



**Vulnerability &  
Policing Futures**  
Research Centre



# ESRC Vulnerability & Policing Futures Research Centre

Annual Report 2025

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# Introduction

The Vulnerability & Policing Futures Research Centre is one of six centres of excellence funded in 2021 by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and began in May 2022. Co-hosted by the University of Leeds and the University of York, it aims to reshape how the police and other organisations work together to reduce harm among vulnerable people in society.

Now three years into our five-year funding period, the Centre's pioneering programme of research, knowledge exchange and engagement platforms includes 47 research projects, 26 Co-Investigators, 38 Project Partners, 29 research affiliates, 12 post-doctoral researchers, 25 International Advisors, four Associated PhD students and a vibrant international PhD network. Project Partners that support the Centre include national stakeholders from government, policing and NGOs, including Revolving Doors, Centrepunkt, Power the Fight, HMICFRS, College of Policing, NPCC, the Police Foundation

and the Home Office, as well as regional partners including West and North Yorkshire Police, Durham Constabulary, West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership and Health Care Partnership.<sup>1</sup>

At this pivotal point we have started to share findings from our research, and are starting to see our infrastructure and capacity building work bear fruit. Attention is turning towards seeking out and facilitating pathways to impact from this important societal research, which we hope to achieve with and through our partnerships.



<sup>1</sup> For a full list of our partner organisations, see the UKRI's [Gateway to Research listing](#) for the Centre.

# The Centre in numbers



**19** people in the Centre staff team,  
including **12** postdoctoral researchers

**47** research projects (either started or complete):

**30** Centre projects, including  
( **18** data science projects, and )

**17** Centre-funded projects



**40** publications to date  
comprising

**8**



journal articles

**1**



book chapter

**13**



blogs/online articles

**18**



reports



**19**

grants awarded



Centre findings shared at...



**119**

International PhD  
network members

**29** research affiliates

**£3.67m**  
in additional funding since the  
Centre commenced, comprised of

**£1.59m**  
from York/Leeds, and

**£2.07m**  
across **8** awards  
from external funders



## Research progress

Centre research has continued apace across our multiple workstrands, with a total of 47 projects now either complete or underway. Some highlights are included below, with information about all Centre-led and Centre-funded projects included on our website: [vulnerabilitypolicing.org.uk/research](https://vulnerabilitypolicing.org.uk/research).

A number of projects have reported findings, and produced a variety of outputs, including our accessible research finding summaries, journal articles, animated videos, webinars, community events and resources, among others.

### Problem-oriented research

The project 'Policing, Vulnerabilities and Domestic Abuse: Victims, Perpetrators, Interventions' has instigated an international knowledge exchange between researchers, policing policy makers and practitioners in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia and Greater Manchester in the UK. Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon (Monash University) and Professor David Gadd (University of Manchester) led a delegation of representatives from Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Greater Manchester Probation (who provided financial support, along with the Rhodes trust) on a week-long visit. The delegation learnt about the evolution of best practice in response to survivors and perpetrators from representatives from organisations including: No to Violence (the peak body for men's services and provides the Men's Referral Service and the Men's Line); the Meli Men's Family Violence Intervention Centre (which works with men to help them learn strategies that do not include using violence); a government funded family violence service; Victoria Police Academy; and the Victoria Victim Survivors Advisory Council.

They also received presentations at Monash University from Associate Professor Bridget Harris on the topic of cyber enabled violence and stalking and Dr Lisa Whieldon on lived experience engagement and family violence policy. Recommendations made by the GMCA delegates are currently being considered for implementation in Greater Manchester. The delegates and their hosts aim to continue the knowledge exchange by inviting professionals from Melbourne to attend a programme of events in the UK later in 2025.





Two new projects commenced in May 2025, to run over the final two years of the Centre's five-year funding period.

- One focuses on young people of colour in Harehills, Leeds, taking a participatory action research approach, and focusing on the lived experiences of the young people, to better understand their perceptions of policing and safety in their communities, and how their vulnerabilities are exacerbated by their racialised identities. The team, led by Centre Co-Is Dr Katy Sian and Dr Nadia Jessop (York), will work with local community groups to develop, with young people, a vision for change in Harehills, and plan to achieve this.
- The other will focus on delivery of police use of Out of Court Resolutions (to divert people from the Criminal Justice System) with adults, and how they are, or could be better, applied with regard to vulnerable groups. The work will include a deep dive into the work of one or two collaborating police forces with established delivery models for Out of Court Resolutions, and be delivered in collaboration with the York Trials Unit, under the leadership of Centre Co-Director Professor Adam Crawford (York & Leeds) and Deputy Director Professor Dan Birks (Leeds).

*"This important project shines a vital light on the experiences of young people of colour in Harehills, particularly their interactions with police and support services. By working closely with the community, it not only seeks to understand youth experiences of violence but also challenges harmful perceptions and in doing so it seeks to drives positive change. Through evaluating the effectiveness of local services, this project offers a crucial step toward building trust, improving support and creating a safer, more inclusive environment for all young people in Harehills."*

RICHARD BURGON MP, LABOUR, LEEDS EAST



RICHARD BURGON MP

Image: Richard Burgon ©House of Commons



## Place-based research

The Centre's data science programme continues to inform national policy via data-driven insights into societal challenges impacting Bradford and Leeds. The recruitment of six new data scientists, drawn from diverse disciplines and backgrounds, has further strengthened capacity in 'socially responsible data science' and enhanced our ability to deliver impactful research that supports public service providers and improves outcomes for the communities they serve.

A key focus this year has been deepening collaboration with local partners, including Bradford Children's Trust, Bradford Council, and Leeds City Council. These partnerships have generated new insights into complex issues such as multi-agency public safety measurement, changing patterns of children's social care provision, and the relationship between school absence, educational attainment, and future engagement in employment or training. We are currently exploring innovative approaches to linking police and health data to better understand community mental health needs and working with

children's social care services to support young people at risk of going missing from care settings. This work has benefited from interdisciplinary contributions across psychology, geography, and law, and has been enriched by practitioner expertise from both Leeds and Bradford Local Authorities – ensuring the research remains grounded in realities of practice.

In keeping with its stated goals, the data science programme has also contributed to career development with former team members moving into roles in police intelligence analysis, NHS data management, academic research, doctoral studies, and the private sector. These trajectories underscore the lasting impact of the programme's research environment on wider professional and societal contexts.

Place-based qualitative work has continued in Bradford. Planning is in hand in relation to the Bradford work, to develop a Demonstration Project based on the Holme Wood research, building on fruitful engagement with key partners including Act Locally.



Image: [SteveH-UoB](#), CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons



## Further funding

Centre colleagues have been involved in securing more than £2m in new externally funded projects.

New funding has been secured for Centre Researcher Dr Andrew Papworth, whose successful ESRC New Investigator Award, 'INTERPRET - interactions between people who use drugs and the police: experiences and impacts', commences in May alongside a reduced time commitment to the Centre.

A team across the University of Leeds and the University of York, including Centre staff, led by Centre Deputy Director Professor Dan Birks and Centre Co-Director Professor Adam Crawford, succeeded in their bid for a Policing-Academic Centre of Excellence award (£600,000, National Police Chiefs' Council funding administered via ESRC). This new programme of work commences in September 2025 and will be closely aligned with, albeit separate from, the ongoing work of the Centre. The P-ACE will combine multi-disciplinary research and innovation from the Universities of Leeds and York to equip police and partners with the best research evidence available. Working closely with UK policing stakeholders, the P-ACEs will drive collaboration among academia and policing. They will ensure that policing is shaped by the most up to date scientific evidence, and that leading researchers nationwide are able to challenge and innovate in partnership with policing as they strive to improve public safety.

Professor Dan Birks was also successful in securing a £212,000 award from ESRC following an invitation to the Centre to submit a proposal for the "UKRI R&D Missions Accelerator Programme Safer Streets". This focused on the 'concentrations of crime' problem statement and responds to the Government's Safer Streets mission. The project will conduct foundational research regarding the application of hotspot methodologies, particularly as they relate to priority offences of knife crime, violence against women and girls, anti-social behaviour and related crime. The project will develop approaches to quantify the uncertainty associated with concentration patterns and assess the feasibility of enriching hotspot analyses with multi-agency data. It will provide the critical groundwork needed to inform the targeted deployment of crime reduction resources by police and partner agencies.

Professor Adam Crawford is part of a team led by Professor Sid Bandyopadhyay (Birmingham) in collaboration with Dr Alison Heydari (NPCC) that has been awarded funding from the Cabinet Office Evaluation Accelerator Fund (£185,000) for a project entitled: 'Are Out Of Court Resolutions Effective In Lowering Crime? An Evaluation Of Outcome 22', which complements the Centre's project on adult diversion.

Centre Co-Investigator Professor Sharon Grace (York) led a successful bid to secure £846,000 in NIHR funding for the **ARROW project** - Assessing the potential of a women only, gender- and trauma-informed residential rehabilitation pathway for drug dependent women leaving prison. Centre Deputy Director Professor Charlie Lloyd is a Co-Investigator on this new project.

*Being so closely aligned to, and then working for the Centre was critical when I obtained funding for my own research and has helped me to progress towards becoming an independent researcher. I'm sure that being able to clearly demonstrate the level of support and expertise that I would be able to draw upon during my grant, as a result of my relationship to the Centre, made a very convincing case to the funders. Colleagues at the Centre have already helped me navigate some of the early challenges I have encountered when running my own project and have also introduced me to researchers and practitioners who will be key in helping me to achieve as much impact as possible from my project's findings.*

DR ANDREW PAPWORTH



Centre Co-Investigators Professor Liz Hughes (Glasgow Caledonian) and Professor Martin Webber (York) were part of the team that secured a £15,000 award through the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) responsive research fund, to conduct a rapid evidence review on 'Good Practice in the Transfer of Care'.

Professor Kate Brown and Professor Sharon Grace have secured £11,000 from the University of York's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA), to work with the NPCC to develop impact in relation to co-produced research focusing on dedicated Sex Worker Liaison Officer roles in policing.



# Impact and engagement

Impact is a key part of the Centre's work as it aims to share and shape how public sector agencies and partners can effectively respond to and prevent future threat, harm and vulnerability through integrated multi-sectoral partnerships. The Centre is implementing project-specific impact plans as well as Centre-wide strategies to support evidence-based policymaking.

Our Co-I Professor Mark Mon-Williams is now Deputy Chair of the Science Advisory Council for the Opportunity Mission (board co-chaired by the Health and Education Secretaries of State) providing a channel for communicating our research insights.

Our earlier Data Science projects have shaped policy, informed practice, and contributed to international research agendas. For example, the N8 Child of the North report on Improving School Attendance drew on sequential work by James Battye, Emily Connell and Lewis Shaw and influenced policymaking within the Department for Education on attendance. In addition, projects from the first data scientist cohort have spurred methodological developments in the use of generative AI to analyse unstructured police data for indicators of vulnerability – examining effectiveness and potential biases. This work, recently accepted for

publication in the discipline's leading international journal, reflects the team's commitment to methodological rigour and has prompted invitations to present findings at the College of Policing, Crown Prosecution Service, and Ministry of Justice, underscoring its practical relevance.

Additionally, the data science programme continues to provide data scientists with the skills and experience to go on to successful careers and build capacity for the future of data analytics.

The Minimum Policing Standard research reported findings during 2024 around [what the public want from police](#), and [whether people think police are meeting minimum delivery standards](#).

Professor Adam Crawford shared findings with police chiefs and police and crime commissioners at the APCC/NPCC annual summit in November

2024, and subsequently was invited, along with Professor Ben Bradford, to contribute to the Trust and Confidence in Policing Symposium, chaired by ACC Dennis Murray (Thames Valley Police) – a quarterly meeting with strategic leads across UK police forces. In addition, Professor Bradford has presented findings to the Home Office and Professor Crawford presented to the French Ministry of Interior as part of their foresight initiative on “Police, Society, and Users in 2035”.

Our “County lines policing and vulnerability” project team have presented to a number of key stakeholders, including the Home Office and will deliver a webinar in July about the research findings and recommendations. Also, the “Co-designing community resilience to online child sexual victimisation” project worked alongside a coastal community in

## REFLECTIONS FROM ABIGAIL BRAKE, DATA SCIENTIST FROM 2022-2023

I joined the University of Leeds in 2022 as part of the [European Centre for the Responsibility to Protect \(ECR2P\)](#), where I worked as a project assistant researching mass atrocity crimes.

In late 2022, I became a data scientist within the Vulnerability & Policing Futures Research Centre through the Leeds Institute for Data Analytics' [Data Scientist Development Programme](#). This role enabled me to lead a project with the Centre that aimed to quantify demand for vulnerability-related ambulance provision across the Bradford region. After leaving the Centre, I continued to work with emergency service data, and I now work as a cybercrime intelligence analyst within the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau at City of London Police. This role involves manipulating data from crime reports to track and predict trends in cybercrime offending, informing decision-making on key threat areas such as hacking, and creating intelligence-led messaging for the public.

My time at the Vulnerability & Policing Futures Research Centre was pivotal in shaping my career trajectory not only by developing my technical skills but by fostering an analytical mindset and a confidence in engaging with external stakeholders, which I now rely on every day.

North West England to create a set of 11 priorities and a quality standards tool in a transferable template that has been used in other UK regions to address online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

## CASE STUDY: OCSV DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

One of the Centre's mechanisms for achieving impact is through its demonstration projects. Demonstration projects take findings and recommendations from the Centre's research and apply them in practice through collaboration with external partners. This can include co-designing new strategies, technologies and tools informed by the research evidence.

One of the Centre's first projects was "Co-designing Community Resilience to Online Child Sexual Victimization", which sought to develop a starting point from which communities might be able to take forward useful actions to respond to and prevent online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA).

The project team worked alongside a coastal community in North West England to create a set of 11 priorities to address OCSEA locally. A community action group began work on implementing these priorities and also worked with the team to develop and agree a quality standards tool from the identified priorities, which consolidated findings into a transferable template that local authorities could use to further improve their own response to OCSEA.

Building on this work, the Centre teamed up with digital safeguarding consultancy MeSafe and the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership to take the quality standards approach and apply it to West Yorkshire.

Translating this work from a small community to an entire county provided additional structures, opportunities, and resources resulting in different ways that the work could be transferred into

practice. The project highlighted the versatility and effectiveness of the quality standards approach as it mapped well onto existing structures within West Yorkshire and was able to gain significant support locally.

The demonstration project led to the development of some valuable resources for taking the work forward including a theory of change, which is a useful tool not only within West Yorkshire, but also other local authorities interested in finding better and improved ways to address OCSEA in their communities.

Other resources that were co-created and informed by a wide range of practitioners from child safeguarding, police, youth work and education were proposed terms of reference for a 'Technology Alliance', a technology champion role description, suggestions on how to be 'child-led' in responses to OCSEA, guidance for developing campaigns, and considerations for developing and embedding online self-evaluation tools.

The demonstration project highlighted how important practitioner and community engagement is when trying to prevent online problems; the knowledge and connections the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership had were invaluable to driving this work forward along with MeSafe.

This has provided West Yorkshire with a basis to take this knowledge forward and develop ways that include parents, children and young people when translating these tools into practice. The Centre looks forward to following and supporting this work in the future, and building on it to see how the quality standards approach can be implemented further regionally, nationally and internationally.

*"Building on from the research undertaken by the Centre to develop quality standards that aim to strengthen existing responses to OCSEA, this demonstration project has enabled us to understand 'how' this meaningful research can be shaped into delivery."*

*"Through engagement with professionals and practitioners working in West Yorkshire, a selection of resources aligned to these standards have been developed to help embed these standards into practice, with clear opportunities for this work to inform positive change in the region"*

**SAM CLEWARTH, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SPECIALIST, WEST YORKSHIRE VIOLENCE REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**





## KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION THROUGH EVIDENCE-INFORMED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the final two years of the Centre's funding (May 2025– May 2027) a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offer will be developed and delivered. This offer will support key practitioners in police and allied professions to learn about and apply Centre research-based insights in their own work. Our CPD courses will be co-produced with partners, focused on sharing learning from research and practical application of findings.

The Centre has undertaken initial CPD work, having contributed to the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme and College of Policing CPD events on responding to online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and the opportunities of using administrative data to better inform policing.

Having recently appointed new postdoctoral researchers, the team has begun its planning and collaboration with stakeholders.

### The CPD programme will:

- improve outcomes for vulnerable people through promoting evidence-based practice responses to vulnerability in policing and allied professions.
- ensure our research findings reach a wide range of practitioners in policing and allied professions, supporting practitioners to translate and apply research insights in their work.
- complement and build upon other CPD offers already provided within relevant professions and in areas of work connected to vulnerability and policing.
- enhance the skills and knowledge of professionals working in the field of vulnerability and policing with evidence-based knowledge and tools they can apply in their practice.

We are currently working with key partners to develop early pilots; please contact us if you have an interest in this work.

## POLICY WORK

The Centre is contributing to policy discussions in the vulnerability and policing sphere. Recently, team members have submitted evidence to the UK Parliament's Crime and Policing Bill on Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and its generation, and mandatory reporting, both based on the "co-designing community resilience to online child sexual victimisation" research project. Colleagues also submitted evidence on criminal exploitation, safeguarding and the criminalisation of vulnerable young adults, based on the Centre's nationwide study of county lines policing and vulnerability in the UK.

As well as responding to calls for evidence, the Centre researchers are sharing findings to the Home Office and senior leaders within the police, contributing to the Police Science Council, presenting findings to the NPCC's new Trust and Confidence Symposium, and taking part in roundtables, such as Ofcom's round table to discuss data related to online grooming of children and related harms for the statutory transparency reporting that U2U and online services will have to provide under the Online Safety Act. This work is in addition to sharing research evidence with the Centre's National Engagement Group, which includes representatives from government departments, policing and NGOs.

A policy brief highlighting cross-cutting themes and recommendations from across Centre projects is in development.

## CHILD OF THE NORTH REPORTS

In November 2024, the Centre coordinated the [“An evidence-based plan for addressing childhood vulnerability, crime and justice”](#) report as part of a series published by the Child of the North and Baroness Anne Longfield’s Centre for Young Lives. The report argued that government policies needed to address children’s underlying vulnerabilities and disadvantages, rather than their behaviours. It advanced an evidence-based plan to provide targeted action to divert vulnerable young people away from criminal exploitation and harm and this report has influenced policymaking within Whitehall.

Centre Co-Directors Professor Kate Brown and Professor Adam Crawford contributed to a webinar outlining evidence and recommendations from the report.

In October, Centre Deputy Director Dan Birks co-authored the policy briefing report: [“An evidence-based plan for improving school attendance”](#), again in partnership with Baroness Longfield. The report made a series of evidence-based recommendations for tackling the rise in children not attending school – one of the Government’s most urgent challenges – and features research conducted through the Centre’s Connected Data Analytics programme. The report has featured within Department for Education roundtable discussions and has shaped the thinking of the relevant policy teams within the Department.

Recently, [the UK Government announced](#) greater mental health support in schools to tackle the crisis of poor mental health among young people and drive up school attendance. Expanding the number of mental health support teams was a key recommendation the report called for.

Child of the North are now preparing for a 2025 campaign starting on 8 September which will take these reports and create ‘How To’ guides for practitioners across health, education and local government.

*“The evidence is definitive – we urgently need stronger social and community support for the most vulnerable children and young people. Failure to act will mean we keep on punishing the most vulnerable in the criminal justice system and leaving them exposed to crime.*

*“If we are serious about preventing crime, it’s investment in children’s life opportunities, care and education that matters most.”*

PROFESSOR KATE BROWN



## Centre events and conference presentations

Date	Conference/host	Location	Presentation	Presenter(s)
<b>Centre hosted events</b>				
May24	Centre International PhD Network	Online	Concept of vulnerability	Kate Brown
Jun24	Centre webinar	Online	What service should the police provide?	Ben Bradford, Adam Crawford, Christine Weirich, David Rowlands
Aug24	Centre International PhD Network	Online	Northern Ireland: Intermediaries, Vulnerability and the Criminal Justice System	Invited speakers: Jenny Humphreys and John Taggart
Sep24	Centre conference	Leeds, UK	Reshaping the relationship between vulnerability and policing	60+ speakers from within the Centre team and across our network
Oct24	Centre public lecture	York, UK + online	Vulnerability: prevention between social policy and national security	Invited speaker: Charlotte Heath-Kelly
Oct24	ESRC Festival of Social Science	Bradford, UK	Safety in Bradford: Voices of Women and Girls	Centre team in collaboration with Bradford partners – public engagement event
Nov24	Centre webinar	Online	Viewpoints on vulnerability as a focus for policing and public services	Kate Brown, Adam Crawford, Dr Chris Devany, Ozgur Yardimci, Isabelle Bartkowiak-Theron
Nov24	Centre public lecture	Leeds, UK + online	Research on police–community dialogue	Invited speaker: Ian Marder
Nov24	Centre webinar	Online	Co-designing community resilience to online child exploitation	Corinne May-Chahal, Christine Weirich, Larissa Engelmann
Nov24	Centre International PhD Network	Online	Vulnerabilities in research on policy–community dialogue: a restorative perspective	Invited speakers: Dr Ian Marder, Katharina Kurz
Jan25	Centre International PhD Network	Online	Neurodiversity: navigating the criminal justice system at the intersect of policing and health	Invited speakers: Inga Heyman, Natasha Spassiani, Natalie Kernaghan McCaughey
Mar25	Centre International PhD Network	Online	Online vulnerabilities in the context of domestic abuse and fraud	Invited speakers: Lisa Sugiura, Chloe Hawkins
Mar25	Centre + West Yorkshire Combined Authority	Leeds, UK	Launch of the Centre's OCSV Demonstration Project	Sarah Carlick, Sam Clewarth, Corinne May-Chahal, Adam Crawford, Charlotte Armitage
<b>External events</b>				
Jul24	British Society of Criminology	Glasgow, UK	What do the public want from police?	Ben Bradford, Adam Crawford, David Rowlands, Christine Weirich
Jul24	British Society of Criminology	Glasgow, UK	County lines and vulnerability	Chris Devany, Tobias Kammersgaard
Jul24	British Society of Criminology	Glasgow, UK	Co-designing community resilience to online child sexual victimisation	Larissa Engelmann, Christine Weirich
Jul24	British Society of Criminology	Glasgow, UK	Bradford mapping research: service provision for vulnerable groups in contact with the police	Larissa Engelmann, David Rowlands
Sep24	European Society of Criminology	Bucharest, Romania	Changing the story in responding to domestic abuse perpetrators: What can be learned from the language use of criminal justice stakeholders?	David Rowlands, Larissa Engelmann



Date	Conference/host	Location	Presentation	Presenter(s)
Nov24	American Society of Criminology	San Francisco, USA	Offline Responses to Online Problems: Co-designing a Community Response to Online Child Sexual Victimization	Larissa Engelmann, Christine Weirich
Nov24	Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association: ALEPH	Johannesburg, South Africa	Addressing sex worker vulnerability through specialist police officer roles	Kate Brown
Nov24?	College of Policing: VKPP	Online	Micro CPD session: Online Child Sexual Victimization research	Christine Weirich, Larissa Engelmann, Corinne May-Chahal
Nov24	European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA): European Conference on Drug-related Violence	Brussels, Belgium	Drug Market Related Violence, the UK County Lines phenomenon and Implications for Policing	Charlie Lloyd
Nov24	APCC NPCC Partnership Summit	London, UK	Do people think police are meeting minimum standards of service delivery?	Adam Crawford
Feb25	SPA Police Scotland Knowledge Exchange Event: Evidence-informed Policing	Edinburgh, UK	Invited contributors	Adam Crawford, Dan Birks
Feb25	College of Policing: VKPP	Ryton, UK	Using administrative datasets to improve evidence-based understanding of policing and vulnerability-related problems	Dan Birks
Mar25	Yorkshire and Humber Regional Organised Crime Unit: Yorkshire and the Humber Child Criminal Exploitation Conference	Wakefield, UK	County Lines Policing and Vulnerability Project: Findings and Policy Recommendations	Chris Devany, Laura Bainbridge



## Publications

The Centre has continued to generate outputs including publications (listed below) and, in line with our commitment to open research, shared methodologies to support future research. The [Q-methods Study of Vulnerability resources page](#) for example is intended to assist other researchers in systematically exploring controversial subjects such as vulnerability.

Author(s)	Title	Journal/Website	Year
<b>Academic publications</b>			
Brake, A., Birks, D., Mon-Williams, M., Relins, S.	<u>What insights can ambulance data provide on vulnerable groups?</u>	International Journal of Population Data Science, 8(2).	2023
Brake, A., Birks, D., Mon-Williams, M., Relins, S.	<u>Exploring spatial patterns of vulnerability using linked health data</u>	International Journal of Population Data Science, 8(3).	2023
Lewis, S., Pina-Sánchez, J., & Birks, D.	<u>The risk of negative feedback loops in some weighted measures of crime harm</u>	Crime Science, 13(1), 18.	2024
Brown, K.	<u>Vulnerability and Social Control at the Margins: A contribution to an interdisciplinary dialogue on vulnerability</u>	Human Studies	2024
Crawford, A.	<u>Vulnerability and Policing: Rethinking the Role and Limits of the Police</u>	Political Quarterly	2024
Brown, K., Grace, S., Redman, S.	<u>Policing Vulnerability: The Care and Control of Sex Workers Through Designated Police Officers</u>	The British Journal of Criminology	2024
Bradford, B., Weirich, C. A., Rowlands, D., Crawford, A.	<u>Public confidence in the police: using opinion survey data to explore the current 'moment' in British policing</u>	Policing and Society	2025
Birks, D., Groff, E., Malleson, N.	<u>Agent-Based Modeling in Criminology</u>	Annual Review of Criminology	2025
Engelmann L, Weirich C, May-Chahal C	<u>Developing quality standards for community-based online child sexual exploitation and abuse interventions</u>	Child Abuse and Neglect	2025
Bradford, B., Rowlands, D., Weirich, C. A., Crawford, A.	<u>What Service Should Police Provide? Towards A Minimum Policing Standard</u>	Policing and Society	Accepted May25
McAlpine, A. & Birks, D.	<u>Using agent-based modelling to enrich and experiment with anti-trafficking intervention theory</u>	Book chapter in: Cockbain E., Sidebottom, A. & Zhang, S. (eds), Anti-trafficking Evaluation. University College London Press	Forthcoming Nov25
Relins, S., Birks, D., & Lloyd, C.	<u>Using Instruction-Tuned Large Language Models to Identify Indicators of Vulnerability in Police Incident Narratives</u>	Journal of Quantitative Criminology	Accepted Apr25
<b>Blogs &amp; online articles</b>			
Webber, M. & Hughes, L.	<u>New research to explore police responses to mental health issues in routine policing</u>	Blog, Centre website	2023
Kammersgaard, T., Devany, C.	<u>Through the Cracks in County Lines</u>	Blog, N8 PRP website	2023
Warrington, C	<u>Promising solutions to thorny problems: Researching the challenges to policing vulnerability</u>	Policing Insight	2023
Warrington, C	<u>Police forces across England plan to respond to fewer mental health calls – here's why</u>	The Conversation	2023

Author(s)	Title	Journal/Website	Year
Crawford, A.	<u>Redesigning the contribution of police to public safety</u>	Academy of Social Science: Election 24	2024
Shaw, R	<u>Domestic Abuse Service Providers and their Stories</u>	Blog, British Society of Criminology	2024
Engelmann L., Rowlands D., Barker A., Jessop N.	<u>Safety in Bradford: Voices of Women and Girls</u>	Blog, Centre website	2024
May-Chahal, C., Engelmann, L., Weirich, C.	<u>Capturing online safety risks offline: working together for a whole community approach</u>	Blog, Centre website	2024
Shaw, R.	<u>The Stories We Tell About Domestic Abuse, with DA Service Providers</u>	Blog, N8 PRP website	2024
Shaw, R	<u>Domestic Abuse Service Providers and their Stories – an ongoing ESRC funded project</u>	Blog, Socio-Legal Studies Association	2024
Crawford, A.	<u>Vulnerability and Policing: Rethinking the Role and Limits of the Police</u>	Political Quarterly	2024
Patriarca, G.	<u>Policing research and engagement: Interview with Adam Crawford by Gabriel Patriarca</u>	Tempo Social, 36(2), 273–283	2024
Crawford, A.	<u>Police are failing to deliver a minimum standard of service according to the UK public</u>	The Conversation	2025
<b>Reports</b>			
Birks, D. Franklin, R., Sohal, K., Malleson, N. (2023) Chapter 9:	<u>Connected datasets can improve public service delivery. Addressing Education and Health Inequity: Perspectives from the North of England</u>	Report prepared for the Child of the North All Party Parliamentary Group	2023
Renehan, N. & Gadd, D.	<u>Building choice in domestic abuse perpetrator interventions: reflections on what clients, victims and practitioners need</u>	HM Inspectorate of Probation Academic Insights report	2024
C Bond, L Munford, D Birks, O Shobande, S Denny, S Hatton-Corcoran, P Qualter, M Wood	<u>A country that works for all children and young people: An evidence-based plan for improving school attendance</u>	N8 Child of the North Reports	2024
Brown, K., Crawford, A., Lloyd, C., Birks, D., Capstick, N. et al.	<u>An evidence-based plan for addressing childhood vulnerability, crime and justice</u>	N8 Child of the North Reports	2024
Battye, J., Wood, M., Mon-Williams, M., Birks, D.	<u>Geospatial and sociodemographic patterns of unauthorised school absence</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Bradford, B., Rowlands, D., Weirich, C., Crawford, A.	<u>What do the public want from police?</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Bradford, B., Rowlands, D., Weirich, C., Crawford, A.	<u>Do people think police are meeting minimum standards of service delivery?</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Connell, E., Warburton, M., Wood, M., Birks, D.	<u>School absence and Not in Education, Employment or Training</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Devany, C., Yardimci, O., Kammersgaard, T., Brown, K., Crawford, A.	<u>Viewpoints on vulnerability as a focus for policing and public services</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Engelmann, L., Rowlands, D., White, A., Crawford, A.	<u>Service provision for vulnerable people in contact with policing: a strategic view from Bradford</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Hass, A., Birks, D.	<u>Estimating the Nature and Scale of Response Police Demand</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024



Author(s)	Title	Journal/Website	Year
May Chahal, C., Crawford, A., Weirich, C., Engelmann, L.	<u>Co-designing community resilience to online sexual exploitation and abuse victimisation</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
O'Loughlin, A., Leader, K., Classman, S., King, A., Mortimer, J.	<u>Defendants as victims: A scoping review of vulnerability, victimhood and safeguards from charge to conviction</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Pajon, L., Brewster, B., Fell, I., Krokida, Z.	<u>Social media-facilitated trafficking of children and young people</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Shaw, R.	<u>Domestic abuse service providers and their stories</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2024
Coomber, R., Devany, C., Lloyd, C., Brown, K., Bainbridge, L.	<u>County lines, policing and vulnerability</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2025
Jessop, N.	<u>Reducing Barriers to Reporting Sexual Harassment through Enhanced Police Procedural Justice for Racially Minoritised Young Women</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2025
Rutter, N.	<u>When it hurts to seek help: identifying non-harmful routes to support for families living with child-to-parent violence and abuse</u>	Summary findings report, Centre website	2025

## People, culture and environment

One of the Centre's long-term aims is to develop a new generation of researchers with the knowledge, skills and cultural understanding that can lead the vulnerability and policing research agenda.

Building capacity and developing skills of the Centre team and wider community is a key part of this, as is creating the culture and environment for them to prosper. The Centre offices in Yorkshire House, University of York, and dedicated space within the School of Law at the University of Leeds provide excellent places to make the connections necessary for this, and the fantastic work of the Centre's ECR Champion, Dr Laura Bainbridge (University of Leeds) helps in building this supportive culture.

The Centre has put on a number of training sessions for its postdoctoral researchers as indicated below.

### Tailored training for Centre Researchers

- Wellbeing
- Media training
- Conducting focus groups
- Managing vulnerable participants
- Vulnerability, care and control
- Drugs, policing and vulnerability
- Policing and vulnerability
- Conceptual approaches to vulnerability
- REF
- Editing and reviewing

Building upon this, line managers are working with researchers to identify and support career development opportunities, including, for example, teaching, research leadership on specific Centre initiatives, and applying for funding.

The Centre team has expanded recently and now includes 12 researchers as the Centre looks to deliver on its impact agenda, including its work on demonstration projects and evidence-informed training for practitioners.

### Capacity building through PhDs

The Centre has four associated postgraduate researchers (PGRs) funded through the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership, all progressing well. The Centre is building research capacity through structured support for these and other postgraduate researchers through its PhD network. The Centre's ECR Champion has arranged a number of PhD training sessions (see table) and some have been given the opportunity to speak at the Centre's upcoming annual conference "[Vulnerability and Policing: Reducing Harm, Strengthening Justice](#)" in Leeds, 9–10 September 2025.

### Tailored training for Centre PhDs

- Anticipating and responding to challenging situations with vulnerable research participants
- Graphic Elicitation / Life Course approach
- An introduction to ethnography (inc. front-line observation)
- An introduction to policing
- Building impact into your research project
- Mentoring from Centre postdoc researchers

The Centre's international PhD Network was established in early 2024 and brings together a wider community of PhD candidates across multiple disciplines who focus on the intersection of vulnerability and policing.

The network provides a forum for discussion, training opportunities, and organises talks from speakers working in relevant fields as part of its aim to encourage collaboration, learning and innovative research.

Since its launch, the Centre has organised seven events for the network and will be putting on a weeklong [Summer School](#) in July 2025 for 21 PhD students from 9 different countries. The Summer School was oversubscribed with a highly competitive selection process. The 21 successful participants will benefit from a full programme including sessions led by world-leading vulnerability and policing experts, as well as workshops dedicated to exploring researcher wellbeing, data collection and analysis methods, publishing, and achieving research impact. The Summer School will also include a range of social activities and networking opportunities for the next generation of vulnerability and policing researchers to build lasting connections with peers.

We also welcome a new Affiliated PGR from October 2025. Ms Omolara Okunoren was successful in the WRDTP Stuart Hall Foundation Award and her PhD will be entitled: *Saying her name: Black women, victimhood and vulnerability in criminal justice*, supervised by Kate Brown and Sharon Grace.



## Early Career Researcher Development Fund

The ECR Development Fund builds research capacity and capability to tackle current and emerging challenges related to vulnerability and policing aligned with the Centre's values and principles, widening the reach of the Centre's work and enabling early career researchers to lead co-produced pioneering projects that contribute new findings and insights.

Across three calls for applications to this funding programme for Early Career Researchers since 2023, 154 applications have been received, 13 grants have now been awarded, with eight projects now complete and another five having commenced in May 2025, tackling pressing issues such as stalking, stop and search, romance fraud, missing persons and sextortion. One final call for proposals launched at the end of May 2025, to award a further cohort of ECR Principal Investigators on co-produced projects, for completion prior to the end of the Centre's current funding cycle.

The first cohort of awardees have published reports on their work and [spoke at the Centre's first annual conference in 2024](#).

### Reflections from Dr Nadia Jessop, Former ECR Development Fund award holder and current Centre Co-Investigator

*As an interdisciplinary researcher who integrates multiple perspectives into my work it can be difficult to carve out a niche area of research that people understand. This is the beauty of working with the Vulnerability & Policing Futures Research Centre with its strong emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches, methodological diversity and co-production. Through the ECR grant, I was able to find an avenue where my intersecting research interests in education, social psychology, youth development, and violence intervention and prevention found a platform. I was awarded a research grant to study how to enhance procedural justice for racially minoritised young women reporting sexual harassment to the police.*

*My experience as an ECR grantee was uniquely affirming when compared to other grant experiences in terms of the level of support we were provided as a cohort of emerging researchers. Capacity building opportunities included working with a designated ECR champion, who led meetings with other grantees*



from my cohort so we could learn about and from each other's experiences throughout managing our first significant external grant. This medium was a great source of support for all of us. We were also provided with a number of training sessions from experts within the centre on topics ranging from working with stakeholders and partners, to building impact and influencing policy, to publication routes, understanding the REF, and applications for future grants. We also had the opportunity to share the results of our grant-funded research from the grant with relevant stakeholder audiences at the Centre's annual conference.

As a result of working closely with the Centre team throughout my term as a ECR grant awardee I was invited to join the Centre as a co-investigator to co-lead a problem-based research project on racially minoritised youths' perceptions of and relationships with the police in the historically under-resourced Harehills community in Leeds. The project aims to enhance racial justice in policing through working with young people from Harehills to help change the narrative on youth violence and police involvement in the community through centering youths' lived experiences. It's a culmination of all my varied interdisciplinary research interests and I look forward to continued collaboration with the Centre team.

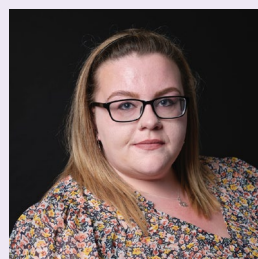
## Our Early Career Researcher Development Fund award holders



### Dr Nadia Jessop

University of York

PROJECT: "Reducing Barriers to Reporting Public Sexual Harassment to the Police: Towards Procedural Justice for Racially Minoritised Vulnerable Young Women and Girls"



### Dr Kirsty Bennett

Leeds Trinity University

PROJECT: "Recognising the Risks and Harms for Repeat Missing Children from Different Residential Environments through a Child and Practitioner Lens"



### Dr Laura Pajón

Liverpool John Moores University

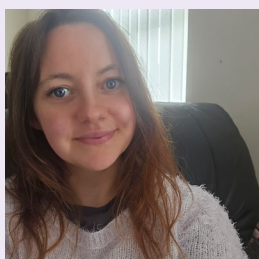
PROJECT: "Social Media-Facilitated Trafficking of Children and Young People Women and Girls"



### Dr Ali Malik

University of Leeds

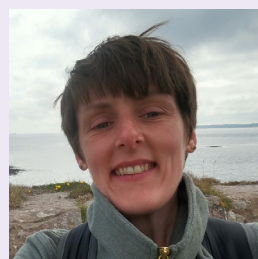
PROJECT: "Policing and community resilience in the context of climate change"



### Dr Nikki Rutter

Durham University

PROJECT: "Who matters? A collaborative co-investigation of who needs to be included, according to families with children with explosive and controlling impulses"



### Dr Sarah Shorrock

University of Bradford/  
University of Leeds

PROJECT: "Roma Voices for Change: Identifying and managing child exploitation in Roma communities within Bradford"



### Dr Rebecca Shaw

University of Leeds

PROJECT: "Domestic Abuse Service Providers and their Stories"



### Dr Lis Bates

University of Central  
Lancashire

PROJECT: "Policing collective coercion: improving understandings of coercive control in honour-based violence and abuse"

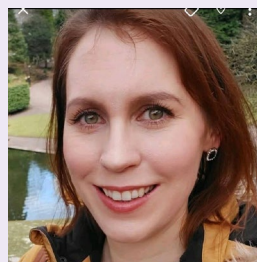
## Our 2025 Early Career Researcher Development Fund award holders



### Dr Kelly Bracewell

University of Central Lancashire

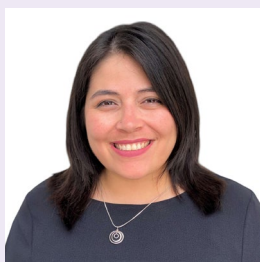
PROJECT: "Experiences of and responses to intimate partner stalking in the lives of young people aged 13–19 years"



### Dr Emily Cooper

University of Central Lancashire

PROJECT: "Policing sextortion: improving understanding of the nature, extent and experiences of (re)victimisation"



### Dr Alejandra De La Fuente Vilar

University of Portsmouth

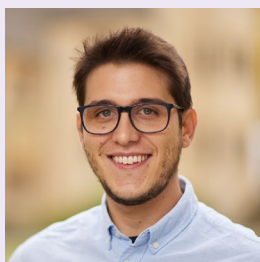
PROJECT: "Developing an Evidence-Based Interviewing Approach for Ethnically Diverse Missing Persons Investigations"



### Dr Jo Kenrick

University of Greenwich

PROJECT: "Redefining vulnerability: Critically examining risk and protective factors in the context of romance fraud"



### Dr Thiago Oliveira

University of Manchester

PROJECT: "Stop and search and the reproduction of social inequality"

## Our data scientists

The programme supports six early career data scientists annually, embedding them in 6-month, partner-driven projects supported by interdisciplinary and cross-sector supervisory teams. Upon completion, previous data scientists from the programme have transitioned into roles in police intelligence analysis, NHS data management, academic research, doctoral studies, and the private sector. These trajectories underscore the lasting impact of the programme's research environment on wider professional and societal contexts.



Profile images from top left:

Abigail Brake, Alexander Davie, Netochukwu Onyiaji, Dr Jayita Chakraborty, Angeliki Fragkeskou, Sadiq Balogun, Jian Feng, Ahmad Ammasha, Folasayo Ogundipe, James Battye, Dr Lewis Shaw, Liam Bailey, Toluwani Osabiya, Dr Emily Connell, Ramaa Thirunarayanan, Dr Amanda Hass



## Translational Fellowships

Our Translational Fellowship funding programme empowers non-academic practitioners and policy makers to undertake research that addresses vulnerability and policing problems or solutions in their work. The Translational Fellows undertake research under the Centre's mentorship, meaning their projects combine the strengths of academic research and practice-orientated expertise to improve approaches to reducing harm among vulnerable groups in society.

The Centre has funded Translational Fellows from Creased Puddle, the Police Foundation and Transform Justice to date.

### CASE STUDY: DR ALICE SIBERRY, TRANSLATIONAL FELLOW

Dr Alice Siberry from Creased Puddle, a UK-based neurodiversity consultancy specialising in policing and neurodiversity, was awarded a Translational Fellowship to conduct research exploring Counter Terrorism practitioners' perspectives on neurodivergent people and their vulnerability to algorithmic radicalisation.

The six-month project found that practitioners agreed that neurodivergent people, particularly young autistic males, may be vulnerable to self-radicalisation facilitated by algorithms. However, most understanding about neurodiversity was generalised, conflating neurodivergent traits, such as "fixation" (or 'specialist interest', an urge to learn everything about that interest) or "social isolation" and extremist behaviours.

To address this, the study calls for neuroinclusive, role-specific training and collaborative, solution-focused strategies between Counter Terrorism (CT) practitioners and external services.

The funding enabled Alice to advance her research on neurodiversity within the Criminal Justice sector. The research is informing interventions, ensuring its findings translate into actionable change. Alice is creating a toolkit and training programme for police as part of this, informed by empirical evidence as well as lived experience. The evidence-informed training will enable Alice and Creased Puddle to continue their mission of empowering organisations to foster inclusive environments. Following on from her project, Alice is submitting articles to journals about her research with her mentor Dr Katy Sian.

*"The Translational Fellowship has provided me the opportunity to meaningfully bridge the gap between research and practice. It has helped me to connect my academic work with the real-world challenges related to policing and vulnerability that we observe at Creased Puddle."*

*"For me, with the support of the Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre, the Translational Fellowship has enabled me to continue applying my research skills in a practical and purposeful way, grounding them in real-world contexts, while still maintaining academic integrity."*

*"For Creased Puddle, this has meant more direct access to evidence-informed thinking and a clearer framework for embedding research into our training and consultancy. Looking ahead, the fellowship has strengthened our ability to share knowledge that is grounded in both lived and professional experience."*

DR ALICE SIBERRY

## Looking ahead

The Centre will be prioritising impact and knowledge exchange work over the coming period, and as we enter the final two years of our ESRC funding, attention is turning towards exploiting various funding opportunities to sustain and enhance our work to date.

Plans are well under way for our second annual conference, [Vulnerability and Policing: Reducing Harm, Strengthening Justice](#), taking place in Leeds in September 2025, and for hosting the [8th International Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health](#) at the University of Leeds in 2026. In the meantime we look forward to hosting our in-person international PhD summer school in York during July 2025, welcoming 21 vulnerability and policing PhD students from across the globe, to learn from each other and an array of expert speakers.

Over the next 12 months, we plan to develop further Demonstration Projects seeking to co-design, facilitate and develop, along with key partners, practical tools, technologies and practices that

apply the learning from the Centre's research. We will also develop and pilot, in collaboration with partners, research-informed training/short courses for practitioners. In addition we will continue to deliver against both newly commenced and ongoing research projects, adding to the Centre's wide programme, and seeking to create and capitalise upon opportunities for impact from our work. We look forward to sharing ideas and engaging with our stakeholders at our annual Centre conference this September, and are hugely grateful for your ongoing support for our work.

### Centre Leadership Team

Professor Adam Crawford

Professor Kate Brown

Professor Charlie Lloyd

Professor Dan Birks

Roz Cumming

Nathan Capstick

### JUNE 2025

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YORK

YORK

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 [Vulnerability & Policing Futures Research Centre](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vulnerability-policing-futures-research-centre)

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