

Centre for Policing Research and Learning

Annual report 2023



In 2023 the Centre for Policing Research and Learning achieved:

Over £1 million

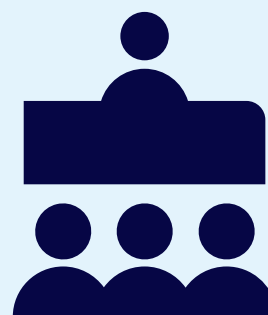
awarded in external grants



56

Academic Publications

Centre for Policing
Research and Learning
research presented at
14 conferences



31

knowledge exchange
events

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Foreword

Dr Nick Caveney and Dr Emma Williams

The Centre for Policing Research and Learning (CPRL) is an effective collaboration between the Open University (OU) and 23 UK police services. We are proud to have police membership from across the four nations of England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. Through robust research and learning, the Centre aims to create and apply knowledge to support policing for the public good. In the summer of 2023, Dr Emma Williams took over the role of Academic Director when Professor Jean Hartley stood down. This presented a great opportunity for the Centre to continue from a position of strength, building upon many previous triumphs. Over the last year the work undertaken across learning, knowledge into practice and research continues to thrive in CPRL and we aim to ensure the work we do is aligned with the key needs of the police – our partners.

Policing continues to experience many challenges. The publication of the Casey Review re-surfaced several issues which threaten police legitimacy and public trust, particularly amongst vulnerable communities. Retaining officers who enter the organisation both as new police constable recruits and those who enter under the detective pathway has been problematic. The workforce is now predominantly young in service and in age across the country and this presents challenges for effectiveness, and the retention of practical policing experience.

Ensuring the relationship between internal wellbeing and procedural justice, and external public legitimacy remains a critical requirement for policing. Despite much organisational investment, public confidence remains fragile. Investment in police officer numbers has been outstripped by a growing and increasingly complex demand base. New technological and digital advances create opportunities and risks for the police. Developments move at pace and the need for policing to maintain currency is challenging to achieve.

This is all happening when a further wave of austerity measures is likely; efficiencies, understanding what works, and evidence-based solutions must be centre stage as services make difficult decisions about local resourcing and priorities. It is for these reasons that the work of the Centre is so critical as it harnesses the expertise from the multiple disciplines of the Open University and bridges it for the benefit of policing and the wider public. At its heart the Centre is about making a difference in policing, not simply producing the highest quality research, but turning those insights into learning, and effective change products for policing, and critically then testing the effectiveness of those interventions. This focus on

practical impact is what distinguishes the Centre from other academic-police partnerships.

This annual report features a selection of the work undertaken across 2023 which we consider to be highly relevant for the current policing environment. We have developed core specialisms in areas such as police professionalism, learning and development, violence against women and girls, police wellbeing and demand management to name but a few. The work has fed into key learning material for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) events, the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) curriculum and knowledge into practice events which aim to mobilise knowledge for forces to impact on operational delivery and strategy development. A key highlight for 2023 was the CPRL Engagement Day where the members co-presented on several of these important areas including community trust and confidence, domestic abuse, knowledge into practice and virtual reality in the context of police learning. A special element of this event was acknowledging the memory and work of our previous CPRL Chair Dr Steven Chase and his contribution to the Centre from its early days.

In September 2023, CPRL became aligned with the wider Department for Policing, within the OU's Faculty of Business and Law. This realignment is exciting and further recognises the synergies between research, learning, teaching and knowledge into practice. The focus has been and continues to be defining our strategic priorities for policing with our partners and this will form the basis of our new strategy for policing currently being developed.



Dr Nick Caveney
CPRL Chair, Assistant Chief Constable,
Hertfordshire Constabulary



Dr Emma Williams
CPRL Academic Director,
The Open University

2023 Overview



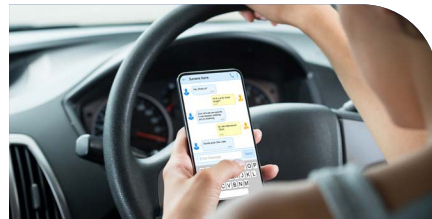
A research project was initiated in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary and with the involvement of a Senior Practitioner Fellow to reduce demand from missing young persons.

The collaborative evaluation of the effects and cost-effectiveness of police-led diversion of people who use drugs got underway with the Centre leading the evaluation of the scheme running across Thames Valley Police.



'Policing at the OU' blog series celebrated International Women's Day with five blogs on relevant research being carried out in support of women and the issues they face.

A journal article authored by two Centre academics was published – A systematic mapping of public health primary prevention interventions with relevance for policing.



The OU hosted a conference on 'distracted driving' and identified how evidence can inform practice through education, enforcement and policy.

The first cohort of North Yorkshire Police's Police Community Support Officers received their Certificate of Higher Education in Community Policing.

January February March April May June



The Centre initiated work investigating the role of 'uncomfortable knowledge' in failures to address long-standing problems negatively impacting on the trustworthiness of UK policing.

The Domestic Abuse Working Group was formed to engage Centre members to share and apply their specialist knowledge and experience to progress research, education, and knowledge into practice in this area.



The Centre's programme of research into the role of the Tutor Constable in the professional socialisation of police recruits completed its third and final phase.

An interactive and innovative theatre-based workshop was held with prosecutors and police officers to further the understanding of evidence-led prosecutions in domestic abuse cases.



The Centre hosted its inaugural Steven Chase memorial annual lecture and presented the Steven Chase award for 'research into practice and practice into research' as part of its member Engagement Day.

Funding received to support the translation of Centre research exploring the challenges faced by women officers during pregnancy, maternity leave and returning to work into policing practice.

2023 Overview



The Centre for Policing Research and Learning and the Police, Organisation and Practice (POP) team became a broader Department for Policing (DfP).

Collaborative research involving Centre academics and West Midlands Police into Body Worn Camera footage and the use of force nears completion.



The Centre's involvement in Operation Soteria (embedding officer learning, development and wellbeing for Rape and Serious Sexual Assault investigators) continued into a third year with the award of just under £1 million additional funding.



The Centre won a bid to partner with the All-Wales Policing Academic Collaboration to evaluate a police perpetrated violence against women advocacy support pilot.

North Yorkshire Police graduate officers presented their evidence-based research projects at the College of Policing's Leadership and Workforce Summit.

July

August

September

October

November

December



An exciting workshop was held with Centre members to identify key capabilities – the skills, judgements, and behaviours – that support effective partnership working across different types of organisation.

Research was completed that demonstrated the use of a virtual reality courtroom as a valuable learning tool for preparing police officers to give evidence in court.



The first cohort of Police Constable Degree Apprentices from North Yorkshire Police graduated.

The Centre's four module course 'Police strategic and applied leadership in data and technology' – concluded with a masterclass on reducing hindrance stress for officers and staff.



A captivating fourth series of The Met, co-produced by the Open University and the BBC, aired its final episode.

The Centre launched a new format for its research seminars under the brand 'CPRL Collaborative' with December's seminar focused on widening, deepening and evidencing research impact.

January

Redesigning the response to reports of missing young persons

Dr Paul Walley

In January 2023, CPRL welcomed Inspector Emma Bilsdon from Hertfordshire Constabulary as a Senior Practitioner Fellow to work alongside Dr Paul Walley on a project to reduce police demand from missing young persons. The project was funded by the Open University's Open Societal Challenges programme which has been set up to develop research that has social impact.

Under-18s are especially vulnerable when going missing as they may be exposed to exploitation or groomed into criminal activity. The project started with a scoping study that explored the evidence-base within the literature about how to effectively deal with missing persons. This phase uncovered 75 articles and reports that included topics such as the patterns of disappearance, causes and responses to missing incidents, the vulnerability of those missing or prevention attempts. This gave the team a clear view about their next steps.

The second phase of the work used over 9,000 records of missing incidents to address three research questions:

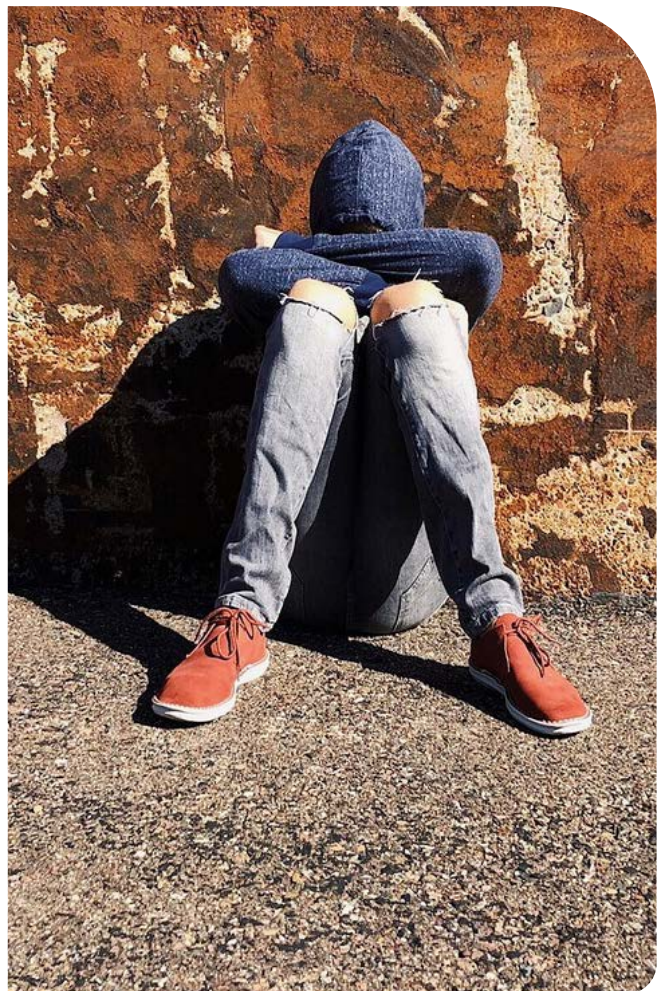
1. What action can prevent children, who are at most risk, from going missing?
2. What activities can agencies undertake when a child goes missing that are most likely to ensure the return of a child to a safe environment?
3. What follow up activities to a missing episode, in a child, is most likely to prevent repeat missing episodes from occurring?

Hotspot analysis and assessment of children who repeatedly went missing (up to 72 times in a year for the most frequent) identified key issues that needed to be addressed. Workshops were also held to map the process of how missing incidents were dealt with. Findings included:

- › 10% of children who went missing most frequently in 2022 accounted for 54% of all missing incidents, showing that there is a small number of children most responsible for most of the demand
- › Some children have periods of time when they repeatedly go missing, until the underlying cause is resolved.

Hertfordshire Constabulary have historically been highly proactive in addressing some aspects of demand reduction prior to this research, including addressing how missing incidents are reported. However, there is more work to integrate the police activities with those in other public services and some charity organisations, Emma Bilsdon was enthusiastic about her time working in CPRL:

"I would encourage anyone thinking about applying for future secondments to do it. The experiential learning I gained will steer how we undertake future evidence-based projects."



Bilsdon, E. and Walley, P. (2023) [Redesigning the response to reports of missing young persons. Can demand be prevented?](#) Report. Centre for Policing Research and Learning, The Open University, Milton Keynes, May.

January

Evaluating Thames Valley's Police Drug Diversion scheme

Dr Helen Glasspoole-Bird and Dr Emma Williams

Dr Helen Glasspoole-Bird and Dr Emma Williams are working on a process evaluation of Thames Valley Police's drug diversion (PDD) scheme – a pre-arrest scheme that diverts adults caught in possession of illegal drugs away from criminal justice pathways towards education, treatment or support (as needed) with an 'out of court' disposal which does not create a criminal record. The project is headed up by Professor Alex Stevens at the University of Kent, and there is a collaboration with a range of partners including the College of Policing, the National Police Chiefs' Council, police forces, universities, government bodies and a lived experience charity. It is due to complete in March 2025 and is a £1.8 million project funded by the Cabinet Office's Evaluation Accelerator Fund. The findings will inform the Government's spending review.

Collaborating with researchers from other universities (University of Kent, Loughborough University, and the University of Sheffield), three different schemes are under evaluation: Durham Constabulary, Thames Valley Police (TVP) and West Midlands Police; CPRL is leading the evaluation of the TVP scheme. The project utilises data already collected by the police, NHS, and drug treatment services to assess the impacts of diversion on crime, hospitalisation numbers and engagement with drug treatment. The project compares the outcomes for people eligible for diversion in the three areas to the outcomes of similar people in matched areas which do not yet use PDD (Humberside Police, Hampshire Constabulary and Greater Manchester Police).

Both Helen and Emma contributed to the development of a **Theory of Change** that underpins the evaluation and, following an in-person workshop with police, diversion partners and researchers from a lived experience charity, they also contributed to a **manual** written to explain how each of the three PDD schemes across the three participating forces should be implemented in practice to achieve a range of legislative outcomes.

The process evaluation is working within a realist evaluation framework – it is looking not just at how the PDD scheme is operating but also exploring in what context and for whom. Work to date has included interviews with 32 participants including: strategic and operational TVP police officers of various ranks and roles; the PCC; out of court disposal team leads; managers and facilitators of diversion partners. Emerging findings include the importance of individual needs assessments, effective multi-agency working and the role of individual motivation and engagement in the diversion process.

Helen has presented [this work](#) at the Eurocrim conference in Florence in September and it is anticipated that this project will lay the foundation for future presentations of crime and health outcomes and of cost and equity effects when the research concludes in March 2025.



February

Investigating the role of 'uncomfortable knowledge' in failures to address long-standing problems harming the trustworthiness of UK policing

Dr Ben Bowles and Professor Mark Fenton-O'Creevy

An online workshop with 80 Centre academics and police partners explored the current state of police legitimacy and issues impacting on public confidence. The theme of 'uncomfortable knowledge' emerged as an area of interest to explore further. Uncomfortable knowledge refers to information that an organisation 'knows' at some level but uses strategies of obfuscation to avoid. Some of these strategies are [Steve Raynor's](#) (2012) 'four D's' – denial, dismissal, diversion, and displacement. An evidence summary report was produced by Professor Mark Fenton-O'Creevy and Dr Ben Bowles on 'The role of 'uncomfortable knowledge' in failures to address long-standing problems harming the trustworthiness of UK policing'.

It drew on prior evidence on the role of failure to address uncomfortable knowledge in failures and crises in organisations, ranging from investment banks to the civil service. This report was also informed through a workshop with police officers on the issue.

A [paper](#) was presented on this work (Fenton-O'Creevy and Bowles, 2023) at a meeting of the Permanent Study Group on The Politics and Management of Policing and Public Safety at the annual conference of the European Group for Public Administration in Zagreb, receiving a good amount of interest and enquiries for potential collaboration from international policing organisations.

In November 2023, at a CPRL Collaborative Research Seminar event at the Open University, the findings from the evidence report were explored further with CPRL members and led to a discussion on the ways in which uncomfortable knowledge is experienced in the context of their police forces.

Work continues on ways to deepen the evidence base connecting uncomfortable knowledge to policing through drawing on existing research in CPRL and public documents such as the Casey Report. This includes working with Professor Tom Cockcroft on how work on the Centre's Tutor Constables research programme could demonstrate examples of uncomfortable knowledge in action, and working with Dr Linda Maguire and Richard Harding to explore how the Centre work on Operation Soteria can further enhance the evidence base. A paper, drawing together insights from across these Centre projects, is in production for publication later in 2024.



February

Inaugural meeting of the Domestic Abuse Working Group

Dr Anna Hopkins

The Domestic Abuse Working Group (DAWG) held its inaugural meeting in February 2023 on Teams. Since then, the group has met quarterly and has been consistently well attended by Domestic Abuse (DA) leads from over 10 forces, as well as representation from the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Taskforce, the DA lead for the National Police Chiefs' Council and OU academics specialising in DA related research.

Chaired by [Dr Anna Hopkins](#), this group has been instrumental in engaging member forces in discussions on various issues relating to domestic abuse some of which include: attrition rates in DA, suicide and DA, police perpetrated DA, strategic threat, risk and harm assessment, evidence-led prosecutions in DA, and the issues of DA orders including the digital considerations of these orders.

The aim of the group is to progress research, education, and knowledge into practice about this area of policing. The group encourages knowledge sharing between member forces and academia.

Academic articles on selected and relevant topics are shared and discussed, as well as DA specialised academics presenting their current and ongoing research on DA related topics. This structure allows for simultaneous knowledge exchange between DA leads and academics between the police-based and academic-based presentations.

Member forces identify topics for discussion and identify those forces who are actively engaged in these topics, requesting them to present a short overview of the relevant work they have been engaged in. These presentations then follow with ample opportunity for a question-and-answer session on both.

In addition, there has been a strong sense of cross-force communication and sharing of various DA related initiatives and pilot projects. Forces have gained great insight into how other forces are managing the topical issues within the policing of DA by attending the meetings.



March

Policing blog

Dr Jennifer Norman

Led by Simon Hull, academics within the Department of Policing have now set up a 'Policing at the OU' blog site, that hosts blogs from OU academics about their work. These have included blogs from Frances Wright, Simon Hull, Emma Williams, and Jennifer Norman across the department. A link to the blog site can be found [here](#). The Department have also developed a special series from Policing Insight last year which featured blog posts about continuing professional development. These blogs continued in both Policing Insight and Policing Matters this year.

An example of this work includes the International Women's Day blog series. Throughout March 2023, a special series of the Policing at the OU blog was published in recognition of International Women's Day and their theme to 'embrace equity' - to recognise that equality and equity are different things and to highlight the fact that women face particular challenges and barriers in their lives that prevent them from fulfilling their opportunities.



The following five blog posts shared details about the relevant work being carried out in the Department for Policing at the OU in support of women and the issues they face. Each of the below blog posts was published on the OU Policing blog page and in Policing Insight – an international online publication which 'provides a platform for latest thinking in policing from around the world' (<https://policinginsight.com/about/>).

[Celebrating International Women's Day at OU Policing](#)

Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn and Dr Anna Hopkins

[Happy International Women's Day – Researching the police response to victim-survivors of domestic abuse](#)

Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn and Dr Anna Hopkins

[The motherhood penalty: Evidence of maternal bias in the workplace and why policing needs to do more](#)

Kendal Wright and Dr Keely Duddin

[When girls 'Go Country': Criminal exploitation of younger women and girls](#)

Dr Shona Morrison and Daryl Baguley

[Equipping officers to make women safer from Rape and Serious Sexual Offences \(RASSO\) – Insights from Operation Soteria Bluestone](#)

Dr Emma Williams, Dr Linda Maguire, Dr Arun Sondhi and Richard Harding

If Centre members have an idea for a future blog series for Policing Insight or would like to blog on our Policing at the OU blog site, please contact oupc@open.ac.uk.

March

A systematic mapping of public health primary prevention interventions with relevance for policing

Dr Arun Sondhi

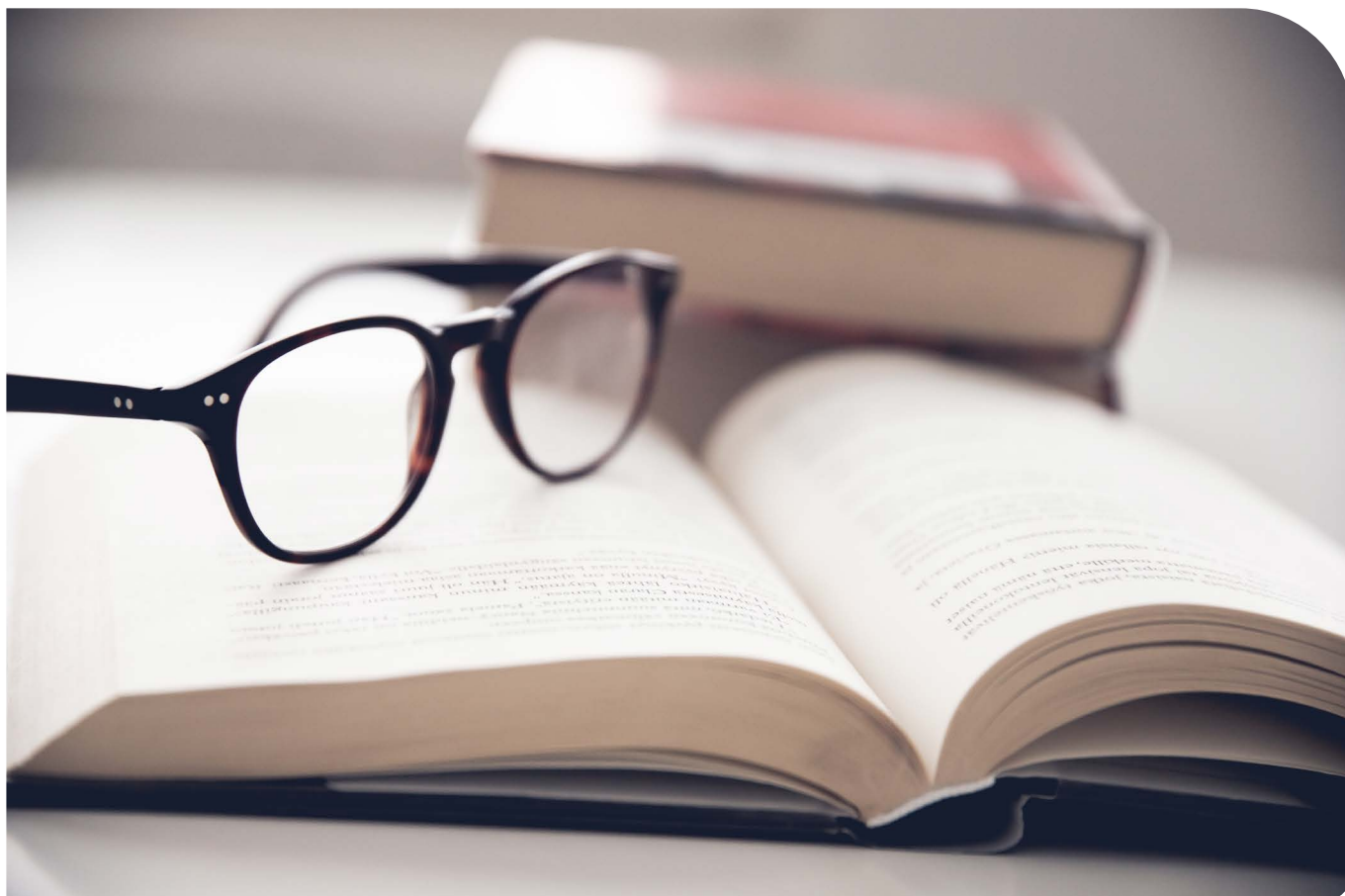
Two researchers from CPRL, Dr Arun Sondhi and Dr Emma Williams, had a [paper](#) published on their work (commissioned by the College of Policing) to understand how policing can contribute towards the primary prevention of illicit, problematic or antisocial behaviours ranging from violent crime to substance misuse. Primary prevention initiatives aim to intervene before an adverse impact occurs by changing future risky behaviours (for example, by preventing young people's exposure to illicit substances or stopping the likelihood of a future mental health illness).

Empirical reviews of the evidence base were systematically mapped, focusing on public health initiatives relevant to policing. In total, 134 studies were included in the final assessment. The majority of primary prevention initiatives were focused on preventing violent crime (53%), substance misuse, including alcohol consumption (37%) and mental health distress (27%).

Few of the studies addressed domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, hate crime, road traffic accidents, terrorism, and white-collar crimes, suggesting gaps in our knowledge of what works in primary prevention. Prevention initiatives ascribed to parenting, family-based, and school-based interventions were found to have some efficacy. The study findings indicate that there are fundamental issues in defining what a primary intervention is.

The thematic analysis identified that few studies could describe the causal mechanisms underpinning behaviour change. Further work is required to develop high-quality, robust evaluations of primary interventions that can determine a causal inference, and there is a need to identify further factors associated with behaviour change.

This work contributed to the Policing and Health Collaboration Landscape Review that identified four areas for further development, including policy and systems, evidence for primary prevention, public health practice and best practice research methods at the intersection of public health and policing.



April

Researching the role of the Tutor Constable

Dr Ben Bowles

This year, the Centre's programme of research into the role of the Tutor Constable in the professional socialisation of police recruits completed its third and final phase.

Phase 1 of this research programme took the form of a national mapping exercise of tutoring practice across all 43 forces ([Cockcroft et al., 2022](#)). Phase 2 focused on the Tutor Constable experience in five forces operating a range of tutoring models ([Cockcroft et al., 2023](#)). Phase 3 of the Tutor Constables research extended the question of how effective current learning and development processes are for the professional socialisation and enskilment of new recruits beyond the 'tutor phase' and into the post-tutoring period of on-the-job workplace assessment by professional assessors. The report to the national police Uplift team in April 2023 ([Bowles et al., 2023](#)) reviewed good practice in workplace assessment from comparator professions and used case studies from three police forces to identify issues in workplace assessment within policing, as well as areas of current strong practice.

The research has already proved useful in informing guidance for tutoring and workplace assessment. Peter Ward from Uplift commented that:

"The research carried out by CPRL looking at work-based assessment and learning practices for new recruits as part of the Police Uplift Programme has helped the service to have a far deeper understanding of this complex issue across policing. As a result, the College of Policing will use this three-phased research programme as evidence to guide the service enhancing practices in the workplace learning and strengthening the revised police officer entry routes. The flexibility and ongoing support from the research team at CPRL has been exceptional throughout".

A meeting was held in Birmingham in May 2023 to mark the end of the Tutor Constables research programme and to disseminate results. This included a guidance document summarising principles for the effective tutoring and assessment of new recruits in policing.

In addition, this research programme directly informed Greater Manchester Police's Tameside Division's initiation of an Academy to support the training of new recruits in the phase of their career immediately post-tutoring. CPRL undertook an evaluation of the Academy initiative in late 2023 and are due to report on this additional research in March 2024.

Further impact of the Tutor Constables research includes its integration into curriculum design for tutor training by North Yorkshire Police. Dr Jennifer Norman said:

"The Tutor Constable research undertaken by CPRL is insightful and contributes to our working knowledge about the needs of tutors supporting new apprentices throughout their probationary period. Within North Yorkshire Police and the Open University partnership we are intending to use this research to further enhance the development provision for officers who undertake tutorship within their role. The research itself is evidence of the need to support and invest in Tutor Constables as a priority, given the complex and challenging nature of the Tutor Constable role, the current environment policing is operating within, and the challenges of ensuring that the support provided to new officers meets their needs".



April

To evidence or not that is the question: Furthering the understanding of Evidence-Led Prosecutions in Domestic Abuse

Dr Anna Hopkins

The collaborative research with Merseyside Police (as the national lead force in this area), was funded through the National Police Chiefs' Council Science Technology Analysis and Research (STAR) funding stream.

The project sought to address:

- › The benefits and challenges of using Evidence Led Prosecutions (ELPs)?
- › How victims of Domestic Abuse (DA) experience ELPs?
- › How police investigate ELPs and identify difficulties in doing so?
- › The main considerations in contemplating the prosecution of an ELP?

Victims with experience of ELPs and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) were interviewed, and police case files were analysed comparing 50 ELP cases against 50 non ELP cases. Some of the findings showed:

- › being subjected to an ELP affected victims both positively and negatively
- › a disjoint existed between CPS and police officers' expectations and understandings of ELP prosecutions
- › officers struggled to capture the more nuanced evidence such as the emotional states of victims where the descriptions of which are often a required element within a hearsay statement when the victim does not support the prosecution
- › The most common offence type in the ELP case files was common assault where the risk levels were typically lower than the non ELP case files.

The main findings were showcased in a one-day innovative and interactive workshop in April 2023. Dr Anna Hopkins and Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn hosted the invitation-only event aimed primarily at prosecutors and police officers. The day featured live and interactive theatre performances enacting some of the typical ELP-based scenarios with a view to improving the practical understanding of what constitutes an effective ELP. This innovative knowledge transfer event produced rich discussions about the scenarios with delegates strategically placed to ensure learning from different professional viewpoints.

The use of theatre in research projects has become an increasingly important and valuable mechanism to encourage effective and engaging knowledge transfer in the dissemination of research findings (Rossiter et al, 2008).



Delegates were organised into mixed tables to generate discussions from their different viewpoints and priorities when it comes to evidence gathering. Theatre company 'Jo Haydock Theatre and Training' performed three scenarios that were typically found in ELP police case files. The scripts were co-produced by Jo Haydock and Anna ensuring they were properly produced from a theatrical point of view and were drawing upon the findings of the ELP project. The third scenario included 'forum theatre' which allows the audience to participate and input into how the interaction between police officers and victims should ideally look like.

Anna received further STAR funding to develop this project further which will involve analysis of ELPs across three forces in England and will include further interviews with victims, police focus groups, police decision-makers and CPS prosecutors. Three further workshops across the forces are due to be held in 2024 to understand what good evidence looks like in the absence of a victim reporting, particularly at the point of officers' first arrival at the scene.

May

Distracted driving

Professor Gemma Briggs

In May 2023, the OU hosted a conference, entitled 'Distracted driving: time to refocus', co-funded by the OU and The Road Safety Trust.

80 delegates attended, made up of police practitioners, government organisations, policy makers, road safety professionals, road safety charities and academics. Speakers presented academic research, practitioner perspectives on enforcement and accounts of personal experience of being a victim of road harm. The day was a great success, enabling networking between academics and practitioners, feeding into new workplace policy recommendations, and forging new working relationships.

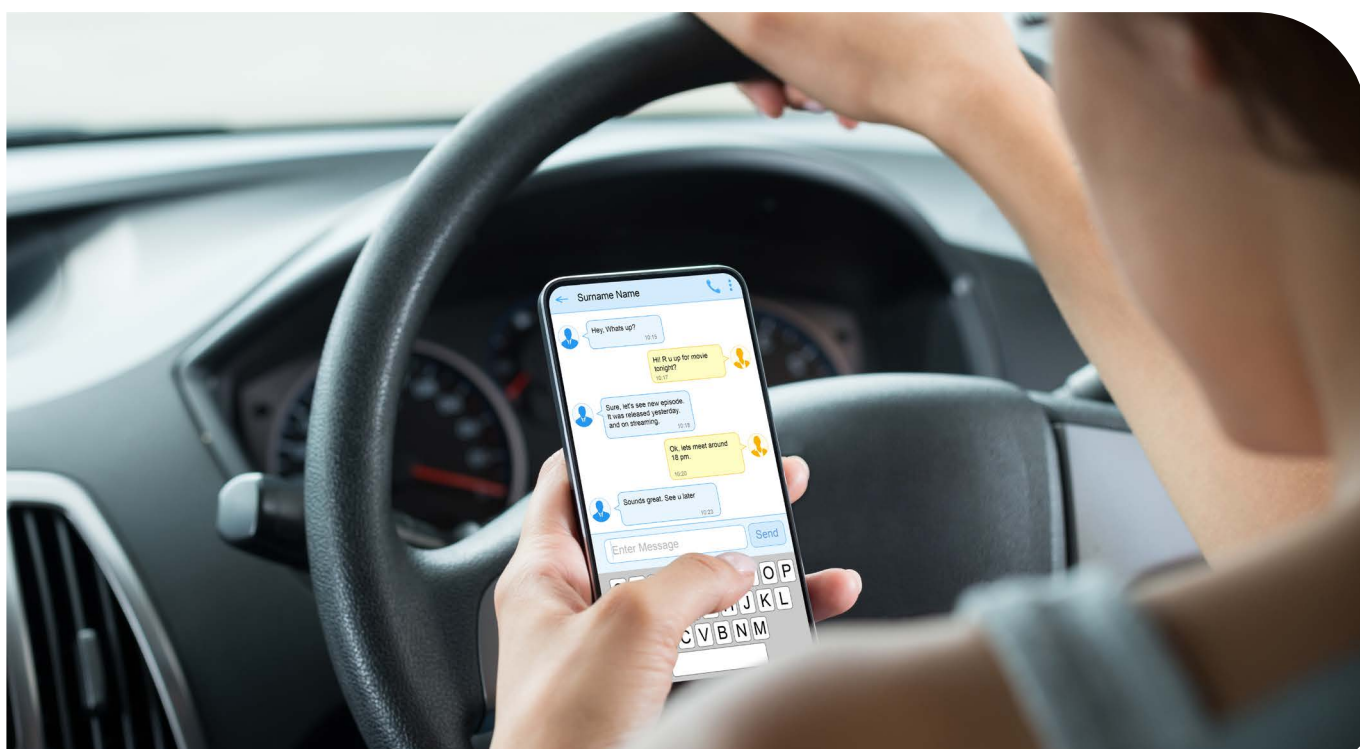
At the conference, the preliminary findings of a collaborative research project with Professor Gemma Briggs (OU), Dr Helen Wells (Keele University) and Dr Leanne Savigar-Shaw (Staffordshire University), entitled 'We need to talk about handsfree' were presented. The project explored the issue of police officer understanding of the dangers of handsfree phone use, and how this understanding impacted on their interactions with drivers observed using their mobile phone. This research was completed in December 2023 and findings revealed that officers regularly encounter mobile phone offenders, and many suggested the use of handsfree systems in future. Officers, motivated by a wish to improve road safety, said they often provide roadside advice to offenders on compliance with the law. As a high

proportion of officers believed handsfree phone use to be safer than handheld use, and the police role is to enforce the letter of the law, these findings are understandable. However, after receiving evidence-based education on the equal dangers of handsfree phone use, officer attitude demonstrably shifted, with 72% of officers saying they would offer advice to offenders in future about avoiding handsfree use and 79% saying they would explain why handsfree use is problematic, based on the information they learned in the intervention.

The findings demonstrate a clear motivation on the part of police officers to promote both safety and legality. The team have provided a set of recommendations to the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), including the suggestion that officers are instructed not to promote handsfree phone use as a safe alternative to illegal phone use.

Chief Constable Jo Shiner, the NPCC lead for Roads Policing commented:

"I welcome any research which progresses our understanding of risk and how it can be removed from our roads. This is a positive step forward in terms of preventing harm and reducing fatal and serious collisions. This work should be applauded and carefully considered by everyone who uses the roads".



May

First Police Community Support Officer cohort complete course

Jo Lambert, Simon Hull, Frances Wright and Dr Jennifer Norman

Following the launch of the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship in 2020, North Yorkshire Police and the Department for Policing were keen to explore other education programmes the National Policing Curriculum provides and identified Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) as an ideal opportunity to progress. Working closely together they developed the Level 4 Qualification and completed the College of Policing's Quality Standard Assurance processes in less than 11 months.

In February 2022, a group of 12 new Police Community Support Officer recruits began their apprenticeship (PCSO-A). The blend of initial training, online learning, supported patrols followed by independent patrol completed the required year of learning to obtain the Certificate of Higher Education in Community Policing Practice.

Director of Teaching, Jo Lambert states:

"As a non-integrated apprenticeship, our cohort undertook their end-point assessment through Skills for Justice (SFJ) Awards, requiring them to have a professional discussion on their portfolio of evidence to occupational competence plus present their idea for a problem-solving initiative within the communities they serve. Waiting to hear their outcomes was a nerve-racking time, but we shouldn't have worried. In May 2022, we received the outcomes from SFJ Awards, and our apprentices performed magnificently with all passing and 25% Distinctions awarded. Two further cohorts have been recruited to the programme, and while this report celebrates the success of the first cohort, learnings, and improvements to the support for the PCSOs has resulted in the second cohort achieving 75% Distinctions for the apprenticeship outcome".

Simon Hull, Qualification Lead for PCSO Apprenticeship and Lecturer in Work-based learning reflected:

"It's been a fantastic qualification to develop and deliver with North Yorkshire Police, and we are absolutely delighted the apprentices have excelled in their apprenticeship outcomes".



Dr Jennifer Norman adds:

"What we have learned is this is a fast-paced programme for all involved. Achievement of Independent Patrol Status within the first six months is do-able with the structured learning and supported patrols but moving to gather the evidence for full operational competence and achieving all the knowledge, skills, and behaviours of the apprenticeship to be ready for gateway and meet the timely completion requirements is challenging and requires good support mechanisms and interventions".

In addition to designing, delivering, and improving the programme the team have also created a stand-alone learning resource on our award winning OpenLearn platform - [Understanding PCSO powers](#).

This course is open to all and requires an average of six hours of study. On completion, participants are awarded a Statement of Participation.

June

CPRL Engagement Day

Dr Nicky Miller

In June the Centre held a productive in-person [Engagement Day](#) for its members which gave a real opportunity to have many in-depth discussions on a variety of topics related to policing.

This included a town square discussion on 'Shifting priorities: Violence against women and girls', as well as two research seminars; one being on [examining the impact of pregnancy, maternity leave and returning to work on women in policing](#); and the other looking at reflections of the course on 'Applied leadership of data and technology for innovation and wellbeing'. [Six workshops](#) were presented by a selection of Centre academics and police partners which covered a range of topics such as building trust, confidence and community engagement in policing, educational needs of officers and, bridging the research-practice gap in policing. These workshops involved police forces sharing approaches that worked for them on a particular subject; drawing on examples from other organisational contexts; reflecting on academic research; and discussing ideas together as a group.

The event also marked the inaugural Steven Chase Memorial Lecture, titled '[Unusually challenging times: reflections on why we are here, and how the police service moves forward](#)'. This was delivered by Martin Hewitt, most recently in the national policing role of Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and now a Visiting Fellow in CPRL. Andy Cooke (HMICFRS) and Andy Marsh (College of Policing) acted as thought-provoking discussants.

Steven was the former Chair of CPRL and embodied the idea of 'research into practice and practice into research' which has underpinned CPRL's work in research, learning and knowledge into practice. The day culminated with the presentation of the Steven Chase Award for a CPRL project which best illustrated this, and which was based on collaboration between an academic (or team) and a police organisation (or several). It needed to achieve value for both the University and the police. Professor Tim Blackman, Vice-Chancellor of the Open University, presented the Award to Dr Paul Walley for his research project about '[Improving the police forces' public demand management by using failure demand analysis](#)', conducted with Gloucestershire Constabulary.

The event was well-attended with a vibrant atmosphere throughout. Chief Superintendent Phil Davies, Vice-Chair of the Centre reacted to the day:

"There is often no substitute for the coming together of colleagues and partners in a shared space beyond the virtual setting to progress our agenda as a collective and to welcome new attendees. I found the day to be full of energy and ideas, with space for workshop dialogue and networking".



June

A year of progress: Advancing maternity research in policing and driving change

Dr Keely Duddin, Kendal Wright, Frances Wright, Dr Sean Bell and Dr Nicky Miller

Over the past year, the CPRL research into understanding the complexities of maternity experiences for women in policing has progressed significantly. With a focus on highlighting the challenges faced by women officers during maternity, it has offered valuable insights, contributing to a broader conversation about gender barriers and inclusivity within the policing context. Engaging 5,920 respondents through a comprehensive online survey, nuanced details were exposed about job-related support, mental health considerations, biases and challenges encountered during pregnancy, maternity leave and upon returning to work.

In June, the research team was awarded additional funding to further explore the complexities of supporting women officers and staff during maternity through three evidence cafés, each hosted by a member force. These aim to foster dynamic knowledge exchange among academics, police personnel, HR representatives, and policymakers, to translate research findings into actionable knowledge and collaboratively devise strategies to inform policy and practice. The results from each café will be shared across CPRL members.

Research co-lead, Dr Keely Duddin states:

“This funding recognises the importance of our research and offers an opportunity for impactful change. Excitingly, we are also pleased to announce the submission of a further research bid with the support of Women of Colour in Policing (WoCIP), British Transport Police and Thames Valley Police. This bid aims to collaboratively examine experiences of maternity for women of colour in UK police forces. This initiative seeks to delve into the intricate challenges faced by women of colour during maternity journeys, recognising the unique hurdles and systemic vulnerabilities experienced by Black, Asian, and Ethnic minority women. Despite efforts to diversify the workplace, challenges persist, especially where intersections of gender, ethnicity, and identity compound the challenges. We find out if we are successful with this bid later in 2024. As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, we see not only progress in illuminating maternity experiences but also the promise of transformative change. We are excited about the opportunities ahead for advancing understanding and addressing challenges within the UK police industry.

In the coming year, we look forward to continued collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the development of evidence-based strategies that will shape the future landscape of maternity experiences for women in policing. Furthermore, our research agenda holds the hope to extend its impact beyond policing, reaching into front-line services to contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment for women across diverse professional domains”.



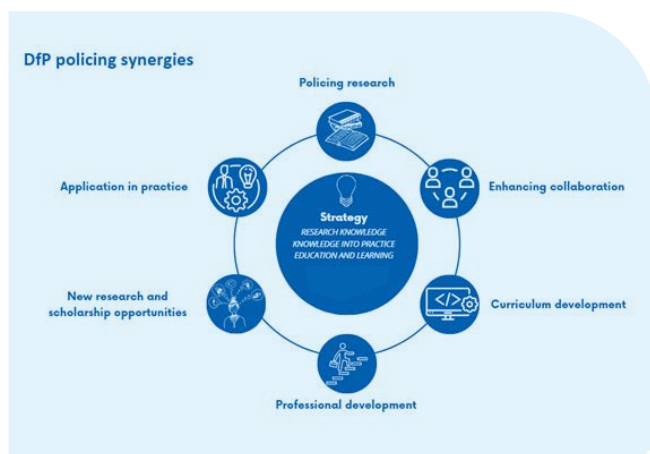
July

Policing Synergies

Dr Jennifer Norman and Dr Emma Williams

During 2023, the Centre for Policing Research and Learning (CPRL) and the Police, Organisation and Practice (POP) team became a broader Department for Policing (DfP). Academics in CPRL and the POP team have always worked closely together, but this structural move aims to ensure closer working relationships, opportunities for staff and a more formal process of getting research knowledge into the policing curriculum content.

This move recognises the breadth and scope of the policing research undertaken by the academics across the department and helps to more formally identify the synergies and their contribution to the enhancement of knowledge and skills across the whole team. This will add to the expertise already offered to our CPRL partners and support evidence-informed policing practice on key priorities both internally and externally. We believe there are several exciting opportunities and mutual benefits for all stakeholders involved in policing at the OU with CPRL aligning within a DfP which have been outlined in the visual below.



The established **policing research** profile within CPRL demonstrates a growing expertise in the violence against women and girls and wider public protection portfolio, professionalisation, demand management and officer welfare. The co-creation of research priorities with our police membership is a core value of CPRL's approach. This collaborative approach further enables the application of research findings in a number of ways, through bespoke knowledge into practice projects and through accredited and non-accredited learning. We have several policing academics working in the broader Department who have developed expertise working in niche areas both within research and scholarship. Joining these aspects together helps realise our potential as we grow and engage in innovative practice and strengthen our **collaborations**.

Policing research plays a core role in informing and shaping the **curriculum** of both our accredited and non-accredited offers to policing practitioners. By incorporating the latest research findings into our programmes, we can provide our professional learners with a comprehensive understanding of evidence-based policing strategies, emerging trends, and best practices. Our accredited curriculum provided through the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship, the Degree Holder Entry Programme, the Special Constables learning programme and the Police Community Support Officer Apprenticeship are prime examples where we have embedded research knowledge into our programmes. We strongly believe that the **application** of this learning offer allows police professionals to apply theoretical knowledge to their practice whilst developing their experiential learning. Both formal and informal knowledge plays a vital role and provides a foundation for students to draw upon and apply in their practice. By building our curriculum using robust research findings it means that police professionals develop their critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and a deeper understanding of the complexities of policing.

Our commitment to supporting the **professional development** of our policing practitioners is mirrored also in our ethos to the development of our policing academics. We have a wealth of experience within the Department, all of whom contribute to the growing body of knowledge we have built over the past 10 years in CPRL. **New opportunities for research and scholarship** not only means we are able to support policing in investigating emerging issues, but we enable our staff to extend their specialisms, engage in new and innovative research methodologies and techniques to gain a deeper insight into our learning offer.

All of this work is underpinned by collaboration with our internal and external stakeholders to bridge the gap between research and practice. The success of CPRL demonstrates how the membership collaboration provides valuable learning opportunities, an exchange of ideas with experienced practitioners, and builds relationships that can support policing.

July

Body Worn Camera (BWC) footage and use of force

Professor Zoë Walkington

In July, the research team comprising academics from the Open University, Lancaster University, and Derby University, together with practitioners from West Midlands Police (WMP) with an interest in proportionate policing/legitimacy met on campus at the Open University.

WMP already have a very impressive suite of analytic tools which allows them to explore information about BWC footage in uses of force in a variety of ways. For this project, the research team focused on asking whether or not interactions which involve handcuffing were procedurally just. The research aimed to determine whether the actions and the behaviours of both officers and citizens differed depending on different factors such as:

- 1. situational factors (such as number of officers involved, number of citizens involved, time of day, lighting etc.);**
- 2. individual factors (such as ethnicity, age etc.); and**
- 3. the behaviours that emerge between citizens and officers as they interact. By behaviours, this does not just mean observations of physical interactions, but consideration of what is said, how it is said and so on.**

Two main theoretical approaches were used to analyse how these interactions emerged. Firstly, procedural justice. This comprises factors relating to participation, fairness and neutrality, dignity, and respect, and conveying trustworthy motives. While procedural justice is a well-established theory it tends to be studied retrospectively and by survey (not at the time it happens but in a recorded interaction which is what the use of BWC footage enabled in this project). The second approach was to look at the interactions according to the principles of the interpersonal circumplex, which has been applied to investigative interviewing as part of Alison et al.'s (2013;2014) ORBIT model. In this research it was applied to shorter interactions taking place in public spaces, such as on the street and in fast food restaurants.

Following the research meeting in July, the team are currently finalising the results and hope to present a workshop on this data. The team are currently writing up an academic paper for publication.



August

Research partnerships workshop

Dr Nicky Miller and Professor Jean Hartley

In August, the Centre ran an exciting workshop with 25 academics and police practitioners on 'Effective partnership working'. The workshop, with international contributions and across a range of public services, aimed to identify the key capabilities – the skills, judgements, and behaviours – that support collaboration across different types of organisations, whether that be, for example, multi-agency partnerships, inter-agency working or academic-practitioner partnerships.

Professor Deborah Blackman, from the University of South Wales, in Canberra, drew on systems thinking to better understand why some partnerships are more successful than others. Systems thinking means that not everything can be planned out, there are likely to be some emergent features of the partnership, so partners need to be alert to dynamic change as they work together. She emphasised the importance of noticing, maintaining, and celebrating some of the differences between the partners rather than trying to eliminate or minimise them, because the whole basis of partnership is that it builds on diversity and difference.

Professor Jean Hartley and Dr Nicky Miller of CPRL explored the practices which underpin effective academic-practitioner partnerships and suggested that developing a culture of curiosity about difference was important, along with creating safe spaces to explore purposes, ideas, and action so that differences can be built on rather than swept

away. They (along with Debbie) argued for keeping the purposes of the partnership in mind and then exercising adaptive leadership. Justin Partridge, a CPRL Visiting Fellow, drew on his experience leading two different multi-force collaborations and from his doctoral research into police force collaboration with the fire service. He explored inter-organisational collaboration in UK police forces, discussing the behaviours, skills and attitudes required for collaboration by strategic leaders.

Participants contributed their own thoughts about the capabilities of effective partnership working, by creating a list of such skills, judgements, and behaviours, and then prioritising them using Q methodology in the later part of the workshop.

Q methodology is a way to prioritise what is seen as most valuable rather than having an idealised list of key behaviours and skills. Valuable discussion took place about how to handle situations where the other partner(s) does not really wish to engage in a genuine partnership. As a result of these presentations and discussions, delegates produced a list of core capabilities required of an effective partnership. The workshop created "real energy to take back this learning to force" and the academics in the workshop were also encouraged by what they had learnt during the day.



August

The experience of police officers using a virtual reality courtroom

Dr Ahmed Kadry and Simon Hull

Lead by Simon Hull, academics within the Department for Policing completed a project that evaluated the experiences of police officers on the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) in using a virtual reality (VR) courtroom as a learning tool.

The VR courtroom was initially developed by the OU's Open Justice Centre in partnership with Sheridan College in Ontario, Canada, to allow law students to engage in virtual mooting and develop courtroom presentation skills. The OU policing project, funded through the Faculty of Business and Law's Scholarship Centre for Innovation in online Legal and Business Education (SCiLAB), aimed to identify whether the VR courtroom could be a useful learning tool in providing police officers the opportunity to practice giving evidence in court.

The five apprentices ranged in experience as police officers and had differing previous experiences of giving evidence in court. They were provided with a fictional scenario that outlined an arrest of a person who was suspected of theft by shoplifting. The officers were then cross-examined in the VR courtroom by an OU law academic who acted as a defence advocate.

Each participant then took part in a semi-structured interview, giving feedback and comments regarding their learning experience.

The project findings showed that using the VR courtroom was a valuable learning experience for the apprentices. They gave feedback saying how immersed they felt in the courtroom, its benefit over the courtroom training that they had received in force, and how the VR courtroom closely matched their real-life experiences of giving evidence in court.

Building on this project, further funding has been secured from the OU's Scholarship Steering Group (SSG) and Access Participation and Success (APS) to develop the use of the VR courtroom. Involving representatives from several of the OU's faculties, a new scenario is being developed that will see participants being involved from policing, law, criminology, social work, and nursing. There are also further aspirations to develop teaching opportunities with the VR courtroom within the OU's existing policing qualifications.



September

Embedding officer learning, development and wellbeing for rape and serious sexual assault investigators – Operation Soteria year 2 into year 3

Dr Emma Williams

After a very busy year, the second year of CPRL's involvement in Operation Soteria as the lead for officer wellbeing and learning and development (Pillar 4) completed in September 2023. Much of the year was focused on the continuing development of the new Serious Sexual Assault Investigators Programme (SSAIDP) curriculum in collaboration with the College of Policing. This involved the analysis of the welfare and learning and development survey with the five original pathfinders and 14 expansion forces. Followed by the subsequent delivery of individual force reports to assist with their understanding of local welfare needs and strategy development to improve this within the Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Offences (RASSO) field.

Year 2 also focused on the development of a national change framework and theory of change for the new National Operating Model (NOM) in collaboration with Professor Bernard Burns from Stirling University. The aim of which was to aid the 43 forces as they work towards implementing the NOM which was launched in July. Much of the year was also spent on the development of NOM enabling products. In total the team delivered 15 products to facilitate the delivery of the NOM, all of which are available on the [College of Policing Knowledge Hub](#).

The products offer forces a 'driver model' to enable them to better understand the drivers of stress and burnout, guidance on reflective practice, a theory of change model with supporting guidance, identified promising practice for implementation, continuous professional development guidance and demand management proposals. The launch of the NOM was covered extensively in the media and its underlying principles of being victim-centred, context led and suspect focused, underpinned by robust evidence and research, have been recognised as being the most transformational methods to finally improving the investigation of rape and the welfare of officers involved.

In September 2023, the team were awarded further year 3 funding to continue the work with the College of Policing on SSAIDP and to consider the applicability of the learnings to other relevant police courses (such as Professionalising Investigators Programme 1 and 2, PCDA material). The Pillar 4 survey will be delivered across all 43 forces to help them understand the current landscape for their learning and development offer and welfare issues across RASSO teams. The team are also leading on further CPD events on the usability of the NOM products (across all 6

Pillars of work) and working closely with the central implementation team as the key academic link between the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) team and the wider academic team. This will be essential with the national roll out of the NOM as the team will play a principal role in identifying challenges, picking up promising practice across the country and sharing knowledge to facilitate the transformational change that is required. The final award for year 3 totalled at just under one million pounds.

The findings of the research were presented in September at the European Society of Criminology conference in Florence by three members of the team and at the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme conference. The insightful and unique findings from the Pillar 4 survey have been instrumental in the development of the national police wellbeing group and the team have presented at both their national wellbeing events and at the NPCC retention board which is led by Chief Constable Jason Hogg. The work has also received interest from the Home Office police covenant group, particularly in relation to the more recent survey findings which are focused on the prevention of burnout and the need for active interventions at different stages of stress build up. This work is also being viewed upon with interest in the context of police retention in detective roles.

In October, the academic team received a letter from Sarah Dines MP (Minister for Safeguarding) to recognise the outstanding contribution to this vitally important and transformational programme of work. Soteria and the NOM has been recognised internationally and there is interest in the methodology with regards to the learning and development piece which are being taken forward into the wider public protection portfolio in 2024.



Sarah Dines MP, Minister for Safeguarding thanked all those who worked across Operation Soteria:

My sincerest thanks for all the work you and your academic colleagues have delivered as part of Operation Soteria to date. This includes developing the National Operating Model and preparing policing to embrace this new approach. The launch of the National Operating Model in July represented a momentous occasion in the journey to transform how the police respond to, and investigate, rape and sexual offences, as did the incorporation of additional products into the Model in late September.

The National Operating Model represents a tremendous body of research which has been distilled into high quality, evidence-based guidance, tools and templates which will better equip officers to improve the service they provide to the public. It is testament to the quality of you and your research teams' work across six pillars that police forces have warmly welcomed the National Operating Model and are actively engaging with the content to deliver a sustained transformation in their approach to sexual violence. I am enthusiastic about the opportunity police forces have been given and look forward to seeing how the National Operating Model, and policing, evolves over time.

Academic outputs

Harding, R., Maguire, L. and Lennie, S.J. (2023) Work, life, welfare & greedy organizations, paper presented virtually at *National Learning Network Event – Impact on Life Outside Work*. 28 March 2023.

Maguire, L. (2023) Understanding gendered approaches of self-care amongst police investigators of rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) in England and Wales, paper presented at *European Society of Criminology conference*, Florence, Italy, 06-08 September 2023.

Maguire, L., Burnes, B., Williams, E., Caddick, C. and Yaxley, E. (2023) Preparation for managing change in RASSO investigations, paper presented virtually at *National Learning Network Event – Teams Live to 43 police forces in England and Wales*. 07 June 2023.

Maguire, L., Burnes, B., Williams, E., Caddick, C. and Yaxley, E. (2023) Update on preparation for managing change in RASSO investigations, paper presented virtually at *National Learning Network Event – Teams Live to 43 police forces in England and Wales*. 12 October 2023.

Maguire, L. and Sondhi, A. (2023) Research highlights stress and pressure among RASSO officers. *Policing Oracle*. [Online]. Available at <https://www.policoracle.com/article-library/research-highlights-stress-and-pressures-among-rasso-officers/>.

Maguire, L. and Sondhi, A. (2023) [Stress-related psychosocial risk factors among police officers working on rape and serious sexual offences](#). *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*, vol. 97, no. 1, pp. 56-72. [Online] DOI: 10.1177/0032258X221128398.

Maguire, L. and Williams, E. (2023) Transforming learning and wellbeing support for police officers who investigate rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO), paper presented at *Together for Transformation conference*, University of Suffolk, Ipswich, 24 May 2023.

Miller, N. and Harding, R. (2023) Delivering effective learning in policing, paper presented at *European Group for International Research Society for Public Management annual conference*, Budapest, Hungary, 03-05 April 2023.

Rawdin, C. (2023) Re-thinking learning and development and well-being in the policing of rape: Insights from a rapid review of comparable public-service occupations. *A Journal of Policy and Practice*, vol. 17, pp. 1-12.

Sondhi, A., Harding, R., Maguire, L. and Williams, E. (2023) [Understanding factors associated with burnout symptoms amongst investigators working on rape and serious sexual offence \(RASSO\) investigations in England and Wales](#). *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, vol. 17, article no. paad020. [Online] DOI: 10.1093/polic/paad020.

Williams, E., Maguire, L., Sondhi, A. and Harding, R. (2023) *Equipping officers to make women safer from rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) – insights from Operation Soteria Bluestone*. Blog. Available at <https://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/OUPolicing/index.php/2023/03/27/equipping-officers-to-make-women-safer-from-rape-and-serious-sexual-offences/>.

October

North Yorkshire Police graduation ceremony

Dr Jennifer Norman and Jo Lambert

During October, the first 29 Police Constable Degree Apprentices from North Yorkshire Police, graduated at The Convention Centre in Harrogate. Stakeholders from the Open University's policing team and Chief Constable Lisa Winward formed part of the academic procession on stage as they celebrated this seminal moment in both the careers of the graduating officers and the partnership between the Open University and North Yorkshire Police. If you have not attended an OU graduation ceremony, they are unlike any other.

The event also highlighted just how closely both organisations have worked with each other over the past four years, with the same shared objective of ensuring that each officer had the support needed to succeed and attain the knowledge, skills, and behaviours for them to serve their communities effectively. The partnership has launched three additional programmes since the PCDA began: the Degree Holder Entry Programme, Police Community Support Officer Apprenticeship, and the Special Constable Learning Programme, all underpinned by the National Policing Curriculum. Learnings from the early cohorts of PCDA have been implemented to these new programmes with learnings from the new programmes feeding back into the PCDA.

Jo Lambert (Teaching Director) reacts:

"The wonderful pomp and ceremony of a brass band trumpeting the academic procession into the hall, the official opening of the ceremony celebrates the tradition of awarding degrees and the accomplishment of the process. Then you have the OU graduates. Their achievements are cheered and celebrated like no others. One even had a dance with the Presiding Officer, the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business and Law. A video of the full ceremony is available to view [here](#).

These policing graduates have shown incredible resilience and tenacity in the first three years of their careers, from starting their journey in COVID with online inductions and hybrid working through their initial training. They have provided a very high benchmark for our current cohorts on the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA). Some of the graduates' plan to mentor future PCDA student officers so that they can add another layer of support, and no doubt share invaluable advice to officers who are following in their footsteps. Importantly, this does not mark the end of their contributions to the PCDA. Some apprentices already have dates in their diaries to present findings from their third-year evidence-based research projects to internal and external stakeholders. Project titles include research into the causes of victim disengagement in domestic abuse cases, to specific analysis of crime demand in coastal areas".



The graduating cohort with members of the OU's Department for Policing team were joined by Chief Constable Lisa Winward, Superintendent Jason Dickson, Inspector Lee Partridge and Learning and Development Manager Catherine Convery-Brown.

October

Masterclass series – ‘Police strategic applied leadership in data and technology’ concludes

Ian McNeill

The Centre’s learning team worked collaboratively with academic colleagues across the OU and practitioners from Oscar Kilo to develop a brand new multi-disciplinary course called ‘Police strategic applied leadership in data and technology’. The College of Policing offered one free place to every force in the country with 35 delegates attending.

The course had four modules:

- the first online, covering topics such as innovation in policing and police IT systems;
- the second and fourth residential, including topics such as leadership and political astuteness and the use and limitations of artificial intelligence;
- and a supported practice-based element as the third – to show how collaborative innovation can create better risk management, improve public service, and reduce ‘hindrance stress’ for officers and staff.

It helped senior leaders understand key strategic issues in the emerging technology and data fields, to enable confidence in leading IT teams, working with private sector suppliers and asking strategic questions to gain high value for their policing organisation.

Feedback from both Oscar Kilo and course participants has been plentiful and constructive and will help the team improve it further. Some of the comments are set out here:

What participants said:

“Challenged more than expected and learned more – moral injury and ethics were highlights”.

“Really engaging and credible subject matter experts”.

“We were exposed to new areas of cutting edge thinking by world class experts. I would not have been aware without the course”.

“The lecturing team are excellent and police forces need more exposure and take up the opportunities to have academic and researched knowledge from the OU”.

What have they learnt?

“It’s given me several ideas for things that can be improved at my force”.

“The overall link between change and the wellbeing of the workforce caused [me] to view this area of business through a new and healthier lens”.

“Useful and thought-provoking content regarding innovation, criteria for judging successes and developing a culture of innovation”.

“The shared knowledge, challenges and commonality with other forces has [provided] exceptional learning. The learning from the OU has been something I’ve never been exposed to in my policing career as a staff member. I hope this opportunity will be available in the future. Thanks to everyone at the OU”.

Please contact [Ian McNeill](#) (Senior Lecturer, CPD Development in Policing and Course Director) for further information about the programme.



November

Win bid to evaluate Police Perpetrated Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence advocacy support pilot

Dr Clare Rawdin and Dr Nicky Miller

Researchers in CPRL are currently collaborating on an investigation into Police Perpetrated Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) led by Dr Sarah Wallace (University of South Wales). Funded by the All-Wales Policing Academic Collaboration (AWPAC), this project is a process evaluation of a new trauma-informed advocacy support service being piloted in two Welsh forces (Gwent and South Wales) over the next two years.

It explores the experiences of both:

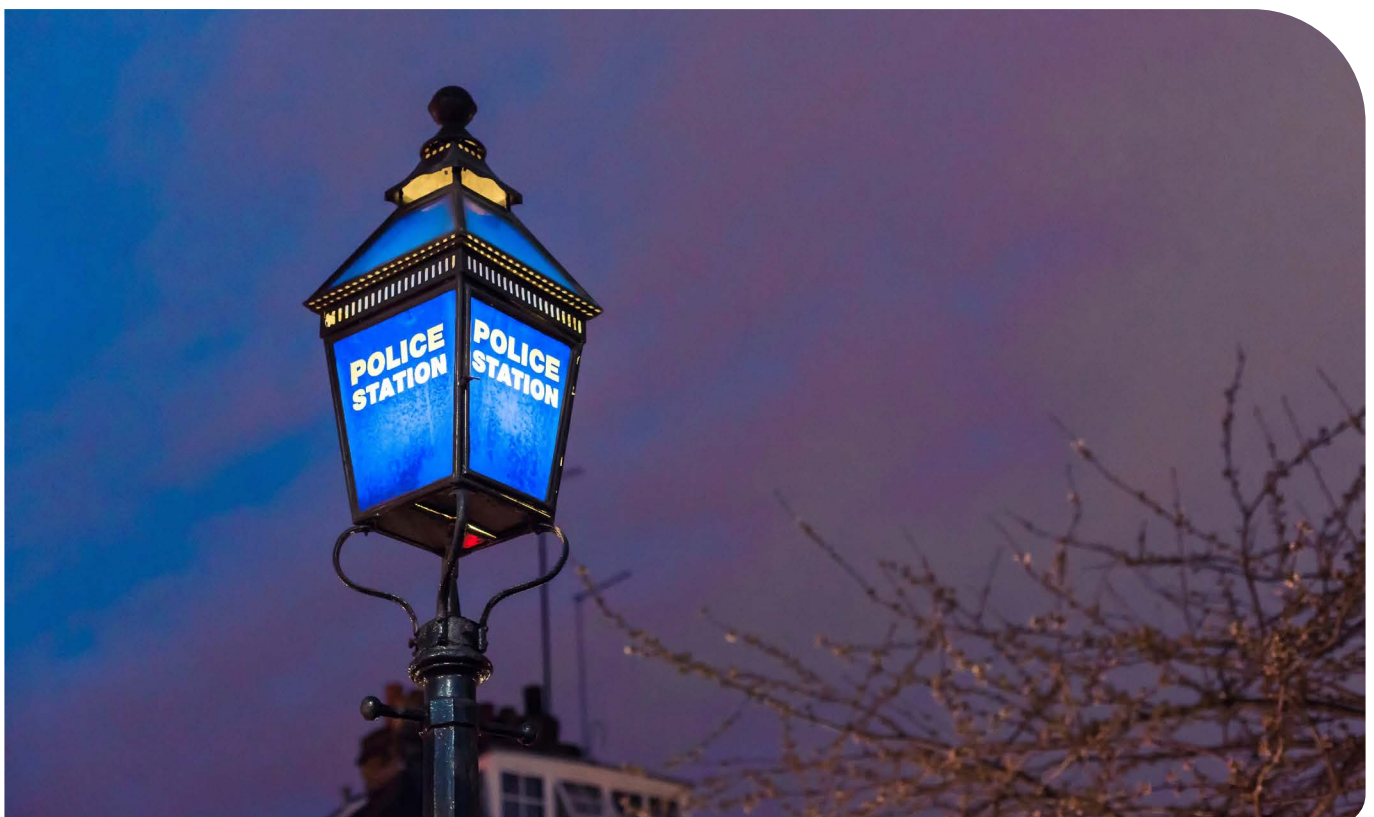
> **victim-survivors**

> **wider stakeholders.**

This investigation stems from a previous AWPAC-funded collaboration into *“Addressing Domestic Abuse within the police – exploring Welsh police forces”* conducted by Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn, Dr Anna Hopkins, and Dr Shona Morrison which mapped current policies and procedures to deal with domestic abuse across the four Welsh forces.

Researchers involved include Nicky Miller and Clare Rawdin, with oversight provided by co-lead Dr Emma Williams. In December 2023, Nicky facilitated workshops in Wales to co-design a Theory of Change (ToC) model and a monitoring and evaluation framework that will underpin the intervention. Clare will be conducting interviews with stakeholders – including strategic/operational leads, policing practitioners, and support workers – to assess their experiences of the support service.

Planned outputs include a final report, a Theory of Change, implementation guidance document, along with research papers. More widely, findings will contribute to the limited evidence on PPDA-VAWDASV interventions, provide a framework for further testing and evaluation of future impact, progress the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda, and provide opportunities for learning and development within forces.



November

North Yorkshire Police graduate officers present their evidence-based research projects at the College of Policing's Leadership and Workforce Summit

Dr Jennifer Norman and Jo Lambert

Three of the North Yorkshire Police recruits, who had recently graduated from the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), were invited to present their findings from their third-year project (evidence-based research projects) at the Leadership and Workforce Summit hosted by the College of Policing. It was a testimony to these officers to be invited to this event, only 22 new officers were selected nationally, and Charlotte, Helena and Lauren were highly professional and embraced the event; networking with senior officers and engaging in the discussions throughout. Here are the three projects presented by the officers (pictured below):

- PC Charlotte Lancaster presented 'Does the portrayal of policing on traditional and social media present a true or false picture of policing and how does it influence officers' morale?'
- PC Helena Gascoigne presented 'An analysis of annual demand on policing: How best to police a coastal command where the population increases significantly during the summer months'.
- PC Lauren Batey presented an 'Evaluation of a North Yorkshire Police training session to improve officers' understanding of, and response to, modern slavery'.

To ensure that the projects undertaken by the third year PCDA apprentices are useful and valuable to their practice, there is a process in place with North Yorkshire Police to identify areas important in force, that would benefit from research. Together, a list of relevant topics for the apprentices to take forward in their projects is compiled so that all of the research undertaken by the PCDA apprentices is relevant to North Yorkshire Police's needs either at a very local level or more in keeping with their strategic priorities.

At the event, PC Charlotte Lancaster spoke on stage, with a selection of new officers from different universities to all of the delegates about her experiences of undertaking the PCDA and the value of the knowledge acquired from the programme. The narratives from these officers about their experiences were rich and powerful. There was consensus in the room about the benefits of how a more formal degree level education can bring to the role of a police officer, given the examples offered around integrating that knowledge in practice, to contextualise and identify problems informing decision-making for action.

Dr Jennifer Norman (Head of the Department for Policing, OU) said:

"I want to offer my thanks again to Charlotte, Helena, and Lauren for their valuable contribution to this event and extend this appreciation to all the apprentices on the PCDA at NYP. You are all doing a superb job, studying a degree full time, whilst working full time is no mean feat! Well done to you all".



North Yorkshire Police recruits (from left) PC Charlotte Lancaster, PC Lauren Batey, PC Helena Gascoigne, Andy Marsh, CEO College of Policing

December

The OU BBC series 4 of The Met completes with its final episode

Dr Nicky Miller

A captivating fourth series of The Met, co-produced by the OU and the BBC, aired on BBC One from 24th October.

The six-episode series provided insight into the Metropolitan Police in the face of complex cases and during a challenging period for the force. Filmed over a period of ten months, the series offered an unfiltered look into the lives of Metropolitan police officers as they navigate one of its most challenging periods in the force's history.

The first episode followed detectives as they investigated the murder of a 17-year-old boy and gathered evidence against a human trafficking gang, all while public trust in the Met reaches a record low. This episode was watched by 1.9 million viewers.

The series was created with input from OU academic consultants Dr Nicky Miller, Director of Knowledge into Practice in the Centre for Policing Research and Learning, Faculty of Business & Law, and Professor Louise Westmarland, Head of Discipline in Social Policy and Criminology in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, who each provided expert insights and analysis throughout.

[Additional online resources](#) related to the series were created that included additional interviews with senior officers about the challenges and future of modern policing.

Speaking on her involvement in the series, Nicky said:

"I have really enjoyed working on this series and seeing what is involved in a production of this nature. Public confidence in the police is low and therefore it is more important than ever to evidence the realities of policing at the front line and the challenges that officers are faced with in performing their role. This series contributes to that greater understanding".

Professor Louise Westmarland added:

"This is an important and insightful series that really lifts the lid on how the police work, including their thoughts, feelings, and decision-making processes. It shows how difficult it can be to investigate and solve some crimes, but also how satisfying it is to bring offenders to justice. A real fly on the wall, no holds barred view of policing, which includes the way some citizens find the way the police work as oppressive and discriminatory".



Image copyright: BBC

December

Creation of CPRL Collaborative

Dr Elke Loeffler

In 2023, CPRL launched a new format for its research seminars under the brand 'CPRL Collaborative'. While CPRL focuses mainly on policing research, many of the OU academics working with the Centre undertake a wider range of research, which has important relevance to CPRL policing research and knowledge exchange. For example, many are doing research in other public services, such as mental health, which has a strong bearing on the context of policing policy and operations. The Collaborative is designed to access and promote this wider research and to incorporate it more fully into the work of the Centre. Typically, CPRL Collaborative Seminars are also open to policing partners to help foster 'research into practice and practice into research'.

In December 2023, CPRL ran a Collaborative Research Development Seminar which focused on widening, deepening and evidencing research impact, in order to enable OU academics to benefit from CPRL's strong track record in research impact. In line with the Research Evaluation Framework (REF) 2021, research impact is defined as *"the evidenced effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia, attributable to research and scholarship"*.

The online event included interactive presentations by Dr Nicky Miller (Director of Knowledge into Practice), Dr Paul Walley (Director of Learning) and Dr Elke Loeffler (Director of Research and Strategic Partnerships). Paul provided examples of research impact case studies from policing, health, and education, while Nicky identified some of the barriers to getting knowledge into practice and highlighted approaches that academics can use to overcome these barriers. Elke introduced a model of 'pathways to community safety outcomes' as a methodology for exploring how different research projects being undertaken by CPRL Collaborative academics overlap and share commonalities – and where there are currently gaps. The PowerPoint files and recordings of the presentations are available in the CPRL [membership area](#).



Professor Anne Adams, Professor of Engaged Practice and Research at the Open University said:

"The presentations were insightful and enabled deeper reflection upon my current approach and interactions with the UK Parliament through my seconded role in the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST). I also very much enjoyed the interesting discussion with colleagues from a range of disciplines and made some valuable new contacts."

If you or one of your colleagues would like to present a research project or explore a new research idea which falls into the CPRL priority areas at a future event, please contact [Elke Loeffler](#) to start the conversation.

Reflecting on the first 10 years of CPRL – and looking forward

Professor Jean Hartley

In the beginning... there were many words. This was followed swiftly by action, pioneering, developing, and testing what was to become the model of CPRL over 10 years.

Back in 2014, working with seven police forces across the UK, a small team of OU academics were awarded a modest grant by the College of Policing to undertake research in partnership to strengthen the capacity of both police and academics to undertake and apply research in policing. From this origin, the OU Centre for Policing Research and Learning has grown into a national centre involving 23 police forces and agencies across the four nations of the UK and with a network of around 80 academics across the OU. Initially we called it the OU Policing Research Consortium. Our aim was to learn about and shape knowledge and practice in both operational and organisational aspects of policing, drawing on expertise across different faculties of the University and to co-produce, test and use this new knowledge with police forces and two police and crime commissioners.

I had arrived at the Open University after more than a decade researching and teaching with the police and other public services at Warwick University. I had been part of the team there which ran a research consortium with 35 local authorities which had had national impact. That experience of collaborative partnership gave me a firm foundation of ideas and experience on which to draw upon. However, I didn't know the OU very well at that point, and my lack of institutional knowledge was amply compensated for by Professor Graham Pike, who was a co-applicant for the grant. With his help, and that of Dr Alessandro Sancino and Dr Owain Smolović-Jones, we discovered academics at the OU undertaking research relevant to policing. The seven Chief Constables of Avon and Somerset Police, Dorset Police, Greater Manchester Police, Metropolitan Police Service, PSNI, Thames Valley Police, National Crime Agency and the Chair of the Chartered Institute of People and Development (CIPD) Police Forum all signed up for the collaboration and were named in the application; Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police came on board shortly afterwards.

Working with the police, we identified several key strategic themes:

- > **operational policing including witnesses and visual identification and working with vulnerable people**
- > **the use of technology and digital data in policing, including new media**
- > **leadership, management and organisation that included organisational design and development, leadership within and across policing and public services, as well as workforce development and engagement**

These have been enduring themes over the years, although the context for policing in society has changed during the time that the Centre has been working and a greater emphasis on governance and legitimacy is now woven into CPRL work.

That first grant was for a mere four months but we achieved a great deal. We undertook two demonstration projects to show what police-academic collaboration could achieve (Graham's team on face recognition; and Professor Anne Adams on using gaming to improve the interviewing of child witnesses).

Research was mutually beneficial and applied in scope. We aimed to strengthen research evidence used in policing (wider than the rather narrow view of evidence-based policing at that time) while also challenging academics to think hard and deep about theory and understanding the policing context.

We drew on Lewin's maxim that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory".

The grant duration was short, so we shifted to a consortium model of funding – the membership model which underpins CPRL – and which has proved to be so productive and enduring. Members engaged with the Centre through an annual financial contribution, and in so doing sat right at the heart of decision-making about priorities. It was not about commissioning research and learning but rather engaging in constructive differences of opinion between academic and policing perspectives to achieve high quality outcomes. Initially, the membership model did not appeal to all forces, so we dropped to five forces, but as the work continued and its impacts were shared widely, members encouraged their own peers to join.



The quantum change in reach and depth came in 2015 when this innovative partnership applied for and won a £1.36M grant from the Police Knowledge Fund (a jointly funded initiative between the College of Policing with the (then) Higher Education Council for England and the Home Office). It was one of 14 academic-practitioner collaborations in England and in fact the only one still in existence. By then, 12 police forces had joined the retitled Centre for Policing Research and Learning to prepare the bid, carefully talking through what could and could not be achieved over 18 months, what were the priorities and what was unrealistic, where we should be daring and innovative and where we should minimise risk, how we would assess whether and how success was achieved. It was an enjoyable grant application to write and the application process itself strengthened mutual understanding. The application had three strands – research, learning and knowledge exchange, all three of which we were already doing on a smaller scale.

Through this grant, we were able to introduce innovations such as:

- > **the Senior Practitioner Fellow scheme**
- > **the peer learning visits**
- > **a postgraduate certificate in policing**
- > **PhD provision for part-time police officers and staff**
- > **a 12-hour free online course on public leadership**
- > **evidence cafés**

There have been other large grants to the Centre since that time which have provided large-scale work such as the citizens' forensics project led by Professor Arosha Bandara; the police learning and development project led by Professors Jean Hartley and Denise Martin; and most recently, the path-breaking work on improving rape investigations and outcomes (Operation Soteria) led by Dr Emma Williams. Many other smaller projects, working between police and academics, gave the Centre a breadth and depth and together they put the OU on the map nationally for UK policing. Dr Paul Walley and team have pioneered new short courses, both online and residentially.

As the Centre has increased in size, its governance adapted from direct to representative governance with the establishment of an elected Steering Group and the introduction of three elected police vice-chairs to support the increasing workload of the police chair. Dr Elke Loeffler has very ably supported that work over the last 2 years.

In 2018, an additional team led by Dr Matthew Jones (and now by Dr Jennifer Norman) was created from the Centre, dedicated to policing degrees, and a competitive tender was won with North Yorkshire Police. Department members, while concentrating on the design and use of teaching materials, undertook research with CPRL where it was mutually beneficial.

With various changes in context (more online work with Covid for example, new participative activities as the Centre grew larger) the membership model has proved enduring. Police forces in membership extolled the value of membership to other forces and so by 2023 membership was 23 forces across all four nations of the UK and around 80 academics across all faculties were involved in various projects over time. However, size, while gratifying in terms of national presence and impact, has never been the prime ambition – more important is the quality of the work produced, and the means by which it is created.

We have sought out systematic research evidence and rigorously examined it in a wide variety of fields and themes – including:

- > digital policing
- > sexual offence investigations
- > managing demand
- > face recognition
- > artificial intelligence
- > maternity leave
- > distracted driving
- > public leadership
- > creating public value



Professor Jean Hartley and members of the Centre collecting research award for “best external collaboration and knowledge exchange”.

The research evidence is catalogued and accessible through the CPRL website with both executive summaries, longer reports and academic publications. CPRL has also contributed to how research evidence and learning materials are used. Dr Nicky Miller has spearheaded the knowledge into practice strand of work, which has built up a body of understanding about how both qualitative and quantitative evidence can be critically adopted and often adapted to particular police geographical, demographic, and organisational contexts.

CPRL is an honest working partnership between academics and police – not aiming to create a cosy consensus but rather to bring together different and sometimes contrasting perspectives on what and how to undertake research, learning and knowledge into practice. Throughout the ten years, we have engaged in serious discussions both within the partnership and in international conferences, to understand what it is which make this partnership work so effectively. A couple of publications (with another one in train) have set out our view of how to have the right amount of grit in the oyster. Creative tension between different perspectives is valuable so long as there is curiosity and respect for differences of assumptions and interests.

CPRL has benefitted from very talented police chairs who have given enormous care to guiding CPRL. Dr Steven Chase of Thames Valley Police took the Chair

for six years as it grew to 20 forces, and provided wise advice and suggestions, as well as creating a welcoming atmosphere to all who joined in meetings. Dr Nick Caveney of Hertfordshire Constabulary had been a Vice Chair from 2019 and then took over as Acting Chair and then Chair, bringing sharp intellectual insights combined with a concern with practical outcomes for both police and the University, often working alongside the other Vice Chair Phil Davies. The quality of contributions from police constable to chief constable; from research assistant to professor and from those providing guidance to the Centre from outside policing has been exceptional. Also highly appreciated are the OU’s professional administrative staff, who have supported the wide portfolio of CPRL activities over the years.

CPRL has shown through its prodigious outputs (both academic publications and practical courses and events in forces) that it is a national institution now – generally the first port of call for police forces seeking out research or evidence to inform policy and practice. The collaborative model so diligently worked out, in part through design and in part through experience, has stood the test of time.

But what of the future? Both police and universities are under immense pressures right now as the environment, societies, politics and technologies change. Police and academics are often the canaries in the mine when changes are taking place in societies.

The future for CPRL may be different or similar, but it will be greatly helped by the clear structural and process principles which underlie the partnership, including that it is co-owned for outcomes relevant to both partners. Discussion and debate, along with constructive conflict, and the desire to achieve practical outcomes underpinned by strong theory and evidence provides a strong foundation to address future risks and opportunities. With a UK-wide university like the Open University, and with participation from all faculties, a variety of operational and organisational issues can be explored, and emerging evidence created to understand and tackle new problems in society, along with comparative perspectives, both across public services and beyond and internationally.

I have been exceptionally privileged to have been able to build CPRL up to such a phenomenon, working along with such fine colleagues both in the police and in the University. As I retire from the OU after 11 years, I am pleased and proud to hand over the CPRL baton to Dr Emma Williams. I hope she enjoys the ride as much as I did.

Coming in 2024

CPD Hub

Ever since CPRL was established in 2014 we have curated lists of our online learning Centre's web pages. During 2024 we will start work on advancing this idea to establish a Department for Policing CPD Hub where people will have direct access to new and existing CPD for police officers and staff.

CPRL Collaborative programme

Online and on campus events related to CPRL priority research areas are already planned. 2024 dates and details of each monthly seminar are included on the [CPRL website](#) and will be updated throughout the year.

A strategy for the Department for Policing

The Department for Policing and CPRL Directors have been jointly working on a new strategic plan. Using a structured methodology, the team have completed a full evaluation of the driving forces that are shaping what we do. A number of strategic priorities around creating financial security, extending our reach and developing internal capabilities have been established. In early 2024 these are being discussed with all stakeholders including our Review Board and Steering Group members, as well as all staff.

10-year event

2024 marks 10 years of Policing at the OU, including the launch of the Centre. To celebrate the many achievements in research, partnership, learning, education and knowledge into practice CPRL are hosting a 2-day event on 13th and 14th November 2024, bringing together police officers, practitioners and academics to focus on Retention and Prevention.



Roles and Contacts

[Dr Nick Caveney](#), Chair of the Centre, Assistant Chief Constable, Hertfordshire Constabulary

[Professor Jean Hartley](#), Academic Director, The Open University (to July 2023)

[Dr Emma Williams](#), Academic Director, The Open University (from July 2023)

[Dr Elke Loeffler](#), Director of Research and Strategic Partnerships, The Open University

[Dr Paul Walley](#), Director of Learning, The Open University

[Dr Nicky Miller](#), Director of Knowledge into Practice, The Open University

[Chief Superintendent Phil Davies](#), Vice-Chair (Greater Manchester Police)

[Detective Chief Superintendent Christina Jessah](#), Vice-Chair of the Centre, (Metropolitan Police)

[Dr Jennifer Norman](#), Head of Department for Policing, The Open University

[Jo Lambert](#), Teaching Director, Department for Policing, The Open University

[Sarah Armstrong-Hallam](#), Senior Manager, Partnerships and Operations, The Open University



The Open University

Centre for Policing Research and Learning

Department for Policing

Force Members

