p4) states:

> The goal of qualitative analysis is to deconstruct blocks of data through fragmentation and then have them coalesce into collections of categories which relate conceptually and theoretically, and which make assumptions about the phenomenon being studied.

Thematic analysis (see Section 3.5) was the chosen method of analysis, this was flexible and can be used for analysing most types of qualitative research data, such as data collected through interviews (Gupta et al ,2018). Applying Braun & Clarke's

(2006) phases of inductive thematic analysis, familiarisation of the data was undertaken, with the transcripts being read and re-read many times whilst listening to the recordings, this allowed for, not just familiarisation to take place, but also to verify accuracy of the transcripts, especially where for example Microsoft Teams could not pick up Welsh names.

For this study NVIVO was used as the software program to help in the coding of the data. The transcripts were uploaded to NVIVO, and using the coding function, the transcripts were analysed attaching data content to the codes, such as, career aspirations, volunteering, benefits of volunteering, skills developed, weaknesses to volunteering and so on (see Appendix 5). Once this had been completed for all 11 transcripts, the codes were further analysed putting them into the main themes, it was then easy to see all the references from all transcripts under each theme (see Sections 4.2 to 4.6).

3.10 Validity and Reliability

When designing any research project, the issue of validity, reliability and objectivity is raised in an attempt to assure an element of standardisation (Flick, 2018). However, such concepts are harder to achieve within qualitative research. The importance within quantitative research is keeping as many factors as possible constant in order to be able to replicate such experiments. Within qualitative research this is much harder to achieve due to changes in time and opinions of the social phenomenon being researched. However methods can be held constant, for example the application of a consistent interview guide, a focused sample, and clear directions for data collection (Miles Huberman & Saldana, 2019, Clarke *et al,* 2021). The terms reliability and validity within qualitative research have often been replaced with

trustworthiness and authenticity and broken down into credibility, transferability dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), due to the incompatibility of standardisation and control in qualitative research (Flick, 2018).

The debate around validity in qualitative research revolves around the unease that such research will generate concrete answers about a social reality, when in fact there may be multiple accounts of such an event (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, Clarke *et al,* 2021, Denzin *et al,* 2023). Schwandt (2000) proposes that for qualitative research validity can be described as how accurately the findings of the study represent participants' realities of social phenomena, whilst Clarke *at al* (2021, p364) state that where there are several accounts of the same social phenomena it is the *"credibility of the account that determines whether it is acceptable to others*". Hammersley (1992) purports that validity is a plausible and credible account of a phenomena that depicts a social reality, as a representation of the world and not as a mirror reflecting the social world back to an audience. He further contends that an account can be held to be "*valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise*" (1992, p69).

Cresswell & Cresswell (2018) define validity in qualitative research as the need for the researcher to adhere to certain procedures, to check for accuracy in the findings and ensuring reliability in applying a consistent approach to the research.

While there seems to be no consensus amongst the literature as to definitive terms for validity and reliability in qualitative research, all call for a consistent approach in data collection across a research project. For this study a clear interview question guide was produced, the timings and method of the interviews was kept the same, and how the data was collected were kept constant and consistent. As discussed in

Sections 1.5 and 3.4.3, the bias of the researcher and the reflexivity had been acknowledged.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

When conducting any research, it is not simply a case of using the most appropriate approach to collect information, but making sure that it is done in the most ethical and responsible way (Gray, 2018). As most social studies involve trying to understand human behaviour, interaction with people is unavoidable, therefore it is important that no 'harm' comes to the participants. This harm could constitute mental distress or causing participants to feel belittled or demeaned (Sudman, 1998). Therefore, treating the participants with respect was paramount. This study used interviews, so it was important that they were arranged to suit the participant and to avoid disruption to their lives. Care was also taken to ensure that participants had support around them if there was anything that could have triggered any mental distress. Thankfully no such occasion arose during the interviews.

The University follows the OECD Frascati (2015, p44) manual definition of research activity which states that research is: "*creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge –including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge*". This covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects. For this study the University's ethic form PG2 was completed and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee for such research to be undertaken.

3.11.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 govern the processing (acquiring, holding, using, etc.) of personal data in the UK, while these Acts are not designed specifically for research purposes the data collected during a research project is subject to the Act's provisions. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the regulator and provides guidance for compliance, which sets out the basis on which data can be collected, what constitutes personal and data and how it can be stored. There are six lawful bases for processing data (ICO.org.uk), for this project the base was consent, whereby the individuals taking part in the research had given clear consent for their personal data to be used for the specific purpose of the study.

Ensuring consent is informed and given voluntarily is another important aspect of any research, in this study all participants were supplied with sufficient information about the purpose, format and proposed outcomes of the research to allow them to give informed consent (Crow *et al,* 2006, Flick, 2018).

Anonymity is also an important consideration, there is no need to use the individual names of the respondents in this study, however the interviews were recorded on Teams, which means the individuals appear on screen, and can be identified. As part of the information given the participants were informed that the recordings would only be held on a university encrypted computer for the time needed to complete the study and then would be deleted.

3.11.2 Right to withdraw.

Participants were notified that they could withdraw from the study at any point and that the recording of the interview and transcript would be destroyed immediately if they chose to withdraw. No participant withdrew from the process.

3.12 Chapter Summary

Within this chapter a detailed review of the possible research approaches has been presented and an explanation given as to the chosen approach taken to answer the research questions proposed. A phenomenological approach has been chosen because the study is concerned with how the students felt about their common experience of the volunteering, how well they felt it help prepare them for the workplace. This study seeks to gather the participant's subjective meanings of their shared experience and how they made sense of it.

The data collection method and data analysis procedures were presented and the reasons why they were used for this study. The most appropriate form of data collection was the use of interviews, as the research questions being asked required reflections and opinions of past students on their experience whilst at university now they were in the job. Interviews were considered the best way to gain rich descriptions of their experiences and their reflections. Thematic analysis was chosen as the method for analysis, it was considered the best method to identify, analyse and report themes within the data collected. Thematic analysis is used to interpret the meaning of a given group's conceptualisation of the phenomenon under study, in this case the participants reflections on how the police student volunteer scheme helped prepare them for the workplace. Validity, reliability, and ethical considerations were also discussed, and the reflexivity of the researcher was highlighted.

In the following chapter a detailed articulation of the findings is presented.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 the method of data analysis was outlined, this chapter will outline the findings that emerged from the data. It presents the reflections of the participants who were; past students, part of the Police Student Volunteer Scheme (PSV) or a Special Police Constable (SC) and have now gone on to work within the police service, on their feelings and thoughts of what skills are needed to do their role, and how prepared they were for it from their experiences at university. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the themes that were identified as part of the thematic analysis process (see Section 3.5). The aim of this study assesses how the university, through its police student volunteer scheme, helped develop employability skills to prepare students for a career in the police service. The study investigates what core skills are really needed in the workplace and whether the police student volunteer scheme helped develop these skills, data were collected by interviewing past students. The aim of the interviews was to gain insight into what specifically they learnt from the volunteering experience, their current role, what skills they think they need to do their job, and whether they felt that those skills had been developed whilst they were at university. From the interviews the data collected has been organised under five main themes, which are a result of the thematic analysis carried out and are depicted in Table 4. The themes are 1. Pre-university experience, 2. Motivation and benefits of volunteering, 3. Challenges and Barriers to volunteering, 4. Academic Experience 5. Skills needed for the workplace. Within this chapter and under each theme and subtheme, extracts from the interviews have been included to support the themes identified. Overall, the extracts are included as they have been

transcribed from the recordings of the interview, however where Microsoft teams has not picked up the exact word, the recording has been re-listened to, to identify the correct word, which has then been inserted.

Table 5: Main themes and subthemes

Main Theme	Subthemes
Pre-university experience	Career Aspirations Reasons for Choosing the course. Skills and experience prior to starting university
Motivation and benefits of volunteering	Type of volunteering Number of hours undertaken Making connections Dealing with exposure to incidents Personal development Skills developed: • Confidence • Communication • Leadership • Teamworking • Taking you outside of your comfort zone Exposure to Diversity
Challenges and Barriers to volunteering	Balancing volunteering with university, work and social lives Dealing with challenging situations Weaknesses of the volunteering Recommendations for further volunteering
Academic Experience	Academic tasks Skills developed through modules. Developing reflective skills
Skills needed for the workplace.	Skills identified as needed for the workplace. Preparation for the workplace Reflection within the workplace Understanding multi-agency working

4.2 Theme 1: Pre-University Experience

In order to establish how much the volunteering experience had helped to develop the participants' employability skills, it was important to understand where each of

them had come from before starting university. They gave answers about their career aspirations, the reason for choosing the course and what skills they felt they had prior to starting university. This information provides an idea of distance travelled in terms of how far they felt they had developed their skills whilst at university and helps answer the RQ2 regarding how the police student volunteer scheme helped develop these skills (see Section 3.1.1). This theme is important in setting context around the participants' experiences and their aspirations prior to starting university, and then the further themes build on this to help answer the research questions.

4.2.1 Career aspirations before coming to university.

All the participants started university with career aspirations to join one of the public services, such as police, the fire service, the NHS, the armed forces, however at the point of staring the course, some were unsure which public services they wanted to join.

Participants 1, 2,5,6 and 10 all stated they were unsure which service they wanted to join when they started university. They all knew that they wanted to do a job that was practical and not an office role and were leaning towards the uniformed public sector. Participant 6 stated that they knew they:

> "wanted to go into uniform service but didn't know what that looked like and chose the course because there was a range of volunteering opportunities with the police, the fire service and the prison".

For Participant 7 she was conflicted and was thinking of "*graduate scheme within the NHS*". But "*my heart was telling me Police*".

Whereas Participant 3, 4, 8 and 11 there was no such hesitation, they were very clear from the start of the course that they wanted to join the police. As Participant 3 summed it up

> "I wanted to be a police officer. That's what I want to do. I want to work at the police. Just be a normal regular constable".

However, for Participant 9 they weren't sure what they wanted to do and saw the course as an opportunity for "*finding where I'd fit in*".

The participants aspirations, to join a public sector job, aligned with their reasons for choosing to study the BA Public services course rather than a specific policing degree. The all stated that they wanted to study a broader degree subject rather than solely studying policing, in order to keep their options open, to study a wider range of modules that linked to the many public services that exist. However, it was over the course of the degree and through the volunteering that their career aspirations were cemented, and all went on to join the police service.

4.2.2 Reasons for choosing the course.

All the participants undertook the BA Public Services degree, which was a broad degree looking at the management of and organisational leadership within the Public Sector organisations. The course covered many elements of public services, learning about the governance structures, the political and economic background, the legislative processes as well as giving opportunities to volunteer within the public sector. The course between 2014-2019 offered an optional policing pathway that embedded the Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) (accredited by Skills for

Justice), which at that point was a pre-requisite to join any police force in England and Wales between 2013 and 2019. Most stated that they chose the course because it would give them more options in case, they didn't end up going into the police. All, where it was offered, took the optional policing module for the CKP but made a deliberate decision not to go for a straight policing degree.

Participant 2 chose her course because,

> "I thought public services give me a range of skills not just towards the police service. And then I think as my university went along, I just sort of fell into the police service side then more than army".

Indeed Participant.3 *"actually went to Pontypridd University and to do the Police Science degree"* but had bad experience and didn't enjoy it, so transferred to do the BA Public Services degree, which was closer to home and did the CKP but also provided opportunities to learn about other services "*I mean, I just wanted to know what else is out there. That's why I went for the public service as opposed to just police*".

Participant 4 liked'

> "the idea of it being more broad, not just in the policing. And as you know, I did quite a few things with the fire service as well and I like that side of things, but I like the local aspect of UWTSD as well. For me being from Swansea".

Participant 5 chose the course,

> "because it was sort of all rounded, really, wasn't it? And I think you know, through perhaps some of the subjects and the CKP in particular, I found that really interesting. I think that's what prompted me to apply I think".

Participant 7 explained that "*I thought if I took public services rather than policing, it was giving me more options*".

Participant 8 despite only wanting to go into the police chose the course because,

> "what if I end up doing a policing degree, by the end of it, I don't want to go into the police. So, I thought I'll do public services because instead of putting all my eggs in one basket, it opens doors for different things. If I change my mind."

For Participant 9 it was all about,

> "finding that interest, which happens to be public services where there is structure. And policies and procedures that I can learn. And so, I think that interest in public services has always been there since I was fire cadet at 17".

Others were attracted to the practical nature of the course and the opportunity to volunteer, Participant 10 states that "*it had that physical aspect which I think is necessary for the roles I wanted to go into*".

This was also attractive to Participant 7 who had heard that "*UWTSD are far more of a practical course*" with "*voluntary opportunities, the opportunities with the specials within South Wales Police*".

Participant 8 liked the fact that,

> "it was like 80% coursework and then 20% exam", "the structure of the course it really suited me and that that was a big factor in me doing it as well".

For Participant 10 there were a variety of reasons for choosing the course,

"I quite like the look of the course itself because again, it's not just working with the Help Point, we had the trips to Llandysul. We had the gym sessions every week. So that's why I selected the public service course. it gives you that broad range and broad experience".

For Participant 11 it was,

"more staying local. I sort of knew I wanted to stay either in Dyfed, South Wales or Gwent Police, so I figured going to university in that area and I lived in the area was massively beneficial".

Participants. 3, 4, 8 and 11 all stated that going into the police was all they had ever wanted to do, but all chose the BA Public Services degree because it offered a broad range of subject areas and allowed for them to experience other sectors and kept options open. However, Participant 3 was the only one that didn't join the police as an officer but joined as a call handler.

For Participant 3 and Participant 11 staying local was an important factor in their choice of university, and both, along with all the other participants have also stayed within their local force area, with the exception of Participant 9 who was not originally from Wales and returned to their home town and joined their local force, and Participant 8 who went to Kent police directly after graduating but who returned to SWP her home town force after completing her probation.

4.2.3 Students' skills and experience prior to university

This study focusses on the key skills and attributes that are required for frontline jobs in this case, policing, skills such as confidence, being able to speak to people and work as a team, it looks at how the volunteering and the course helped develop

those skills. Therefore, it is important to understand where the participants started from in terms of those skills to understand their development during the course. It is clear from their responses that the participants started the programme from a number of different starting points, so their skills development journeys are different.

Participant 2 states compared to the person she was starting university to now "*to be honest I am a completely different person*", and that herself in "*2016 wouldn't be able to have the conversations and comprehend the conversations I have with people now on a daily basis*".

Participant 3 recognised that they were "*probably quite shy and reserved coming into university*" and "*wasn't the type of person initially to put myself out there and speak to everyone*".

Participant 4 also thought he was,

> "probably quite shy and reserved coming into university with only one or two people doing the course, but I didn't know everyone as you're not going to and I wasn't the type of person initially to put myself out there and speak to everyone, speak my mind, so I'd probably take a step back. I'd just sit and watch usually and just get on with my work".

Participant 5 acknowledges the change in him from when he started university stating that when he started, he was "*not quite as confident as what I am now*".

Participant 9 did not think they were *"confident at all"* when they started university but highlighted that the opportunities presented at university gave "*those options available, improved my confidence and belief in myself to try these new things which had never really been available to me before*".

For Participant 10 coming to university was a huge change of pace and social change;

> "I was a valley boy. I stayed in the valleys. All I knew was the valleys really, you know, I didn't venture out the valleys. So having that coming out of my comfort zone and kind of staying in Swansea, in staying in the city, not waking up to cows or whatever, it was massive kind of shock".

However, for some it was different as they had some life experience before starting university for example, Participant 1 started university as a mature student at 22, who had had a number of jobs before he started university and felt had good levels of confidence when he started;

> "I've always been part of sport in teams, which I think has always helped. I worked in the school as well. Before that I worked with vulnerable adults, so I've had a little bit of experience."

However, he acknowledges that "*I don't think I would have the mentality to go straight from college to university*".

Participant 6 highlighted the importance of having a job before coming to university, "*I was fortunate that I had the part time job. So, I was working in Tesco. I had that sort of structure*" but still considered herself to be "*immature in terms of life and your experiences*" and that she would;

> "shy away from things. I would have gone to something else that I was more comfortable with. I think my confidence from the very beginning to the end of university, like really changed and I became confident".

For Participant 7 they thought of themselves as "*always been quite a confident person, like, very comfortable in my own skin, comfortable to talk to anyone*". However, she acknowledged that "*it's probably developed as I was in university*".

Both Participant 1 and Participant 9 started the course having taken time out before coming to university which meant that they had had some life experience before coming to university, although for Participant 9 this had not necessarily developed their confidence, they had undertaken work before university as a "*support worker for people in West Sussex District volunteering for children with disabilities in a sporting environment*" and Participant 1 had "*worked in a school and before that worked with vulnerable adults*", before staring university at 22.

For Participant 1, Participant 7, and Participant 8, they discussed how being part of a sports team before starting and during university, helped to develop skills such a team working, and both gained confidence by being part of a sport team.

Participant 1 stated that;

> "I've always been part of sport in teams, which I think has always helped. I recommend to anybody in the university, get part of some sort of social club, because again, it gives you connections with people and throw yourself at everything. I think that's what I would say if they weren't particularly confident".

Participant 7 stated that she "*was happy to work in, in a team. I love being in team environment*", explaining that she "*was playing netball, so there were women of all different ages*" which gave her confidence to talk to people. While, Participant 8 said "*I think I've always been a team player. I've always played team sports. I prefer working in a team than working on my own*".

Therefore, they were already coming into the course having started to develop the core skills, such as communication and teamworking, required for the job. Whilst this theme is important to understand the participants it is themes 2-5 that really help answer the research questions.

4.3 Theme 2 Motivation and benefits of volunteering

All the participants volunteered with the South Wales Police, 11 out of the 11 became Police Student Volunteers (PSV) with 3 of those leaving the PSVs to become a Special Police Constable (SC).

All those who were PSVs worked on the Swansea Help Point, which is an alcohol treatment centre in the city centre, open on a Wednesday and Saturday nights 10pm to 4am and key Fridays and Sundays through the year. All PSVs get basic first aid training, conflict management training and vulnerability training before they work on the Help Point.

PSVs could also volunteer with the drugs charity SANDS, which was then renamed Drugs Aid Cymru, which has now been replaced by Barod Cymru, that specialised in substance use support for both adults and young people.

At the time there was no mandatory hours set by South Wales Police for PSVs, they just signed up for the shifts they could do. The only requirements were the 120 hours for the level 5 module. Therefore, the number of shifts the participants undertook vary greatly.

For the participants that volunteered as SCs there is a mandatory expectation that they complete 16 hours a month. A usual shift length is 8 hours, so this equates to 2 shifts a month, but they can sign up to as many shifts as they are able to. An SC

works alongside full-time police officers on shift and contributes to community policing.

4.3.1 (a) Commitment of the participants to volunteering and hours undertaken whilst at university.

The commitment to volunteering varied amongst the participants with some accruing over a thousand hours and others achieving the minimum needed for the credit bearing module.

Participant 4 would "*usually weekly do a Wednesday night*" and over the three years at university undertook "*well over 1000 hours*" Participant 10 also achieved high numbers of volunteering hours "*had to be at least 1500 hours' worth of help point alone*". Participant 1 committed to "*almost 300 hours, a lot of shifts, Wednesdays, Saturdays and then the odd bank holiday*".

However, Participant 3 didn't want to do volunteering in their first year as they didn't want the pressure and wanted to experience the student life and it was only in,

> "the 2nd and the last year we did quite a bit on the Help Point that was usually weekly. I do at least one a week and maybe 2 because it was a Wednesday and a Saturday".

Participant 9 committed to "*well over the hundreds. In three years, I probably did a minimum of 45 shifts*" which would have equated to approximately 300 hours.

Participants 5, 6 and 11 whilst wanting to volunteer to get the experience did not commit as much time to volunteering as others and achieved "*about 200 hours, maybe just over*". Participant 11 summed it up as "*probably every other Wednesday, or maybe every third Wednesday or something like tha*t".

For those participants who were SCs there is a commitment to 16 hours a month, Participant 8 did her minimum hours as a SC and prior to becoming an SC as a PSV did "*probably say about 10*" shifts at the Help Point and "*4 to 5 with Sands*".

Participant 7 however in the summers "*was almost doing like full time hours and then when I came back into my third year, it was mostly I would just give 16 hours as a minimum*". Participant 2 as a SC would commit "*45 hours a month average, about a shift a week, if not more*". The fact that with SC there is a rota and a greater expectation to volunteer, accounts for the difference in volunteer hours undertaken between SCs and PSVs.

4.3.1 (b) Types of shifts undertaken.

The Police Student Volunteer's primary role is to provide assistance in the running of the Swansea Help Point, and the majority of the shifts undertaken by the participants were at the Help Point. However, some participants were able to also volunteer on a number of community-based projects with the police, such as theft reduction walks, riot training, and working in police stores. Other participants volunteered with Drugs Aid Cymru (formerly SANDS) and worked at the needle exchange and drop-in centre, while others volunteered with the Fire Service and worked on projects such as the Phoenix Project, providing training sessions for disaffected young people. The different types of shifts provided exposure to different aspects of working in the public sector, which allowed the participants to make informed decisions about which organisation that might want to go into in the future.

Whilst working at Drugs Aid Cymru Participant 8 got shown "*the box of all the different drugs, things like that and I wouldn't even know what they look like. You*

become more knowledgeable". This was a day time shift which opened her eyes to the drug problems in the city.

Participants 3,4,6 and 10 all also volunteered with the Fire Service, whilst also working at the Help Point.

Participant 4 wanted to gain experience into the wider public sector, so he would "*do one night at the Help Point and one night with the fire service".* This Participant 4 did for the whole of the three years of study, so much so he "*was basically part of that team".*

Similarly, Participant 6 also "*didn't really know which one I wanted to do or which one I was most particularly interested in*", so decided to undertake a few volunteer schemes to help her gain insight into possibilities. "*I think I did a phoenix course, I attended some of young firefighters".* However, Participant 6 only "*did a couple of sessions in Morriston"* as they only accrued the required numbers of hours needed for volunteering for the course.

For Participant 3 and Participant 10 working with the fire service provided the opportunity through the Phoenix courses to work with "*children who aren't doing well in school*" (Participant 10), "*underprivileged children with learning difficulties or not very book smart, not very good at the learning in class. it's a week-long course where they teach them, team building exercises*" (Participant 3) The course also helps them through peer-to-peer learning as "*I think I was 19 at the time and it was a little bit easier to relate to me than the firefighters that were there*" (Participant 10).

4.3.2 Motivation for volunteering whilst at university

All the participants were taking the BA Public Services course, at level 5, in the second year, there was an optional module that required the student to undertake 120 hours of volunteer work experience with a public service. This was optional and students could opt to take an academic classroom module instead. All participants opted for the work experience module. 11 out of the 11 participants had signed up to become Police Student Volunteers (PSV) and 3 signed up to become a Special Police Constable (SC). 8 out of 10 of the participants signed up to volunteer in their first year, 3 signed up in their second year. The reasons given for why the participants volunteered whilst at university varied, so did the length of time and number of shifts undertaken.

4.3.2 (a) Completing the mandatory hours.

Some participants signed up simply to be able to complete the requisite hours for the work experience module.

Participant 11 admitted he signed up because "*it was just the module*" and that he would "*enjoy being a first-year student*" and then in the second year *"become a bit more serious and then do some more volunteering*".

Participant 6 described the experience "*to be about personal development*" but also the "*fact that it was mandatory as well*", referring to the module's required 120 hours.

4.3.2 (b) Understanding the role and the organisation*.*

For most of the participants the volunteering was about getting experience and understanding the role of a police officer before committing to a career.

Participant 1 stated that they'

"wanted to see that world, before really wanting to go into police, because I think everyone can see the watch TV shows, see things on social media, can speak to people who have touched upon policing and policing experience, but unless you actually do it you won't know".

Participant 2 "*wanted to understand the role and I thought any experience towards it would be beneficial for me in the long run*".

Participant 3 "*wanted firsthand experience*". She recognised that whilst,

"you know you can read about it and you can learn all the laws and in theory… until you actually do it, I could have done it and just hated every minute and didn't and wouldn't want to go into that kind of role".

Participant 6 "*wanted to understand a bit more about those organisations and the opportunities within them*" she also wanted "*to speak to people within the organisation as well and build connections*".

Participant 8 thought the same as she, "*didn't want to obviously go through the long training, join, and then think oh no, this isn't for me. I thought I'd sort of dip my toes in, be a Special, see what it's like*".

Participant 10 also wanted to "*find out what it's really like, by actually speaking to officers*".

4.3.2 (c) help with the application process.

Participant 7 thought that by volunteering it would help with the application process to becoming a police officer, "*there was an assessment centre, it would provide examples. So, I thought that was a good opportunity to learn*".

Participant 5 also thought that it would help in the assessment process and that "*in an application I can show that I've spent my own time trying to get an insight into what, public services do*".

Participant 1 also thought it would give him an advantage in interviews;

> "when you go to interviews you want to be different to other people you want to say like I've done this. I've done that. If you haven't done those things, then you are kind of on the back foot straight away".

Participant 6 also supported this point,

> "You know you are at a disadvantage sometimes if you've just left university and you're up against somebody else who has the same qualifications as you. But has perhaps had some experience in that role or had some of those transferable skills. So, I think being able to volunteer sort of allows you to develop those skills, have real examples of how you've used that in practice and being able to sort of convey that in in an interview".

4.3.2 (d) Opportunity to make contacts

Participant 4 wanted to also get the experience but saw the volunteering as "*a huge networking opportunity*", to make "*contacts that I wouldn't have had otherwise*". For Participant 6 they saw it as an opportunity to "*speak to people within the organisation and build those connections*". It also exposed the participants to the different officers,

> "different police officers from a number of different ranks up to Inspector Sargeant PC, I think we might have met the chief super as well at some point. You know you're attending police station, so your exposure to those you know is really good" (Participant 4).

Which meant that when they joined the force, they were comfortable around senior figures. As Participant 6 put it;

> "You're comfortable around officers, you're comfortable around those who are quite senior, you don't realise at the time, but every interaction you have with somebody, be that a patient, or a professional, you learn something from them that you take in into your next profession and that is the one thing, it's just being comfortable around people".

4.3.2 (e) Not wanting to be a traditional student.

For a lot of students, the university experience involves not just the academic side but the socialising and drinking culture that goes alongside the learning. For some of the participants this surprisingly was not what they wanted to do during their time at university and the volunteering afforded them the opportunity to excuse themselves from this side of university culture.

Participant 4 did not want to spend his time "*going out on a Wednesday night and getting drunk*", he wanted to get the experience as he was very clear about his future acre aspirations in terms of working within a public service. This was also the reason behind Participant 9's motivation as they wanted "to move away from the social side of meeting people, which as a student is going out getting drunk, that sort of nightlife. And I wanted to put myself in safer, healthier positions where I was still going out, meeting new people, and doing better for myself and the community". As Participant 10 put it "there's a lot more to university than going out every Wednesday for the cheap drinks".

4.3.2.(f) Simply an enjoyable experience

For two participants whilst acknowledging the importance of the volunteering in terms of CV building and preparing for the world of work they did actually enjoy the experience as Participant 4 stated he "*enjoyed it more than anything*" and Participant 10 agreed saying that,

> "I also really enjoyed it because it gave me the opportunity to carry the weighted bodies and stuff and kind of go through the practical of the fire burning, which I would never have had that experience if I didn't do the course".

4.3.2 (g) Motivation versus time given.

Those participants who volunteered for the experience seemed to commit far more hours to volunteering than those who just did it for the credit-bearing module. For example, Participant 11 admitted he did it because "*it was just the module*" and undertook a shift "*probably every other Wednesday, or maybe every third Wednesday*". This was also true for Participant 8 who stated that "*I wanted to go out. I didn't always want to be doing that*". Participant 8 even stated that she "*thought, why does it have to be 200 hours, can it not be a little less?*" Whereas Participant 4 and Participant 10 collectively committed to over 2000 hours of volunteering, Participant 4 saw it as "*a huge networking opportunity*", while Participant 10 explained that "*working on the help point was amazing because it gave me a massive insight, I started on the Help Point from year one and I wanted to get as much time under my belt as I could*" to "*find out what it's really like, by actually speaking to officers*".

Interestingly only one participant stated they were volunteering because they "*wanted to make a difference".* The Participant 6 was the only one to cite altruistic motivations for their volunteering.

This section highlights that, those participants who gave more than the mandatory time, were heavily invested in the scheme, and as we will see in the next section, they were more profusive in their reflections of the benefits the experience had for them. The findings do not show any differences in volunteering hours by gender to time and commitment to the volunteering.

4.3.3 Benefits of the volunteering experience

All the participants had undertaken the required hours for the module and more, which meant that they had undertaken many shifts at the Help Point and the other volunteering opportunities. They therefore discussed and highlighted the many benefits of the volunteering experiences they had whilst at university.

4.3.3 (a)Making Connections

Participant 1 felt that making connections with the police officers was very beneficial as he is now working with them, "*especially when you go into custody or you need help with something, you've got a familiar face. You can go and call upon. It just gives you gives you an edge".*

Participant 1 also saw the importance of asking questions to the serving police officers that he was working with,

> "always ask questions. Listen, that's what I would say. You know, you're never going to know it all. Just try and take everything in and speak to people

who've got the experience because they'll know a lot better, and you can learn from them".

For Participant 6 working as a volunteer and meeting police officers from all ranks meant that she became,

> "comfortable around officers, you're comfortable around those who are quite senior and gain guidance from and mentorship, but every interaction you have with somebody, you do learn something from them that you take in into your next profession, being comfortable around senior people like the Commissioner. Whereas before I probably. I would have been like, oh gosh, don't speak to me. I don't know what to say. I think that for me is probably one of the biggest benefits".

Both Participant 1 and No.6 have gone on to work with South Wales Police, with Participant 6 applying to work within the Police and Crime Commissioners Office specifically because of the connections she made through the volunteering and for Participant 1 because of the greater understanding of the force gleaned through asking questions of the officers he worked with during the volunteering. It also highlights the development of their confidence through this process, to be able talk to people of higher rank and not be afraid to ask questions.

4.3.3 (b) Dealing with Exposure to incidents.

Participant 4 saw the volunteering as giving them an opportunity to develop skills and gain insight into policing and exposure to policing situations they would not have had otherwise,

"it gives people like me who didn't have any opportunities like that, I did a few things with school and six form, but I wasn't exposed to the community like I was doing with the volunteer scheme. So, it allowed me to develop all those skills. We've got some horror stories from down there or some of the things we did with the injuries or people so intoxicated they can't control certain aspects of their body. So, it definitely helps you prepare for the police. It's not such a culture shock when you're going into these houses where people are like that, who live like that, or you're not going into situations where people are seriously injured and looking to you for help. You've been exposed to it previously".

Participant 7 gained life experience, developed communication, learnt how to gain the trust of the public from the volunteering. Working as a volunteer she stated that,

"You are dealing with people, and they are intoxicated, and they need to feel comfortable in your presence because we could have been anybody. Really working with them and that's where your communication really came in and is getting them to trust you. That was that was a challenge, but a good challenge and a good lesson to learn."

Participant 7 also said the benefit was that,

"it gives you a bit of life experience as well, which is what you need joining the police because as I said you do talk to different communities, different people, different experiences and you may not be able to relate, but you can understand if you've perhaps seen it before".

For Participant 8 working at the Help Point exposed them to working with intoxicated people and help prepared them for the reality of the job.

"It was a great thing, because if you don't like dealing with people that are

drunk. And if you can't communicate with these students that have had a bit

too much to drink and you get frustrated with that. Like this is what it's going to

be like. If you don't like that, don't bother. Yeah, definitely helps you to sort of

have an idea of what you're going to be going into."

When Participant 4 talked of '*people like me'* he was highlighting the fact that he was

not from a policing family, he was also first in his family to go to university, so without

the volunteering he would not have ordinarily been able to gain exposure to such

experiences.

4.3.3 (c) Exposure to the service

As stated in Section 1.1.1 the police student volunteer scheme is a collaboration

between the university and the police force, and the duties the students undertake

are organised by the force. Thus, the industry engagement is integral to the running

of the scheme, with a viable presence to the volunteers.

For Participant 3 the volunteering allowed her to find out more about the organisation

and to learn about all the different roles within a police force;

"you don't realise like the different roles that are, you know, in the police. You

just think of Constable, and you think police that's initially what I wanted to do.

I've never thought of the control room".

Participant 6 also thought the volunteering allowed her to find out more about the

wider organisation and to learn about all the different roles within a police force not

just frontline;

"You really do get that sort of knowledge and understanding of their organisation. Like I never knew that there was a Police and Crime Commissioner, but I never really knew there were support roles with them. I think when you think about policing, you always think about the frontline work. And you don't think about those other roles that actually support that frontline delivery. So that was a big eye opener for me".

Both Participant 3 and Participant 6 started with aspirations of joining the police as officers, but from the exposure through the volunteering have ended up in other roles within the force, Participant 3 works in the control room and No.6 works in Police and Crime Commissioners Office as a Crime Prevention project manager. Although both Participant 3 and Participant 6 are female and have not gone into operational frontline policing, they both attest to the exposure to other aspects of policing gained from the volunteering as the reason for their current career path. That exposure is due to the strong industry ties involved in the volunteering scheme. However, with the other 3 females participants going into frontline policing there isn't evidence to suggest that the volunteering acted as a deterrent to female participants to operational policing.

4.3.3 (d) Personal Learning from the volunteering

Participant 7 found the experience of volunteering at the Help Point had made her more aware of the dangers of drinking.

"When I used to be there (the Help Point) and I would see like 18-year-olds coming in, you know and it was their first time to Wind Street (the area in Swansea where pubs are concentrated) or their first time experimenting with drugs and they got themselves into these situations. It was a real like culture

shock to me and really opened my eyes to it, I never ever want to be in that position".

She goes on to say she learnt how,

"to keep myself safe and then obviously to keep my friends and family safe. What it taught me the most is how alcohol or drugs can make someone so vulnerable".

Participant 8 had a unique experience as she worked with Sands, Drugs Aid Cymru, (now Barod Cymru), it gave her an insight into the drug problems that a city experiences, the initiatives that are in place to support drug users, but it also changed her perspective on the subject, something that she has taken into her current role.

"I didn't know that much about them (Barod Cymru). They provided, clean needles for drug users and they'd have classes on how to inject cleanly. Which was an eye opener for me, because at the time I thought why are they providing them with clean needles, wouldn't they just tell them to stop? But that's not how it would work, if you don't supply them with clean needles, they will use dirty needles. It was done to decrease the number of people dying from infectious disease, and for some people, that's completely out of their comfort zone. In my head I was how do they get to that point? Do they really choose to be in that situation? But from doing that experience and then going into my job where I meet drug users. I just had a different approach. They are all still human, I think I'm a lot more empathetic towards people in those situations, obviously I don't agree with it, but, I think I am more patient. But the experience tested me. From doing the volunteering where we would

sometimes come into contact with drug users on the Help Point and also doing Sands. I don't know. It's just changed my view on it and I don't look at people like that anymore. I just sort of see everyone as being the same, but everyone's gone in different sort of journeys. They've unfortunately ended up there".

For Participant 9 it was about taking responsibility for themselves and maturing;

"But I think the difference being at university and having the options to volunteer and be in those environments where you can't go home to your mum because I made that decision to make that step. It makes you become more responsible. You're able to be that stronger person, I suppose, and take more responsibility where previously I had not been able to do that".

Participant 10 also felt that the volunteering matured him and expanded his knowledge of the world as it took him,

"out of my comfort zone from the valleys. It's put me in a city I'm not familiar with. And I've gone. Right, OK, this this is how the world works. I think it was a wakeup call and it definitely matured me".

For Participant 11 the volunteering exposed him to a greater understanding of the diversity in our communities; he stated that one of things he had personally learnt was;

"that people are a lot more different than I ever sort of thought, you know, I know people are different, of different views, perspectives, you know. But the amount of diversity that I encountered was astronomical. You know, I think that was really like, oh, wow, OK, a real eye opener as to what the sort of working world is".

Unlike Participant 1 and Participant 9 all other participants started university straight from school, and therefore by their own admissions were immature. Therefore, being given such responsibility through the police student volunteer scheme, enabled them to gain a unique experience and allow them to mature, albeit in a safer environment than if they had gone straight into work. The volunteering allowed them to learn and reflect, but at the same time not be solely responsible for the people they came into contact with. The Participants all acknowledged that the volunteering allowed for personal growth and development.

4.3.4 Development of skills and experience through the volunteering

RQ 2 (see Section 3.1.1) is concerned with how the volunteering developed the skills needed for the workplace and most notably for working in the police. Here the participants were asked what skills they felt had been developed through their volunteering, the main ones were development of confidence, communication, leadership and teamworking.

4.3.4 (a) Confidence

Participant 3 saw the volunteering as "*boosting your confidence, it developed your confidence, it meant you know what to expect, you felt prepared for the role*".

Participant 4 claimed that,

> "for me it was that confidence build that I needed in university. I go into situations I don't even think twice about what I'm doing. Again, I've been doing this 6 1/2 years and I've learned over those six and half years. But I came into the police with the core skills from the volunteering, whereas if I hadn't had that opportunity, perhaps I would have been a bit more reserved than I would

have been a bit more step back and or let's watch things and it would take me longer to learn the skills I needed in the police".

For Participant 6 it was,

"definitely confidence, knowledge and probably leadership I would say are the biggest ones. I think it provides you with the foundation to just step outside of that comfort zone and once you've done it once, you'll continue to do it because you know. Therefore, the volunteering aspect was probably the most important part of the course to prepare you for life after university".

Participants 3, 4 and 6 all came straight from school to university, all three lived at home whilst studying, Participant 4 and Participant 6 were first in their families to go to university, and none of them came from policing families, therefore their reflections show how important the volunteering was to help them gain confidence and prepare them for the workplace.

4.3.4 (b) Communication with the public

Communication is an important part of policing, as it is a public facing frontline service, there are many types of communication and when dealing with different people you have to adapt the way you communicate.

Participant 1 states that from working on the Help Point he was able to develop the skills of adapting how he spoke to people depending on who they were.

"You can't have the same mindset with every single call you go to, you may think that you can do everything the same. Absolutely not the case. A drunk 35-year-old is not going to react the same way as a drunk 17/18 year old female or male, you have to try you to change your approach sometimes and

be adaptable in the way that you deal with things".

Participant 3, who now works in the control room for South Wales Police and has to deal with a lot of calls from the public, commented on her experience as a volunteer and how it prepared her for the job she is doing;

> "the kind of environment you get on Wind Street on the help point or even just volunteering like house to house knocking, you're going to have people who are scared, who don't really want to communicate with you. You're going to have people who are under the influence and shutdown. So, it's really good experience to have already been there, done that kind of have an idea of where how to deal with it and where to go with it. So yeah, that that was really good".

Participant 4 recognised that you needed to change your approach when dealing with different people;

> "if it's students, you probably have a bit of a laugh and especially if we knew them, but it has to change. And you have to be more professional. Not that you wouldn't be professional with the students, but it's just that different approach for older people or people of different backgrounds."

Participant 5 acknowledged that from working on the Help Point he learnt that there was a need to change the way things were communicated to different people and in different situations;

> "you have to be tactful because if you're dealing with somebody, for example, at the Help Point we dealt with someone with a mental health issue, someone a lot older, they've got a lot of experience, a lot of things going on in their life. It was difficult to reassure and comfort somebody when you probably had half

as much life experience as them. And so, you have to learn to be a bit more tactful in how you say things. They've got twice as much life experience, so it is a little bit difficult then in terms of trying to give them support and guidance because".

No.6 described how when working on the Help Point you learnt how to recognise the need for different communication in different situations;

"working out what was, the most appropriate communication strategy and what would be most effective in that situation. So, it can be done to perhaps understanding the terms that St John used for certain things or you know the processes that they have to go through when you're in transit with a patient."

Participant 7 recalled an example of when she had to deal with a lady patient who was older than her,

"who had a very much of I could be your mother attitude like, you know, sort of thing. And when we were trying to help her, she was like, get off me. Get off me. So yeah, that was probably my first experience of that. And I remember thinking OK, this is different. So, I learnt that here is a different way to speak to them, a different way to approach them".

Participant 8 learnt from working at the Help Point that when working with *"people are under the influence of alcohol or drug, they aren't there to have a conversation with you, it's just needs to be very simple, effective communication".*

For Participant 9 working on the Help Point meant that they were ,

"learning to how to cope with situations working in public services, where you need to be able to balance things and juggle. And so having the experience of

the help point where you did have multiple lines of communication and noise and by being in those environments, sometimes forcing myself into those environments, I learned how to communicate".

Participant 10 recognised when dealing with patients the importance of behaving in a "*professional manner, in a mature way, but in a more professional way than when speaking to peers as well*".

While Participant 11 was able to develop his communication skills because he was working

"with different age ranges, genders, identities, minorities, talking to new people is always great. You always get a fresh perspective and what they think and feel. So I think it helped massively. I was able to really understand how beneficial it is to be able to talk to anyone at any point. I just think it's a skill you develop by doing it".

Participant 11 also stated that "*working there really opened my eyes to a lot of things. I think it was just really, really helpful in learning how to encounter and talk to new people*".

It is clear from these reflections that the volunteering helped develop all the participants' skill at communication and their understanding of times when that method needed to be adapted depending on who was in front of them and the situation they were dealing with.

4.3.4 (c) Communication with the professionals

Participant 4 also described the other types of communication that was needed on a shift at the Help point,

"first you would be communicating with colleagues or other student volunteers, police or St. John's staff about what sort of night we're expecting, what's going on and then be communicating individually with a team, and we do, radio communication."

Radio communication is an essential skill for frontline police officers and Participant 4 goes on to state that "*it's not hard to communicate clearly over the radio, but you can see people who've had previous experience doing it to people who haven't*".

Participant 5 also commented on the development of radio skills;

"being able to use the radio is a massive thing. And if you're not used to using it does, its uncomfortable initially, you do sort of get used to. I think the help point does assist with that. You learn to be quite concise in what you're saying. You know you can't waffle over the air, when you're trying to get a point across, it needs to be quite concise. So that practice just using the radio was very useful".

For Participant 6 the development of radio skills was also something she developed by volunteering on the Help Point, she realised the importance of being clear and concise in this type of communication;

"you have to be articulate in what you're saying, especially when you're on radio and have to your location or ask for support you can't take ages, you can't have waffle or anything you really got to sort of be quite articulate".

For Participant 7 learning how to use the radio as a volunteer meant that

"it wasn't alien to you being handed this radio, it was just a more of a natural process. You understood? OH, I know what this is for. I know how to use it. I

was comfortable with that being in my hand. A lot of people when they join the police, they get very shy of going over the air and people hearing them. But I think because I'd had that little bit of experience, it did help."

Participant 1 emphasised that "*communication, especially over the radio letting people know what you're doing, timings, it's just key*".

Using a radio is not an everyday occurrence for most people, it is usually reserved for people in frontline services and is not something that would be taught in the classroom, therefore this was a unique opportunity for the volunteers to develop this skill prior to starting with the police. From the reflections it is clear this this in one example of how the volunteering better prepared them for the workplace.

4.3.4 (d) Other forms of Communication

Participant 1 discussed the of learning about non-verbal communication to try and deal with conflict;

> "importance of the communication, if it's something that can be dealt with without communication, and you can deal with it as a group when you're there, then I think that's more beneficial".

A personal insight from Participant 1 who felt that this had helped him within his current role, although not something any of the other participants brought up in their discussions.

4.3.4. (e) Leadership

For Participant 4 being the team leader on the help point helped to develop not only his leadership skills but his communication skills and confidence,

"being the team leader, it's a role that I took seriously. And as a result of that, you know, I had the respect of St. John's. And the police. Having to do briefings and tell people, look, this is what we're going to do tonight. This is what we're looking to do in, gave me that confidence. Just giving me that confidence more than anything. To say look, if you if you got an issue come speak to me and we'll sort it out".

Participant 10 learnt a lot about leadership from working on the Help Point and could see the development of that skill from the first year to his final year,

"in my final year I was a team leader, which obviously has massively assisted me and was kind of a massive development for me really because I think without the course, I'd really struggle to get to the point that I am now".

Participant 10 is now a Temporary Sergeant' with South Wales Police, a position he has achieved within 4 years of joining the force.

Participant 11, had to take on the team leader role at the Help Point due to being one of the most experienced members, he hadn't wanted to be team leader but by being made to he really learnt from the experience;

"I think being made to have that responsibility helped a lot. I think a lot of people don't go for leadership roles unless they're made to. And then I think in that scenario that's when you learn if you can or cannot do it".

Here all three participants are male and had been given the role of team leader whilst at the Help Point, Participant 4 and Participant 10 were also some of the highest grossing participants in terms of hours undertaken. It is interesting that both Participant 4 and Participant 10 speak with pride about being given the role of Team

Leader, whereas Participant 11 sees it has been forced upon him when he states *'being made to have the responsibility'*. Participant 11 completed just a fraction more than the mandatory hours, so whilst they all see that leadership skills were developed, there is something that can be said for the way that benefit is perceived from those who were more motivated to volunteer and those that did it because they had to.

4.3.4 (f) Teamworking

Being able to work in a team is recognised across all the literature as an essential employability skill. All the participants recognised that the volunteering helped to develop their teamworking skills, however some also learnt valuable lessons about how to mange different people in a team, that not all people will react and behave the same way and this can at times be challenging.

Participant 10 commented on how much the Help Point developed his teamworking skills,

> "It was a lot of teambuilding because sometimes if you all work in the help point, you have that trust with each other because you built that team, team playing is a massive part of public services".

Participant 11 learnt the importance of teamworking on the Help Point and described it,

> "as an essence of camaraderie. You know, I think that you're there to do a job, and even if you don't really know them, you're still there to do their job. I think you can work better together".

Participant 3 described a typical shift on the Help Point and highlighted the fact that as volunteers their role was an integral part to the running of the Help Point and they were not just there to observe. She stated that as part of the role they had to,

"teamwork, two to lift, one to do the communication back so they know what to expect, so there's no delay in like getting help, and one to talk to witnesses. It is very much you've got to rely on one another. You've got to give each other directions and someone takes charge or a couple of you have ideas. You got to just get it done. It's different when you're in in the environment as opposed to just sitting there and thinking what would you do in this case? You just got to do it?".

The Help Point is a multi-agency run scheme with many partners involved, for Participant 5 this meant working with many people which helped not only develop his teamworking skills, but also his confidence and communication skills. He described it as,

"working with the help point you're working with the police. You're working with paramedics. You are meeting people quite often you wouldn't normally meet. And it takes you out of your comfort zone sometimes. I think it's quite a team-based environment and work. I think being exposed to that quite regularly, you know, you are developing skills."

Participant 8 found that working on the Help Point as a team meant that at times there were situations that required them to work together as a team to solve a problem and that this had helped develop her problem-solving skills.

"I think being exposed to that and like when you're tired and you think I'm not even getting paid to be here. You just think like let's try and figure out what's

going on. Get a solution. We can just sort of move on and go to the next thing".

For Participant 9 this was a learning curve as they learnt how people within a team have different ways of dealing with things and responding to situations, which enabled her to work better as a team. She learnt that,

"everyone deals with things differently and in their way that they've learned to deal with taught me to know different styles. We're all there for the same reason, but there's different approaches. And identifying them to support each other within the workplace, I found myself being there a lot of my colleagues. Whether it be taking a break, have a cup of tea. And identifying changes in behaviour is something that I definitely didn't have before volunteering Being aware of people around me is a skill that I didn't have for a long time. So that you can be there to support your team, because ultimately without your team you've not got a job. You can't. You can't do your job. So yeah, supporting each other".

This was also a lesson for Participant 5 who learnt from the experience how to manage difficult team situations and understand that;

"people have different ways of working and different ways that they get their point across and the way they speak to people. So yeah, sometimes it can be challenging if someone who works quite considerably different to how you would work, but I suppose it prepares you in dealing with people like that and trying to be quite tactful".

4.3.5 Taking you outside your comfort zone.

A common phrase heard throughout the interviews was '*outside of my comfort zone*', the concept of having to deal with things that they were not comfortable with, and having to manage the situation, deal with it and overcome it, to learn from it. This is not something that can always be simulated in the classroom but is a very real aspect of policing.

Participant 2 "I think that then helped a lot then because you'd be put in a situation whereby you weren't comfortable with, and you have to deal with that".

Participant 5 – "And it takes you out of your comfort zone".

Participant 6 "I think it provides you with the foundation to just step outside of that comfort zone".

Participant 7 "this is out of my comfort zone. I'm having to deal with people that I have never dealt with"

Participant 8 "And for some people, that's completely out of their comfort zone." And "proved to myself I could do something that was out of my comfort zone"

Participant 10 " So having that coming out of my comfort zone and kind of staying in Swansea, in staying in the city"

4.3.6 Exposure to Diversity

In Section 4.3 the backgrounds of the participants varied significantly in terms of coming from rural and urban areas and their exposure to diversity. For those participants who lived locally or in rural areas, their exposure to different cultures, backgrounds and demographics was limited.

Participant 3 is one such person who did not have exposure to how diverse society can be until she went to university.

"I'm from a small Welsh village. I went to a Welsh school. We didn't have any black people.. Just like people on my course, we had people from the Philippines, people from England. Meeting new people in university, that is an experience for me. Meeting people from different backgrounds in that sense and then through the volunteering, I probably would never go and help homeless drug addicts, when would I have had the opportunity to do that? You're a bit more aware of different scenarios that it could be. You're not just judging them straight away; you like oh it's a drug. No, actually there's other things you wouldn't have thought of before unless you were exposed to it".

The same applied to Participant 4 who lived locally to the university and only got involved with his local community.

"Before university I did things with when I was in comprehensive and sixth form, you know, stuff within the community, but it was all very local to Morriston, sort of very local groups to me, born and bred Morriston, you know, I didn't really go out and do an awful lot in different communities, but then come into university, you're exposed to not only the people who have come from all over the country to come and do the course. I was exposed to diversity with the schemes, with the fire service, especially with the schools, although they were local groups, they were from different backgrounds to me, it wasn't a huge, diverse background, but it was diverse to me. That definitely increased that exposure. It was exposure to not only students, but people of different generations So yeah, there was an exposure to a wide range of age groups".

Participant 5 also lived locally to the university and had little exposure to people from

different backgrounds,

> "on the course as there's quite a diverse range of people in a way even from different backgrounds and different communities. I think with university people come from elsewhere. I live fairly locally. Then the university people sort of come from other cities and other cultures and things like that. So you get to know people from different backgrounds, what's going on in their life and how they deal with things. And obviously there's people have personal things happen in university, you get to know them and perhaps situations you haven't been exposed to, it is a bit of an eye opener".

Participant 7 on starting the course met,

> "people from different parts of the UK. You know. So yeah, there's definitely exposure there, different ages, different experiences, different life backgrounds. So, there was lots of that within just your class. You look at your class, everybody had a different story. It was expanded in the help point because you are meeting lots of different people on Wind St. I guess everybody had a different story to tell you and it was interesting to learn".

Participant 10 realised that,

> "there's a whole world out there and this whole world is filled with different people" and that there's a "little bit more than just little him and his little valley, I was a valley boy. I stayed in the valleys. All I knew was the valleys really, you know, I didn't venture out the valleys, so there was a massive kind of development and maturity".

Coming from the rural area of Gower, Participant 11 learnt that,

"the amount of people that come to university from abroad is just huge. You know, you'd meet people from cities or towns you've never even heard of, I'd say I was probably quite limited, I think in my exposure".

However, for Participant 9 who was born and raised in Sussex, England, they were shocked at the lack of diversity when they moved to Wales and that there should be more "*opportunity to work with more multi agencies that are more diverse in economic differences, social, race, gender*".

Whilst at university Participant 9 was open about being a lesbian and found that they "*did struggle with living in Swansea and was not feeling as included in social aspects at times and it took me a lot longer to find where I fit in*", they felt that in terms of the LGBTQ+ community, Swansea was not a diverse community at all.

For No 11 this was no surprise as he stated that,

"from the valleys, it was very taboo to be in kind of in the LGBT community. Honestly, I never met someone who was out, who was part of the LGBTQ community".

For Participant 3 this was also a new experience "*Do you know when I joined university, it was the first time I met a gay person*".

For those participants who had worked prior to university, they gave a different view to the issue of diversity. Despite living locally and in area not known to be very diverse, Participant 1 had had several different jobs before coming to university which he felt had given him quite a bit of experience with dealing with different people.

"I was a support worker for those with Down syndrome and who were wheelchair bound for around 18 months. Dealing with their families as well, that was difficult, but it was difficult and enjoyable the same time. And then I worked in school so obviously worked with children, other members of staff older and younger, different sort of mentality preferences. I've also worked in a pub as well, working evenings in the pub, so I dealt with all sorts of different people there, drunk people as well, so I had a quite a bit of experience before coming to the university".

Participant 2 also worked before, and during university and gained experience of working with and dealing with people from different backgrounds;

"there were people from different cultures and backgrounds. And it's quite nice to engage with different people and learn different cultures and everything that I never experienced".

Coming from Swansea and living locally the work that Participant 8 did whilst working at Drugs Aid Cymru really opened her eyes to how diverse the area was,

"I got so many calls there, you've got Kurdish, Indian, Pakistani, Polish, Romanian. Like this so many different ethnic backgrounds that are there I didn't know, it's a bit of an eye opener".

It is clear that the participants viewed the volunteering experience in a positive light and that they felt it had helped them develop skills to prepare for the workplace.

The incidents that the Participants were having to deal with were not just about looking after intoxicated students but dealing with many different people of all ages and backgrounds in very dynamic situations and working with multiple agencies in the night time economy. It is important to remember that all of the participants at the

time of undertaking the volunteering were aged between 18-24, and whilst the older participants admitted to coming to university with some level of experience, it is clear that the situations that they were presented with contributed to developing levels of maturity and capability.

The above section has highlighted the many benefits of the volunteering to the participants, and their motivations for undertaking such a scheme. However, there were also many challenges and barriers that were identified during the interviews.

4.4 Theme 3: Challenges and Barriers to volunteering.

The participants were very candid about why they got involved with the volunteering and equally about how difficult it was to be able to fit volunteering into their lives. The subthemes highlight the many challenges that were brought up throughout the interviews and are presented below.

4.4.1 Balancing volunteering with university, work and social lives

Over half of the participants (6) had a part time job whilst studying at university and undertaking volunteering, this seemed to present a significant challenge to the participants at the time and could be seen as a blocker to volunteering. The balance between academic work, a social life and volunteering also meant that they had to develop their time-management skills.

For Participant 2 who volunteered as an SC alongside having a part time job in Tesco, it meant,

> "Multitasking and everything. I would quite often go to the university for example. I had come home. I'd eat food. I go straight onto a shift. I'd come up,

finish late. I come back home, and I go to university next morning. I'd have

like four- or five-hours sleep".

Participant 4 also found the balancing act a challenge, "*it was always going to be time management in terms of balancing my uni work and the volunteering*", he also had a part time job in Waterstones alongside study and volunteering.

For others it was a challenge to balance university work and their social lives alongside the volunteering.

Participant 9 agreed and saw it as,

"balancing what you've got going on, so balancing your degree, balancing your work, balancing you, growing up as an adult in uni".

They also highlighted that their motivation, was about,

"wanting to put the effort in these environments where you know that they're going to be beneficial for the future. It does take its toll, but for me it was about structure".

For Participant 8 her time at university was seen as an opportunity to gain a degree, have a good social life and enjoy being a student. Volunteering for her was part of getting knowledge of policing but was not her main priority. Participant 8 wanted to be selective about the shifts she signed up for because,

"I didn't want to do all my hours on help point because obviously it was basically like doing a night shift. And I thought I like my sleep too much to be doing this every time, and I like to go out as well".

Despite the participants all wanting to be involved in volunteering, the emphasis appeared to be on the other aspects of their lives, highlighting the importance of

being able to balance university work, paid work and their social lives. It is also of note here that where most volunteered at the Help Point this was a 10pm to 4am shift, which is working anti-social hours and does impact the day after, which was a reason given by Participant 8 for not doing many shifts on the Help Point and why she chose other daytime duties.

4.4.2 Dealing with challenging situations.

As part of their roles as PSVs and SCs the participants worked closely with South Wales Police officers, other volunteers and depending on the shift, with other organisations, and at all times with members of the public. These shifts were akin to the real-life shifts that a police officer would encounter, so provided real insight to the challenges police officers face daily.

The challenges that the participants faced provided teachable moments and allowed for development of coping mechanisms, communication, teamworking and leadership skills.

From the interviews one of the biggest challenges for the participants was managing the working relationships between the volunteers, all PSVs on the Help Point were from the University and across all three year groups, so they were not necessarily in the same class or friends.

However, for Participant 1 it was learning how to challenge poor behaviour from participating colleagues that was one of the biggest challenges.

> "Sometimes it could be your own teammate, at times not pulling their weight, which is very difficult to deal with because you have to kind of challenge that at some point because if you see that person not pulling their weight or not

doing as they're supposed to be doing, then to challenge is actually the most difficult things because that's the person that you spend a lot of time with, but if it you didn't, it could create an atmosphere whereby you don't want to go into work or they don't want to go into work. So that's not what you want. You just nip that in the bud. If somebody is not doing something, they should be able to challenge that. And I'm not that person to kind of rock the boat. Really. But you have to do."

Participant 9 thought that the main challenge was "*the commitment of others. When other students wouldn't turn up, I struggled with that for a long time*".

Participant 3 saw one of the biggest challenges as having to manage "*different personalities*" especially when you had someone who was overly enthusiastic and who took the role very seriously,

"you might have one person who wants to take charge and it's their way or no way type thing, and you've got to kind of say hang on. It's a group. It's a team, you can't just tell us what to do".

This was the same for Participant 8, who found it hard to deal with domineering volunteers who would give orders,

"We're here to do this, this and this. And I'd sort of be there. Like God. Alright, give her a break. It's not that deep. You know, we're here to help out the police and the door staff. And they would be very, very keen" And maybe because I at that point I wasn't. I was like, yeah, you know, we had to do our hours, would do what we can. We'll help out."

This made her question her own commitment to the shift and the volunteering "*Being in that situation, I was like. Should I be taking it a bit serious? More serious maybe?*"

Participant 4 found managing differences in personalities and motivations was the challenge,

> "it was always going to be conflict of personalities, conflict of interest and, you know, people who don't get along and for one reason or another, whether that was something we did with volunteering, or they just didn't get along".

Apart from learning to work with the other volunteers the interviews raised the fact that there were many challenges from working with the public.

Participant 4 discussed dealing with drunk people as being one of the biggest challenges as,

> "learning how to deal with different people and especially intoxicated people. Or even people with, the learning difficulties or behavioural difficulties, it's learning to adapt to deal with people in different situations and how they need to be dealt with".

This was supported by Participant 7 and 3 who also stated that it was a challenge "*dealing with people and they are intoxicated so they're not 100% with it*" (7). Or the "*the drunk people being sick*" (3).

Participant 1 found one of the hardest parts was managing the boredom when it was not a busy night,

> "when it's quiet. It's OK but can be difficult sometimes. Watching the clock. The shifts I'd rather be busy because you become bored or complacent. I think that was the hardest thing dealing with how quiet it can sometimes be".

Whilst not as challenging in terms of dealing with intoxicated people, the reality of shift work is working through the night and at times this can be very quiet with not

much going on. The flip side to that is that often there is a lot going on which can lead to situations of conflict.

4.4.3 Exposure to conflict

Participant 4 highlighted that as a PSV the role was to attend scenes where vulnerable, intoxicated, or injured people had been identified and as a team go an assess the situation and bring that person back to the Help Point to be treated by the medical team. However, working in the night-time economy, the situation could turn aggressive, the PSVs would then step back, and the police could step in. Therefore, he states that

> "obviously there's always going to be an element of conflict which we couldn't be exposed to as volunteers. However, there was a level of conflict that once you come into the police you know you had to be the ones to deal with it". Participant 4 described part of being a police officer is to deal with "conflict management every day. It's all about going in and dealing with conflict management, it's the crux of my job".

Participant 5 also commented on the lack of exposure to confrontation, as he saw the "*the confrontation side of things*" as a big part of policing and "*there wasn't a great deal of it in the Help Point. When you're sort of put in a position where there, perhaps is quite a bit of confrontation*".

Participant 8 Supported this by stating she felt that dealing with confrontation was missing from working as a PSV on the Help Point as they "*never had to face any confrontation, so that was an element that was missing, that is very much in the police officer role*".

However, Participant 2 though that working on the Help Point did expose volunteers to some level of conflict as the role of a police officer is one where conflict is prevalent.

> "It's such a unique role in the situations you have to deal with. Any volunteering experience, I think significantly helps in relation to the role, for example, the help point deal with situations on Wind Street, which significantly helps you realise that you're constantly in conflict with people, for example, who are intoxicated, who just have no idea what they are saying or doing".

Participant 8 thought that while as a SC she did not get involved in conflict situations, especially physical ones, she did witness them, which provided exposure to such situations, which she felt was important for when you are in the job. She gave an example of when,

> "We've had scraps and there will be that person, one officer in the background who's kind of like. Would you want me to do? Sit on them, do something. Just grab an arm, do anything. And I think it's the reluctancy and like nervousness to get involved and get hands on. But when you've got your colleagues that are there biting, actively fighting with someone. You've got to get involved and I think there are a lot of people who aren't exposed to that before the job, therefore when it comes to it, it almost like freeze".

Participant 10 gave a similar situation of new officers he worked with who had not been exposed to conflict before and just "*stood there with his hands in his pockets*". So, he continued that "*it's having that understanding that you are a police officer. You are going to have to use force and people aren't going to give in*". Which he states

that working on the Help Point exposed him to the reality, although he didn't get involved in physical conflict as a PSV. As Participant 1 stated,

"it opens your eyes to the world a bit more. I think you can be wrapped in cotton wool a little bit, you can't avoid that sort of side of the world, because it isn't a nice place unfortunately, the world sometimes and you have got to deal with it. And I think it opened my eyes to what people can be like and, how different people can be in drink and drugs".

However, all recognised that volunteers could not get involved with the levels of conflict that police officers deal with and that this would never change, however the exposure to witnessing such conflict took the shock out of it happening once someone was in the job.

4.4.4 Recommendations given by the participants for improvements to the volunteering scheme.

Whilst most of the participants were full of praise for the volunteering opportunities, they had experienced, "*Without the volunteering, I don't think I would have had enough from the course, the volunteering for me allowed me to develop furthe*r" (Participant 2), some felt that more exposure to the realities of policing would have been beneficial.

Participant 2 had previously stated that as a special she didn't have the workload that a full-time officer would have but she stated that "*everyone underestimates how much paperwork was involved, and until you actually sitting there and dealing with it, do you actually realise how much is actually involved*" and she "*couldn't build case files or anything for example*". She felt that it would have benefitted her as a Special to have had more hands-on experience with this before joining.

The majority of the participants all suggested that they would have benefited from experiencing the realities of policing and what they do day-to-day in all of the different areas of policing. Policing is not just about response police and dealing with anti-social behaviour on the streets and responding to calls. There are many elements to it, such as traffic police, the custody suite, the investigation hubs, simply being in the police station and experiencing that environment. Most would also have liked to go on a ride-along.

> "a ride along, that would have been beneficial for me, to see how a shift works or going into a custody suite and seeing how that runs because that's always a shock when you see people being taken away" (Participant 4).

Participant 5 supported this and agreed he would have also liked to,

> "have a ride along and sort of see what we do. But it's difficult because there's a high level of risk to it. But I think for someone to have the experience of a ride along just to see what we do day-to-day".

Participant 10 would have liked to have "*some sort of link with the camera room. So if there was some sort of Camera room shift it would be beneficial*".

Participant 11 also felt that having a greater understanding of the day-to-day role of being a police officer would have been beneficial. He states he would have liked to,

> "go to a police station or have a bit more experience with the police specifically. And I think perhaps having a small understanding of the variety of calls we did go to and deal with, not all of them, because we do get a lot of violent people. But just knowing what we do in the daily basis, I think could be great".

Participant 8 also thought "a *day out in the car with the police or working on a shift*" would be beneficial, however she suggested volunteering in a different environment to learn about the different communities in the local area, or with organisation's that work with people of different abilities such as; "*an autistic day centre, a mosque thing, a Christian charity*" would be really helpful for people wanting to join not just the police but any public service. She admitted that she had "*never been to mosque before yet you speak with people that went there every day*". So, she felt it was important to understand who your community are.

Whereas Participant 9 felt that as part of the course she would have liked to learn about further about the broader criminal justice system locally, nationally and internationally, suggesting that it was important to learn about,

> "different organisations and we do a lot with Interpol and it's quite a big part of my job sharing intelligence, an insight into that at uni, to understand other cultures, other policies in other places of the world, I think that improves your understanding of law as a whole".

Participant 7 took a more practical approach to suggestions to improve the volunteer experience, she felt that it was important for students to make sure that they that they were fully prepared for the physicality of working with in the police and highlighted the importance of,

> "maintaining a level of fitness so that when we came to do like the officer safety tactics and stuff, obviously our fitness was at a standard, that it needed to be at".

She also suggested that perhaps the university could help prepare them better for the recruitment process by running "*a mock assessment day*".

These suggestions are very helpful for universities and forces to further develop and plan the volunteer experience for students, so that all parties get the most of such schemes.

4.4.5 Comparisons between the Police Student Volunteer and Special Police Constable experience

The 3 participants who started as PSVs then applied and were accepted as SC and had some unique insights about the differences in the experiences that they encountered doing the two very different roles. PSVs do not have any police powers, they work in a supportive role with police officers and police community support officers (PCSO). Whereas a Special Police Constable (SC) has the same powers in law as every other police officer, they wear the same uniform, carry the same equipment, and work alongside regular police officers. A SC must work towards Independent Patrol Status which will take approximately a year to achieve after the initial training they have to undergo.

Participant 2 felt that working as a SC;

> "I'd be quite protected. I couldn't do certain forms. And I think that was a hindrance when you're in a team situation, the other officers were trying to do something and you want to try and help out, but you can't because you can't do the relevant forms. You're not constantly doing the role 24/7 so you didn't get a real sense of the workload,"

Participant 2 also stated that being a special was like a chance to "*dip my toe in the water sort of thing, I never saw as much as what I do now*". Due to the times that she could commit to being a special is meant that "*I was working, those that calls never came up*" which limited her exposure to the role of a police officer.

The role of the special is to commit 16 hours a month, which is not on a rota, so Specials can just say they are coming to work a shift and choose when, therefore as Participant 2 contends "*you're not constantly doing the role 24/7 in the sense of we never had a workload, you don't have as much responsibility*". She felt that as a Special whilst she would attend a call, because she didn't have the same workload or responsibility as full-time cop, she didn't fully appreciate the role until she joined.

However, Participant 8 felt that being a special was more,

> "related to what I was hoping to experience before joining, I needed to join as a special just to expose myself to the reality of what they so. I think a lot, a lot of people, including myself, think, I'm going to be going to about 10 different calls a day. And I'll hardly be in the office. The reason I wanted to join the police is because I could not do a 9 to 5 office based job. The harsh reality is that that you'd go to a call. Then it's got to be logged somewhere, what you've done and what was said, sometimes this can take 2 hours. And I think people need to know, that's what happens, because it's not all fun and games and driving around the flashing lights on".

Participant 8 saw being a SC as more beneficial than being a PSV, she saw the work being done on the Help Point,

> "as just more like medical, then it would have been related to actually police in itself. Yes, there's still the elements of communicating with those staff and like the CCTV cameras and ambulance".

There is a significant difference between being a SC and a PSV and this study does not fail to recognise this, a SC does have a warrant card and has does have the power to arrest, whereas the PSVs are simply volunteers working on much lower-

level community policing projects and schemes. However, the more general employability skills that have been developed from such schemes do not seem to be very different from the participants responses. Indeed, as the next theme will show, the participants have also reflected on the positive impact their academic experience had on developing these core employability skills.

4.5 Theme 4 Academic Experience

As part of the BA Public Services degree course all students had to undertake compulsory modules at level 4,5 and 6, Leading Self at level 4, Leading in Action at level 5 and Organisational Leadership (Theory into Practice) at level 6. These three modules were designed to develop knowledge and understanding of leadership theories using outdoor activities to put them into practice. Students would partake in activities such as rock climbing, kayaking, mountain biking, river rescue and swimming, coasteering and orienteering. At level 4 the sessions were mainly concerned about how the student managed themselves, how they worked in teams and understand their own health and safety. At level 5 the focus turned to how the students lead and motivated their team, and how they managed the health and safety of the team. By level 6 students were being asked to plan and prepare an event, over 2 days in the outdoors and taking responsibility for the leadership of that event and the team. As part of the module, they also had to attend weekly gym sessions and design and deliver a gym session to the class.

4.5.1 Development of skills and experience whilst at university

From the interviews it appears that these modules and the lessons learnt from these sessions were also instrumental in the development of the core skills needed to work in the police.

Participant 2 found the experience of the outdoor sessions helped her develop her leadership skills;

> "the experience of going to Gower and engaging our teamwork with different people and different years was important and I think developed my confidence a bit further as well. Having to for example go to Gower to lead. A group of boys and around the mountain was definitely an experience and that we have to take control of that situation using leadership skills that the helped develop me further".

Participant 3 found the outdoor activities and residentials helped build her "*leadership skills with the residentials and stuff, that's all team building and having to lead exercises*".

Participant 6 stated that skills developed through the volunteering were

> "complemented with leading in action because I think that developed the skills and the knowledge and you have to put it into practice alongside the volunteering. In terms of the residentials and the leadership, I don't think you know at the time or understand the importance of it. So, like having those sort of experiences and what a good leader is and what leadership means and those different methods. You can really relate it to your day-to-day work".

Participant 7 took away from the outdoor activities and residential lessons on working as a team and how to motivate team members even if you didn't know them, which is essential to a policing environment;

> "not everybody gets on in life and that's a given, you know. And so sometimes you would put in a team with people who you didn't get on with the best or who didn't speak at all, and you had to, navigate around that and make people

feel inclusive, and I would try my best, even if they were the shyest person. I would always ask them for their input, so yeah, they (the outdoor activities)were beneficial".

Participant 8 admitted that she did not like the outdoor activities that she had to do for the course, such as coasteering, but that the support from her team helped her get through it;

"I don't like water myself, so I wouldn't be particularly good at doing that, but had to put it to one side, believed that you can do it, sort of get on with it, and then that's where the team work side of it comes in, to get you through".

For Participant 11 the outdoor activities really helped develop his teamworking skills;

"I've always been sort of a team-oriented person anyway, so I've always had those teamworking skills. But I think it's not just the ability to work in a team, it's to form new teams and new groups and new friendships. And you know, there aren't always people you like who you go into working, with which is a given at any job opportunity, but it's the scale and the ability to work with them. And you know I think that's just boosted me massively".

For Participant 2 the outdoor activities were simply fun to do, and it was only later did she realise the importance of them;

"I was just enjoying it. I was. I'm not going to sit in an office. So for me, it was fun. But now looking back, I see the relevance of it. I see how important it was".

She went on to talk about the importance of the gym sessions in helping prepare her for the police fitness tests;

"university then gave me that opportunity to understand what the fitness was, but also as beneficial for me that could give me an opportunity to practice. Look at what technique was best for me and completing it and to prepare me for the fitness tests for the police".

She also commented on how important class participation was in developing her fitness.

"It also helps us I think because we had our fitness in the class you would end up competing with someone, then they just pushed you that little bit further then and just improve your fitness a bit more".

Participant 3 felt that the gym sessions really helped prepare her for the fitness tests to get into the police due to the focus of the sessions on that area:

"I hate running. But as having to actually have to do it, that was brilliant. That's just something you don't even think of when you apply to be police officers, like, oh, my God, I got to do a fitness test. So, stuff like that was excellent".

Participant 6 thought that the fitness sessions were valuable in preparing for the police;

"we used to have those fitness sessions. But if you wanted to go into any of the uniformed services which you have to do. So, I think that was really good".

Participant 10 also thought the fitness sessions were beneficial in helping prepare students for the realities of not just the recruitment process for the police, but that also the job was physically demanding;

"You know there is fitness involved. They are physical altercations or its physically demanding. That aspect is of all the services. So again, it's a nice

reminder for you that this, if this is what you want, to join the emergency services, the public service course has that physical demand to it as well".

For Participant 7 the practical elements to the course that were taken off campus were beneficial for helping her learn the theory

"now that I look back and I think that was a part of my degree, I think it's fantastic, you know, and it's learning outside of the classroom environment".

For most of the participants it was only on reflection could they see the benefit of the outdoor activities on developing their skills, for most it was "*wet*" and "*freezing cold*" (Participant 7).

4.5.2 Academic tasks which helped develop employability skills

As part of her course Participant 3 had to organise class gym sessions and outdoor activities, she states that this really helped with developing her leadership skills;

"actually doing a physical activity and having to put together a structured thing. I think that was leadership straight away. I think it's helped me because as a result of it I've become like a tutor in my role".

Participant 5 stated that through the academic tasks set in class and as assessments helped to develop these core skills; on teamwork he said that

"some of the tasks and stuff that we had, you have to work on a team. It's quite a common thing in university as well. And we're doing teams sort of tasks and assignments, things like that, you are developing skills".

On confidence and the ability to speak to people he said,

"whether you realise or not, confidence is quite a big thing, especially presentations. If you haven't done presentations before then you start doing university. It's public speaking, and that's a big part of the job of policing, is just the ability to speak to people. And empathise with people in the situations they're in, so communication is a massive thing I think that you develop through university".

Participant 6 felt that having to give presentations developed her confidence in speaking in front of people, which is something she has regularly do in her current role and the academic assessments helped develop this skill;

"I think when I first came to university, I was quite shy, but I think the opportunities where you have to give presentations which used, I used to find nerve wracking. Now I do them all the time and don't even think about it I think it definitely played an integral role".

What these responses are saying is that embedded assessments that require students to work as a team and then present to the class, have helped build confidence, their communication skills and teamworking, almost subconsciously and it is only on reflection that they participants realise this. Thus, making the ability to reflect crucial.

4.5.3 Developing Reflective Skills

As part of the course the students who undertook the volunteering module, had to keep a diary of each shift they attended, and then produce a reflective piece of work on their experience and how it had helped them develop their employability skills. Reflective practice was part of several assessments within the BA Public Services programme. When asked if the reflection was useful at the time the participants

stated that it was when they were writing the reflective practice assignment that they realised how much they had learnt through the volunteering scheme.

Participant 2 stated that

> "It's not until I was actually completing that assignment did, I realise how much I developed as a person and the skills that I needed. I think when I was just doing it, I was just going on automatic pilot and was just not taking into account too much that had developed".

Participant 3. thought keeping the diary was important to keep a record to

> "look what I've just done and actually thinking about how you've just done it. When you actually look at what you wrote down, we had a really aggressive person in that night or I dealt with someone who was on drugs or having a panic attack, it does make you think, well, look what I did it and then you think of how did I even deal with that cause you just do it in the moment you don't think. And when you're driving home, you just want to go to bed and you're not thinking about what happened. So having that diary to write it all in, it was really helpful to look back at and realise all the different types of people and environments you had the experience of going to, who and why it literally made you think, and it does build your confidence".

For Participant 8 having to reflect on their experience within the assignments, highlighted her own strengths and weaknesses,

> "I think when we did the reflective essays, it made me realise that if I'm not comfortable in a situation I withdraw and I don't become as vocal as I would be if it was something that I was comfortable with and if I enjoyed". Which is

something they had been able to work and overcome, which then "sort of proved to myself I could do something that was out of my comfort zone".

4.5.4 Strengths of the academic programme

Participant 6 was keen to stress the importance of the outdoor activity modules and the benefit of the module in developing key skills needed for the future;

> "like a team building exercise, when it's a lot more than that. It's probably more leadership than communication and everything that, you know, that revolves around, you think about it instead of strengthening the relationships you have in university, actually it strengthens the leader that you become. I definitely think should 100% be in there".

Participant 2 on reflecting on the programme as a whole, including the volunteering, admitted that without all the experiences to help develop the core skills required she would have struggled in her role as PC;

> "I think if I am honest, doing the role now. I think I would have struggled quite a bit because the role is so intense by itself. Trying to learn all these skills on top makes it 10 times harder, if you have no skills, so university gives that time to develop which was a massive thing for me".

Participant 2 also admitted that when reflecting on all the activities and opportunities the course provided her, she could see "*the relevance of it. I see how important it was*".

Participant 3 felt that without the volunteering she would not have been able to perform well in interviews;

"I felt like when I was going for interviews and they asked me questions, I had a lot of examples to be able to give of like organisation, teamwork, collaborative, multi skilled. Through the volunteering we had a lot of opportunities and examples to be able to give in interviews. I don't think people would have that without the voluntary experience".

Participant 8 admitted that she only originally got involved with the volunteering to get the hours done for the module, rather than taking the academic alternative module. In fact, at that time, she couldn't understand "*why it had to be few 100 hours, can it not be a little less? I'll be honest with you*". However, having completed more than 200 hours volunteering she stated that;

"On reflection, I think 100% helped. I think it's good that you did do the 200 hours because it made people, rather than just turn up, do it and leave you actually sort of get involved a lot more and learn more".

4.6 Theme 5 Skills needed for the workplace.

RQ3 asks what skills the participants think are essential to do the jon of policing, now they are in the role (see Section 3.1.1). All the participants have gone into roles working with police forces, 10 out of the 11 with South Wales Police and 1 with Brighton and Hove Police Force. They were asked, now that they are in the job, what they thought the most important core skills were needed to do the job, these reflections are presented below.

4.6.1 Skills identified as needed for their current role.

For all the participants they felt that confidence was essential to be able to do the job, which entails having to speak to the public, often when they are at their most

vulnerable. In order to do this, you have to know how to communicate with them in the most appropriate way, to gage how they might take what is being said and to be in control of the situation. Therefore, as Participant 1 put it

> "you've got to be confident; you have to be able to make a decision. Be decisive in what you're doing. Be confident in what you're doing".

Communication emerged then as the most prominent skill the participants identified "*Communication skills. I think are key*" (Participant 1). All participants discussed how important it was to be able to talk to people, and to have the confidence to just be able to go up to people and converse with them.

> "communication is a big one, you got to learn how to communicate with your colleagues and then how to speak to people. So, its communication that's the most important thing" (Participant 4).

Participant 3 who works in the control room taking the 999 and 111 calls and discussed how crucial being able to communicate was for this role. She stated that

> "the hardest part is when youngsters come straight in fresh out of college and they don't know how to speak to people".

She highlighted how this was not a taught skills when new starters come into the job as

> "the training that they provide us for my role, it's more to do with how to work the systems as opposed to how to speak to people".

She explained how important the volunteering was and how it helped build her confidence to talk to people, to go and start conversations with strangers and to give out advice to people in the streets.

"We had to knock on people's doors and give them advice. We had to deal with drunk people and just speak to people I know it's silly because we speak to people in classroom, but not professionally and not giving advice and not like having to ask probing questions".

Participant 8 put communication as crucial;

"it's definitely communication skills because you could be the most academic person out there. You could write a great statement. But if you can't talk to people, then it's just not really going to be the job for you".

After communication the participants listed teamworking as another essential skill to have to do the job.

"Teamwork is also central. Just effectively communicate with you team and just offering a hand, especially if they're working late" (Participant 2).

With Participant 11 listing teamworking as the most important skill, as the nature of policing is to work as a team,

"Teamworking is absolutely number one totally, you will never work alone, if you don't come with that teamworking mentality, I don't think you'll sort of fit in".

When asked whether the reflective practice used in university assignments had helped prepare them for their current role, all participants stated that their current roles require a lot of refection and that learning this at university really helped them.

"self-reflection is key in the job. I think if we don't self-reflect then you're going to make the same mistakes. That's what it's there for. Some things you do well and yeah, that one really went well. And then some nights you can go well everything I was doing was wrong. So I'll look and go. What? What was going well? What wasn't going right there. And then you can change it or try something else" (Participant 1).

Within their current role in the control room Participant 3 uses reflective practice all the time to learn and develop, after dealing with a call they

"get to listen back to say no, there wasn't a particularly nice call, or maybe we'd maybe I've taken a call and I've graded it lower and we get time to reflect in the sense that we get to listen back to recordings, pick up on things and maybe we've missed or, we can listen in positive way as in you've dealt with it really well. Once I had a call, it was the end of a night shift, and there's a really nasty domestic and I just you just go into the zone you just deal with it. you just get on with it. When I got into work the next week, the Super emailed me a recording of the call. And like said how fantastic you've dealt with it. And I thought it's just another domestic was he talking about when I actually listened back to it, I thought how on Earth did I deal with that?"

For Participant 11. reflection is the way to improve performance,

"I think sense of reflection is critical. Really. You know, you really need to go into something. And if you don't do it very well, if you know, if anything, great, you didn't do it very well because now you know you've got wrong. And if you do reflect, you know what you've got wrong and then you can identify how to

change it. It's reflecting on how you've done it and what you've done wrong. I think you can only go upwards".

From these results it shows from the interviews that now they are in the job, the top three skills identified by all participants are communication, teamworking and reflection.

4.6.2 Preparation for the workplace

The aim of the volunteering scheme is to provide the students with the necessary skills to go into their chosen profession, for most of the students this was policing. Policing is a public facing role and officers, call handlers and police staff come into contact with the public, usually when they are in a high state of anxiety, panic, intoxication, or anger. Preparing students on how to deal with these situations is difficult in a classroom situation, and therefore the volunteering allows them an opportunity to experience these situations firsthand, but in a more controlled way. Policing is also a 24/7 profession and involves shift working and working with other agencies, again this is not always easy to demonstrate within the classroom environment.

4.6.2 (a) Dealing with the public.

Participant 3 saw the volunteering as preparation for a career in policing and allowed her to experience firsthand the way the public can behave and what police officers have to deal with on a daily basis. This meant that when she was presented those situations in her job, she knew what to expect and how to react.

"So when you're when you're out dealing with the public, obviously you speak to them different than you would, you know, report back to an officer or the

ambulance, you're going to be maybe more empathetic, sympathetic, kind, understanding to people who are upset and crying. And then in the next minute, you might have someone shouting and coming at you when you've got to, switch and take charge and be more assertive but keeping your cool, I don't think you get any kind of experience just sitting in a classroom. You can talk about it, you can say oh you have to be more assertive. But until you're in that situation, you don't know how you're going to act. So, it's good experience, changing how you would speak to them, seeing if they are vulnerable, you'd speak slower, softer, if they shout know you're going to be more assertive. Having those experiences, you know what to expect".

For Participant 4

"It was that confidence build that I needed in university. Now I go into situations. I don't even think twice about what I'm doing. Again, I've been doing this 6 1/2 years and I've learned over those six and half years. But I came into the police with the core skills from the volunteering, whereas if I hadn't had that opportunity, perhaps I would have been a bit more reserved than I would have been, a bit more step back and let's watch things and it would take me longer to learn the skills I needed in the police".

Participant 5 is a serving police officer and part of the role is having to deal with confrontation, he thought that working on the Help Point exposed him to how people behaviour under the influence of drugs and alcohol, and that it prepared him for his current role.

"The things we deal with, a lot of it could be confrontation. When we were in the role of police volunteers and you go into things and a lot of intoxicated

people and no one quite understands why you're there, sometimes people are quite often confrontational. Being able to sort of deal with that and diffuse situations was a big help. Coming into this role, particularly, since you can imagine we don't deal with the nicest people. So, it's quite common that we have to deal with confrontation. So that was a big help".

4.6.2 (b) Shift working.

Working on the help point meant that students would be working a 10pm to 4 am shift, which is considered anti-social working hours. Often, they would have been working or at university during the day before they started that shift and sometimes would have to be back at work or university the day after. Shift working is a reality of policing, and nights shifts are something all police officers must do. From the interviews this exposure to working a night shift helped prepare them for the realities of the role.

Participant 1 stated that he from working at the Help Point he was exposed to what working a night shift would be like;

> "doing the shift you get tired. Dealing with hardship. You know that's what the job is. You know you you've got to deal with hardship and that it's going to get tough at times. You've got to deal with it".

Participant 3 stated that *"the closest thing to going out on a shift would be the help point".* Participant 4 also agreed *"I think having had a taste for shift work on the help point did help".*

Participant 5 discussed how it prepared him for affect night shifts had on you;

"you know, anti-social hours. It's you're there till early hours in the morning or sometimes you're back in university the following day. It's just understanding how it affected your body as well and your sleeping clock and the toll it takes. I think having done that prepared me a bit for the night shifts".

Participant 8 thought that working the hours at the help point would make people question if policing was for them before they joined;

"Because like I said, with the hours at the help point. If you don't like working those hours, then how are you going to work in policing, when you finish at 7:00, o'clock in the morning".

For Participant 10 the understanding of the shift working was developed by working at the Help Point, but also the reality of having to give up of social time. The Help Point shifts were timetabled for those very nights when it is common for young people to go out into Town, that is why the Help Point is open on those key times. Therefore, while Participant 8 and Participant 11 stated that they didn't volunteer all the time because;

"I like my sleep too much to be doing this every time, and I like to go out as well" and they wanted to "enjoy being a first-year student",

Participant 10 saw it as preparation for anyone who wanted to go into the police,

"They've got to understand that they've got to give up some of your personal time as well. Like I can't make a birthday sometimes, I can't go, I've missed Christmas sometimes, because I need to do my job".

4.6.2 (c) Attitude to working.

For some participants, they took working as a police volunteer very seriously, they saw it as volunteer work, an approached it with the same commitment and dedication as any paid job. It was these volunteers that went significantly over and above the 120 hours needed for the academic module. Participant 4 signed up to volunteer in his first year at university and for the full three years;

> "it was usually weekly and normally do a Wednesday night. I would be the team leader, taking groups of other volunteer students up Wind Street either for a call or looking for people that specifically needed our help. So, was basically part of that team".

This allowed for growth in experience and being part of the whole team involved in the Help Point, the Police and St John, meant that he was able to "*get that bond and then you just work well together*".

It also developed a strong work ethic,

> "it was just taking that role of professionalism. Even though we were in university, and we were volunteers, it was pride in ourselves in what we did".

Participant 10 described his experience of working at the Help Point as making him "*more professional*" and learnt the importance of teamworking and the impact of turning up, that despite the fact that he didn't "*get paid, if I don't come in, mostly the team kind of loses*". Participant 9 also undertook more hours than was needed for the module, and volunteered from first year to third year, and saw the role as a commitment, not just 'experience' and therefore found it hard "*When other students wouldn't turn up*" and felt let down by "*the commitment of others*" something they "*struggled with for a long time*".

Participant 10 is now an acting Sergeant' in the force, and he states that the

volunteering helped him to mature, develop his skills and learn to be a reflective

practioner, this all helps in his current role where he has "*tutored 7 students in the*

last two years and after every call, we've got to have a bit of a debrief". Being a

temporary Sergeant' so early on in his career is remarkable, something he puts

down to the development of his skills and work ethic, through the significant

volunteering hours he completed at university. He goes as far to say that "*of my*

peers who didn't do the Help Point every Wednesday, they're not in the careers they

wanted to be".

4.6.2 (d) multi-agency working.

According to Participant 3 as part of her current role she must work with a number of

different public sector agencies, when dealing 999 calls, she stated that,

> "I don't just speak to officers on a daily basis. I would pass reports to the
>
> Ambulance, and they would pass reports to us. You've got Social Services,
>
> Victim Services, the Prison, Probation, Fire and Mental Health Team in one
>
> room".

The notion of multi-agency working was very much planted during the volunteering

and her work on the Help Point, "*as there's so many people working down there, it all*

makes sense now that you're in the working environment".

For Participant 4, the volunteering didn't just give the insight into multi-agency

working but he also highlights the importance of the networks he made working with

other agencies whilst working at the Help Point that help with the synergy of multi-

agency working in his current job. Participant 4 shares how,

"it was a huge multi agency thing, and it was my first experience with it. Which helped massively, especially in my current role in roads policing. You know, if we go to a serious collision on the motorway or wherever it be, there is every man under the sun there, you know, you've got us the police who will run the scene for the fire service. You've got ambulance and everyone's got to communicate and being police and often first one on the scene as we were single crewed, we're the ones who manage that scene. So, I've got those skills and from that network and people I used to work with on the help point that I see now, and it's just makes it easier".

For Participant 5 he learnt a lot from the multi-agency of the Help Point,

"it was a big eye opener to see. I think the purpose of the help point was to cooperate with agencies, to see how it works. And obviously it's working very well cause it's still there today. My role now there is multi agency working, if we attend a call with another agency, whether it be Coast Guard or Fire service or handovers to paramedics".

Participant 9 and Participant 11 agreed that the exposure to multi-agency working has helped prepare them for their current roles as Participant 9 stated that she has to work with other agencies such as "*social services if you go to anything where there's a vulnerable adult or there's children involved*". Participant 11 concurred saying "*we work with hundreds of different agencies every single day and we're in contact with housing options, probation, and the prison service*".

4.6.3 Understanding the importance the volunteering had on professional practice.

Now that all the participants are working, most as frontline officers, but all in the

wider police service, they are able to see the difference in new people coming into the job with experience, be it from volunteering or past work experience, and those who are coming in without any. This has allowed them to reflect and appreciate the benefit their own volunteering experience had on their transition into their current roles.

For Participant 2 she realised the importance of past experience when working in a demanding situation as a response officer with people with no experience,

"You need to take command of situation. So, they just take that a little bit longer, whereas people with previous experience. Understand it and are reacting a bit quicker".

She went on to add that,

"there's one student on our team now who has previous experience, and he is far more competent in team situations than others",

This statement seemingly illustrates the benefit volunteering has once in the job. She further added that without her own previous experience she,

"would have struggled quite a bit, because the role's so intense by itself. Trying to learn all these skills on top is just makes it 10 times harder".

Participant 3 gave an example of someone they worked with who had not had any experience of the job before joining,

"they joined to be an officer without having done any like volunteering or special or anything. Their first experience was a crazy person running at them, shouting. Maybe not aggressively. They might just be distressed, but that's just scared them, frighten them and they've left straight away. They just

went that's not for me, but from me having those experiences, you know what to expect".

Another example Participant 3 gave highlighted the difference between people she worked with having experience or not is where,

"youngsters come straight in either fresh out of college and they don't know how to speak to people, you've got to ask questions and they don't know where to start. They don't know what to ask".

Whereas she felt that because of her own volunteering experience, where she had to "*knock on people's doors and give them advice*", it enabled her to develop the skills of asking questions, which is essential in her role.

All participants have been able to highlight the importance of having prior experience before joining the job, that working with the public, having exposure to incidents of conflict, working overnight, and having to speak to strangers, really helps when starting a career in policing. They have all acknowledged that these are not skills that are taught in a classroom but have to be developed over time by doing rather than talking or reading about, and often outside of one's comfort zone.

4.7 Summary:

The findings discussed in this chapter highlight the motivations and benefits of the volunteering, the challenges, and barriers the participants faced to volunteering whilst at university, how their experience before and during their academic studies helped develop their skills and what they feel are the most important skills needed for them to do their job. The responses from the interviews suggest that all participants felt that the police student volunteer scheme had helped develop their

skills needed to work within the police service and that it was a positive experience for them. In particular, they valued the experience working on the Help Point gave them and appreciated how it provided them with a certain level of exposure to working as a frontline police officer, as well as the opportunity to learn from police officers, ask questions and build a network of contacts. The findings place emphasis on the impact the academic sessions had on developing the student's core skills, such as the fitness and outdoor activities, alongside the traditional academic assessments of group work and presentations. The most essential skills they identified as being needed to work in policing, were communication, teamworking, reflective practice and being confident in the job. Most highlighted that their time at university and through the volunteering, increased their exposure to diversity, and helped them better understand how diverse society is, developing their empathy. Exposure to drugs and alcohol abuse and social deprivation from working in the night time economy, with excluded young people, and Drugs Aid Cymru, changed their perceptions of such situations and gave them better understanding of society. However, whilst they acknowledged that working at the Help Point exposed them to shift working, how people behave under the influence, and the reality of conflict in the night time economy, as volunteers they were very shielded from being part of the conflict. All the participants who work as frontline operational police officers identified conflict as being an everyday part of the job and their need to use reasonable force a reality of their daily role. There was an understanding that as volunteers they couldn't get involved, but some expressed a need for practice at having to deal with such conflict to be embedded in the course, whilst realistically accepting that this would be impossible. However, they did appreciate that their exposure to conflict, even from a viewer's perspective, helped prepare them to the fact that they would encounter

discord as part of the job on a regular basis. All acknowledged, however, that their volunteering experience had aided them in getting their jobs with the police forces as it provided them with evidence to support their applications and prepared them for working in a frontline organisation by developing the skills needed to do the job. In the next chapter a thorough discussion of the findings will be presented in relation to existing literature on employability in higher education. The role of HEIs, the importance of collaboration with industry to develop employability initiatives and what constitutes employability skills will be discussed in light of the findings presented in this chapter and how they expand and add to existing literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion
5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to derive discussion points from the findings and to provide a reflection on the study as a whole. The focus of the chapter will be to conceptualise the findings within the current literature that exists within the field of employability in higher education. There will also be critical evaluation of this research more broadly.

The aim of the study was to assess how the university, through the police student volunteer scheme, developed employability skills to prepare students for a career in the police service. The study used thematic analysis (see Section 3.5) with the aim of analysing the data without a preconceived hypothesis, particularly as there is little known about the impact of such schemes in helping prepare graduates for working in the police service (see Section 2.7). Naturally there was always a risk of trying to prove a positive response from the participants in terms of the success of the volunteering scheme. However, by recognising this possibility and allowing the participants an opportunity to give their description and space to expand on their reflection this allowed for in-depth descriptions to be produced. Rich data was generated on the participants experience prior to and whilst at university, the benefits, and barriers to volunteering and skills the participants identified as essential for working within the police service. This was accomplished by the synchronous online interviews held with the participants (see Section 3.6)

This study focusses on the police student volunteer schemes that were developed for Public Services and Policing students, namely the Police Student Volunteer scheme set up with University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and South

Wales Police, and evaluates the participants' perspectives of the skills they developed and how this helped prepare them for employment in the Police Service This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What core skills do graduates really need for the workplace?

RQ2: In what ways did the police student volunteer scheme help develop these skills?

RQ3: What most helped the participants once they were in the workplace and what is needed to better prepare policing graduates for the workplace?

The study findings (in Chapter 4) revealed the different perspectives of the volunteering and university experience the participants had. Whilst all the participants undertook the same course and were involved in the volunteering experience, the impact of the experience varied from one another. Insight into the participants lives gleaned from the interviews, illustrated the different experiences they had had before starting university, which meant that development of employability skills such as teamworking, leadership and communication (see Section 2.2) were from different staring points. However, the focus on this study was to concentrate on the skills the participants, now in the work place, felt were essential for working in the police service, and how the volunteering helped prepare them. What the findings show is that all participants gained from the volunteering and appreciated the advantage the experience had given them in terms of evidence to present at the interview stage of joining the force, supporting all the research that purports work experience increases the graduates chance of employment after university (Crebert *et al,* 2004; Thompson, 2017).

Simply undertaking a placement or volunteering is not solely going to increase a graduate chance of employment, they must be able to convince an employer that the experience has developed their skills and competencies, therefore reflection on practice is imperative (Tight, 2023). The findings from this study (see Section 4.8.3) contribute to the literature and re-enforce the need to embed reflective practice as part of any placement module, and also establishes reflection as an essential skill for those working within policing, due to the constant need to review and debrief after any interactions with the public (see Section 4.9.1).

Additionally, the findings support the literature that highlights the importance of Industry involvement (see Section 2.5 and Section 4.6.3) in designing work experience opportunities, in order for the experience to be worthwhile for the students, in gaining insight to the profession and developing industry specific skills.

Five main themes were produced from the thematic analysis of the data, these are 1. Pre-university experience, 2. Motivation and benefits of volunteering, 3. Challenges and Barriers to volunteering, 4. Academic Experience 5. Skills needed for the workplace. To further explain the data, this chapter discuss each of the five themes identified and their related subthemes, in relation to the literature. The themes enable the study to set the context of where the participants started in terms of skills at the beginning of their university career and allow them to depict their journey of development through their course and on into the chosen career. Therefore theme 1 (see Section 4.5) provides initial context with detail and rich description of the participants, but it is themes 2-5 (see Sections 4.6-4.9) that help answer the research questions proposed by this study (see Section 1.4).

Whilst there is significant literature on employability, the role of universities, how to embed employability in higher education, how to measure success of these schemes and student perspectives on these initiatives, the focus of that literature is based either generally or against subject areas that have traditionally been easier to embed placements such as business, education, medicine, sport, and health. There is very little mention in the literature of initiatives focussed on policing programmes. The findings from this study will now be discussed in more detail below in line with the existing literature studied.

5.2 Summary of Themes

Theme 1 sets the scene in terms of the participants career aspirations (see section 4.5.1), their reasons for choosing the course (See Section 4.5.2) and their skills and experience prior to starting university (see Section 4.5.3). While this information is important in providing context, the development of skills and the impact of the police student volunteer scheme is better explained in themes 2 and 3. These provide insight into the motivations and benefits of the volunteering and the skills developed (see Section 4.6), alongside the challenges and barriers associated with the experience (see Section 4.7). Theme 4 (see Section 4.8) highlights the need for employability skills to be embedded across the curriculum and not just from placement, volunteering, or extracurricular activity opportunities but within academic tasks. Finally theme 5 identifies the skills needed for the workplace as defined by the participants now they are in practice and specifically for working within the police service, an area where little research has been undertaken.

5.3 Theme 1: Pre-university experience

This theme (see Section 4.5) taken from the data created a starting point for the study, giving insight into the initial career aspirations of the participants, how the participants saw their levels of confidence and abilities to work as a team, take the lead and their exposure to diversity before they started university.

5.3.1 Career aspirations

The findings from this study show that the participants picked the BA Public Services course as they felt it would provide them with more options that just picking a police specific degree course (see Section 4.5.2) if they decided not to go into the police. The literature around employability and the role universities should play in embedding it in higher education is extensive, it recognises that with the increased cost of a degree students are looking now more than ever for a return on their investment (Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017, Grove, 2015, Tymon, 2013) and see university as the first step in their career path. Therefore, students need to know there is a progression route from their chosen degree. The majority of the participants picked the Public Services degree because of the volunteering opportunities, which offered them the opportunity to work with the police force to gain valuable insight into how policing works, supporting the Jackson & Tomlinson (2022) research which put this insight as a predominant reason for students wanting to undertake work experience, volunteering, or extracurricular activities. From the findings, most of the participants were leaning towards policing but were not 100% sure it was the career for them, although they did know they wanted a career in the public services. As a result of the volunteering, they were persuaded by their experience to join the police. All the participants have gone on to work in the police service, of the 11 participants eight have gone on to become police officers, of the remaining three, one became a data analyst, one went to work in the service centre,

and one went to work as a project a project manager in the Police and Crime Commissioners Office. Thus, showing forces that by working with universities to establish such volunteer schemes, they work as a good recruitment tool to showcase the career opportunities within the police service.

5.3.2 Skills and experience prior to starting the course

Some of the participants were coming into their course after having taken time out, and were returning to education, and thus having worked prior to starting the course. Their reflections (see Section 4.5.3) stated that they felt that they were starting with a good level of confidence, experience working as a team, and ability to lead, which supports some of the literature that states factors outside higher education can contribute to the development of a graduate's employability (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006, Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009 Tomlinson, 2007 Brooks & Youngson, 2016, Clarke, 2018). However, despite the different levels of experience the participants had coming into university all participants reflected that the experience that they had had, working as police volunteers, significantly developed the skills they felt are required to do their current roles. They stated that without having had that experience, they may not have got into the force as quickly and would have taken far longer to effectively do the roles that they currently hold. These findings support existing literature on the success of placements, volunteering, or extracurricular activities in developing skills and preparing students for the workplace (Wilton, 2012, Rouse, Morrissey & Rahimi, 2012, Holman & Richardson, 2021 Furtak & Barnard, 2021) and adds to that literature to showcase a successful initiative, in regard to a scheme to develop employability skills specifically of those wishing to join the police service. Although there are some studies that focus on police volunteering (Pepper, 2014; Ramshaw & Cosgrove, 2019; Pepper, 2021), there is very little literature on

employability that focuses solely on initiatives for students wanting to go into the police service (Pepper & McGrath, 2019), so this small-scale study contributes to that body of existing literature.

5.3.3 Theme 1 discovery:
- The volunteer scheme convinced the students that a career in policing was for them, thus providing a recruitment vehicle for a force.

- The volunteer scheme built on existing skills to develop employability skills specifically needed for a career in the police service.

5.4 Theme 2: Motivation and benefits of volunteering

The literature shows that when students have the opportunity to gain practical experience whilst at university that allows them to put the theory learnt in the classroom into practice, it significantly enhances their graduate employability, (Wilton, 2012, Rouse, Morrissey & Rahimi, 2012, Homan & Richardson, 2021, Brooks & Youngson, 2016).

5.4.1 Preparation for the recruitment process
The findings show (see Section 4.6) that all the participants felt that their volunteering experience had helped them get into their current role, by providing them with evidence to support their answers in an interview, and for the scenarios at the assessment centre. All participants in this study all went on to gain employment in the police service after graduation, with the majority entering within 6-12 months after graduation, the timeframe for the recruitment process for policing takes 6-12 months, so entering a force between 6-12 months after graduation shows that those participants were accepted on their first attempt. According to the police workforce data up to March 2023, only 17% of the police officers at the rank of constable are 25 and under (Gov.uk, 2023), which makes the participants achievement of entering

the force within 6-12 months straight after graduation remarkable and supports the research that work experience whilst at university increases job prospects after graduation (Andrews & Higgins, 2008).

5.4.2 Motivation and time spent volunteering
Research by Smith *et al* (2010) and Hyde *et al* (2014) showed that students who were involved in long term volunteering gain greater motivations and benefits than those who only volunteer for a short term, the findings here show that the participants were involved in varying levels of engagement with the police student volunteer scheme. Some admitted that they signed up to commit to the requisite hours for the credit-bearing module (see Section 4.6.2 [a]), while others committed weekly for the three years of the degree. Those participants that undertook significantly more hours than needed for the credit-bearing module gave much more positive reflections of the scheme and its impact on them in terms of development of skills, personal development, and benefits to them within their current role. Whilst those that undertook the required number of hours or just slightly more were not as profusive in their reflections of the experience. However, they did report that they felt that they had gained a good level of extra-curricular experience that they would not have had without the police student volunteer scheme, this supports Irwin *et al* (2019) that duration had little impact on the perception of the student on the work experience undertaken. Interestingly these participants were also the ones who reflected that they had developed key skills through their academic work, which included outdoor activities and innovative assessment methods such as practicals and presentations, supporting the literature that purports that work experience/placements/ volunteering opportunities at university are not the sole reason for gaining graduate employment after university (Tomlinson, 2008, Mason,

Williams & Cranmer, 2009, Brooks & Youngson, 2016, Clarke, 2018). Some of the existing literature contends that there needs to be structure, formality, and recognition for work experience to be impactful on student employability (Brewis & Holdsworth, 2011, Heyler & Lee, 2014, Lee, Foster & Snaith, 2016). The findings from this study show that for some participants, they engaged with the police student volunteer scheme initially because they had to for the credit-bearing module, and they stated that if there was credit to be gained at every level of the programme, they would have continued to be engaged throughout their whole degree journey, adding further support to the existing literature.

Dacre Pool & Sewell (2007) and Bridgstock (2009) introduced the idea of career development and career management as an element within employability models, which was further promoted by the HEA (2015) in the *embedding employability in higher education framework*. Bridgstock (2009) defined career management as a student being able to create realistic career goals by identifying specific work opportunities and setting a clear pathway to achieve those goals. All the literature that further discusses this idea of students taking ownership of planning their career paths aligns it with essential industry engagement with the university, creating a trialogue between the three stakeholders (Bolden *et al,* 2009, O'Byrne & Bond, 2014).

5.4.3 Exposure to the Police service
The findings of this study show that through the police student volunteer scheme, which was created in collaboration with the police and the university, the participants had gained valuable insight into the organisation (see Section 4.6.2. [b]) and the many different opportunities within the force. Before starting the volunteering, the participants stated that they had not realised that there were many different areas of

policing they could work in, such as the control centre, data analyst, the police and crime commissioners' office as well as the different areas of operational policing such as traffic and community, which allowed them to set a career pathway after graduation. The benefit of the scheme being a collaboration between the force and the university has allowed for the participants to gain both academic knowledge and the industry insight, thus creating an example of best practice, albeit on a small scale, that is missing from current literature in the area of employability in particular for students studying policing.

5.4.4 Development of skills through the volunteering

Research by the McKinsey Global Institute (Dondi *et al,* 2018) identified future skills needed for the workplace and classed them into four Categories 1. Cognitive, 2 Digital, 3 Interpersonal, 4 Self-leadership, with 56 foundational skills under each category. The College of Policing (2024c) has also defined the skills they belief are needed for the role of Police constable. The findings show the participants positive reflections on what skills they thought the volunteer scheme had helped them to develop whilst at university to prepare them for their current role (see Section 4.6.4).

5.4.4 (a) Communication

Communication has been recognised as an essential skill, not just in the McKinsey research but in all the literature concerning what is an essential employability skill needed for the workplace (York, 2007, Billing, 2007 Andrew & Higgens, 2008, College of Policing, 2016, Tight, 2023). The findings support that the participants felt that working as a police volunteer really helped to develop their communication skills. However they were able to expand further on the different types of communication skills that they felt they had developed through the scheme, that extends further than the current literature discusses. The current literature does not define communication, other than "the capability to communicate and interact with

others, either through teams or through networking" (Andrews & Higgens, 2008, p413), these findings expand this further as it discusses how they had to learn to adapt their method of communication in a dynamic way (see Section 4.6.4 [b-d]), from communicating via a radio service to the communications unit on the Help Point, speaking to intoxicated students, to intoxicated older people, to vulnerable adults, to the police on the response teams and to the health care professionals they handed the patients over to. For every different party they had to adapt how they communicated, the tone of their voice, the vocabulary used, the speed and level of their voice, all had to be changed to enable the situation that they were dealing with to be resolved effectively. This seemed to be a significant learning experience for all the participants, as this they felt was good preparation for their current roles where they have to deal with the public on a daily basis, often in the most challenging of situations (See Section 4.6.4.{b-d}).

5.4.4 (b) Teamworking

Team-working, interpersonal skills and interacting with others have been listed by the literature as an essential employability skill and one that can be developed further through work experience/placements/volunteering (York, 2007, Andrews & Higgens, 2008, Metz, 2011, Trought, 2017, Dondi *et al,* 2021). The findings show that all participants felt that the volunteering scheme helped develop their team working skills. In their reflections most of the participants did discuss already having good teamworking skills from their part time job, playing sport and the group work assessments that were set within their academic work. However, they felt that this was developed further by working at the Help Point, as this involved working with multi agencies, students other than their peers, and within a high paced dynamic situation. The Help Point involves them working in the night time economy, with

intoxicated and vulnerable people and managing situations in real time, not in a

simulated classroom environment, which allowed for a unique learning experience

linked to the specific professional practice of policing (See Section 4.6.4 [d]). This

supports the literature from Wilton (2012), Rouse, Morrissey & Rahimi (2012) and

Holman & Richardson (2021) that all state that practical experience allows students

to gain insights into a profession that can't be learnt in a classroom.

5.4.4.(c) Leadership

From the findings some of the participants felt that the work they completed on the

Help Point had allowed them to develop their leadership skills (see Section 4.6.4[e])

and thought that they had had the opportunity to take a leadership role, again this

supports the literature that classes leadership as an essential employability skill

(York, 2007, Billing, 2007 Andrew & Higgens, 2008, College of Policing, 2016, Tight,

2023). One participant reflected that the opportunity to take on a leadership role

within the volunteering experience had shaped his career planning and goal setting,

which had influenced his progression in his current role to temporary Sergeant after

4 years with the force, again supporting the literature from Dacre Pool & Sewell

(2007) and Bridgstock (2009) regarding the importance of including career

management in any employability initiative.

5.4.4 (d) Exposure to diversity

Metz (2011) , Berdrow & Bird (2018), Karunanayaka & Naidu (2021) and Peel *et al*

(2021) all put multicultural competence and cultural awareness as an emerging

graduate attribute, the findings of this study show that the participants felt that the

experience that they had had working as a police volunteer had exposed them to

levels of diversity that they would not have had in the classroom. For many of the

participants they came from local areas around Swansea that were not considered multi-cultural and therefore had not been exposed to a diverse range of people prior to starting the volunteering (see Section 4.6.6). Some participants did reflect that there was some diversity in their peers also studying the course, but it was working as a volunteer that they were exposed to so much more, and that they were able to get a better understanding of the diverse communities that exist around them through the volunteering. The findings highlight how the unique nature of the police student volunteer scheme was able to expose the participants to a diverse community and increase their social and cultural understanding in a way that none of the existing literature has been able to show for those wanting to go into the police service. Embedding diversity, equality and inclusion into policing is seen as essential by the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) and that understanding communities will lead to more effective policing (NPCC, 2018). Volunteering is seen as a way to bridge the gap between police and communities (Rogers & Pepper, 2022), and the participants highlighted how much they had learnt about the community through the volunteer scheme. Participant 8 highlighted how much she had learnt about the drug problems in Swansea from her volunteering by working with Drugs Aid Cymru. The experience educated her on the issues and the type of people going through drug addiction and changed her perceptions and prejudices against those with drug problems, she is less judgmental and more empathetic, which she has taken into role as a police officer. All participants felt that the exposure to people from different backgrounds and cultures widened their understanding of the community they live in which has helped them in their current roles and contributed to more effective policing, which the NPCC is striving to achieve.

5.4.4 (e) Networking

In the study by Jackson & Tomlinson (2022) it was reported that students viewed creating network contacts as an important aspect of any work experience volunteering or extracurricular activity, the findings of this study support this research as the majority of the participants reflected that they are been able to make valuable connections with professional whilst they were police volunteers. The reflections extended this further by stating that the connections were not just important to get them into a job, but that because the volunteering was with their chosen force, the connections made as a volunteer continue to help them within their current professional role.

5.4.5 Theme 2 discovery

- Through the volunteer scheme experience participants felt prepared for the application process and had examples to use at the interview

- The volunteer scheme exposed them to the many different job roles and opportunities within a police force, which influenced their career choices

- The volunteer scheme helped develop key skills needed for a career in policing

- The volunteer scheme exposed the participants to the diversity that exists in the community, which helped them be more effective in their current professional role

- The volunteer scheme helped the participants build their own professional networks before starting their career, something they would not have been able to do without the volunteering.

5.5 Theme 3: Challenges and Barriers to volunteering.

5.5.1 Balancing volunteering with university, work and social lives

The literature around a student's ability to gain a paid placement shows that they are uncommon as organisations know that they can get away with providing unpaid placements due to high demand to gain work experience (Purcell *et al,* 2013, Bathmaker *et al,* 2016, Hordosy & Clark, 2018, Lemann, 2019). As a result of not all subject disciplines being able to offer placements students often take up volunteering in general to improve their job prospects (Hirst, 2002, Barton, Bates, & O'Donovan, 2019). The student police volunteer scheme was set up to bridge this gap and to create a subject specific volunteer scheme as there was little or no opportunity for paid placements in policing. Volunteering is very important to policing (NPCC 2019). Studies by Bathmaker *et al* (2016), Lehmann (2019) and Pepper *et al* (2024) found that the need to take up paid work whilst at university was reported as a barrier to students being able to partake in any unpaid placements or volunteering (see Section 4.7). The findings of this study show that the majority of the participants did have to undertake paid work to fund themselves through university, however it did not deter them from participating in the volunteer scheme. They acknowledged that having to balance volunteering around paid work, was a challenge but not insurmountable, as there was flexibility in how the shifts were organised and the number of shifts they could accept to do. These findings dispute the existing literature that the need to work to support oneself whilst at university is a barrier to participation in placements and volunteering and enforces the need for a flexible provision of work experience and again highlights the need for collaboration between universities and industry to create flexible opportunities.

Research shows that there are inequalities that exist for students from low-income families to access placements or undertake volunteering (Clegg, Stevenson &

Wilmott, 2010, Purcell *et al,* 2013, Lehmann, 2019), what these findings show is that, while a number of the students came from low-income families and they did have to work whilst at university it was not a barrier that prevented them from engaging with the scheme which contradicts the existing literature, that students from lower socio-economic classes and first generation entrants are less likely to take part in a placement/volunteering (Bathmaker *et al,* 2016, Hordosy & Clarke, 2018). However, the findings show that because the volunteer scheme had been set up collaboratively with the university and the police force, and was linked to a credit-bearing module, participants were able to time manage around their other academic work, their volunteering and paid part time work. This collaborative approach supports the literature calling for greater industry involvement in the design of programmes (Bolden *et al* 2009) and contributes to strengthening the evidence to support this need. The findings also show that if a scheme is structured, timetabled, carries credit and is supported by the university, then it removes barriers and allows students from lower-income backgrounds the opportunity to engage with such schemes on an even pegging to students from higher-income backgrounds.

5.5.2 Exposure to Conflict
The study by Jackson & Tomlinson (2022) found that students expected to gain insight into the world of work from the work experience opportunities, the findings from this study showed that all participants stated that from their volunteering experience they had gained a real insight into some elements of policing. Additionally, the participants further discussed that gaining this insight into policing was hindered by the limits to what the volunteers were allowed to whilst volunteering, especially in relation to incidents of conflict (see Section 4.7.3). As current serving police officers, conflict is a reality of their role, and all participants felt that their

exposure to this whilst volunteering was limited and that they were expected to stay out of the way when a situation turned aggressive. For the PSVs, engaging in a conflict situation was an absolute no, they were told in all briefings that if a situation turned nasty to step away, and call for help, which on Wind Street would be the After Dark Police team. Police Specials do have the same powers as regular Police Officer and when on shift are expected to be involved in all policing matters, therefore they do benefit from gaining the experience of how to deal with conflict situations before becoming a regular officer. Dondi *et al* (2021) lists resolving conflict as an essential attribute and skill; however, this was designed for business students rather than those working in frontline public services, which didn't consider the unpredictable nature of policing conflict. Whilst the PSVs understood the health and safety reasons behind the mandate to remove them from any potentially dangerous situations, they still felt it was a negative aspect of the experience for preparing them for a career in the police service. These findings extend the existing literature by highlighting the challenges to any work experience or volunteering schemes that are designed for policing students in the future.

5.5.3 Dealing with Challenging Situations
The literature also defines interaction with people as a key attribute and skill (Nesta, 2017, Trought, 2017, Dondi *et al,* 2021) and for the majority of the participants they reflected that the volunteering helped develop this skill in a positive way. However, the findings go further and discuss this is also a challenge that the participants had to overcome whilst they were volunteering. The uniqueness of the volunteering experience meant that the volunteers were working with a number of stakeholders, often having to take the lead in a situation. This meant that they had to develop coping mechanisms to be able to deal with challenging members of their own team

or working with intoxicated people, who behave very differently under the influence of alcohol and drugs than they would normally. The nature of the scheme meant that the volunteers had a lot of autonomy which meant that they had to develop these measures unaided and unsupervised, which while this was challenging at the time for them, they later reflected had significantly prepared them for their current role. These findings can be used to support future schemes for embedding employability for policing students as it is adding new insights into how students gain positive development from such schemes adding to the literature surrounding this topic.

5.5.4 Theme 3 discovery

- To undertake volunteering the participants had to become adept at time management, so as to balance the studies with both paid and unpaid work.

- The unique relationship with the university and the police force is an example of best practice on how to provide opportunities for students in the workplace.

- The volunteer scheme is an example of best practice of a scheme that is accessible for all students to be involved in regardless of social background, due to its flexible provision, which allows students to commit however much time they have.

- The volunteer scheme develops students' ability to learn how to manage challenging situations and exposes them to conflict. However, the Special Constable route appeared more beneficial in preparing them for conflict, a reality of policing.

5.6 Theme 4: Academic Experience

The role of universities has been much debated but it is clear that over the last few decades there has been significant change in this role and the obligations universities have to its stakeholders (Robbins, 1963, Kettis *et al,* 2013, Rich, 2015,

Tight, 2023). The idea of learning for learning's sake is perhaps an outdated and naïve view to have of the reason for going to university (Tight, 2023). However, it would also be imprudent to think that a university was just a training ground for the workplace (Artess, Hooley & Mellors-Bourne, 2017). Therefore, there is a need for a balance between the competing demands and desires of higher education stakeholders to provide a cognisant academic experience (Tomlinson, 2008, McCowan, 2015, O'Byrne & Bond, 2014, Barkas & Armstrong, 2022).

The Government in Westminster and the Welsh Government have put a significant emphasis on universities to embed employability in their curriculums, which some say is driven by a political agenda to supplant the labour market and driven by the commercialisation of the high education (Boden & Nedeva, 2010, Hartmann & Komljenovic, 2021, Gorley & Stevenson, 2017).

Frameworks, however, have been developed over the years to try and create consistency within the employability agenda, with models designed to include subject knowledge being delivered alongside the professional skills needed for practice and emotional intelligence (Kight & Yorke, 2003, Dare Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Latterly, organisations such as Advance HE and the Higher Education Funding Council for England/Wales (HEFCE/HEFCW) have been working on creating and developing employability frameworks to help support universities to establish their own employability strategies (Advance HE, 2024). The new 2024 Advance HE Student Success Frameworks promotes the need for employability to be embedded into all aspects of the curriculum of a course, which includes active learning, authentic assessment, learning environments, co-creation of content with industry, with work integrated learning opportunities. The framework recognises the need for

work experience, but that employability skills should also be delivered through all of a student's academic experience, such as assessment and classroom activities. The College of Policing are also asking for more practice-based assessments to be embedded in their licensed Police Constable Entry Routes (PCER) with a focus on optimising work-based learning within the curriculum (College of Policing, 2024b).

It is recognised that definitions of employability skills and graduate attributes have become so similar that the boundaries are blurred, and terms are interchangeable (Oliver & Jorre De St John, 2018; Scott & Wilson, 2021). However, the skills that are recognised as being most sought after are time-management, team-working, problem solving, communication. leadership, digital skills, and emotional intelligence (Trought, 2017; Nesta, 2017; Dondi *et al,* 2021). More specifically the College of Policing (2024c) role profiles for all staff further include being able to manage conflict and defuse difficult situations. The College also included in their Policing in England and Wales: Future Operating Environment 2040 report the need to think innovatively, to anticipate emerging issues and to develop polices and interventions to address these them.

5.6.1 Development of skills through the academic experience

Within the BA Public Services degree course that the participants interviewed had graduated from there were a number of modules that included outdoor activity sessions. From the findings the participants identified these sessions as having been instrumental in developing their teamworking, leadership and communication skills.

The participants described how the activities had been designed to show their leadership skills, such as by having to lead their classmates in an outdoor activity such as coasteering, which also required them to motivate their peers, communicate and work with people they may not know very well, and further developing their

communication and team-working skills. These findings (see Section 4.8) support the need for practice-based activities within the prescribed curriculum as identified by Advance HE (2024) in developing the skills that have been identified by the public sector as being essential for working in that industry (MoJ, 2008, HMPS, 2018, College of Policing, 2016).

The findings show (see Section 4.8.2) that through the practice-based activities and innovative assessment methods, that the participants were able to develop their confidence, by having to give presentations it allowed them to learn how to speak in front of people and to people which supports the study undertaken by Tymon (2013). This again supports the research by the McKinsey Global Institute (Dondi *et al,* 2021) that identified public speaking as being a foundational skill in the cognitive skills category of the future skills needed by industry.

The participants also spoke about how they had to self-motivate themselves during the outdoor sessions and the fitness sessions, as the activities were very physical and often when outside in inclement weather, which meant they had to dig deep to motivate themselves and others to complete the task. Again, this supports the McKinsey Global Institute (Dondi *et al,* 2021) self-leadership category of the future skills identified for industry.

5.6.2 Developing reflective skills
The participants spoke about how the reflective diary and assessment they had to complete for the practical modules and the volunteering module, really helped develop their reflective and evaluation skills (see Section 4.8.3). They felt that these skills allowed them at the time to see how they had developed their skills, writing in the diary involved them keeping a weekly account of their activities. The final written assessments required them to look back on the shifts and practicals undertaken,

which made them realise how much they had learnt and changed from the experience. Dacre Pool & Sewell (2007) developed the CareerEDGE model of graduate employability which put reflection and evaluation at the heart of employability development, which allows students to be able to articulate and identify the skills that they have developed from their degree and any work experience undertaken. Dunne (2017) and Mello *et al* (2021) found that reflection on experience allowed students to be able recognise and evaluate their own skills, which helps with career choices and future horizons. The findings help support the research that empathises the need for reflection within the curriculum as an assessment tool in order to consolidate the learning from the practical-based experience within the programme (Cole & Tibby, 2013). The College of Policing (2016) Competency and Value Framework emphasises the importance of effective reflection, the need to critically analyse, to be able to deliver confidence in policing. Within the findings the participants highlight how much of their current role involves reflection in the form of debriefs on cases, performance analyses and professional discussions (see Section 4.9.1). Therefore, this contributes to answering the RQ1 for this study which seeks to gain insight into what core skills graduates really need for the workplace and the RQ2 showing what ways the police student volunteer scheme helped develop these skills.

5.6.3 Strengths of the academic programme
Some of the participants felt that the practical outdoor activity elements (see Section 4.8.1) that were embedded within the curriculum of the course gave them sufficient examples to be able to evidence in an interview situation of not only team-working skills but also leadership and communication skills and that it had increased their confidence. This supports the literature that suggests that employability should be

embedded into all aspects of the curriculum (Advance HE, 2024). However, the findings also show that that the participants felt that it was the volunteering experience that gave them the better understanding of working in a policing environment, especially the work in the night-time economy, that helped prepare them for their current role, which they would not have got from the outdoor activities undertaken alone.

For the participants who graduated before 2019, they were part of the cohorts that were able to undertake the Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) which the university had embedded into the programme, so that they did not have to pay further for this pre-recruitment qualification required by all forces between 2013-2019. The findings show that having the CKP embedded as part of the course was an initial factor in the participants applying for the course (see Section 4.5.2), but also, they reflected that this helped them in their application and when they were in the job as they already had the foundations of policing practice before they started. There is very little-known literature on preparing policing students for practice, but these findings support one such study by Pepper & McGrath (2018), which found that embedding the CKP into a policing programme, increased understanding of the role in policing and confidence in students wanting to apply for the police. However, with the introduction in 2019 of the Policing Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) the CKP was superseded (College of Policing, 2020).

5.6.4 Theme 4 discovery
- The participants reported that it was not only the volunteering that helped develop skills needed for a career in policing, but the academic modules and assessments.

5.7 Theme 5 Skills needed for the workplace.

All the participants are in roles within police forces, most are as response police officers, but others work in the public services centre, as data analysts or for the Police and Crime Commissioners office. All participants reflected on what they thought were the most important skills they needed to do their job, which helps answers the RQ1 to gain insight into what core skills graduates really need for a career in the police service.

5.7.1 Skills needed for their current role
The literature states that the key skills that have been identified from both an academic and professional point of view are professionalism, reliability, confidence, time-management, team-working, problem solving, communication. leadership, digital skills, emotional intelligence and ethically informed (Andrews & Higgens, 2008, College of Policing, 2016, Trought, 2017; Nesta, 2017; Berdrow & Bird, 2018; Dondi *et al,* 2021).

5.7.1 (a) Communication
The findings show (see Section 4.9) that all participants put communication as an essential skill to have for working in policing, this supports all the literature in this area, such as the police's Competency and Values Framework, which provides that any public-facing role requires staff to be able to engage with the public to be able to deliver, support and inspire the community (College of Policing, 2016). The need for good communication skills was also highlighted in the Skills and Productivity Board's (SPB) report on behalf of the Department of Education, the findings show that the participants thought that communication and being able to speak to people as the most important part of the job. The participants highlighted that for most response police officers, talking to and dealing the public is a significant part of the job,

228

therefore being able to speak to people is essential, and being able to adapt communication styles to the different situations that officers find themselves in is equally important.

5.7.1 (b) Life Experience
Research by Tomlinson (2008), Smith, Ferns, & Russell (2016) Barkas & Amstrong (2022) and Tight (2023) all evidence that having a degree is no longer enough for employers and that they are now looking for employees to possess additional core skills and competencies before joining an organisation. Working as a frontline police officer or police staff requires people to be able to deal with dynamic incidents, that are outside most people's comfort zones. When most people are running away from an incident it is the police that are running towards it. Therefore, the need for life experience is essential to be able to do the job. The findings of this study support this, the participants place life experience as a necessary pre-requisite for joining the force. Some participants reflected that the training that is given on joining is about processes not about developing skills, therefore without having developed the core skills through experience before joining, new recruits were at a distinct disadvantage.

5.7.1 (c) Team-working
Most of the literature on employability includes team-working and the need to work inclusively as an essential skill (College of Policing, 2016, MoJ, 2008, HMPS, 2018, Trought, 2017, Dondi *et al,* 2018), the findings in this study support this, as all the participants stated that team-working was a crucial part of being able to perform their role.

5.7.1 (d) Reflective skills
It has been mentioned as a benefit of the academic programme, but the participants re-enforced in their discussions about the skills needed for the job, the importance of being able to reflect. The findings show that the participants felt that they reflected

every day in the current roles, it was an essential part of the continuous professional

development. Debriefings are very common in policing and officers have to make

sure that they have complied with the many pieces of legislation that award them

discretionary powers and that they work within the statutory code of Practice for

Policing and the non-statutory code of ethics for policing (College of Policing, 2023

and 2024a). The participants discussed the importance of reflecting in order to

improve, whether that be taking an emergency 999 call or dealing with someone with

mental health issues, being able to reflect back on how you handled the situation

meant they were able to improve and develop. All participants said that having had

experience of reflection at university had helped develop them as reflective

practitioners. These findings extend further the models and frameworks set out by

Dacre Pool & Sewell (2007), Cole & Tibby (2013) and Advance HE (2024) as it

suggests that reflection needs to be fully embedded as an employability skill rather

than being a suggested element. The findings support Jackson & Tomlinson (2022)

and Tight (2023) who suggest that reflection is imperative for students to develop as

a skill in order to learn from any experiences they have whilst at university. These

findings show that it is not just about being able to articulate skills developed at

university in order to be able to evidence at an interview to get employment (Mello *et
al,* 2021) but as an essential part of continuous professional development when in

the job, especially in policing.

5.7.1 (e) Time Management
The literature identifies time management as being considered a key employability

skill (Andrews & Higgens, 2008, Dondi *et al,* 2021) the findings extend this to not

only being able to time manage but also the participants stated that working in such

a professional capacity as students meant that it had shaped their work ethic which

they have carried into their current role (see Section 4.9.2 [c]). The participants stated that by working on the Help Point, they were part of a wider team, so they couldn't let them down by having poor time management, but that also saw the role as a commitment not just an experience. The findings show that due to the uniqueness of the police student volunteer scheme and the opportunity to work all the way through the degree programme not just as a means to gain the hours for the credit-bearing module, the participants had been able to further understand to some degree the reality of working within the police service which helped prepare them for their current role, which supports the research by Jackson & Tomlinson (2022) that found that students want to gain insight into the world of work from any work experience, volunteering or extracurricular activity.

6.7.1 (f) Digital Skills

Interestingly, although the literature identifies digital skills as an essential employability skill (Andrews & Higgens, 2008, Marginson, 2019, SPB, 2022), none of the participants mentioned digital capability when discussing the key skills they need to do their job. According to the NPCC (2020) virtually every crime the police must deal with has a digital element, yet the participants did not discuss this element at all within their interviews nor list it as an essential skill they felt that they needed to do the job.

5.7.2 Insight into policing

Crebert *et al* (2004) stated that engaging with placements, volunteering, or extracurricular activities, not only develops the generic skills already discussed such as teamworking, communication, leadership skills etc, it also developed relevant and specific industry skills. The findings from the participant's reflections support this point as all participants say that they gained an insight into policing, especially working in the night time economy, working on radios, experience of shift working

and community policing. However, they all said that they would have liked to have had more exposure to working in the police station, experiencing ride-a-longs, and gaining an understanding of the level of paperwork and reporting involved with response policing.

5.7.3 Exposure to shift working

Policing is a 24/7 service and as such staff are expected to work shift patterns so that there is always staff working to cover a 365 day a year service. Whilst the literature researched has concentrated on skills that are considered essential for the public sector, the findings have shown that the participants felt that understanding what it is like to work outside of normal working hours helped prepare them the shift working. Thompson (2017) contends that some disciplines lend themselves better to embedding placements or sandwich years, such as business, hospitality, sport and health and social programmes and not programmes such as policing, which as Pepper *et al* (2024) state is much harder to embed such placements in a programme. The literature on employability talks about development of skills which seem generic in terms of skills acquired but the findings of this study have gone further, and the participants have discussed specific skills or understandings needed to go into policing and how the volunteering helped prepare them for the workplace. One such factor the participants said they found really helpful was that they learnt through the volunteering the reality of shift working (see Section 4.9.2), of working anti-social hours and working at times when most of their friends would be out socialising, this they felt was a significant thing to learn and to prepare them for their current role. Shift patterns are set to meet the demands of the organisation and do not fit in around the personal lives of the officers, where they may have to work over birthdays, Christmas, and the weekends, the participants state that by working the

shifts that they did, they experienced the reality of missing out on social events, something police officers have to accept as part of the job.

5.7.4 Collaboration

The College of Policing (2016) include working collaboratively as a core competency and value needed for working in policing, this is also mentioned by the Ministry of Justice (2008) and HMPS (2018) in their identified competencies for working in a public sector role. All Participants in this study reported that the experience that they gained from working at the Swansea Help Point, allowed them to be part of a multi-agency scheme, that showed them first-hand the importance of collaboration between frontline services to tackle a specific issue that caused a strain on the services involved. The findings show that the participants felt that this was a unique insight into multi-agency collaboration (see Section 4.9.2.[d]) that they would not have experienced other than through the volunteering and that understanding the how it works has helped them in their current roles. Both Irwin *et al* (2019) and Silvia *et al* (2018) purported that the structure of the experience was an important factor, in this study the participants supported this point, and all spoke about how the work they did on the Help Point involved having a defined role (see Section 4.6.1 [b]) and that they played an integral part in the running of the scheme. This integrated role allowed them to gain valuable insight into aspects of policing, and working with the healthcare professionals, that they would not have gained from the classroom.

Again, the experience gained further extends the existing literature and illustrates the knowledge and skills learnt from placements, it provides specific detail in relation to skills learnt by policing students, where there is very little research done in this specific subject area and contributes to answering the RQ3, identifying best practice,

and what most helped the students once they were in the workplace and what helped prepare them for a career in policing.

5.7.4 Commitment to volunteering

In a study by Irwin *et al* (2019) it was stated that the duration of the experience did not make a significant impact on the stakeholder's perception of the work experience, however the findings of this study found the opposite, the majority of the participants volunteered over and above the required hours needed for the credit-bearing work experience module as they felt that the more shifts they worked the more they developed their skills and the more they learnt about policing. One participant, who at first didn't see the point of having to do so many hours for the module, admitted that by doing so many shifts they had gained more from the experience.

5.7.5 Theme 5 discovery

- The participants identified the key skills that are needed for them to carry out their current role which are mostly in line with what all the literature suggests.

- Exposure to shift working is introduced onto the list of skills needed for a career in the police service.

- Understanding the need for collaboration between public services and how they can work together successfully is also introduced onto the list of skills needed.

5.8 Summary

This study aimed to find out find out what skills the graduates felt were essential now that they were in the workplace and whether the police student volunteer scheme developed by the university in collaboration with the police, helped prepare the participants for a career in the police service. From the themes within the findings four main areas have emerged to create a framework for this thesis. The areas being, exposure to the police service, collaboration, volunteering in the police service, and academic delivery.

5.8.1 Exposure to the police service

The findings show that all participants agreed that the police student volunteer scheme gave them valuable insights into the role, what to expect when starting the job and preparing them for the realities of the workplace, such a shift working. There were some areas highlighted by the participants for improvements to the volunteer scheme, such as further engagement with police and working with other departments, which is useful for the programme team to work with the force to further develop the offer.

5.8.2 Collaboration

However, this highlights the importance of the employer engagement within employability initiatives and how the police student volunteer scheme is a good example of such collaborative practice. Further research could be to re-examine how these changes could lead to a more seamless move from higher education to police practice for policing students. The Advance HE (2024) frameworks recognise the need for partnerships with external stakeholders to support such schemes and this study highlights that by working with a police force to create a scheme can lead to longevity, which in turn benefits many generations of students

5.8.3 Volunteering in the police service

This research adds to the current literature about the benefit to students, who undertake volunteering/ work experience or a placement whilst studying, on their career prospects and contributes new findings to this literature with a focus on preparing students to enter the police service. Key skills developed are in line with the literature and add specific skills identified for policing such as shift work and exposure to diversity to better understand communities for more effective policing.

5.8.4 Academic delivery

This research contributes to and adds to the literature in employability in higher education and how best to embed initiatives into the curriculum. It also highlights the need for innovate practice-based assessments, that develop communication and teamworking skills, alongside out of the classroom learning practices such as out-door activities which develop leadership and motivational skills seen as essential for a career in the police service. .

5.8.5 Framework

The fours areas for a successful employability initiative that a university can use to develop employability skills and prepare students for a career in the police service is represented in Figure 8 below. Unlike other frameworks this is the first of its kind to focus specifically on initiatives that prepare students to enter the police force. It highlights the key learning from this study and represents it in a clear diagrammatic form.

How the University through its Police Student Volunteer scheme helped develop employability skills to prepare students for a career in the police service.

Exposure to the police service

- Cements career aspirations
- Builds networks and contacts
- Prepares for application/interview stage
- Provides insights to all roles within policing

Volunteering with the Police Service

- Develops communication, teamworking, leadership, time management skills
- Provides exposure to diversity to better understand the community
- Exposure to shift working/conflict prepares for reality of the job
- Open to all students

Collaboration

Police forces and universities working together to create volunteer opportunities results in:

- Longevity of the scheme
- Recruitment for the force
- A valuable resource for the force
- Better experience for the student

Academic Delivery

- Innovative practice-based assessments develop key skills such as communication, teamworking and leadership
- Need for practice-based lessons outside of the classroom to develop needed skills
- Develop reflective practice within assessments
- Embed work experience in the curriculum

Figure 8: Employability Framework to prepare students for a career in the police service

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

Chapters 4 and 5 have presented and discussed the findings of this study, this chapter begins by providing an overview of the study followed by a presentation of its contributions and implications. Limitations of the study will be recognised and recommendations for further research offered.

6.2 Overview of the study

The fundamental purpose of this study was to investigate how the university through the police student volunteer scheme helped develop students' employability skills and better prepare them for a career in the police service. As stated in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.1) the motivation behind this study was the lack of research into higher education employability initiatives that existed for those students aspiring to enter the police service. The majority of the literature available concentrates on studies involving subject areas such as business, sport, tourism and health and social care.

The focus of this study was on what skills the participants, now they were in the job, felt were essential for the profession, and how these skills had been developed whilst at university and through the volunteering scheme.

6.1.1 Reflection
The data collected through the interviews were very detailed and rich in descriptions about the participants experience of volunteering whilst at university and what they had learnt from the experience. The level of detail has led to a development of a framework (see Figure 8) that establishes fours areas needed to be in place for a university, through a police student volunteer scheme, to develop a student's

employability skills and prepare them for a career in the police service. Therefore, achieving a greater understanding of the university's role and the need for strong industry collaboration, what skills are considered essential for a career in the police service, and what is uniquely different about a police student volunteer scheme that prepares students for the job, thus achieving the aim of the thesis.

Whilst this study does not claim to be comprehensive, it uses a qualitative phenomenological approach (as set out in Section 3.3) that provides empirical evidence of an employability initiative in higher education that has been designed to prepare students for a career in the police service. What is offered are rich descriptions of the participants experiences which furthers an understanding of skills required to work in the police service.

It supports and confirms a number of the theoretical findings of the benefits of volunteering/ work experience/ placements that help prepare students for the workplace and further contributes to new knowledge in the field of developing employability skills of students in higher education to prepare them for a career in the police service (see Section 5.8).

This study established the increasing awareness of employability and the many definitions that exist, and then the growing demand for universities to embed employability into their curriculums through innovative teaching, learning and assessment practices. The findings show that the participants were able to develop some of the identified employability skills such as communication, team-working and leadership through the practical nature of some of the modules that included outdoor activities, the use of group work and presentations and the inclusion of reflective practice assignments (see Section 4.8).

What became clear was the lack of literature that focussed on initiatives in higher education programmes designed to prepare students to enter the police service (see section 2.9.1). The findings provide greater understanding from the participants as to what helped them develop the skills, they feel are essential to do their role. How the unique nature of the police volunteering helped them gain insight into the policing profession, and how it prepared them for the realities of the job, such as shift working (see Section 4.9.2). As such, it advances the sparse empirical knowledge in employability initiatives for students wishing to pursue a career in policing, whilst recognising that the sample group for this study only provides insights on a local level and in particular related to Swansea and South Wales Police. However, it does provide insightful conclusions that could led to further study on a wider scale with more forces involved.

6.3 Contributions to theory and practice

This study provides theoretical contributions to the existing body of literature on the role of higher education and the employability agenda, and how best to prepare students for specific professional practice notably for entering the police service. Advance HE (2024, p2) states that "*to be effective employability should be embedded into all aspects of education, from the curriculum to the wider student experience*". This study adds to the knowledge by understanding the subjective experiences of past students who have gone into policing, who volunteered as police student volunteers, and how they felt that that experience helped prepare them for their current role. It also wanted to gain insight from the past students, who now they are in policing roles, on what they class as the necessary skills they need to do their job, if these had been developed at university and through the police student

volunteer scheme, and what, if anything, the university needs to add into its curriculum.

The aim was to advance the literature on graduate perspectives of employability initiatives at university now that they are in the job, as there is very little literature from this perspective, with most of the research focussing on students' perspectives whilst they are at university or just finishing. By providing a subjective retrospective reflection from graduates who have been in the job for some time, and what they feel are important employability skills needed for working in policing and what best helped to develop them at university this study is making a theoretical contribution to the theories of embedding employability in higher education.

Providing reflections on employability skills from past graduates on how these skills had been developed whilst they were at university, the findings are consistent with past research (Crebert *et al,* 2004, Brewis & Holdsworth, 2011: Heyler & Lee, 2014: Lee, Foster & Snaith, 2016 Wilton, 2012: Rouse, Morrissey & Rahimi ,2012: Holman & Richardson, 2021). Evidencing that students who undertake placements, volunteering or engage with extracurricular activities can further develop key employability skills such as teamworking, communication and leadership and gain valuable insight into industry that they cannot gain from the classroom. However, there is a lack of literature on how placements can be used to help students gain insights into policing as a profession, this small-scale study has been able to extend the literature and highlights some of the unique environments that police work in and the insights gained from the police student volunteer scheme in this study that provided opportunities to work in those environments for volunteers.

The reflections of the participants contribute to the literature by giving prominence to the value those experiences provided in preparing them for working in the police service. The reflections also highlighted further areas of development within the police student volunteer scheme such as providing more opportunities to work within the police station and with other departments, other than within the night-time economy and community policing teams, so that students can gain a fuller picture of the role of police officers.

Silva *et al* (2018) highlighted the importance of structure within a placement or volunteer experience, and Thompson *et al* (2013) and Dunne (2017) found that reflection and assessment needed to be aligned with the placement or volunteering in order for the students to fully realise what they had gained and developed as a result of the experience. This study supports this research as the findings show how important the participants found reflective assessments, the study also highlights the need for the placement or volunteering to be credit-bearing, with many of the participants saying that they would have undertaken more volunteering in their final year if there had been credit for it. The Advance HE (2024, p2) Student Success Framework Series such that "*employability should be embedded into all aspects of education, from the curriculum to the wider student experience*", which this study suggests that universities should give opportunities to gain credit for volunteering at all levels of a degree programme, thus making it accessible for all.

Research by Clegg, Stevenson, & Willott (2010) and Lehmann (2019) explored the social inequalities that exist for students from low-income families in being able to access placements whilst at university, especially unpaid year-long sandwich years. What this study highlights, is that the creation of a police student volunteer scheme that allows students to volunteer weekly, fortnightly, or monthly or whatever time they

can manage, alongside their study, that also gives credit against one module, allows students who also have to work whilst studying, the opportunity to engage with industry related placements, regardless of their social status. For the majority of the participants of this study they undertook far more hours of volunteering than was necessary for the credit-bearing module, whilst balancing part-time work and the rest of their academic studies, highlighting the positive effect of a flexible continuous work experience opportunity, created in collaboration with the university and the police force.

The literature is limited on employer engagement, although the literature that does exist promotes the need for employer engagement to be integral to curriculum design and how work experience, placements or volunteer opportunities are embedded into the course working closely with employers (Bolden *et al,* 2009, UKES, 2009, Poon & Brownlow, 2015). These findings further advance this literature as it highlights the benefits of the police student volunteer scheme to developing a student's insight into professional practice, and that because the scheme was set up as a collaboration between the university and the police force it evidences a successful example of a fully collaborative scheme. It further supports the research by Suleman, Videira, & Araújo, (2021) who stated that employers needed to balance the cost and benefits of working with universities in this sense, these findings show that the police student volunteer scheme provides a huge benefit to the force, in terms of resources for community projects, notably the Help Point and equally a significant USP for the university in providing a unique opportunity to gain professional insight into policing. Therefore, these findings provide a valuable example to universities of best practice of employer engagement for employability initiatives for policing students.

The findings of this study can also inform practice as they brought out the importance of innovative assessment, work integrated learning and the importance of the learning environment not just being set in a classroom, all identified as focus areas for programmes in the HEA Essential Framework for Enhancing student success for Educators (2024). The participants reflected on how important they felt the outdoor activities helped develop their communication, leadership and teamworking skills and personal fitness, all essential skills they identified as needed to work in the police service and further supported by the College of Policing (2016). This can aid curriculum planning for the future and allow for HE providers to review how certain subjects are taught and whether it is possible to integrate innovative learning environments into the curriculum.

6.3.1 Original contribution to knowledge

Unlike existing literature on employability initiatives in higher education, this study focussed on policing students and the employability initiative for them to gain professional insight into policing, where research into this area is very limited. Therefore, this thesis is making a valuable and original contribution to the knowledge around the role of higher education in developing employability skills for students wishing to enter a career in the police service. The conclusions of the study, highlights that exposure to the police service benefits to students as it enables them to understand the many roles within a force, it can cement their aspirations to join the service and for a force it acts as a vehicle for recruitment. Collaboration between a police force and university to create such a scheme, results in longevity, a better experience for the student and valuable resource for the police. The volunteering itself develops valuable key skills, manages expectations of what the job is really like, exposes volunteers to the diverse nature of the local communities, and the

organisation of the police student volunteer scheme means that it is accessible for all students to become involved. Finally credit also needs to go to the contribution of the academic delivery that embeds the volunteering into the curriculum, the design of reflective practice assessments and innovation practice-based learning. All of these components create a framework (see figure 8) of best practice on how a university, through its police student volunteer scheme, develops employability skills and prepares students for a career in the police service

6.4 Limitations

Whilst this study contributes to the existing literature there are limitations which need to be recognised. It could be said that the data was narrow in its demographic scope as the sample only included those students who had studied at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Swansea. This then ties it to a specific group, bringing into to question the transferability (see Section 3.8). However, where rich descriptions about the researched area are given, then it is possible to transfer it to other settings and contexts providing a consistent approach to the research is applied (Lincoln & Guba, 1994, Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). Therefore, whilst acknowledging the limitations of the sample in generalising the findings to wider contexts, the relative uniformity of the sample does provide accurate data on which to analyse and reach legitimate conclusions about this specific groups, which has advantages for the researcher.

Another limitation regarding the sample, is that all participants came from the same course background, all studies the BA Public Services, all had volunteered with the Police Student Volunteer Scheme (PSV), and all had gone on to join the police service. Other people from other areas of study or who had not volunteered as a

PSV, may have different views and opinions of their experiences which could have generated different data. In addition, those that volunteered for this study could have seen their experience in a positive light due to their career success, where as those that didn't participate or hadn't gone into the force could see it in a very different light. This could question how representative the sample is, for example the reflections from those students who did the course and volunteered but who did not successfully gain employment in the police are missing from the data. Research on this group of individuals would provide the data for an additional study that could examine the reasons behind their failure to be recruited by the police. It would be of interest to discover what they felt had contributed to them not getting in or whether they had decided against this career path because of the experience as a PSV.

The size of the sample could also be seen as a limitation to the generalisation of the findings. The research had intended to recruit 20 participants to interview, these potential candidates had been identified as past students who had undertaken a BA Public Services degree with University of Wales Trinity Saint David, had volunteered on the Police Student Volunteer Scheme, and were employed by a police force. In the end, only 11 of the 20 replied and agreed to the interviews. 4 others initially agreed to be involved but due to the nature of their shift patterns and busy personal lives, they never got around to confirming a date to conduct the interview, one also went on maternity leave so couldn't fit in the interview, others had left the force so didn't meet the criteria. Recruitment of participants was kept open and further messages sent to try and arrange convenient times for the interviews up until the initial coding process took place. However, after the initial coding was completed, it was felt that no new themes were being generated and that data saturation had been achieved. Saturation is the point at which the data collection process no longer offers

any new or relevant data, the point at which no matter how many more people are interviewed, no new theoretical insights will be achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Dworkin, 2012: Baker & Edwards, 2012; Gray, 2018 Furtak & Barnard, 2021).The timeframe of the study was also a factor in continuing with just the 11 participants and not seeking any more participants.

6.5 Recommendations for Further Research.

This study opens the door for several potential research pathways in the area of employability in higher education and in particular studies looking at preparing policing students for practice.

While findings from the present study related to those students who had been recruited to the police service within 6-12 months after graduation, future researchers may be encouraged to look into those students who took longer to get recruited or into those who did not get into the police at all, or even conduct a comparative study comparing those who have joined the force but did not undertake any volunteering with those who didn't join, to investigate the reasons why they either didn't get in or the other factors developing employability skills other than volunteering of those who got in without doing the scheme.

With the introduction of the Policing Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) and the establishment of the Professional Policing Degree (PPD), further research could use the developed framework and apply it to students studying on the PPD. Research could evaluate the time a force would need to spend with a new recruit with such experience getting them occupationally competent. While this study only briefly looked at volunteering with the Special Police Constables (PSC), further research could focus on embedding this type of volunteering in within the curriculum

of the PPD rather than the Police Student Volunteer (PSV) scheme. Most universities offering the PPD already encourage and support to students to become Police Specials whilst they study and have strong links with their local forces. Some will also include modules within the course to give credit for that volunteering (UCAS, 2024) It may also be beneficial for future researchers to gain insight from the force itself on how they view the skills of new recruits and how they perceive their levels of preparation and competence when joining the force. This further collaboration with a university and force to design and insert industry created employability schemes throughout a curriculum and evaluate the impact on student recruitment and career progression would make for an interesting research project, and further extend the findings of this study.

Smith *et al* (2010) and Hyde *et al* (2014) stated that students who were involved with long term volunteering benefitted more than those who only committed to a short-term stint. However, Irwin *et al* (2019) contended that duration had little impact of the student's perception of the experience. The findings in this study presented conflicting views, some participants committed over 1000+ hours, stating it gave them more insight and greater experience, whilst others completed the mandatory hours for the credit-bearing module or just over and were satisfied that it gave them enough evidence to support their applications and get through the interview stage. It should be noted that 120 hours and most did up to 200, is not an insignificant amount of time to commit to volunteering. All participants stated that if there had been credit-bearing modules at all levels of study it would have motivated them to volunteer for longer, therefore if these changes are made to current curriculum and volunteering modules are integrated it would make for an intriguing future research

project, to evaluate whether more time spent volunteering would have a significant impact on employability of graduates.

There are many areas that could led to further research stemming from this thesis as discussed above. However, the development of the framework within this thesis showing how the university, through its police student volunteer scheme, developed employability skills to help prepare students for a career in policing, is an important contribution to knowledge and literature in this area and the intention is to share this through a series of publications and conferences.

References

Abrica, E.J. (2019) "Institutional Researcher Reflexivity: How IR Professionals Can Utilize Researcher Reflexivity in Qualitative Studies of Community College Students," Community college journal of research and practice, 43(12), pp. 880–890 https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2018.1543060

Adler, P.A. and Adler, P. (1987) Membership Roles in Field Research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Adler P.S & Kwon S.W (2002) Social Capital: Prospects for a New Concept The Academy of Management Review, Vol. 27, No. 1 pp. 17-40 https://doi.org/10.2307/4134367 .

Advance HE (2024) Essential Framework for Enhancing Student Success Available from: https://advance-he.ac.uk/sites/

Alaszewski, A. 2011 Using documents in health research. In Saks, M. & Allsop, J. (eds.) Researching in Health Care: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods. Sage: London.

Allan, H.T. and Arber, A. (eds) (2018) Emotions and Reflexivity in Health & Social Care Field Research. 1st ed. 2018. Cham: Springer International Publishing

Alvesson M. (2011) Interpreting Interviews Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage

Andrews J. & Higson H. (2008) Graduate Employability, 'Soft Skills' Versus 'Hard' Business Knowledge: A European Study, Higher Education in Europe, 33:4, pp 411-422, https://doi.org/10.1080/03797720802522627

Arora, B. (2015) A Gramscian analysis of the employability agenda. Vol 36 Issue 4 pp 635–48.British Journal of Sociology of Education, London Routledge https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2013.838415

Artess, J. Hooley, T. & Mellors-Bourne, R. (2017) Employability: A review of the literature 2012 to 2016 A report for the Higher Education Academy York Higher Education Academy York.

Atfield G, Hunt W & Luchinskaya D. (2021) Employability programmes and work placements in UK higher education Research report Department of Education www.gov.uk

Bangor University (2022) Employability Strategy 2030 strategy2030-employability-strategy-en.pdf (bangor.ac.uk)

Barkas. L.A & Armstrong P-A (2022) The price of knowledge and the wisdom of innocence: A difficult journey through the employability discourse in higher education Industry and Higher Education 2022 36:1, 51-62 https://doi.org/10.1177/09504222211016293

Barnett, R. (2010). Life-wide education: A new and transformative concept for higher education. In N. J. Jackson & R. K. Law (Eds.), Enabling a more complete education: Encouraging, recognising and valuing life-wide learning in Higher

Education. Conference proceedings, 13–14 April 2010 (pp. 23–34). Guildford: University of Surrey.

Barton. E, Bates. E.A & O'Donovan. R. (2019) 'That extra Sparkle': student's experience of volunteering and the impact on satisfaction and employability in higher education. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 43:4, pp453-466 London Routledge https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1365827 .

Bathmaker, A.-M., N. Ingram, J. Abrahams, A. Hoare, R. Waller, and H. Bradley. (2016). Higher Education, Social Class and Social Mobility - The Degree Generation. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Bazeley P. & Jackson K (2019) Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo 3rd Ed London Sage

Becker, G S (1962) Investment in Human Capital: A Theoretical Analysis. Journal of Political Economy , Oct., 19.62, Vol. 70, Participant 5, Part 2: Investment in Human Beings (Oct., 1962), pp. 9-49 The University of Chicago Press https://doi.org/10.1086/258724 .

Becker, G S (1964) Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, With Special Reference to Education. New York: Columbia University Press

Ben-Porath . Y (1967) The Production of Human Capital and the Life Cycle of Earnings. The Journal of Political Economy, Vol. 75, Participant 4, Part 1 pp. 352-365 The University of Chicago Press https://doi.org/10.1086/259291 .

Berdrow, I. and Bird, A.W. (2018) 'Development and Assessment of Intercultural Effectiveness: A Learner-Centered Approach', Journal of education (Boston, Mass.), 198(2), pp. 136–145 https://doi.org/10.1177/0022057418807432 .

Berelson, B. (1952). Content analysis in communication research. Free Press.

Berntson, E. (2008). Employability perceptions: Nature, determinants, and implications for health and well-being (PhD Thesis). Stockholm University, Sweden

Bevan M.T. (2014) A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing. Qualitative Health Research. Vol 24 Issue 1 pp136-144. Sage https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732313519710 .

Bhardwa, S. (2021) What do top employers want from graduates? London Times Higher Education

Billing D. (2007) Teaching for transfer of core/key skills in higher education: Cognitive skills Higher Education (2007) 53: 483–516 Springer Science Business Media B.V https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-005-5628-5 .

Blackmore P., Bulaitis Z.H Jackman A.H & Tan E. (2016) Employability in Higher Education: A review of practice and strategies around the world Pearson

Blackwell, A., Bowes, L., Harvey, L., Hesketh, A.J. and Knight, P.T., 2000, 'Transforming work experience in higher education', British Educational Research Journal, 27(3), 269–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920120048304 .

Blaquière, G. Nolan, J. & Wray, K (2019). Joining up the dots: Telling the story of skills. How can students in Higher Education be supported to better understand and articulate their employability? Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability. Vol (2)10. p15. https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2019vol10no2art699 .

Boden, R., and M. Nedeva. 2010. "Employing Discourse: Universities and Graduate 'Employability'." Journal of Education Policy 25 (1): 37–54 https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930903349489 .

Bolden R. Connor H. Duquemin A. Hirsh W.& Petrov G. (2009) Employer Engagement with Higher Education: Defining, Sustaining and Supporting Higher Skills Provision: A Higher Skills Research Report for HERDA South West and HEFCE

Bolden R. Connor H. Duquemin A. Hirsh W.& Petrov G. (2010) Strategies for Effective HE-Employer Engagement A South West Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Research Report.

Bolton P. (2024) Higher Education Student Numbers: research briefing UK Parliament https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/

Boud. D, Keogh. R & Walker. D (1985) Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning, London :Kegan Page

Bourdieu, P. 1984. Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Bowden, J., Hart, G., King, B., Trigwell, K. and Watts, O. (2000) Generic capabilities of ATN university graduates. Available from: http://www.clt.uts.edu.au/ATN.grad.cap.project.index.html

Bowers-Brown. T. & Harvey. L (2004) Are there too many graduates in the UK? A literature review and an analysis of graduate employability' Industry and Higher Education Vol 18 Issue 4 pp243-54 https://doi.org/10.5367/0000000041667538 .

Bowes, L., and L. Harvey. (1999) The impact of sandwich education on the activities of graduates six months post-graduation. Birmingham: Centre for Research into Quality

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Braun. V & Clarke. A (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology 3 pp77-101 Qualitative Research in Psychology London Routledge https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa .

Brewis. G (2010) From Service to Action? Students, Volunteering and Community Action in Mid Twentieth-Century Britain. British Journal of Educational Studies 58:4 p439 https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2010.527668 .

Brewis. G & Holdsworth. C (2011) University Support for Student Volunteering in England: Historical Development and Contemporary Value. Journal of Academic Ethics 9 pp 165-176 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-011-9129-0 .

Bridgstock, R (2009) The graduate attributes we've overlooked: enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. Higher Education Research and Development. Vol 28, Issue 1, pp 31-44. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360802444347 .

Brinkmann, S. & Kvale, S. (2015). Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing 3rd Ed Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Brooks. R (2012) Evaluating the impact of placements on employability. In: Employability, enterprise and Citizenship in Higher Education Conference 2012, Manchester Metropolitan University

Brooks, R. and Kay, J. (2014), "Enhancing employability through placements in higher education", Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning, Vol. 4 Participant 3 https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-08-2014-0042 .

Brooks, R., and P. Youngson. (2016) "Undergraduate Work Placements: An Analysis of the Effects on Career Progression." Studies in Higher Education Vol41 Issue 9 pp 1563–1578 https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.988702 .

Bryman A. (2008) Social Research Methods 3rd Ed Oxford: Oxford University Press

Cairns, J. G., Hervey, T. & Johnson, O. (2018). Neither 'bolt-on' nor 'built-in' : benefits and challenges of developing an integrated skills curriculum through a partnership model. Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education, 13 https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.v0i13.435 .

Caricati, L, Chiesa, R, Guglielmi, D and Mariani, M (2016) 'Real and perceived employability: A comparison among Italian graduates', Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 38 (4): 490-502. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2016.1182668 .

CBI/NUS (2011) Working towards your future: making the most of your time in higher education. CBI: London. Available from: http://educationandskills.cbi.org.uk/reports/

CBI (2018) Educating for the Modern World: CBI Pearson Education and Skills Annual Report

CBI (2019) Getting young people 'work ready' Our vision for how education should prepare young people for the modern world People and Skills Overeducation and the Skills of UK Graduates

Charmaz K. (2014) Constructing Grounded Theory 2nd Ed London Sage

Chevalier A. & Lindley J. (2009) Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (Statistics in Society), Vol. 172, No. 2 pp. 307-337

Chi Hou A.Y, Hill C., Justiniano D., Yang C. & Gong Q. (2021) Relationship between 'employability' and 'higher education' from global ranker and accreditor's perspectives—does a gap exist between institutional policy making and implementation in Taiwan higher education?, Journal of Education and Work, 34:3, 292-312, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2021.1922619 .

CIPD (2024) Competence and competency frameworks https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/factsheets/competency-factsheet/#what

Clark, G., Marsden, R., Whyatt, J., Thompson, L., & Walker, M. (2015).'It's everything else you do...': Alumni views on extracurricular activities and employability. Active Learning in HigherEducation,16(2), 133–147 https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787415574050 .

Clarke, M. (2018). Rethinking graduate employability: The role of capital, individual attributes and context. Studies in Higher Education, 43(11), 1923–1937 https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1294152 .

Clark. T, Foster L. Sloan L Bryman A.. (2021) Social Research Methods 6th Ed Oxford: Oxford University Press

Clegg, S., J. Stevenson, and J. Willott. 2010. "Staff Conceptions of Curricular and Extracurricular Activities in Higher Education." Higher Education 59 (5): 615–626. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9269-y .

Cloete, M. (2018) 'The impact of an integrated assessment on the critical thinking skills of first-year university students', Accounting education (London, England), 27(5), pp. 479–494 https://doi.org/10.1080/09639284.2018.1501717 .

Coffey A & Atkinson P. (1996) Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies Thousand Oaks Cal. Sage

Cole. D & Tibby .M (2013) Defining and developing your approach to employability: A framework for higher education institutions. York The Higher Education Academy

Coleman, J.S. (1988) 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', The American journal of sociology, 94(1988), pp. S95–S120 https://doi.org/10.1086/228943.

College of Policing (2020) Policing Education Qualifications Framework Initial entry routes Learning to date: development and implementation, 2016 to 2019 Available at: Policing Education Qualifications Frameword Initial entry routes Learning to date: development and implementation, 2016 to 2019 (college.police.uk)

College of Policing (2016) Competency and Values Framework for policing Available at: competency-and-values-framework-for-policing_4.11.16.pdf (college.police.uk)

College of Policing (2020) Policing in England and Wales: Future Operating Environment 2040 Policing in England and Wales: Future Operating Environment 2040 (college.police.uk)

College of Policing (2023) Code of Practice for Ethical Policing. Available at: Code of Practice for Ethical Policing | College of Policing

College of Policing (2024a) Code of Ethics Available at: Code of Ethics | College of Policing

College of Policing (2024b) Induction Guidance and 'bridging' curriculum for Professional Policing Degree (PPD) National Policing Curriculum (www.college.police.uk)

College Of Policing (2024c) Professional Profiles https://profdev.college.police.uk/professional-profiles/

Collini S. (2012) What are universities for? London Penguin Group

Corbin J. M & Strauss. A (2008) Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques 3rd Ed (Newbury park) Calif. Sage

Crebert, G., M. Bates, B. Bell, C.-J. Patrick, and V. Cragnolini, V. (2004). Developing generic skills at university, during work placement and in employment: Graduates' perceptions.Higher Education Research and Development 23, no. 2: 147–65 https://doi.org/10.1080/0729436042000206636 .

Cressey, D R, (1953). Other People's Money. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell L, J. (2018) Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. 5th ed. London: Sage.

Crotty M (1998) The Foundations of Social Research London Sage (reprinted 2015)

Crow, G, Wiles, R, Heath, S & Charles, V 2006, 'Research ethics and data quality: The implications of informed consent', International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory and Practice, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 83-95 https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570600595231 .

Crowe, M., Inder, M. and Porter, R. (2015) "Conducting qualitative research in mental health: Thematic and content analyses," Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 49(7), pp. 616–623 https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867415582053 .

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) (2022) Competency Framework for Recruitment & Selection Grade Profile Level (copfs.gov.uk)

Dacre Pool, L. & Sewell, P. (2007) The key to employability: developing a practical model for graduate employability. Education & Training. 49 (4), 277-289. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910710754435 .

Dalrymple R, Macrae A, Pal M, & Shipman S. (2021) Employability: a review of the literature 2016-2021 Advance

Dean, J. (2022) 'Informal Volunteering, Inequality, and Illegitimacy', *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, 51(3), pp. 527–544. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640211034580 .

Dearing Report (1997) Higher Education in the learning society Main Report London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Chapter 7 p130-141

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. 2000 Handbook of Qualitative Research 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. 2013 Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. 2018 Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research 5th edition Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. 2013 Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. Lincoln, Y Giardina, M. & Cannella, G. (2023) Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research 6th edition Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Desai, M.S., Berger, B.D. and Higgs, R. (2016) 'critical thinking skills for business school graduates as demanded by employers: a strategic perspective and recommendations', Academy of educational leadership journal, 20(1), pp. 10–31.

Dey, D., A. Lindsay, and P. Thomson. (2017) "Supporting Student Transition into Professional Practice." Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice Vol 5 Issue 2 pp 115–118 https://doi.org/10.14297/jpaap.v5i2.276 .

Divan A & McBurney S. (2016) Understanding how students manage their employability. New Directions in the Teaching of Physical Science Vol. 11 Issue 1

Donald W.E, Ashleigh M.J & Baruch. Y (2018) Students' Perceptions of education and employability. Facilitating career transition from higher education into the labour market. Education and Employability www.Emeradinsight.com

Dondi. M. Klier. J. Panier. F. & Schubert. J, (2021) Defining the skills citizens will need in the future world of work McKinsey & Company www.mckinsey.com

Drisko J.M & Maschi T. (2016) Content Analysis Oxford Oxford University Press

Dunne. J. (2017) 'Work placement reflective assessments and employability enhanced through highlighting graduate attributes', Journal of teaching and

learning for graduate employability, 8(1), pp. 40–59 https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2017vol8no1art616 .

DWP (2012) Work Together https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220310/eia-work-together.pdf

Eddles-Hirsch, K. (2015). Phenomenology and educational research. International Journal of Advanced Research, 3 (8), 251-260.

Edgar T.W & Manz D. O, (2017) Exploratory Study. Research Methods for Cyber Security pp95-130 Cambridge Elsevier

European Commission. The Erasmus Impact Study, 2014, http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact en.pdf

Fenech, R, Baguant, P and Abdelwahed, I (2019) 'Are you work ready? The case of Emirati women', International Journal of Entrepreneurship, 23 (2): 1-10.

Fereday . J & Muir-Cochrane E. (2006) 'Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A Hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development' International Journal of Qualitative Methods Vol 5 Issue 1 pp 80-92 https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107 .

Fischer C. T (2009) Bracketing in qualitative research: Conceptual and practical matters, Psychotherapy Research, 19:4-5, 583-590 https://doi.org/10.1080/10503300902798375 .

Flick. U (2007) Designing Qualitative Research London Sage

Flick, U. (2018) Designing qualitative research. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sage.

Fugate, M., Kinicki, A.J., & Ashforth, B.E. (2004). Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 65(1), 14–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.10.005 .

Furtak, A., & Barnard, A. (2021). Flourishing in trying circumstances: A hermeneutic phenomenological exploration of volunteer well-being.SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde, 47(0), a1809 https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v47i0.1809 .

Gerson, K. & Horowitz, R. (2002). Observation and interviewing: Options and choices in qualitative research. In: T. May, (ed.) Qualitative research in action. London: Sage, (pp. 199-224).

Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of phenomenological method as a qualitative research practice procedure. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, Vol 28 Issue 2 pp 235–260 https://doi.org/10.1163/156916297X00103 .

Giorgi, A & Giorgi, B. (2003) '"Phenomenology"'. In Qualitative psychology, Edited by: Smith, JA. 25–50. London: Sage.

Giroux, H. A. (2010) Bare Pedagogy and the Scourge of Neoliberalism: Rethinking Higher Education as a Democratic Public Sphere, in The Educational Forum, Vol 74 Issue 3 pp184–196. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2010.483897 .

Glover, D., Law, S., & Youngman, A. (2002). Graduateness and employability: Student perceptions of the personal outcome of university education. Post-Compulsory Education, Vol 7 Issue 3 pp 293–306 https://doi.org/10.1080/13596740200200132 .

Goodman, S and Tredway, G (2016) 'Antecedents of perceived graduate employability: A study of student volunteers in a community-based organisation', SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 42 (1): 1-10 https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v42i1.1315 .

Gourlay L and Stevenson J (2017) Teaching excellence in higher education: critical perspectives. Teaching in Higher Education 22(4): 391–395 https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1304632 .

Government communication Service (2016) Government Communication Professional Competency Framework https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/publications/competency-framework/

Gov.Wales (2015) Review of higher education in further education institutions review-of-higher-education-in-further-education-institutions.pdf (gov.wales)

Gov.Wales (2022) A Plan for Employability and Skills Annual Report Template (gov.wales)

Gov.Wales (2024) Commission for Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Tertiary Education and Research | GOV.WALES

Gov.uk (2024) Student Finance England Student finance login - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Gov.uk (2023) Police workforce open data tables Police workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2023: age open data table available at: Police workforce open data tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Graduate Outcomes 2019/20 (2022) Summary Statistics - Summary, HESA,

Graduate Outcomes 2019/20 (2022) About the Survey HESA https://www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk/about-survey

Gravelle J. & Rogers C. The Economy of Policing—The Impact of the Volunteer, Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, Volume 4, Issue 1, 2010, Pages 56–63, https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pap016 .

Gray. D (2018) Doing Research in the Real-World 4th ed. London Sage

Grove, J. (2015) 7 key challenges for UK higher education London Times Higher Education

Guba. E.G & Lincoln Y. 1994 Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research 1st ed. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage

Gupta, M., Shaheen, M. and Prathap Reddy, K. (2018) Qualitative techniques for workplace data analysis. Edited by M. Gupta, M. Shaheen, and K. Prathap Reddy. Hershey, Pennsylvania: Business Science Reference. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-5366-3   .

Hammersley, Martyn. (1992) What's wrong with ethnography? methodological explorations. London; Routledge.

Handy, F., Hustinx, L., Kang, C., Cnaan, R.A., Brudney, J.L., Haski-Leventhal, D., et al. (2010). A cross-cultural examination of student volunteering: Is it all about résumé building? Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 39(3), 498–523. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764009344353 .

Hartmann, E., and J. Komljenovic. 2021. "The Employability Dispositif, or the Rearticulation of the Relationship Between Universities and Their Environment." Journal of Education Policy 36 (5): 708–733 https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1725983 .

Harvey, L. 2003. Transitions from Higher Education to Work: A Briefing Paper, Sheffield Hallam University.

Heyler. R & Lee. D (2014) The role of Work Experience in the Future Employability of Higher Education Graduates Higher Education Quarterly 68:3 pp348-372

High Fliers (2017) The Graduate Market in 2016: Annual review of graduate vacancies & starting salaries at the UK's leading employers High Fliers Research Limited London www.highfliers.co.uk

High Fliers (2019) The Graduate Market in 2018: Annual review of graduate vacancies & starting salaries at the UK's leading employers High Fliers Research Limited London www.highfliers.co.uk

High Fliers (2021) The Graduate Market in 2021: Annual review of graduate vacancies & starting salaries at the UK's leading employers High Fliers Research Limited London www.highfliers.co.uk

High Fliers (2023) The Graduate Market in 2023 Annual review of graduate vacancies & starting salaries at the UK's leading employer High Fliers Research Limited London www.highfliers.co.uk

Higher Ambition Report (2009) The Future of Universities in Knowledge Economy. Department for Business Innovation and Skills www.gov.uk

Hill, M., J. Russell, and G. Brewis 2009. Young people, volunteering and youth projects: A rapid review of recent evidence Institute for Volunteering Research 5._Young_people__volunteering_and_youth_projects_A_rapid_review_of_recent_evidence.pdf

Hirst. A. (2002) Links Between volunteering and Employability. Labour Market Trends 110:1 pp 45-46

HM Prison Service (2018) Competency and Qualities Framework hmps-competence-framework.pdf (www.justice.gov.uk)

Holdsworth, C. (2010). Why volunteer? Understanding motivations for student volunteering. British Journal of Educational Studies, 58(4), 421–437 https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2010.527666

Holdsworth, C., & Quinn, J. (2010). Student volunteering in English higher education. Studies in Higher Education, 35(1), 113–127 https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070903019856

Holman, K and Richardson, T (2021) 'Perceptions of placement experiences of Early Childhood Studies students: The fluency of knowledge and skills', Journal of Further and Higher Education, Vol 45 Issue 3 pp 324-336 https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2020.1762170

Home Office (2010) Core Competency Framework Core_Competency_Framework.pdf (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

Hordósy, R. and Clark, T. (2018) 'Beyond the compulsory: a critical exploration of the experiences of extracurricular activity and employability in a northern red brick university', Research in post-compulsory education, 23(3), pp. 414–43 https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2018.1490094

Hyde, M. K., Dunn, J., Bax, C., & Chambers, S. K. (2016). Episodic Volunteering and Retention: An Integrated Theoretical Approach. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 45(1), 45–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764014558934 .

Information Commissioners Office UK GDPR Guidance and resources UK GDPR guidance and resources | ICO www.ico.gov.uk

Irwin, A., Nordmann, E. and Simms, K. (2019) 'Stakeholder perception of student employability: does the duration, type and location of work experience matter?', Higher education, 78(5), pp. 761–781. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00369-5

Jackson, D. and R. Bridgstock. 2018. "Evidencing Student Success in the Contemporary World-of-work: Renewing our Thinking." Higher Education Research & Development Vol 37 Issue 5 pp994-998 https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1469603

Jackson, D and Wilton, N (2017) 'Perceived employability among undergraduates and the importance of career self-management, work experience and individual characteristics', Higher Education Research and Development, 36 (4): 747-762. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1229270

Jackson, D. and Collings, D. (2018) 'The influence of Work-Integrated Learning and paid work during studies on graduate employment and underemployment', Higher education, 76(3), pp. 403–425 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0216-z

Jackson, D. and Tomlinson, M. (2022), "The relative importance of work experience, extra-curricular and university-based activities on student employability", Higher Education Research & Development, Vol. 41 Participant 4, pp. 1119-1135, https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1901663

JACKSON, N., (2011). Recognising a more complete education through a Lifewide Learning Award. Higher Education, Skills and Work - Based Learning, 1(3), pp. 247-261. https://doi.org/10.1108/20423891111179641

Jagger, E. (2001) "Marketing Molly and Melville: Dating in a Postmodern, Consumer Society," Sociology (Oxford), 35(1), pp. 39–57 https://doi.org/10.1017/S0038038501000037

Jakubik, M (2019) Enhancing human capital beyond university boundaries', Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning, 9 (2): 434-446. https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-06-2019-0074

Jameson, J., Strudwick, K., Bond-Taylor, S. and Jones, M. (2012) Academic principles versus employability pressures: a modern power struggle or a creative opportunity? Vol 17 Issue 1 PP 25–37. Teaching in Higher Education, London Routledge https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.590978

Joffe, H. (2012). Thematic Analysis. In D. Harper & A. Thompson (Eds), Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy: A Guide for Students and Practitioners (pp.209-223). Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kalfa, S. and Taksa, L. (2015) Cultural capital in business higher education: reconsidering the graduate attributes movement and the focus on employability. Vol 40 Issue 4 pp 580–95. Studies in Higher Education https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.842210

Kamerade. D & Ellis – Paine . A (2014) Volunteering and Employability: implication for policy and practice Volunteer Sector Review 5:2 pp 259-273 https://doi.org/10.1332/204080514X14013593888736

Karunanayaka, S.P. and Naidu, S. (2021) 'Impacts of authentic assessment on the development of graduate attributes', Distance education, 42(2), pp. 231–252 https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2021.1920206

Katz, J (2001) "Analytic Induction" International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, eds. Oxford, U.K.: Elsevier. Vol. 1, Pp. 480-484. 2001.

Kent University (2022) Employability strategy 2022-2026 English (www.kent.ac.uk)

Kettis, A., Ring, L., Gustavsson, M. and Wallman, A. (2013) Placements: an underused vehicle for quality enhancement in higher education? Vol 19 Issue 1 pp 28–40.Quality in Higher Education, https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2013.772697

Knight, P. and Yorke, M. (2004) Learning, Curriculum and Employability in Higher Education. London: Routledge Falmer.

Lapadat, J.C. and Lindsay, A.C. (1999) 'Transcription in Research and Practice: From Standardization of Technique to Interpretive Positionings', Qualitative inquiry, 5(1), pp. 64–86. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049900500104

Law Society (2021) Apprenticeships: Information for employers https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/hr-and-people-management/apprenticeships-information-for-employers

Lee. D, Foster. E & Snaith. H (2016) Learning and Teaching in International Politics. Implementing the Employability Agenda: A Critical Review of Curriculum Developments in Political Science and International Relations in English Universities. Politics Vol 36 issue 1 pp 95-111 Sage

Lee, Y. and Brudney, J.L. (2012) 'Participation in formal and informal volunteering: Implications for volunteer recruitment', *Nonprofit management & leadership*, 23(2), pp. 159–180. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21060

Lehmann, W. (2019) 'Forms of capital in working-class students' transition from University to employment', Journal of education and work, 32(4), pp. 347–359 https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2019.1617841

Lindesmith, A R, (1968). Addiction and Opiates. Chicago: Aldine.

Local Government Association, (2019) Approaches to managing the night-time economy Local Government Association London 10 40 Approaches to managing the night-time economy - case studies_v05.pdf (local.gov.uk)

Lochmiller, C. R. (2021). Conducting Thematic Analysis with Qualitative Data. The Qualitative Report, 26(6), 2029-2044

MAKE Associates (2017) A Study of 'Safe Spaces' in the UK Night-time Economy SUMMARY REPORT Microsoft Word - Summary Report v6.docx (localalcoholpartnershipsgroup.co.uk)

Marginson, S. (2019) 'Limitations of human capital theory', Studies in higher education (Dorchester-on-Thames), 44(2), pp. 287–301 https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1359823

Mason G, Williams G. Crammer S & Guile (2006) How much does higher education enhance the employability of graduates Higher Education Funding Council for England Bristol.

Mason G, Williams G. & Crammer S (2009) Employability Skills Initiatives in Higher Education: What Effects do They Have on Graduate Labour Market Outcomes? Education Economics Vol. 17, issue 1, pp 1–30 https://doi.org/10.1080/09645290802028315

Mason O'Connor, K., Lynch, K., & Owen, D. (2011). Student-community engagement and the development of graduate attributes. Education and Training, Vol 53 Issue 2 pp 100–115. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400911111115654

McCowan, T. 2015. "Should Universities Promote Employability?" Theory & Research in Education 13 (3): 267–285. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878515598060

Mello, L.V., Varga‑Atkins, T. and Edwards, S.W. (2021) 'A structured reflective process supports student awareness of employability skills development in a science placement module', FEBS open bio, 11(6), pp. 1524‑1536 https://doi.org/10.1002/2211-5463.13158

Menon, M, Argyropoulou, E and Stylianou, A (2018) 'Managing the link between higher education and the labour market: Perceptions of graduates in Greece and Cyprus', Tertiary Education and Management, Vol 24 Issue 4 pp 298-310. https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2018.1444195

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). Phenomenology of perception. (Colin Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Merriman S.B & Tisdell E.J (2016) Qualitative Research: A guide to Design and Implementation. 4th Edition San Francisco Jossey-Bass

Metz, S. (2011). 21st-century skills. The Science Teacher, 78(7), pp. 6.

Meyer. M.D (2020) Qualitative Research in Business & Management 3rd Ed London Sage

Miles M.B, Huberman A.M & Saldana J.M (2019) Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook 4th Ed Thousand Oaks CA Sage

Ministry of Justice Core (2008) Competence Framework Guidance booklet www.civilservice.gov.uk

Minocha. S, Hristov. D & Reynolds. M (2017) From Graduate Employability to employment: policy and practice in UK higher education. International Journal of Training and development 21:3 235-248 https://doi.org/10.1111/ijtd.12105

Moreau, M.P., and C. Leathwood. 2006. Graduates' employment and the discourse of employability: A critical analysis. Journal of Education and Work 19, Participant 4: 305 –24 https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080600867083

Morrell-Scott, NE (2018) Using diaries to collect data in phenomenological Research. Nurse Researcher, 25 (4). pp. 26-29. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.2018.e1527

Moustakas, C. (1994). Phenomenological research methods. London: Sage Publications.

National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) (2011), Institute for Volunteering Research, University of Southampton, University of Birmingham, Public Zone Formative Evaluation of v The National Young Volunteers' Service Final Report

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) (2024) Public sector volunteers less satisfied https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/public-sector-volunteers-less-satisfied/

National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) (2018) Diversity, Equality and Inclusion strategy 2018-2025 npcc-diversity-equality--inclusion-strategy-2018-2025.pdf

National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) (2019) Police Support Volunteer National Strategy 2019 – 2023 Connecting communities to policing and policing to communities CiP national Strategy 2018.cdr (www.npcc.police.uk)

National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) (2020) National Policing Digital Strategy Digital, Data And Technology Strategy 2020–2030 Available at: National-Policing-Digital-Strategy-2020-2030.pdf (www.pds.police.uk)

National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW) (2015) The Value of Apprenticeships to Wales Report presented to the National Training Federation for Wales. Arad Research

Nesta (2017) Future of Skills: Employment in 2030. [Online] Available at: https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/the-future-of-skills-employment-in-2030

Norton S. & Dalrymple R. (2021) Employability: breaking the mould: A case study compendium Advanced HE www.advanceHE.ac.uk

Norton S. (2022) Employability in the curriculum report A digital report assessing employability within the curricula of Welsh HE providers. AdvHE_Employability-in-the-Curriculum-report.pdf (www.hefcw.ac.uk)

O'Byrne D. and Bond C. (2014) Back to the future: the idea of a university revisited Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, Vol. 36, Participant 6, 571–584 https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2014.957888

OECD (2015), Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities, OECD Publishing, Paris

Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021 Population and household estimates, Wales: Census 2021 Population and household estimates, Wales - Office for National Statistics (www.ons.gov.uk   )

Okay-Somerville, B., and D. Scholarios. 2015. "Position, Possession or Process? Understanding Objective and Subjective Employability During University-to-Work Transitions." Studies in Higher Education 19 (6): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1091813

Oliver, B., and T. Jorre De St Jorre. 2018. "Graduate Attributes for 2020 and Beyond: Recommendations for Australian Higher Education Providers." Higher Education Research & Development 37 (4): 821–836. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1446415

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2014) Competency Framework competency_framework_en.pdf (oecd.org)

Orlikowski W.J , Baroudi J. J. (1991). Studying Information Technology in Organisations: Research Approaches and Assumptions. Information Systems Research, vol. 2 no. 1, pp. 1–28 https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.2.1.1

Owen J. & Tibby M. (2013) Measuring the impact of Pedagogy for employability on employability policy and practice in higher education institutes. The Higher Education Academy York www.heacademy.ac.uk

Page, S., Trudgett, M. and Bodkin-Andrews, G. (2019) 'Creating a degree-focused pedagogical framework to guide Indigenous graduate attribute curriculum development', Higher education, 78(1), pp. 1–15 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0324-4

Pannucci C.J, Wilkins E.G. Identifying and avoiding bias in research. Plast Reconstr Surg. 2010; Vol 126 issue 2 pp 619-625 https://doi:10.1097/PRS.0b013e3181de24bc

Patton M.Q (2015) Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice 4th Ed CA Sage

Peel, R., Missen, K. and Florentine, S. (2021) 'Reflections on an international nursing placement experience in Nepal: A thematic analysis', Nurse education today, 106, pp. 105050–105050 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2021.105050

Pegg. A, Waldlock J, Hendey-Isaac.S & Lawon. R (2012) Pedagogy for Employability Higher Education Academy

Pepper, I. (2014). 'Do Part-Time Volunteer Police Officers Aspire to Be Regular Police Officers?' Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles 87(2): 105–113 https://doi.org/10.1350/pojo.2014.87.2.667

Pepper, I. and McGrath, R. (2019) "Embedding employability within higher education for the profession of policing," Higher education, skills and work-based learning, 9(3), pp. 319–328 https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-06-2018-0061

Pepper, I., Rogers, C., Turner, J., Louis, N. and Williams, B. (2024), "Enabling student employability through volunteering: insights from police volunteers studying professional policing degrees in Wales", Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print.

Pepper M, (2021) 'Once I joined my motivations changed': Exploring the initial and continuing motivations of police support volunteers in an English constabulary, Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, Volume 15, Issue 4, Pages 2297–2309 https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paab057

Pepper, M., Bullock, K., and McCarthy, D. (2020).'Exploring the Role and Contribution of Police Support Volunteers in an English Constabulary.' Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice paaa005.

Pillow, W. (2003) "Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research," International journal of qualitative studies in education, 16(2), pp. 175–196 https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635

Police and Crime Commissioner (2020) Swansea Help Point https://www.southwalescommissioner.org.uk/en/our-work/tackling-violent-crime/help-point/

Polit, D. & Beck, C. 2010, Essentials of Nursing Research: Appraising Evidence for Nursing Practice, 7th edn, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia

Poon, J. and Brownlow, M. (2015) "Development of Students' Commercial Awareness within the Curriculum of Professionally Accredited Courses: A Case Study of Property Courses," Education & training (London), 57(4), pp. 405–428. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-12-2013-0145

Potter. C (2015) Leadership development: an applied comparison of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and Scharmer's Theory U Industrial and Commercial Training; Guilsborough Vol. 47, Issue 6, pp 336-342. https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-03-2015-0024

Prikshat, V, Kumar, S and Nankervis, A (2019) 'Work-readiness integrated competence model: Conceptualisation and scale development', Education + Training, 61 (5): 568-589. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-05-2018-0114

Prospectus (2023) What do Graduates Do? Insights and analysis of the largest higher education survey Jisc What do graduates do? 2023/24 | Luminate (prospects.ac.uk)

Purcell, K., P. Elias, G. Atfield, H. Behle, R. Ellison, and D. Luchinskaya. 2013. Transitions into Employment, Further Study and Other Outcomes: The Futuretrack Stage 4 Report. Warwick: Institute for Employment Research.

Quinlan K.M, Corbin J , Gentry N.W , Cameron L. (2020) How and why do students' career interests change during higher education? Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Careers and Employability Service, Division of Computing, Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, School of Psychology University of Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom Final Report for HECSU Research Fund Award 2019 https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2166916

Ramshaw, P. and Cosgrove, F. (2019). 'Changing Motivations of the Special Constable: A Qualitative Analysis of the Role of Organisational Experience in Retaining Satisfaction and Commitment.' Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy 30(8): 933–949 https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2019.1612894

Rees, S. (2021) 'Re-imagining employability: an ontology of employability best practice in higher education institutions', Teaching in higher education, 26(5), pp. 663–678 https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2019.1670637

Reid, J. (2016) Redefining 'Employability' as something to be achieved., Vol 6 Issue 1 pp 55–68 Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-02-2015-0005

Reissman, C. K. (1993). Narrative analysis. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Rich, J. (2015) Employability: Degrees of value. London: HEPI.

Ritter, B.A., Small, E.E., Mortimer, J.W. and Doll, J.L. (2018), "Designing management curriculum for workplace readiness: developing students' soft skills", Journal of Management Education, Vol. 42 No. 1, pp. 80-103. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562917703679

Robbins Report (1963) Higher Education Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Chapter 6 p147-169

Robinson W.S (1951) The Logical Structure of Analytic Induction: American Sociological Review , Vol. 16, Participant 6 pp. 812-818 American Sociological Association https://doi.org/10.2307/2087508

Rogers, C. & Pepper, I. (2022). Volunteers in Policing: a vehicle for increased representativeness in policing? Transforming Society. 17 March. [Blog]. https://www.transformingsociety.co.uk/2022/03/15/volunteers-in-policing-a-vehicle-for-increased-representativeness/

Rooney, S. and Rawlinson, M. (2016) Narrowing participation? Contesting the dominant discourse of employability in contemporary higher education. Vol 36 pp 20-29 Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling, https://doi.org/10.20856/jnicec.3603

Rouse, L., A. Morrissey, and M. Rahimi. (2012) "Problematic Placement: Pathways Pre-service Teachers' Perspectives on Their Infant/toddler Placement." Early Years Vol 32 issue 1 pp 87–98 https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2011.610299

Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2000). Data management and analysis methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd ed., pp. 769-802). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Saunders V & Zuzel K. (2010) Evaluating Employability Skills: Employer and student Perceptions, Bioscience Education Vol 15 Issue 1 pp1-15 https://doi.org/10.3108/beej.15.2

Schwandt T.A (2000) Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry In Denzin NK, Lincoln YS, editors, Handbook of Qualitative Research. 2 ed. SAGE Publications Inc. 2000. p. 189-213 Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Scott F.J & Willison D. (2021) Students' reflections on an employability skills provision Journal Of Further And Higher Education Vol. 45, Participant 8, 1118–1133 https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1928025

Seidman, I. (2013) Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences. Teachers College Press, New York.

Shultz T.W (1971) Investment in Human Capital: The role of Education and Research New York The Free Press

Silva, P. Lopes. B Costa .M, Melo. A, Dias .G Brito E & Seabra. D (2018) 'The million-dollar question: can internships boost employment?', Studies in higher education (Dorchester-on-Thames), 43(1), pp. 2–21 https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1144181

Sims D, Southcott C, Lynch S & Wade P. (2013) Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials Research Brief The National Foundation for Educational Research. Department for Education

Skills and Productivity Board (2022) Understanding current and future skills needs Policy Report Department of Education https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/

Skorková Z. (2016) Competency models in public sector Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences Vol 230 pp 226 – 234 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.09.029

Smith, K., Clegg, S., Lawrence, E., & Todd, M. J. (2007). The challenges of reflection: students learning from work placements. Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 44(2), 131-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290701241042

Smith, C., S. Ferns, and L. Russell. 2016. "Designing Work-integrated Learning Placements that Improve Student Employability: Six Facets of the Curriculum that Matter." Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education 17 (2): 197–211.

Smith, J.A, Flowers, P. & Larkin M (2022) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory Method and Research 2nd Ed London Sage

Smith, K.A., Holmes, K., Haski-Leventhal, D., Cnaan, R.A., Handy, F., & Brudney, J.L. (2010). Motivations and benefits of student volunteering: Comparing regular, occasional, and non-volunteers in five countries. Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research, 1(1), 65–81. http://doi.org/10.22230/cjnser.2010v1n1a2

South Wales Police (2021) https://www.south-wales.police.uk/police-forces/south-wales-police/areas/careers/careers/volunteers-and-special-constables/volunteer-roles /

South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner Office (SW PCCO) (2015) SWANSEA HELP POINT – A CASE STUDY SWANSEA HELP POINT A CASE STUDY.pdf (merthyr.gov.uk)

Speight, S., Lackovic, N. and Cooker, L. (2013) The contested curriculum: Academic learning and employability in higher education. Tertiary Education and Management, 19 (2) 112–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2012.756058

Spiegelberg, H. (1975). Doing phenomenology: Essays on and in phenomenology. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff

Stevenson, J., & Clegg, S. (2011). Possible selves: Students orientating themselves towards the future through extra-curricular activity. British Educational Research Journal,37(2), 231–246 https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920903540672

Stone, G A, Duffy L.N, Pinckney H. P, & Templeton-Bradley R, 'Teaching for Critical Thinking: Preparing Hospitality and Tourism Students for Careers in the Twenty-First Century', *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 17.2 (2017), 67–84 https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2017.1279036

Student finance Wales https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/

Sudman S. (1998) ,"Survey Research and Ethics", in NA - Advances in Consumer Research Vol 25, eds. Joseph W. Alba & J. Wesley Hutchinson, Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research, pp: 69-71.

Suleman, F., Videira, P. and Araújo, E. (2021) "Higher Education and Employability Skills: Barriers and Facilitators of Employer Engagement at Local Level," Education sciences, 11(2), pp. 5 https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11020051

Swansea Council (2021) Wind Street: Key city centre location Wind Street is having a £3m upgrade. Wind Street - Swansea

Sweetland, S.R. (1996) 'Human Capital Theory: Foundations of a Field of Inquiry', Review of educational research, 66(3), pp. 341–359 https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543066003341

Thompson, D. (2017) "How Valuable Is 'Short Project' Placement Experience to Higher Education Students?" Journal of Further and Higher Education Vol 41 Issue 3 pp 413–424. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2015.1117601

Thompson, L. J., Clark, G., Walker, M., & Whyatt, J. D. (2013). 'It's just like an extra string to your bow': Exploring higher education students' perceptions and experiences of extracurricular activity and employability. Active Learning in Higher Education, 14(2), 135-147. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787413481129

Tibby M. & Norton S. (2020) Essential frameworks for enhancing student success: embedding employability. A guide to the Advance HE Framework. Advanced HE www.advanceHE.ac.uk

Tight M. (2023) Employability: a core role of higher education? Research in Post-Compulsory Education Vol 28 No.4 pp551-571 https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2023.2253649

Tomlinson, M. 2007. "Graduate Employability and Student Attitudes and Orientations to the Labour Market." Journal of Education and Work 20 (4): 285–304. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080701650164

Tomlinson, M. 2008. "'The Degree Is Not Enough': Students' Perceptions of the Role of Higher Education Credentials for Graduate Work and Employability." British Journal of Sociology of Education 29 (1): 49–61 https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690701737457

Tomlinson. M (2012) Graduate Employability: a review of conceptual and empirical themes. Higher Education Policy 25:4 pp 407-431 https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2011.26

Trought, F. (2017) Brilliant employability skills : how to stand out from the crowd in the graduate job market. Second edition. New York: Pearson Education.

Tymon, A. (2013) 'The student perspective on employability', Studies in higher education (Dorchester-on-Thames), 38(6), pp. 841–856 https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.604408

UCAS (2024) Search | All results | "professional policing" | UCAS

UKCES (2009) The employability challenge: Full report. UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). Retrieved from the-employability-challenge-ukces.pdf (educationandemployers.org)

University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) (2022) Employability Strategy 2022-2026 Corporate Services - Employability Strategy 2022-26 12 May 2023.pdf - All Documents (sharepoint.com)

van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action centred pedagogy. Ontario: The Althouse Press.

Wang Y-F & Tsai C-T (2014) Employability of Hospitality Graduates: Student and Industry Perspectives Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education Vol 26 Issue 3 pp 125-135 https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2014.935221

Webb, E., Campbell, D., Schwartz, R., & Sechrest, L. (1966). Unobtrusive measures: Nonreactive Measures in the Social Sciences Chicago Rand McNally

Weber M (1947) The theory of Social and Economic Organisation trans. Henderson A.M and Parsons T. New York: Free Press

Welsh Government (2016) 'Managing the Night Time Economy in Wales Framework, Creating a Healthy, Diverse and Safe Night Time Economy Nighttime Economy Framework Summary (nhs.wales)

Welsh Government (2019) Wales 4.0 Delivering Economic Transformation for a Better Future of Work Review of Digital Innovation for the Economy and the Future of Work in Wales Delivering Economic Transformation for a Better Future of Work www.gov.wales

Werkmeister Rozas L. & Klein W. C (2010) The Value and Purpose of the Traditional Qualitative Literature Review, Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work, 7:5, 387-399, https://doi.org/10.1080/15433710903344116

Willis. P (2001) The "Things Themselves" in Phenomenology, Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, 1:1, 1-12, http://doi.org/10.1080/20797222.2001.11433860

Wilson T. (2012) A Review of Business–University Collaboration Department for Business, Innovation & Skills www.gov.uk

Wilton N. (2012) The impact of work placements on skills development and labour market outcomes for business and management graduates Studies in Higher Education Vol. 37, Participant 5, pp 603–620 https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2010.532548

Wingate, U. (2006) 'Doing away with 'study skills'', Teaching in Higher Education, 11(4), pp. 457-469. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510600874268

Wolcott. (1994) Transforming qualitative data: description analysis and interpretation. Sage

Wolf A. (2011) Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report Department for Education www.gov.uk

Yorke, M. and Knight, P. (2006) Embedding employability into the curriculum. (Learning and employability series 1). York: Higher Education Academy

Yorke, M. 2006. "Employability in Higher Education: What It Is – What It Is Not." In Learning and Employability Series No 1. York: Higher Education Academy.

Znaniecki, F, (1928). Social research in criminology. Sociology and Social Research, 12, pp. 302–322. http://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/00774-9
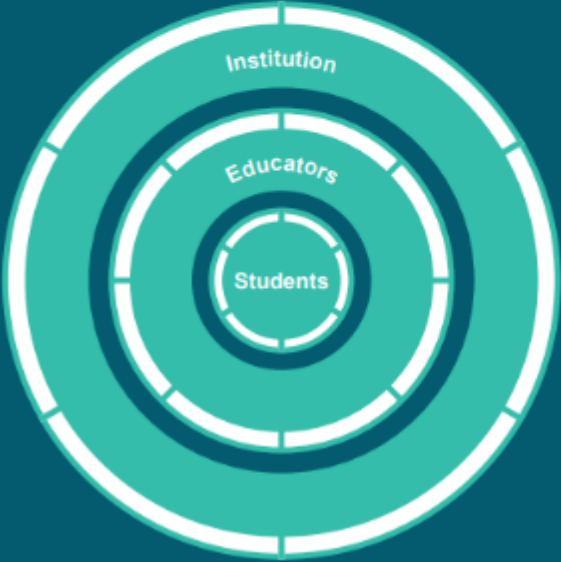
Appendices

Appendix 1 Essential Framework for Enhancing student success 2024

HEA Essential Framework for Enhancing student success (2024 p5)

Framework for embedding employability

External Stakeholder Engagement

Employment Outcome Data

Professional Services

Interdisciplinarity

Student and Staff Wellbeing

Institutional Culture

7

HEA Essential Framework for Enhancing student success for Institutions (2024, p7).

9

HEA Essential Framework for Enhancing student success for Educators (2024, p9)

Appendix 2 Interview Questions

The interview will consist of 22 Semi-structured Interview questions, which are aimed at answering the main objective of the project. The interview will take approximately one and half hours:

•   Establish student engagement with the Police Student Volunteer scheme offered and the opportunities the scheme offers to students (25 minutes)

1.   What is your current role and how long have you been in the job?

2.   When you started university what were your career goals?

3.   Why did you apply to become a student volunteer?

4.   How many shifts over the three years did you undertake?

5. What sort of shifts were you involved in?

6. Who did you work with during the experience?

• Interview past students who were part of the Police volunteer scheme and have now become Police Officers to gain their insight into whether they had developed the sufficient core skills for the job through the volunteer scheme (45 minutes)

7. Thinking back to when you started university, how would you have described yourself in terms of confidence, team working skills, leadership, communication, working with people from diverse backgrounds?

8. Did the roles that you undertook during the scheme develop/strengthen those skills?

9. What did you learn during the volunteer programme?

10. What was the most challenging part of the role?

11. What do you think were the strengths of the programme?

12. What do you think were the weaknesses of the programme?

13. How do you think it could have been better? What could we add?

14. How do you think, if anything, the experience changed you?

15. What skills or qualities would you say were developed during the experience?

16. How helpful was the diary in terms of reflecting on your experience? Did it make you change how you responded to a similar situation?

17. (Having looked at the diaries where some challenges had been identified, different for each individual, will discuss those challenges with the interviewee)

• Identify best practice, what most helped the students once they were in the work place and what didn't help (20 minutes)

18. As part of your role on the Help Point you had to work with a lot of intoxicated patients, did that help prepare you for your current role?

19. How about the mutli-agency working, do you see how that fits into your current role?

20. What skills do you think are essential for new starters to have, in your role?

21. Do you think you developed any of these skills and qualities during your time as a student police volunteer?

22. What, if anything, do you think could have better helped prepare you for your current role?

Appendix 3 Participant Information Guide
To be read by all participants interested in taking part in this project.

This information page forms part of the process of informed consent. It should give you information about the research and what your participation will involve. Please read this document carefully and feel free to ask about anything that is not clear about the project. This is not a contract, so your input will be very welcome.

1. **What is the purpose of the project:**

This project is part of a Professional Doctorate. The purpose of the project is to gain feedback from past UWTSD students on how they feel their experience volunteering for the Police student volunteer programme, helped them prepare for entering the workplace. The project is looking at employability of students leaving higher education and how the university has helped prepare students for the workplace by developing employability skills. There have been many studies on what is meant by employability and the provisions that universities have put in place to develop these skills, however there has not been any projects that have revisited the students who are now in the workplace to review if these provisions have really helped prepare students in their chosen profession.

2. **Why have you been selected to take part?**

You have been invited to take part in this study, because you are a UWTSD student, who whilst at university took part in the Student Police Volunteer scheme and have since gone on to a career in the Police service. Your perspective is important from the point of view that how you feel that what you experienced as a police volunteer helped prepare you for your current role.

3. **Do you have to take part?**

Participation in the project is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

4. **What will you be asked to do?**

You will be asked to take part in a semi- structured interview that can either be done face to face or via Teams, the interview should not take more than one hour. This interview will be recorded for accuracy but will only be held until after the project has been completed, then will be deleted. Only those involved in the project will have access to the recordings.
We will be focussing on the following research questions:

RQ1: What core skills do graduates really need for the workplace?

RQ2: In what ways did the police student volunteer scheme help develop these

skills?

RQ3: What most helped the participants once they were in the workplace and what

is needed to better prepare policing graduates for the workplace?

You will be asked to give your consent to be part of this Professional Doctorate Project.

5. **What are the exclusion criteria?**

   Only Students who have graduated from UWTSD, been part of the Students Police Volunteer scheme and have gone into the Police Service can be included in this research project.

6. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

It is hoped that the research will increase our understanding of how universities can better prepare students for the workplace. That skills and qualities needed for working in the Police service can be embedded into the curriculum or organised as volunteer or placement opportunities.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I do not foresee any risks or disadvantages to participating in this research. To ensure confidentiality, all your personal data/information will be anonymised. Any video recordings will be anonymised, and deleted once the analysis process has been completed.

8. Will participation involve any discomfort or embarrassment?

It is not expected that you to feel any discomfort or embarrassment if you take part in the project

9. Who will have access to the information provided?

Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to the information that you provide. All records will be treated as confidential.

10. What will happen to the data collected and results of the project?

All data collected during the project including personal, identifiable data will be treated as confidential and on a password protected file on the University's secure server. This storage of data will be done in accordance with GDPR. Your name or other identifying information will not be disclosed in any presentation or publication of the research.

After the project has finished, you will be provided with a summary of the project results if you would like. This summary will not include any identifiable information and will show the overall findings of the project

11. Who has reviewed the project?

This project has been approved by the University ethics committee and complies with the university's Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice REICoP-July-2022.pdf (uwtsd.ac.uk) .

12. How can you withdraw from the project?

If at any time you wish to cease participation you may do so without offering a reason. After that time, it will be anonymised and no longer retrievable. All your data and the information you provide will be kept confidentially and in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Your individual results will not be identifiable in any way in any presentation or publication.

13. University of Wales Trinity St David data protection policy

The University of Wales Trinity St David data protection policy can be found here: data-protection-policy-updated-18-october-2021.pdf (uwtsd.ac.uk)

14. What happens if there is a problem?

If you have any more concerns or if you have any questions you can contact me, I will do my best to answer any questions.

If I am unable to help or if you wish to make a complaint, please contact: secases@uwtsd.ac.uk

15. If you require further information?

Thank you for expressing an interest in participating in this project. If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Name of Lead Researcher: Bronwen Williams

Email: Bronwen.williams@uwtsd.ac.uk

Director of Studies: Howard Riley

Email: howard.riley@uwtsd.ac.uk

Supervisor : Steven Keen

Email: s.keen@uwtsd.ac.uk

Appendix 4 Informed Consent Form

This is an informed consent form dealing with a Professional Doctorate research project evaluating feedback from past UWTSD students on how they feel their experience volunteering for the Police student volunteer programme, helped them prepare for entering the workplace.

I, _____, confirm that (please check box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the research.	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	☐

6.	I give my consent for interviews to be recorded and how these will be stored until the end of the project has been explained and provided to me.	☐
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
8.	I, along with the Bronwen Williams - Doctoral Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	☐

Participant's Signature   Print Name

Date

Bronwen Williams –
Doctoral Researcher **Signature**   Print Name

Date

Appendix 5: Example transcript

(all available in word on request)

Interviewer

So firstly, if you could just talk about your current role and how long you've been in the job?

0:1:50.660 --> 0:2:19.790

Participant 5

OK, so I'm currently a response officer and I work at a town hall. So basically my role would be answering 909 calls. Any calls that come from the 101 system. So we work off 2 systems really one is what we call control works. So that would usually be 99 nines. If someone makes a call for 101 and it's not quite an emergency. We work through those and one see initially inquiries have been done, it drops down to a system we have called niche.

0:2:20.710 --> 0:2:24.550

Participant 5

And then we basically manage that alongside answering calls that come in.

0:2:25.280 --> 0:2:33.550

Participant 5

Uh, I've been in that role for about 6 years now than two years in this one. Swansea City centre and four in total police station or?

0:2:33.140 --> 0:2:36.470

Participant 5

I I thought it was gonna be something in the public sector. I wasn't quite sure. And and the thing that actually prompted me to join the police was the CKP that you offered at the time through the university. I think that sort of swayed my opinion to join them.

Interviewer

Want it to be a piece of a straight away so that's why you chose public services or.

0:4:55.980 --> 0:5:8.120

Participant 5

Yeah, because it was sort of all rounded, really, wasn't it? And and I think you know, through perhaps some of the subjects and the sea keeping in particular, I found that really interesting. I think that's what prompted me to apply things I think.

0:5:8.780 --> 0:5:14.830

Interviewer

And while you were university, did you volunteer?

0:5:27.590 --> 0:5:29.520

Participant 5

Uh, yeah, I was in the help point quite a bit.

0:5:31.70 --> 0:5:36.940

Participant 5

Most you know, Wednesday now and then I go down. Which was? Yeah, I think it was a massive help as well doing that.

0:5:37.960 --> 0:5:42.150

Interviewer

So you were a police volunteer. Was that the only volunteering that you did?

Participant 5

That little sort of hat that was in Castle Gardens, if you remember the small little unit there. And when they moved on to the strand then I think that's pretty much when I started doing it really then.

Participant 5

I did have who, remember, went to the High Sheriff or what do you think done about $200.00 in total?

0:6:28.70 --> 0:6:30.960

Participant 5

Yeah, but about 200 hours, maybe just over.

0:6:32.430 --> 0:6:37.680

Interviewer

And did you? Did you volunteer right from your first year or did you start later?

0:6:38.490 --> 0:6:45.80

Participant 5

I think it was more towards a second. I can't remember if it was the end of the first one in the second year, be a would have been about then.

0:6:45.800 --> 0:6:48.390

Interviewer

And did you volunteer in your third year?

0:6:50.420 --> 0:6:54.850

Participant 5

Yes, I didn't do as many hours in the third year, but I'm still doing it then yeah.

0:6:55.910 --> 0:7:1.160

Interviewer

And what was your motivation for for volunteering?

Participant 5

Just for sort inside really. And I thought that obviously you know in, in an application I can show that I've spent my own time trying to sort of get an insight into what publics, you know, public services do.

0:7:17.40 --> 0:7:17.460

Participant 5

I did enjoy it. So now you opener because I'll see it being a student and you spend a lot of time drunk on my street does to see it from the other person.

0:7:34.960 --> 0:7:37.710

Participant 5

Was interested. Once you get to know.

0:7:38.600 --> 0:7:46.610

Participant 5

Paramedics people have St. John's police officers down there. You can ask questions about the role, what they do. So yeah, there's a big, big guy up. And I did. I did enjoy.

0:7:47.770 --> 0:7:57.340

Participant 5

I said they got. It's a big eye opener to see. I think that was the purpose of the help point. Really wasn't it to to cooperate through agencies to get right, to see how it works. And obviously it's working very well cause it's still there still there today.

0:8:44.470 --> 0:8:58.580

Interviewer

How how would you have described yourself in terms of, say, confidence?

0:10:25.760 --> 0:10:29.210

Participant 5

Not quite as confident as what I am now.

0:10:30.890 --> 0:10:39.160

Participant 5

I think obviously there's a lot of team tasks, presentations, things like that, a lot of teamwork and trying to sort of do assignments to get or things like that, so that.

0:10:39.910 --> 0:10:43.0

Participant 5

I suppose that is transferable over into the role that I'm in now.

0:10:43.720 --> 0:10:44.150

Participant 5

Uh.

0:10:45.250 --> 0:11:4.520

Participant 5

The academic side of it as well. Obviously the way that you structure a certain reports and certain documents when it comes into play and work then for example,

just having that ability to write more academically does help. When you do an update. So say I go to a call and I've got an update. What I've done after it.

0:11:5.260 --> 0:11:8.270

Participant 5

And just having that sort of back down mindset.

0:11:9.40 --> 0:11:16.290

Participant 5

And structure right then does help because obviously it looks more professional that when you're when you're writing your place. So is that a slightly better?

0:11:17.810 --> 0:11:40.130

Participant 5

Yeah, it definitely. I'm developed in university and then don't like I said doing tasks as a team with peers and stuff and obviously working with the help point you working with.

0:11:51.230 --> 0:12:2.500

Participant 5

He has you working with the police. You working with paramedics? Um, you know you. You meeting people quite often or you wouldn't normally meet. And it takes sort of your comfort zone sometimes.

0:12:4.410 --> 0:12:7.300

Participant 5

I think it's quite a team based environment and work.

0:12:8.560 --> 0:12:13.690

Participant 5

You know, it's if you go to call and then you come back after, there's people there to sort of like.

0:12:14.670 --> 0:12:24.880

Participant 5

So some of the stuff we see is not not totally nice. So having that sort of ability to, you know, talk to people, be more empathetic and and talk about stuff that we've been to does help.

0:12:26.670 --> 0:12:31.150

Participant 5

And know that when you're a call, just being able to.

0:12:37.270 --> 0:12:37.580

Interviewer

Hmm.

0:12:32.50 --> 0:12:44.680

Participant 5

Sort of work well in the team is important as well. Obviously we're quite. We're double crew quite a lot. We go to something you need to be able to work as a team and it needs to work well just so that we do with the call properly.

0:12:47.570 --> 0:12:50.420

Participant 5

Yeah, I don't know what else to say, at least, yeah.

0:12:50.60 --> 0:13:6.690

Participant 5

So it was good that was good experience.

0:13:18.620 --> 0:13:26.810

Interviewer

So did any of those help develop your teamworking whilst you were at university? Not just the academic side but?

0:13:27.980 --> 0:13:31.340

Interviewer

And sort of those sort of more practical based elements.

0:13:31.980 --> 0:13:43.610

Participant 5

Yeah, some of the tasks and stuff that we add, you know, you have to work on a team. It's quite a common thing in university as well. And we're doing teams sort of tasks and assignments, things like that.

0:13:44.190 --> 0:13:44.570

Participant 5

Uh.

0:13:45.990 --> 0:13:50.820

Participant 5

Yeah, I think being exposed to that quite regularly, you know, you are developing skills.

0:13:52.80 --> 0:14:0.300

Participant 5

You know whether you realise or not, you know confidence as well is is quite a big thing, especially presentations. If you haven't done presentations before then you start doing university. It's a.

0:14:1.0 --> 0:14:5.550

Participant 5

The voices of public speaking, and that's a big part of the job of policing, is just the ability to speak to people.

0:14:6.750 --> 0:14:13.700

Participant 5

And empathise your people on the situations they're in, so communications are massive thing. I think that you develop through university.

0:14:14.950 --> 0:14:19.120

Participant 5

The things we deal with, a lot of it could be confrontation.

0:14:43.300 --> 0:14:43.850

Participant 5

Thank.

0:14:45.60 --> 0:14:58.410

Participant 5

When we were in the role of like police volunteers and you go into things and there's a lot of the toxicated if people are around not quite even understands why you're there. And sometimes people are quite often confrontational.

0:14:59.60 --> 0:14:59.480

Interviewer

Mm-hmm.

0:14:59.70 --> 0:15:2.760

Participant 5

Umm. Being able to sort of deal with that and diffuser situations?

0:15:3.520 --> 0:15:14.270

Participant 5

That was a big help. This was coming into this this role, particularly since you can imagine we don't deal with the nicest people. So it's quite common that we have to deal with confrontation. So that was a big help as well.

0:15:15.720 --> 0:15:21.120

Participant 5

I think it's just been out of you sort of comfort zone. You know where, like I said before would be on Main Street, there's a as a student and you know you're drinking socializing, whereas like when you're in natural.

0:15:42.620 --> 0:15:52.570

Participant 5

You kind of have to put the professional switch on and you're dealing with things very differently as to how you deal with them. Normally in a more relaxed setting you know everything a lot more formal and.

0:15:53.610 --> 0:16:0.420

Participant 5

You're ultimately wearing a uniform, which you have, which you represent in our organisation. Then so that that takes a sway in it as well, you know.

0:16:2.700 --> 0:16:12.360

Interviewer

And thinking about the skills that you needed for, so for the help point, things like, did you have the radios?

0:16:13.570 --> 0:16:30.270

Participant 5

Yeah, initially I think I changed a bit later on so, but initially, yeah, we we so obviously went to speak to the CVR Bridge, the orderlies with door staff because they obviously contact this used to be operated to contact us obviously police as well if there was a situation where.

0:16:30.920 --> 0:16:35.690

Participant 5

It was out of our hands on in terms of how to deal with it, so if there's quite a high level confrontation.

0:16:36.830 --> 0:16:41.940

Participant 5

Obviously our advice was to withdraw and asked me to communicate with police as well to get them there to to assist.

0:16:43.280 --> 0:16:43.990

Participant 5

Yeah, I think if you're not used to it, it's quite it's quite comfortably in training. That's the biggest thing is just being able to use the radio is is a massive thing. And if you're not used to using it does, there's quite a comfortable initially.

0:17:14.490 --> 0:17:20.750

Participant 5

But yeah, you do sort of get used to. I think the help point does does assist with that. Social delays were people that will be end.

0:17:21.510 --> 0:17:37.330

Participant 5

Would be quite concise and in what you're saying really. You know you can't waffle over the air, but when you're trying to get a point across, it needs to be quite concise. So that practice just using the radio letter I think was a bit of a help. And I went into training cause I just felt a little bit more confident than using the radios.

0:17:40.370 --> 0:17:50.940

Interviewer

I'm thinking about then working on the help point with sort of members of the public, but also fellow students that perhaps you didn't know.

0:17:52.200 --> 0:18:3.90

Interviewer

How did you find you developed your abilities to to, to work with people that you didn't know that you've never met before that were very different to you?

0:18:4.360 --> 0:18:7.330

Participant 5

Yeah, I think it's people have different ways of working.

0:18:7.830 --> 0:18:13.180

Participant 5

And different ways that they get their point across and the way they speak to people.

0:18:13.700 --> 0:18:15.750

Participant 5

Umm. So yeah, sometimes it can be.

0:18:16.470 --> 0:18:29.730

Participant 5

You can't be challenging if someone who works quite considerably different to how you would work, but it's yeah, I suppose it prepares you in dealing with people like that and trying to be quite tactful in.

0:18:30.580 --> 0:18:33.170

Participant 5

How you work as a team if particular for someone, is quite.

0:18:34.100 --> 0:18:38.330

Participant 5

Old pair in a difficult pairs you to sort of deal with that as well, I think.

Participant 5

Yeah, I'd say I'll see on the course as, as you know, there's quite, it was quite diverse range of people in a way even from different backgrounds and different communities, so.

0:19:25.900 --> 0:19:26.590

Participant 5

It's.

0:19:27.710 --> 0:19:35.990

Participant 5

Yeah, I think I think with university people come from from elsewhere in school. It's I haven't sort of live in fairly locally, whereas they do.

0:19:36.70 --> 0:19:58.800

Participant 5

Then the university people sort of come from from other cities and other cultures and things like that. So you get to, you get to know people from different backgrounds. And you know what? What's going on in their life and how they deal with things. And obviously there's people have personal things happen in university, you get to know them and perhaps situations you haven't been any self sorted. But it is a bit of an eye opener.

0:20:0.500 --> 0:20:4.990

Participant 5

But it's obviously a good thing as you get to work with people and you know, meet people who would normally meet so.

0:20:6.320 --> 0:20:6.780

Interviewer

Yeah.

0:20:8.20 --> 0:20:14.310

Interviewer

And how has that helped going into the job that you do now and being able to?

0:20:15.130 --> 0:20:19.650

Interviewer

Respond to people who are very different from you.

0:20:20.620 --> 0:20:24.770

Participant 5

I think it's just that awareness, especially particular cultures, I would say.

0:20:26.110 --> 0:20:44.870

Participant 5

You know if someone from sort of Islamic background, if I hadn't met someone like that before and then I had for university is gonna help and particularly for example, if I've gone to that incident reported by some of the Islamic background of the Brookside where day-to-day very dirty.

0:21:6.800 --> 0:21:7.220

Interviewer

Umm.

0:20:45.950 --> 0:21:10.380

Participant 5

So if I go depending on the reason I go into the house, if I go to house and I know like this is like dirty and they're quite particular in terms of cleanliness, especially with with feeding things, I would normally like make sure I take my boots off and things are off to take my boots off and I wouldn't have known that before unless they obviously worked with someone or met someone from my background. So that's just an example really.

0:21:10.870 --> 0:21:17.220

Participant 5

I think you have to be the most tactful as well, because if you're dealing with somebody, for example, then it if we don't know how point we dealt with someone, it

was a like a mental health issue. Someone was a lot older, they've got a lot of experience, a lot of things going on in their life is very difficult for you to try and.

0:22:31.450 --> 0:22:43.480

Participant 5

Reassure assembly and comfort somebody when you probably were half as much life experience as then. And so yeah, you have to be a bit more tactful in how you would things and and how you position, you know, positive outcomes to them because ultimately.

0:22:44.640 --> 0:22:52.800

Participant 5

You have to reach. They've got twice as much life experience, so it is a little bit difficult then in terms of trying to give them support and guiParticipant 5ce because.

0:22:53.500 --> 0:22:56.740

Participant 5

Are they really gonna see you as somebody who can offer that guiParticipant 5ce, you know?

0:22:59.220 --> 0:23:14.860

Interviewer

And you going into the police force at 22, how do you not had that experience, do you think you would have been as prepared for what the job entails as you were?

0:23:16.10 --> 0:23:24.830

Participant 5

No, no, definitely not. No, it's quite young age to join and it is difficult to come in next too early as well. So not have it. See for example you start as a PCSO.

0:23:25.800 --> 0:23:27.580

Participant 5

Less responsibility with that role.

0:23:29.630 --> 0:23:35.890

Participant 5

So that massively helps, but I didn't have that experience to be PCSO before and I kind of went straight into the role of PC.

0:23:36.510 --> 0:23:44.80

Participant 5

So how's in the experiences I've had through the help point? I think they definitely helped prepare me.

0:23:45.570 --> 0:23:48.850

Participant 5

For the sort of situations I could be in as a as a PC then.

0:23:52.910 --> 0:24:2.240

Interviewer

So what else could we have put in place for you to prepare you for the job that you do now?

0:24:4.610 --> 0:24:5.400

Participant 5

The.

0:24:7.120 --> 0:24:17.230

Participant 5

It's difficult to say really. I suppose if there was like I obviously, I don't know if South Wales Police would really sort of allow that like a sort of ride along thing. I don't know if.

0:24:18.270 --> 0:24:29.80

Participant 5

That could be something that could be arranged, but again, it's very difficult because we're quite short staffed and under resourced and the risk of some of the calls that we do attend.

0:24:29.680 --> 0:24:30.270

Participant 5

Umm.

0:24:31.230 --> 0:24:34.950

Participant 5

You know, it wouldn't be safe for someone who's obviously not the warded off. So really.

0:24:35.430 --> 0:24:35.790

Participant 5

Uh, just difficult, really. For for that to be put in the place, but that that they'd be good to sort of have a ride along and sort of see what we do.

0:24:43.480 --> 0:24:44.210

Participant 5

But it's difficult because if we've got somebody with us in the car and then we'd have to go to a call that's got a high level of risk to it.

0:24:53.250 --> 0:24:53.600

Participant 5

The sort of drop them off and then we have to go either way to go to drop them off and it delays things getting to the call and you know, so the other than other than the help point really I don't really know what.

0:25:3.600 --> 0:25:4.830

Participant 5

Suggest you could do you know?

0:25:6.140 --> 0:25:9.480

Interviewer

So I mean it's preparing you.

0:25:9.680 --> 0:25:32.970

Interviewer

And for the realities of the job, but also practical elements. So is there anything that you felt that when you started was a bit overwhelming? Like even just sort of add mini stuff that perhaps could have helped if you'd known about it or understood it before you went in?

0:25:34.150 --> 0:25:45.170

Participant 5

Yeah, I mean, using just Microsoft applications, obviously that's a big thing in university that massively helped coming into the job because you're comfortable in using the systems and then something that we use obviously on a regular basis.

0:25:48.40 --> 0:25:54.610

Participant 5

Yeah, I think that was one of the biggest things is, is, is just using that to familiarizing yourself with that, yeah.

0:25:55.610 --> 0:25:56.100

You know could have done something differently and you're asking yourself these questions and then it does help. Yeah, that, that that self reflection.

0:28:25.610 --> 0:28:26.280

Interviewer

So.

0:28:27.720 --> 0:28:37.170

Interviewer

Looking back and reflecting on your time at university, apart from sort of ride alongs did we help prepare you to get the job that you've done now?

0:28:37.920 --> 0:28:38.700

Interviewer

You've got now.

0:28:40.500 --> 0:28:55.50

Participant 5

It's not sure. Yeah, there's so many variables in terms of what we did through the course and the experiences that the course allowed me to have. I think All in all, yeah, they just, you know, from development skills and communication skills, things like working as a team.

0:28:56.940 --> 0:29:3.320

Participant 5

Probably even things subconsciously that I you know, I'm I'm looking back. I I probably didn't realise at the time. You know. So yeah, I think.

0:29:4.0 --> 0:29:6.10

Participant 5

The university did help massively, I'd say, yeah.

0:29:7.200 --> 0:29:9.230

Interviewer

And thinking about your job now.

0:29:10.190 --> 0:29:16.90

Interviewer

What do you think is the most important skills that are required for the job?

0:29:17.800 --> 0:29:19.600

Participant 5

Communications. Massive thing.

0:29:20.860 --> 0:29:30.730

Participant 5

You know, I think when perhaps should we do in some of the team based task, there's a lot of debate going on as you can imagine, there's a lot of debate in the role that we have as well in particularly members of the public.

0:29:31.480 --> 0:29:32.50

Participant 5

It's.

0:29:33.900 --> 0:29:39.440

Participant 5

The confrontation side of things, although there wasn't a great deal of it in the health point.

0:29:40.910 --> 0:29:47.600

Participant 5

When you sort of put in a position where they're, perhaps is quite a bit of confrontation.

0:29:49.240 --> 0:30:2.170

Participant 5

Unless you've been through that experience, you're not gonna know. Understand how you're gonna react. So I think having been in situations as a result of that, give me an idea of how I'm gonna react if I put in that situation, perhaps in in this role model.

0:30:4.260 --> 0:30:4.650

Appendix 5 Example of NVIVO coding

Name	Files	Refer
And I think once I got used to it, yeah, I didn't quite	1	1
Anything that could have been added to the progra	1	2
benefits of volunteering	7	32
challanges to volunteering	2	6
challanges to volunteering (2)	6	10
challenge within the volunteering	2	3
Current role	11	14
development of communication skills from voluntee	10	33
did the course help prepare you for the role	3	4
did the volunteering preare you for the current role	6	18
employment information learnt at university	1	1
expereince of working with diverse people before u	4	6
exposure to diversity	10	23
exposure to shift wrking	2	3
How the volunteering changed you	2	3
importance of refelection	10	27
Job aspirations before university	10	13
key skills needed for the job	9	22
leadership skills developed on the course	5	9
lessons learnt from the course	1	1
lessons learnt from volunteering	8	42
levels of confidence before university	9	17
Motivation for volunteering	11	27

Codes | | | |

Search Project		

Name	Files	Refer
⊙ Motivation for volunteering	11	27
○ networking from the volunteer expereince	2	3
○ New Code	2	3
○ New Code (2)	0	0
○ number of shifts	11	25
○ partes who you worked with as part of the volunteer	4	9
○ prepartion for the assessment centre	1	1
○ reason for degree choice	9	18
○ recommendations for improvement	8	18
○ refelcting back on the course actvitities	2	3
○ strengths of the course	6	16
○ strengths of the volunteering	6	28
○ teamowrk expereince	2	2
○ teamworking expereince from volunteering	2	3
○ type of volunteering	3	6
○ type of volunteering (2)	3	6
○ understanding the multi agency service	6	9
○ weaknesses of volunteering expereince	3	14
○ what skills did you develop	8	27