

We are Better Together

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The action man getting Gloucester talking

The city's latest PCSO on chasing criminals in
Jamaica, having conversations with anyone and why
there's no room for egos in policing – pages 2-4



The action man getting Gloucester talking

From jumping out of helicopters and chasing drug smugglers over rocky shores, to being a detective investigating major crime in Jamaica, Andrew Bennett has had an action-packed career so far. But just as rewarding to him as catching a criminal, he's now finding success getting the community to talk to police in Gloucester.



One of the city's Police Community Support Officers, Andrew Bennett has a wealth of experience to draw upon.

At the age of 22 he joined Jamaica Force Constabulary, where he underwent training and graduated in 1999.

He spent two years as a local constable, before joining the narcotics division as a narcotics agent based in Kingston.

The specialised section dealt with drugs offences, and any day or night he could find himself being asked to go in a helicopter to the far region of the island, and search drug smugglers' boats.

Andrew recalled one of the more interesting jobs he was deployed to and said: "I was on a helicopter and we were chasing a go-fast boat, these boats come from Colombia.

"They have massive engines and go very fast, and smugglers would use them to smuggle cocaine from Colombia, South America to Jamaica.

"Because Jamaica is a channel shipment point the drugs would come from Colombia to Jamaica, and then they leave Jamaica to the UK, America or other parts of the world.

"So we were chasing this go-fast boat from out at sea and it came to a rocky shore and the guy jumped off it barefooted on these very pointed rocks and proper legged it.

"The helicopter team came down, we jumped off, and these were proper sharp rocks. I was in my boots and I'm feeling it, and this guy was barefooted."

The team pursued the offender, but he managed to get away and was dealt with at a later time.

Andrew had wanted to be in the army from a young age and follow in his father's footsteps, but as he grew up he realised it was not for him.

He had always liked the police uniform, and has had several different roles in both Jamaica and England, with his current one being as a PCSO covering the Barton and Tredworth areas of Gloucester.

After spending eight years as a narcotics agent, in 2008 he went to work as a detective investigating major crimes including murder, shootings and robberies in the St. Andrew South Division in Kingston.

Being trained as a firearms officer is part of everyone's initiation to the force, as gun crime is an issue on the Caribbean island similar to that of knife crime in the UK.

Andrew said: "On Monday morning you could walk in all dressed up in your nice clothes, shirt and tie, proper shoes and all that, and then be told there's a body been found in some deep ravine or wherever, and you as a local detective have to go there and take charge of the initial investigation. So you could be there all day in quite gruelling conditions.

"I think the main thing we have in Jamaica in some areas is organised crime, gun crime, and that can take up a lot of resources.

"Unlike here where we have knife crime, in Jamaica we have more gun crimes, and that's a major issue in pockets of Jamaican

society so you get a lot of resources being thrown into areas where you have loads of murders and stuff like that.

"It can be quite taxing for the police workforce because sometimes you see all sorts of gruesome scenes.

"I've seen some of my colleagues die in the line of duty, and then again I've seen where police have rescued so many people also too.

"That feeling that you get when you're able to create a difference for a community member or somebody, makes you feel this is why I do this job."

Andrew, aged 45, was born in the parish of St. Elizabeth, an agricultural region in the middle of Jamaica.

He left the island in 2014, and travelled to England where his wife had been residing.

Andrew continued to work in a role which involved the community, and worked as a carer in a care home for people living with learning disabilities.

After that he worked in the NHS in a mental health hospital in Stroud, which supported people with a wide array of mental health related issues.

Even though he soon returned to policing, Andrew still works as a healthcare assistant part-time.

He said: "I like working with people with learning disabilities. Working as a PCSO I come across a lot of persons suffering from mental issues too, so that role links in.

"Working with a person with learning difficulties is about having patience, understanding and communication. That's one of the main things.

"Understanding that person's communication method, and also the patience to take time out for them to understand what you are saying or what they are trying to say.

"And working in communities is all about that, communication and patience."

Policing has always been Andrew's main role and it comes naturally to him - during the early stages of

the pandemic he starting working in Gloucestershire Constabulary's Better Together team on recruitment and diversity.

He said: "When I started there in my opinion there wasn't much in terms of diversity work being done within Gloucestershire Constabulary then, so I think when Sandra [Sandra Samuel, Better Together manager] came on and that team formed, it started to make a difference.

"There's still a lot to do, but I think leaps and bounds has been done since then."

Following his work in the Better Together team, Andrew ended up recruiting himself back into a uniformed role, and started as a PCSO in May 2021, working in Gloucester.

He said: "Within Gloucester there's not a lot of people looking like me within the Constabulary so you know, I think when they see me people realise 'oh, I can be like him, I can come and join'.



PCSOs are people with knowledge and experiences, some of the people here have Masters...

“Black people in general, or people from diverse backgrounds, don't really trust the police. So I'm saying rather than staying on the outside and saying you don't trust, come on board and see if you can cause some change from within.

“It takes some time. Talking to people in the community you'll see it's getting better, there is still far to go, but it's getting better than what it was even two or three years ago.

“Someone from Jamaica would ask 'why would you want to join the police over here?', and I would say 'why not?'

“Why would I not want to join the police over here where you can see me and feel comfortable in talking to me as opposed to somebody who doesn't look like you or anything.

“When he came out he came across a bit passionate about what he was saying, but having that conversation with him, I was able to show him my side of the story.

“And since then, whenever he sees me we say hello and we talk. So it's all about having that communication and that

conversation so you can change the narrative.

“That's what the role of PCSOs do – you're open and people should feel comfortable in talking to you and also as the police, it doesn't matter if the person is passionate or angry or whatever.

“You should be willing to have a conversation with them and try and show them from your point of view, it works. They change their whole narrative.”

The role of a PCSO is a diverse one – you are part of the community, meeting people, helping with welfare issues, attending community events, working with partners, and sometimes a PCSO is the first point of contact for someone speaking to police about an issue.

Andrew said: “Once you see where your input has caused somebody to change a life or even just answer a question for them, that's rewarding in itself.

“Because we live in a society nowadays where people are so anti-social and they don't really talk to people, and if you can, especially in uniform, where

people sometimes are not really open to you, and they come and talk to you, that's rewarding in itself.

“I think PCSOs are still looked upon as though they are not proper police, from the public and also even within the Force sometimes.

“PCSOs are people with knowledge and experiences, some of the people here have Masters and a wealth of knowledge from different roles.

“They have got skills and they choose to do this role because not everybody wants to have arresting powers. More regards should be paid to PCSOs.

“Not everybody has the right attitude to become a police officer, you have to have the right skillset to be a PCSO.

“Where some police officers may have this preconceived notion about some people, as a PCSO you shouldn't have that.

“Forget about ego, egos in policing will get you in trouble. Everyone in the police should treat each person how you would want to be treated.”



Chief Constable national Race Action Plan update

“We can't be having the same conversations 10 years from now” – Gloucestershire Chief Constable Rod Hansen

At the end of August the public survey asking for views on the national Police Race Action Plan closed. It is now incumbent on the service to take on board the feedback and ensure the plan is fit for purpose.

I have already made clear my position on the importance of the plan and how vital it is to eradicating all forms of hatred from our organisation and ideally society. It is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss and one which, here in Gloucestershire, we have already been working with pace and purpose to start implementing it in its current form.

In recent years there have been many steps forward in this county thanks to our Better Together approach, including the introduction of unconscious bias and bystander training, the creation and ongoing contribution of the Community Legitimacy Panel, the work of the independent Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel, radical changes to how we try to recruit from our diverse communities and increased education and events about black history. However, I acknowledge there is still a long way to go.

We mustn't deny the lived experiences of members of minority communities, coupled with the data relating to some areas of policing activity (such as stop and search), which continues to provide evidence of institutional racism as set out in Sir William Macpherson's report.

We will aim to learn from history and improve our education and understanding of what it is like to be on the receiving end of policing – that is our way ahead. It will include, of course, targeting those who continue to believe that discriminatory behaviour is acceptable – it is not – internally or externally.

As Chief Constable, I am determined to ensure we are not having the same conversations 10 years from now and I believe the national Police Race Action Plan provides the detailed map to get us where we need to be.

I believe unequivocally that committing ourselves to becoming an anti-discriminatory organisation is the right thing for us to do. This means not only acting in a non-discriminatory way, but addressing systemic inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination. It fits with our values, with our Corporate Strategy, and in how we want to police our county – with the full consent and support of all the communities who live in Gloucestershire.

I want us to be at peace with our approach to race and inclusion and to be proud that we belong to a Constabulary that acknowledges, in a spirit of humility, our previous mistakes and misjudgements – but which is committed from now on to become an unconditionally anti-racist and anti-discriminatory organisation.

We are truly Better Together.



'A moment to decide'

by Teddy Burton, Chair of Gloucestershire's Community Legitimacy Panel



When, largely through the efforts of Sir Robert Peel as Home Secretary, the Metropolitan Police was established in 1829, the wages of constables were set at a rate comparable to that of an agricultural labourer. Additionally, constables were only armed with a truncheon, and with a rattle to summon help where necessary. Both those factors were aimed at ensuring the police remained 'of the people' and were not seen as an occupying force. It was recognised at the outset that it was important for policing to have legitimacy; not merely having the quality of being done according to law but also to be, and to be seen as, reasonable and acceptable in the eyes of the public. British policing, more widely, adopted this model and prides itself on 'policing by consent'.

However, police legitimacy has come under increasing strain, especially in recent times. For decades, report after report has come to the same conclusion, that black people's experience of policing in Britain needs to be improved. Black communities themselves have been telling anyone who would listen that ours is not the same experience as others. And that was reflected repeatedly in the low levels of confidence expressed in the police, lower than any other group. The problem is that not many people were listening. But when George Floyd was murdered in May 2020, by a police officer in the US, the sentiments around police

violence towards black people and black men in particular, but also towards people from Asian and other ethnic minorities, resonated with communities in the UK, from the most populous cities to the remotest villages. The fact that we were in lockdown at the time enabled our fellow citizens from other backgrounds, who, but for the pandemic, may have otherwise been caught up in the daily bustle of life, to witness this traumatic event. The protests which followed showed the collective call of multicultural Britain for change here at home. The problem of diminishing legitimacy was becoming a problem the police would have to contend with beyond just black communities.

Recognising the need to urgently improve the experience of policing of ethnically diverse communities in Gloucestershire, the Community Legitimacy Panel (CLP) was launched in August 2020. The CLP seeks, within its terms of reference, to hold the Constabulary to account in relation to how it uses its powers towards people of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. We review the Constabulary's work in a wide range of areas, from use of force to recruitment and progression and we make recommendations for policy and operational changes. The panel is comprised of about 20 outstanding, public service oriented individuals from a wide range of backgrounds including students, nurses, educators, lawyers, religious leaders, broadcasters and retired professionals.

Over the past two years, we have reviewed and made recommendations in matters relating to use of force and wrongful arrest, stop and search, body worn video cameras and how additional police powers were used during the height of the pandemic. We have also been active in a myriad of other areas; contributing to discussions at the most senior levels of the police through strategic development forums, hosting public meetings to encourage direct dialogue between the community and the police, engaging a barrister to advise the community on their rights when dealing with the police in various circumstances, seeking to improve relations between the police and the community through the Better Together community sports and fun day, among other activities.

The work of the CLP was cited by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, in its 2021/2022 inspection report, as a significant contributor to Gloucestershire Constabulary's rating as being good at engaging with and treating people with fairness and respect. Nevertheless, we recognise there is a huge deficit of trust and in standards of service to be made up between the police and some communities. That is why we remain resolute in our commitment to make policing in our county a model of good practice by ensuring it is fair, just and reasonable; that it has legitimacy in the eyes of all segments of the community and therefore, will be more likely

to succeed in its stated aim of keeping the public safe. But the goal we pursue cannot be achieved with the work of the CLP alone. It is only possible with the input of all police officers and staff, being willing both to examine and remedy any personal biases, consciously or unconsciously held, and challenging such prejudices as may be observed in their colleagues. It will also require that members of the public, of whatever background, both support the legitimate work of the police and robustly challenge police conduct where it is disproportionate, unprofessional or even unlawful. As one senior police leader put it, 'The work of the police is too important to be left to the police alone'. He is right. We each have our part to play in pursuit, not only of a better police service but also a better society. And we are at our moment to decide whether and how we will.

In the eloquent and timeless words of the poet, James Russell Lowell:

'Once to every man and nation Comes the moment to decide, In the strife of truth and falsehood, For the good or evil side; Some great cause, God's new Messiah, Off'ring each the bloom or blight, And the choice goes by forever Twixt that darkness and that light...

Though the cause of evil prosper, Yet 'tis truth alone is strong; Though her portion be the scaffold, And upon the throne be wrong: Yet that scaffold sways the future, And behind the dim unknown, Standeth God within the shadow Keeping watch above his own.'

Teddy Burton
(Chairman, Community Legitimacy Panel, Gloucestershire)

Interested in joining the CLP?

If you would like to join the panel, please email legitpanelglos@gmail.com or, bettertogetherteam@gloucestershire.police.uk and you will be sent the link with the full application details.

Music Works making dreams come true

The Music Works is a Gloucester based charity whose mission is to transform young lives through music, particularly those in challenging circumstances, helping them reach their full potential in music, in learning, and in life. They work with over 3,000 young people a year from ages eight to 30, in schools and state-of-the-art community rehearsal spaces in Gloucester, Stroud, and the Forest of Dean. They do everything from helping young people get started in music, to supporting emerging artists and running festivals and events.

"The Music Works makes dreams come true! Before I came here, I didn't really know myself, I was a bit quiet and they have really helped show me what I can do outside of my comfort zone, allowing me to stretch my talents and really feel myself," said Lydia, 22.

Inclusion is at the heart of everything at The Music Works. They believe that true musical inclusion can only happen if all young people are supported as musicians across all genres and styles, by leaders who genuinely support them as individuals. The music leaders are creative role models who believe fundamentally that any young person has the potential to be creative. They work to empower any young person regardless of the barriers they may face, helping them to make whatever music they want to make.

In July 2021, The Music Works opened the doors to their brand new fully inclusive community music hub in the heart of Gloucester.

Guy Moot, CEO of Warner Chappell Music, global music publisher and one of the Hub's many sponsors, grew up in Gloucestershire and knows first-hand how challenging it is to become involved with music. "Music should be a route for all young people, and it was really tough for me and others like me at the time [of growing up]. The Music Works' Hub is a game-changer for all the local, undiscovered artists that will now thrive in this space - it will empower them to pursue careers in all areas of music," he said.

Find out more at www.themusicworks.org.uk



Visionary – The rising Gloucester rugby star creating a better tomorrow for the young people of today

Fred Curtis is a member of Gloucestershire's first Youth Advisory Group – a body set up by police and other local agencies to ensure the views of young people are heard. He is studying international relations at the University of Nottingham and is a Gloucester youth rugby player.

Tell us a little about your background

I'm Gloucester born and bred. I come from a single parent household, it's me, my mum and my two brothers. I think one of the key values we have in the family is love and the support of each other because at the end of the day it's all we've got, just us. So, that's something that resonates strongly with me.

What can you tell us about the Youth Advisory Group?

I found out about it through another member, Joanna. She texted me about it. We had a conversation over lockdown, we had all the George Floyd and Black Lives Matter events and she texted me about them because she wanted to hear my opinion and I told her what I felt, my views on it.

Then a few months after she said I'm part of this youth advisory group, I think it would be really good for you – do you want to join?

I didn't know what to expect because I've never had any involvement with police, positive or negative, they don't know me and I don't know them.

But it was really good, a good opportunity for me because the goals and the aims within the group and what we're trying to achieve is something that's really important in today's society, giving a voice to young people to talk about issues and things that they want to see happen in their own communities.

Can you give some examples of how the group is making a practical difference?

We've had a lot of people in, like the Police and Crime Commissioner. He showed us his crime plan. He then came down to talk to us himself. He asked us questions and we asked him questions. He's wanting to take action on what we said.

There was another incidence where we talked about the FLARE app, which allows anyone targeted by sexual assault to report it online. And based on our feedback with it where we've talked about a lack of advertising in schools, it's been a lot more visible and more people have been talking it. It's an example of walking the walk, not just talking the talk.

As the group grows in numbers and status I think a lot more can be done. As it grows and people see the path of the group, that's when it will be a positive force for change.

What are the main issues of concern for young people at the moment?

Knife Crime – nationwide you can see the growth in London, Birmingham and Bristol and it's been dropped into Gloucestershire as well. It's happened.

Drugs, that's another issue that's been dotted around the map of Britain and now you can see it in Gloucestershire. I feel like it's grown so much the police have had to be reactive.

Sex education in school – the lad culture. For me, I play rugby, there's a laddish culture in rugby and you see the positives and negatives of it. I try to distance myself from it – I try not to drink too much, I try to stay away from that. But I think there should be an education in school where boys and girls are taught about values, and things that they should and shouldn't do, consent.

Social media is a factor in many of these issues – what are your thoughts on it?

It's such a difficult, complex thing to analyse because without us

realising it's become our life. So it's difficult. The way I see it, it's a very good place but it's also a very bad place. The pressure you face on social media is unbelievable. You want to go out there and give the very best version of yourself but nine times out of ten you're not in Paris by the Eiffel Tower or you're not in Rome eating pizza – it's impossible. I've grown up with social media but that pressure has forced young people to live a lifestyle that's not theirs.

I love going on Twitter – it's a place where you can learn different things, meet different people and be advised on different issues – but then after the Euros, when England missed the penalties, I already knew the racial abuse all these boys were going to get was going to be unreal and for me, as a black man, to know that another black man is going to get abused because he missed a penalty, is heart-wrenching.

Every social media account should be linked to an ID and passport – it keeps people accountable. Most of the people posting these things are doing it on fake accounts, they create a fake name profile, say this stuff then log out and go into their normal account and pretend nothing happened.

Has anything the Youth Advisory Group raised shocked people?

Drink spiking – I think they were shocked to hear the extent of it and how bad it is. That's a generational thing. The society we live in – it happens now. It shouldn't be a thought you have in your head but the way it's going you know it could happen at any point so I think spiking was a big thing, and harassment in clubs.

What do you make of how our diverse communities view the police at the moment?

The issues around the relationship between the police and communities like the black and Asian communities – those not always seen to be best friends with the police – I think for me there's an opportunity to improve relations. Police are often associated with fear. For me, I don't understand that because police are just people who are there and have a role in society. You don't fear a fireman. You don't fear a paramedic do you? Maybe that's being naïve in my vision of love and society but I really hope you see a society where the police and the people are one, it's not them and us.

What do you see yourself doing in the future?

Alongside studies I play rugby and I was fortunate enough to get a rugby contract with Gloucester Rugby so I'll be playing my rugby at Nottingham Uni and coming down to Gloucester to train up at the academy. It's something I want to take as far as I can. I want to finish my studies, take a year abroad, and have some work experience in a different country – French speaking Canada interests me a lot. I'd also like to go to Africa as that's where my roots lie.

Something in international development – helping out – sharing love, being a good man, working for charities or the civil service or working in an embassy. I haven't been able to narrow it down, even policing to be honest! I've got options and I just need to pick the right ones for me.



People Person

Sandra Samuel's journey has been a tough one but the home manager, mother of four, foster parent and award-winning diversity manager overcome all hurdles and is on a mission to 'change mindsets, empower and motivate'.



I was born in Jamaica, the second eldest out of eight – five brothers and one birth sister, as well as an unofficial adopted sister. We grew up in a little village and always had extended family coming over to visit.

My grandmother would welcome everyone into our home; some stayed long term, others short term. So it is not a surprise I'm in the field of fostering – it's like a trait in the family, looking after and nurturing other people's children. My current husband and I have fostered probably ten or 11 children long term, 15 when you include respite care.

I left Jamaica when I was 17 and came to England with my first husband. I was quite young but I thought I had the love of my life. We were childhood sweethearts. We then started a family and had my first daughter at 18, then my second daughter at 20.

It was tough leaving home at such a young age, but when you are in love nothing else matters. It was also tough and terrifying moving to a different country where the weather was nothing like I had ever experienced in all my life. To show my naivety, I remember when I came here I had flat shoes on with no tights, so I was really cold.

We were given a three-bedroomed property in Hackney where we stayed with my two sister-in-laws. It was so hard for us. We could not afford to buy individual beds so we bought a double bed and shared it. I remember me and my



ex-husband sleeping on the bed base and my two sister-in-laws sleeping on the mattress. At one point it was so cold I used the hairdryer to warm up underneath the blanket.

With two young children we had to juggle child care so my ex-husband worked in the day and I worked at McDonald's in the evening. There were times when I really wanted to go home because I missed my family. My ex-husband had lots of family here but I still felt out of place and isolated.

But I am a homemaker and try to keep families together, so I would have people coming over, his family coming over. We would have barbecues. That's me! Bringing people and communities together even when I don't realise it!

Things got even tougher for me though. I fell pregnant with my third daughter (whom I gave the second name of Bridget, meaning 'strong') but I lived with the threat of miscarriage throughout and was bed ridden for much of it. This was after having a hysterectomy following the birth of my second daughter and being told I would never get pregnant again.

After giving birth my relationship was still rocky so I got a really good contract to work as a manager for McDonald's. I then decided to take the children back home to Jamaica so that I could get support from my family.

We spend one year in Jamaica but my second daughter hated it, hated Jamaica – the upbringing is stricter over there, here they had more freedom. She rebelled and told her dad she wanted to come back. I gave up my job in Jamaica. I decided, well, I'm not living without my children so I'll go home to the UK. I considered it my home by then as I had built the foundation.

When I came back I decided I was going to college so I did a foundation course. I remember this woman saying I wasn't university material. I never challenged her – I wasn't that confident to challenge – but, looking back – what is 'university material'? Straight away she was putting me down and, you know, you tell me something I can't do and I'll show you I can do it.

So I got into university and graduated with a degree in social work studies and during that time I had walked out on my husband, taken my children and ended up on a blow up bed in a one bedroom flat. Then I got my second flat and met my second husband.

I liked the fact my Diploma of Higher Education covered youth and community work because I love people and supporting young people. Social work has a lot of red tape, informal education has no red tape – so you learn through play, through conversation, through challenge – I got into it and loved it – so I worked for the youth service at Hackney, worked at YMCA and then I came down to Wiltshire to visit my cousin.

My future husband and I wanted a change out of London. It was a massive change. We only looked at one property and it was nice and big enough for the family so we decided we were going to buy it.

I applied for a job as a youth participation worker at Bristol City Council then went for a job at Wiltshire Council. I went for a job three times to be youth work manager, and on the third time they recognised my face – they looked at me and said 'oh you've applied for a few jobs' and I said 'yeah, and if I don't get this one I'm going to come back again and again and again'. During my time

there I revamped a youth centre and we went from having about 12 people go to around 100 or so attending.

Later I went for the role of positive action officer at Wiltshire Police.

One of my doubts was we were very anti-police – in the first two months in Wiltshire we were racially profiled. My current husband was a door supervisor. There was an altercation where he worked, he was the only black man and so he was racially profiled because of his background and history during the 'sus' laws.

We live in a middle class community and 11 police officers came and searched our house. They questioned us about how we were able to afford to buy our home and told us that the car we were driving was not good enough for us and we should consider selling it.

People often ask me why I am working for the police – my response is that I accepted the role in policing because I wanted to change the mindset for my children and my grandchildren. I don't want them to go through the things my husband and I experienced.

I felt I can make a difference and if we all take a step we will make that difference but when we shy away and say 'policing is racist' then we have to ask what are we going to do about it? We were always on the outside looking in so how about getting inside and making the change on the inside.

When certain things happen, like child Q, it has a massive impact. I'm not just dealing with protected characteristics I'm thinking of myself as a black woman – those things knock you for six.



I think things are progressing – it's a very slow pace but we are progressing.

You look at our figures in Gloucestershire and we do have more people from diverse backgrounds applying. We are making a difference even though sometimes it's hard to see.

My biggest frustration right now is trying to get people to recognise and apply 'diversity and inclusion first aid'. It's like checking someone's blood pressure, breathing. When you apply those principles to mental health you may find out when our diverse workforce is feeling deflated and why that is. We're on this hamster wheel all the time and we're getting worn out. It's good supportive leadership and it's about keeping people in the organisation. It's also about progression because if you're checking in you'll find out where people are and where they want to get to in their career.

Reverse mentoring is my one of proudest achievements, which is something we delivered in Wiltshire Police and has now been embraced here. This is the reversal of the traditional mentoring model where the more senior individual takes on the mentee role to gain fresh insight. Those from under-represented groups share their journey – that might mean explaining what it is to be a Muslim for instance, how that impacts someone's life, how they do their job. The mentee gets to understand what that person has been through, developing empathy and changing their attitude but then influencing change in the organisation. The mentees are in a position to change policy and make sure the workforce understands difference.

I enjoy what I do. I love people and once we get into this mindset of treating people with humanity then I think we're in a better world.

The police can be for everyone – but there’s still a long way to go

Troy Harrison is a third-year journalism student at the University of Gloucestershire. Originally from Halesowen, his interest in comic books was a gateway to writing stories about his community. From the age of six, he found his talent in writing stories, now, at 21, it has matured into writing for different platforms while studying for his degree. Here he shares his recent experiences meeting police officers during a media exercise at the university.



My experience when spending the day with Gloucestershire’s police officers was not what I expected. Growing up as a young black male in the United Kingdom you have very different perceptions of the police. I was raised to be mindful of my actions and observe caution when interacting with the police.

I reflect back to incidents involving my older brother when he would be stopped and searched regularly when picking me up from primary school. I recall a similar incident happening to my mother – unfortunately, she was involved in a road traffic accident with her car and called the police. However, instead of supporting her, the police told her to get out of her car and go into the back of a police van, all because they thought (and I quote) “she was going to overpower a young officer”.

These personal experiences were put into perspective following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, as injustice was no longer something that people who looked like me could tolerate. I quickly realised that the authorities who were supposed to protect everyone in the community were in actual fact seen as intimidating to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Being a victim of unnecessary stop and search, I made a conscious decision to not wear hooded clothing because there is almost an unconscious guilt when walking past a police officer – you haven’t done anything wrong, but all of the bad experiences outweigh the good ones.

Therefore, when my journalism lecturers revealed that we were going to be working with Gloucestershire Constabulary, a cold shiver went down my spine. I always thought if I stayed out of the police’s way and kept my head down I would be fine, now I had no choice but to spend the whole day with a group of officers.

However, when I finally met the officers and briefed each of them on the day, the officers made it clear that they could trust me with their space, and I felt I could trust them with mine. Each officer asked me about my university course to break the ice, but the real benefit of interacting with the officers was that they listened to me and respected what I had to say. They made me feel welcome, and the anxiety that I was holding onto was quickly being proved wrong.

This particular group of officers were a shining example representing Gloucestershire Constabulary. They made everyone on the course feel welcome, but I think there is still work to be done when it comes to the police force and engaging with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

The police should visit more schools around the Cheltenham and Gloucester area, starting conversations with young minorities about how they want to interact with the police. The police should support minority-owned businesses, giving them a chance to explain how they could enrich the community. Finally, social media could be a great way to talk to different organisations about different minorities and their relationships with the police.

The officers I met broke the stigma, but that doesn’t change the fact that black people are seven times more likely to be subjected to a stop and search in the UK. The Gloucestershire officers showed me that the police could be for everyone... but instances like the shooting of Chris Kaba are bleak reminders that there’s still a long way to go.



‘The best thing I have been involved in’ – mentor gives his views on ‘reverse mentoring’ scheme

Detective Constable and Chair of the Gloucestershire Ethnic Minority Association, Rob Brown, was sceptical of reverse mentoring when first introduced to the idea.

Reverse mentoring is when someone from a marginalised group uses their voice and shares their experiences with senior leaders, with the hope of spreading awareness and evoking change within the organisation towards greater diversity and equality.

Rob said: “I was very cynical – obviously being black myself I just thought this was another scheme for someone else to get promoted off the back of.”

However he was keen to encourage change.

Working in policing and being black can be challenging. Police across the country do not have a positive reputation or track-record with the public when it comes to race equality.

Rob wanted to be part of something to help improve that. He said: “The initiative was to break down barriers and to get senior management aware of issues around race – I thought to myself, if I don’t take part, I have no right to moan if they get things wrong. I wouldn’t have a leg to stand on.

“Get involved or don’t moan was the way I saw it. If it doesn’t work, at least I can say I took part and I tried. So that’s where I started.”

However the initial meeting of Rob and his fellow reverse mentors didn’t go far in changing his scepticism about the scheme.

He said: “I didn’t like the first day of our training. They wanted us to have our photograph taken together and I thought here we go again, another PR bit.

“We always have to have photos of the ethnics all together to make everything look hunky-dory and that we’re doing so well with diversity within the Force. So I refused to have my photograph taken as I thought I didn’t come here for this.”

Rob found himself navigating the fine line between wanting to represent the communities he serves and feeling diversity was becoming the new ‘greenwashing’ – where people of colour are showboated for the sake of appearances.

Off to a slightly rocky start, and with a sceptical mind-set, Rob was pleasantly surprised.

Reflecting on the conversations he has gone on to have with his mentees he’s proud, and certain they made a real difference.

Rob added: “We discussed my life, my perspective, what things are like at work. They went on to talk about their families.

“It was interesting – a lot of them took away what we had been talking about and then went home and discussed it with their families. I was glad to see that seed had been planted and was blossoming out.

“One of the mentees was quite emotional – our conversations were very full and frank. I just tell it how it is. I told them how things are seen and viewed from our perspective, and this mentee really hadn’t thought of things that way. It was emotional and powerful.”

On reflection Rob felt that his mind had been entirely turned by reverse mentoring. From initially being wary and cynical as to what change this scheme could actually bring, he now thinks it has been a huge success.

He added: “I think it’s the best thing I have been involved in, in terms of race equality. I was cynical about it, but it was very good and it has certainly changed my mentees.

“It has had a positive effect on equality and there are not many times you can say that unfortunately within policing.”

Hundreds from Gloucester take part in Community Sports and Fun Day



More than 500 people from Gloucester turned out for the Better Together Community Sports and Fun Day this summer.

Families from across the surrounding area took part in an afternoon of sports and activities at Ribston Hall High School on 28 July.

The event was organised by the Community Legitimacy Panel (CLP) and Gloucestershire Constabulary to celebrate the wide diversity in our communities and to build trust between the Constabulary and the communities it serves.

As well as basketball, football and netball competitions, young and old were invited to have a go at scaling a climbing wall, competing in a tug-of-war, petting the police horses and getting behind the wheel of a police car.

A top barrister was also on hand to give advice and guidance regarding stop and search.

Among those coming along with their family was Adam Lewis and his 10-year-old daughter, Sarah.

Adam said: "It's great to see the police taking the time to speak to the community and to learn more about what they are doing. It's especially nice that children, like Sarah, are able to come along and learn more."

Sarah added: "I really liked meeting the horses and being able to sit in the police car. I didn't know how much the police actually do."

Kate Powell had seen a flyer for the event and was intrigued to find out more. She said: "I wanted to

learn more about the work being done with the community by the local police.

"I know they work hard, but so often it's behind the scenes. You don't realise quite how much is really happening. It was really interesting talking to officers about their role in the community."

Six-year-old Thomas Keating was there with his family, sister Jo and mum Karen. He said: "I really enjoyed watching the football – they were really good. I want to be a policeman one day, so I liked talking to them [the police officers] about catching bad people."

Teddy Burton, chairman of the CLP, emphasised the need for the police and the community to have positive interactions. He said: "When most people interact with the police, it will be in stressful situations.

"But since the job of keeping people safe from harm requires an interdependence between the police and the communities it serves, events such as this one are essential in building trust by just interacting on a human level through sports, music, sharing a meal and also having honest conversations about our rights and duties."

Chief Superintendent Jane Probert said: "This was a fantastic event showing once again that we are better together and that we have more in common than we have differences.

"Our communities have a rich heritage of drawing people together regardless of background and our great diversity only helps to make us stronger."



Why working in diversity is for me

by Anka Jablonska, Positive Action Officer, Gloucestershire Constabulary



It was not a surprise for me, friends and family that I ended up working in diversity, equality and inclusion. Since I can remember I had a huge desire to ensure everyone was treated with fairness, dignity and respect regardless of their background.

I also studied social sciences so there is a natural interest in different cultures and communities, differences and commonalities. So that is the passion element. Then there are lots of skills, knowledge and experience that I bring to this role from working in HR, marketing research and the customer service field.

Another reason was challenge and change – I knew it would not be easy as our role is very complex and includes increasing the trust and confidence of our communities and our existing staff while increasing representation across our workforce and ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment. But despite this (or maybe because of this) I wanted to be part of the change that needs to happen if we really want to be an inclusive and diverse organisation. It is a long term commitment in shifting the culture and everyone has their part to play.

I also get to work with an amazing team – Ati, Atira and Sandra, inspirational, supportive and passionate women. What is not to like?

We are 'Better Together' and if we treat people with dignity, respect and fairness the world will be a better place.

There is much more to come so watch this space!

Gloucester FM – the radio station building a stronger community

Gloucester FM community radio station is the county's longest running community radio station, founded in 1999.

A not-for-profit organisation run and managed by volunteers, it relies on advertising, donations and the good will of those who offer their time for free, some of whom have been with GFM since it started.

It serves a culturally diverse area and gives local residents a chance to get involved and become a voice in their community by being presenters, committee members, news readers or interviewers, preparing them for employment or further education.

An underlying ethic at GFM is the core belief that involvement in radio can do a great deal for people in gaining tangible skills and building confidence as well as wider social and life skills.

The station helps build a stronger community, giving opportunities to local people, a platform for public, private and community organisations to deliver important messages and listeners the chance to hear vital information, ask questions and learn more about issues that affect them.

To learn more visit: www.gloucesterfm.com

RESPECTFUL POLICING COMMANDS THE RESPECT OF THE COMMUNITY

“This was a very difficult policing operation – there’s a lot of context that sits around it and I believe we did the right thing... No regrets”

Said Superintendent Andy Bennett of Avon and Somerset Police. Policing strategy at this historic moment took public feeling into account and these strategic choices resulted in a greater global understanding around the reasons why the protesters wanted the statue removed and prevented further disruption from the public who were in attendance. Ultimately, the Colston Four were found not guilty of criminal damage.



Stroud Against Racism is a grassroots, anti racist organisation with the mission of replacing systemic racism with a system of equality and equity.

Visit www.stroudagainstracism.co.uk for more details

Photo: Adrian Boliston from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/boliston/51235720672>



**Gloucestershire
Constabulary**



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If you would like to provide any feedback on this magazine please email BetterTogetherTeam@gloucestershire.police.uk