

Centre for Policing Research & Learning



2025: A YEAR IN CPRL



Launch of the
PG Cert
offering places for
full and part-time
PhD study



**CPRL
review**
applying knowledge
through research and
education to improve
policing

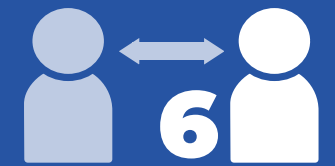


2

strategic
training needs
analysis completed

£150,000

external funding
awarded



6
sessions of
face-to-face
CPD

8

collaborative
events featuring

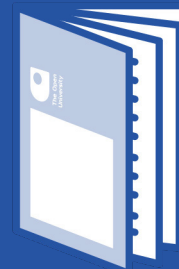
**14 presentations to
support knowledge
exchange**



1,846

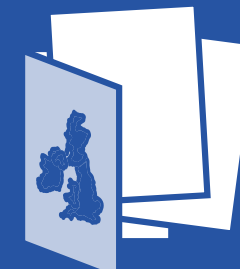
**learners
engaged**

in CPD days/
face-to-face



37

peer reviewed journal
articles published by
policing academics



22

national/international
conference papers
delivered by policing
academics



**44 short
courses**

on Policing Practice
and Leadership Hub



Launch of working
groups on
**Data Analytics
and
Evidence-Based
Practice**

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FOREWORD

Dr Jennifer Norman

Interim Academic Director
Centre for Policing Research and Learning

Dr Nick Caveney

CPRL Chair and Assistant Chief Constable,
Hertfordshire Constabulary

Policing continues to operate in an environment of unprecedented pace and complexity. National reform, rising public expectations and sustained operational pressure mean that policing must adapt quickly, while remaining grounded in legitimacy, ethics and public trust. The direction set by the Policing White Paper and the evolving priorities of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) underline the scale of change underway — and the critical importance of decisions being informed by strong, credible evidence.

In this context, the role of the Centre for Policing Research and Learning (CPRL) has never been more important. During 2025, CPRL has continued to demonstrate its value as a trusted partner to policing: providing independent research, applied learning and practical insight that supports reform at pace, without compromising on quality or integrity. Across workforce development, artificial intelligence, professional learning, organisational culture and wellbeing, the Centre's work reflects the real challenges facing policing today and the need for solutions that are both evidence-based and operationally realistic.

This Annual Report presents a series of soundbites that illustrate CPRL's impact across its three core areas — Research, Learning, and Knowledge into Practice. These examples highlight key achievements, partnerships and areas of influence over the past year, but they represent only a snapshot of a much broader and deeper programme of activity undertaken in 2025. Much of CPRL's work takes place through sustained collaboration, long-term research and ongoing engagement with forces and national partners, the full extent of which cannot be captured within a single report.

What distinguishes CPRL is not only the quality of its research, but the way that evidence is developed and used. The Centre's Mode 2 collaborative model, working alongside forces, national bodies, practitioners and students, ensures that research and learning are relevant, timely and capable of being translated into practice.

At a time when policing is required to move faster than ever, CPRL provides the assurance that innovation is informed, proportionate and aligned with the long-term interests of the service and the public it serves.

Looking ahead, we are pleased to be entering the next phase of CPRL's development with the appointment of Professor Clifford Stott as academic lead for CPRL. As national reform continues to gather momentum, Cliff's leadership will be central to ensuring that CPRL continues to support policing priorities through rigorous research, high-quality learning and meaningful knowledge exchange. We look forward to working with him to strengthen the Centre's national influence and to help shape policing reform that is both ambitious and sustainable.

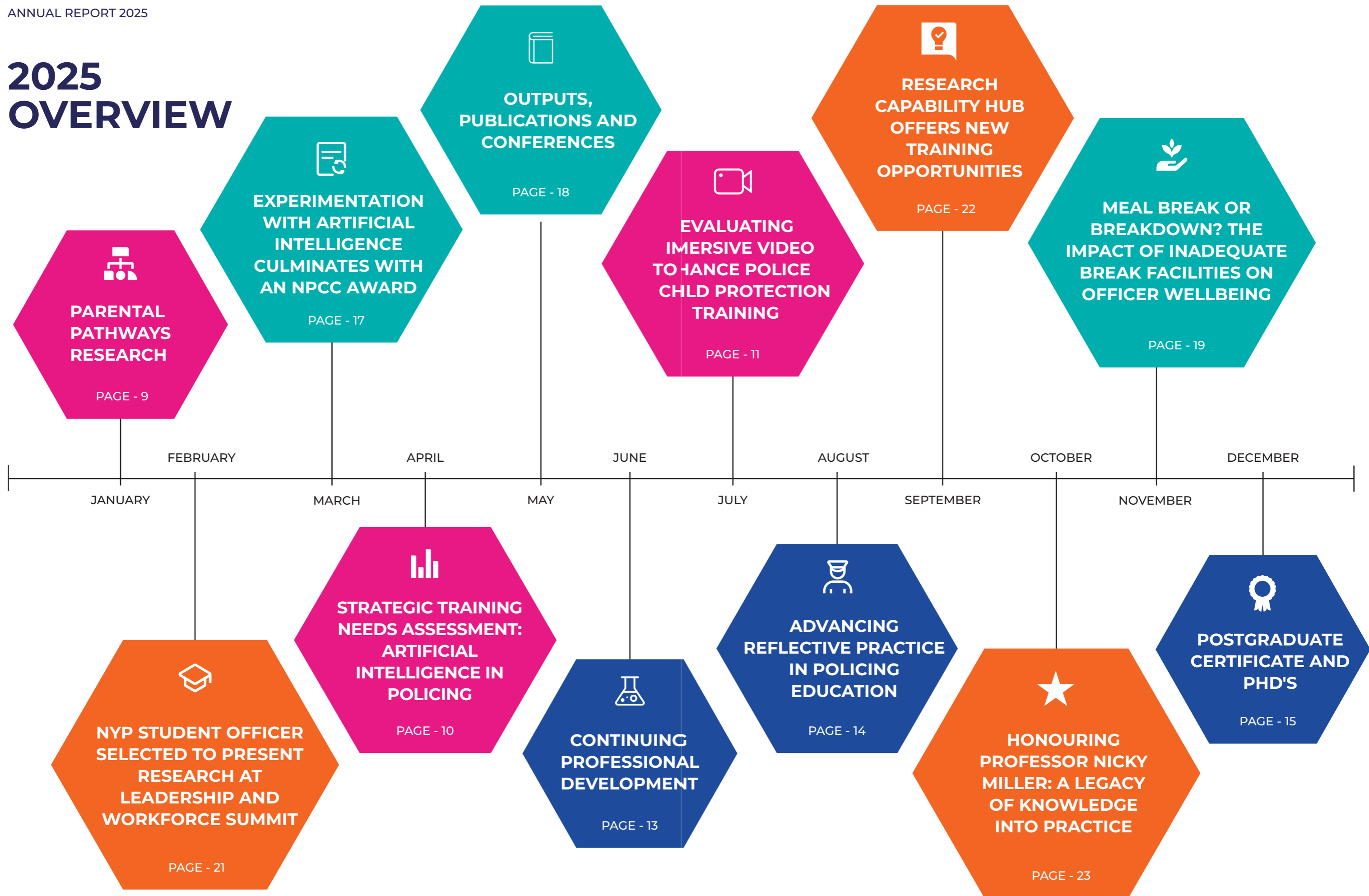
This transition also marks the conclusion of Dr Jennifer Norman's period as Interim Academic Director. Over the past 17 months, Jennifer has provided stability, leadership and continuity during a period of significant change. Her close working with the Chair, the academic team and CPRL member forces has ensured that the Centre has maintained momentum, strengthened partnerships and remained aligned with national policing priorities. Her contribution during this period has played an important role in reinforcing CPRL's position as a nationally recognised centre of excellence in policing research and learning.

As this report demonstrates, CPRL is well positioned to support policing through the next phase of reform. With strong leadership, trusted partnerships and a clear commitment to collaboration and evidence, the Centre will continue to play a vital role in helping policing meet current challenges while preparing for those ahead. We thank all our partners and members for their continued engagement and support, and we look forward to the next stage of CPRL's journey.



Photo: Dr Jennifer Norman, Interim Academic Director and Dr Nick Caveney, CPRL Chair and ACC, Hertfordshire Constabulary

2025 OVERVIEW



RESEARCH

PARENTAL PATHWAYS RESEARCH

STRATEGIC TRAININGS NEEDS ASSESSMENT: AI IN POLICING

EVALUATING IMMERSIVE VIDEO TO ENHANCE POLICE CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING

PARENTAL PATHWAYS RESEARCH

DR KEELY DUDDIN AND KENDAL WRIGHT

The Parental Pathways research continued to advance with the aim of securing consistent, evidence-based support for parents throughout their careers in policing and beyond. In 2025, project leads Dr Keely Duddin and Kendal Wright presented emerging findings and recommendations at several professional and academic forums, including the Canterbury Centre for Police Research annual conference and the International Research Society for Public Management (IRSPM) conference in Bologna, Italy.

The IRSPM conference centred on civic engagement and social capital in modern public administration, with particular attention to social equity and environmental sustainability. Their presentation, "Addressing Maternal Bias and Stigma in UK Police Forces: How Challenges for Parents Returning to the Workplace Part-Time Affect the Social Equity of Policing," examined how structural inequities, cultural stigma and biased organisational practices affect parents, particularly mothers on their return to policing. The event provided an international platform to showcase the research, gather feedback, test ideas with global peers, and engage practitioners committed to improving public-sector workforce equity. It also generated interest in future collaborations across public administration, gender, and employment research networks.

The Mumentum campaign launched at Westminster in June to engage policymakers and has since reached 3.54 million people and generating more than 30,000 interactions with online resources. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) subsequently embedded the toolkits across 650+ jobcentres, and over 300 work coaches were trained to use them with parents. Contributions from policing participants directly shaped the campaign's content and continue to influence real-world support for working mothers across the UK.

A partnership between the DWP and the Open University is a social mobility policy partnership made in heaven.

Alison McGovern
Minister for Employment

In 2026, the research programme is expanding further through the launch of a national benchmarking audit, supported by the NPCC Family Friendly Guidance lead. This first-of-its-kind audit will capture the current landscape of parental provision across policing organisations. Findings will complement the 2022 survey and inform future outputs, including a return-to-work toolkit tailored to policing and the wider public sector. The team also plan to develop an online training programme for first-line managers, aimed at improving understanding and consistency in supporting employees through pregnancy, parental leave and workplace return. Ultimately, the goal is to strengthen organisational culture, enhance retention, and embed equitable parental support across policing.



Photo: Kendal Wright and Dr Keely Duddin

STRATEGIC TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN POLICING

DR JENNIFER NORMAN, JO LAMBERT, DR PAUL WALLEY, IAN MCNEILL AND FRANCES WRIGHT

During 2025, CPRL undertook a commissioned Strategic Training Needs Assessment (STNA) on Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Avon and Somerset Police, one of the largest and most innovative forces in England and Wales. The work was developed in close partnership with the force and reflects CPRL's commitment to applied, co-produced research that supports evidence-informed decision-making in policing.

Our collaboration with CPRL has been invaluable. Bringing academic insight together with operational policing has enabled us to build a strong evidence base and clear recommendations that will shape and strengthen how we upskill our workforce in relation to AI. Colleagues from the OU have far exceeded the expectations set out in the original terms of reference.

Jason Sims
Chief Inspector, Avon & Somerset Police

The project responded to the rapid growth of AI in policing and the wider criminal justice system, alongside rising concerns about ethics, leadership capability, workforce readiness, and risks of bias and discrimination. Avon and Somerset Police asked the STNA to focus on two key issues: leadership preparedness for AI-enabled policing and ensuring future AI use does not reinforce racial or structural inequalities. The work was supported by national stakeholders, including the NPCC AI lead and the College of Policing, placing the project within a wider national policy and practice context.

CPRL used a robust four-phase mixed-methods approach, combining a structured review of academic and policy literature, interviews with senior strategic leads, focus groups with officers and staff in operational and specialist roles, and a large workforce survey with 849 respondents.

This design enabled a comprehensive assessment of organisational AI readiness and training needs across ranks, roles, and career stages, while also generating wider insights into organisational culture, governance, and change management associated with technological innovation.

The findings highlighted a strong appetite across the workforce to engage with AI and recognise its potential to improve efficiency, service delivery, and investigative capability. However, the research also identified significant gaps in understanding, confidence, and organisational readiness. Senior leaders reported feeling underprepared to lead AI strategy and governance, while many officers and staff expressed uncertainty about AI concepts, ethical implications, and appropriate use. A key contribution of the research was demonstrating that training needs cannot be addressed through rank-based models alone, with generational differences emerging as a critical factor shaping learning preferences and engagement.

The final STNA report provided Avon and Somerset Police with a detailed, evidence-based set of strategic and workforce-level recommendations, including the need for clearer AI strategy and governance, structured change management, tailored training pathways, and stronger mechanisms for organisational learning and knowledge sharing. Importantly, the work positioned AI training not simply as a technical requirement, but as a broader organisational capability linked to leadership, ethics, public trust, and workforce sustainability.

CPRL is now working with Avon and Somerset Police to identify next steps arising from the STNA. This ongoing collaboration exemplifies CPRL's role as a trusted partner in translating research into practice, supporting innovation while safeguarding ethical standards, and strengthening the capacity of police organisations to respond effectively to complex, emerging challenges.

EVALUATING IMMERSIVE VIDEO TO ENHANCE POLICE CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING

OLIVER HOWSON AND DR HELEN GLASSPOOLE-BIRD

Responding to domestic abuse incidents places multiple demands on police officers, including ensuring personal safety, supporting victims, and accurately gathering evidence. In this complex context, signs of harm, neglect, fear or coercive control affecting children can be overlooked.

Motivated to strengthen child safeguarding in domestic abuse cases, Cheshire Constabulary used immersive video (IV) technology. Through virtual reality headsets and headphones, participants experienced a real-life scenario from the child's perspective.

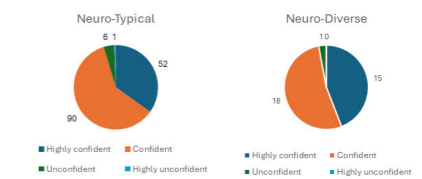
IV offers police officers a realistic way to develop skills for safeguarding children in domestic abuse contexts. By simulating authentic scenarios, it exposes officers to the emotional and practical complexities of real cases, supporting the recognition of subtle cues and risk factors often missed in traditional training.

This research evaluated the effectiveness of IV within Cheshire Constabulary's child protection training, including its potential to provide more inclusive learning for both neurotypical and neurodiverse officers.

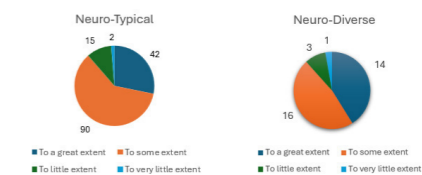
IV is particularly valuable for training neurodiverse police officers, offering structured, visually rich, and multisensory learning. Officers can engage with realistic scenarios at their own pace, supporting different processing styles while improving understanding, retention, and confidence.

Researchers from CPRL carried out an evaluation of the training. This included a survey completed by 183 participants. Analysis of survey data was used to inform question sets for three focus groups. One group was exclusively made up of those who had indicated (on the survey) that they had some form of neurodivergence (diagnosed or self-diagnosed).

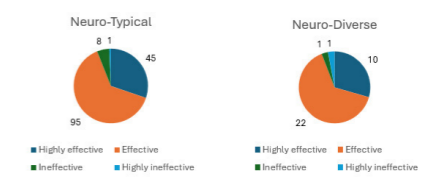
Confidence in applying learning from IV training to real-life situation involving child protection



Improved ability to recognise signs of child vulnerability through IV training



How IV training prepares officers for real-life situations involving vulnerabilities



- Participants found IV more engaging than traditional learning, improving focus.
- Real actors enhanced realism and transferability to practice.
- The emotional intensity made learning more memorable, increasing empathy and awareness, particularly for those experiencing compassion fatigue.
- Low-stakes simulation reduced cognitive load, allowing safer practice of decision-making.
- Shared scenarios supported focused reflection and discussion of decision-making.

Combined with the force's post-training evaluation, these findings support IV as an effective training tool. Cheshire Constabulary subsequently updated policy and practice and expanded its use across training.

LEARNING

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ADVANCING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN POLICING EDUCATION

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE AND PHD'S

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DR PAUL WALLEY AND IAN MCNEILL

Operation Soteria, first launched in June 2021 by Avon and Somerset Police as Operation Soteria Bluestone, was created to transform how rape and serious sexual offences are investigated and to address wider issues surrounding violence against women and girls. Central to its success has been the development of the National Operating Model (NOM), which challenges traditional investigative assumptions and prioritises understanding offender behaviour, victim experience, and the broader context of offending.

Launched in 2024, the Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme was developed in collaboration with the Operation Soteria Joint Unit and academics across all six national pillars, the programme was designed and led by Ian McNeill, Senior Lecturer in CPD Development in Policing at CPRL. The programme brought together cutting-edge academic research and frontline policing expertise to embed the principles of the Operation Soteria NOM into everyday investigative practice.

Throughout 2025 colleagues Ian, Dr Paul Walley and Dr Jennifer Norman continued delivery of the landmark CPD programme in partnership with the National Centre for Violence against Women & Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP) supporting Operation Soteria, continuing the significant step forward in the national effort to improve investigations into rape and serious sexual assault offences (RASSO).

In 2025, the CPD programme was delivered across three key locations: in April to officers from the States of Jersey Police, in June to colleagues in Guernsey, and in July to policing professionals in Staffordshire. Each delivery reflected the same core commitment - to equip investigators with a victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led approach to RASSO investigations, while allowing space for local discussion and reflective practice.

Across all three locations, the CPD programme was praised for its structured delivery and innovative teaching methods. The curriculum consisted of three integrated modules, blending online learning with face-to-face sessions and practical consolidation.

Participants engaged with videos, case studies and facilitated group discussions designed to encourage critical thinking and professional confidence.

Ian McNeill said, "The level of engagement in this training has been quite overwhelming. While feedback during delivery was very positive, the evaluation data clearly shows the scale of impact and how strongly officers connected with the programme."

As the success of the programme continues to gain recognition, CPRL and the Operation Soteria team have been invited to deliver further CPD sessions in additional jurisdictions. The programme stands as a powerful example of how evidence-based learning and collaboration can drive meaningful change in modern policing and strengthen public trust.

I liked the amount of time dedicated to such an important topic for training. The use of videos and infographics really helped, and the lecturers were engaging, knowledgeable and approachable.

CPD participant



Photo: Ian McNeill, and Regional Practice Advisors, NPCC DI Mim Law and Nicky Arrowsmith

ADVANCING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN POLICING EDUCATION

STEPHEN MOSS

Stephen Moss, an academic in Policing and CPRL, completed a project supported by SCiLAB (Centre for Scholarship and Innovation, Business and Law) that aimed to understand:

- How is reflective practice conceptualised within the policing concept?
- What potential does reflective practice hold for professional development in policing?
- What strategies can address existing gaps in its application, particularly in relation to the professionalisation agenda in policing?

Reflective practice is widely recognised as a tool for work-based learning across sectors. In policing, it is typically framed as an individual, cyclical process, with the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988) endorsed by the College of Policing and commonly used in the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP). Tutors often complement Gibbs with other models, promoting reflection as a means to improve decision-making, prevent mistakes, and foster professional growth.

That's an interesting one... because reflective practices, we talk about it as a term all the time, and yet it does mean different things to different people.

Interviewee from a Higher Education Institution

The research involved reviewing key literature and reports, gathering insights from DHEP educators through questionnaires and interviews, and engaging with staff from other Higher Education Institutions and policing organisations. Findings revealed that while educators value reflective practice and demonstrate strong expertise, they report that students often approach reflection superficially seeing it as a task tied to assessment rather than an integral part of their professional development and praxis. Heavy workloads exacerbate this issue.

Current approaches emphasise evaluative self-assessment but lack the depth required for transformative learning. Deeper critical reflection depends on clear scaffolding, including structured materials and assessment guidance, with engagement improving when reflection is relevant and supported beyond assessment requirements.

The literature highlights similar concerns. West (2023) advocates for holistic understanding that combines self-knowledge with critical awareness to develop creative and reflexive professionals. Sweet (2023) critiques instrumentalist approaches that prioritise conformity over empowering learners to take responsibility for their growth. Christopher (2015) argues that limited critical depth in policing reflection undermines transformative learning, while Fook (2023) calls for models that interrogate the self and situate experiences within broader social and political contexts. Each offers insights into how developing reflective practice approaches can impact positively with the emerging professionalisation agenda.

Initial recommendations from the study include:

- Developing assessment strategies and structured workbooks to illustrate the progressive nature of reflection.
- Creating clear marking rubrics to promote 'critical' engagement.
- Establishing communities of practice through forums, workshops, and world cafés to support educators.
- Pursuing collaborative scholarship to design a contextualised, progressive model of critical reflection for policing.

The study argues for deeper, critically informed reflective practice in policing education, supported through structure and educator collaboration to move beyond compliance and support transformative professional development.

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE AND PHD'S

DR SEAN BELL AND CPRL PHD STUDENTS

Partnering with the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW), the Department for Policing at the OU has launched a pioneering accredited qualification designed to strengthen professional practice for Federation representatives across England and Wales. The new Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Professional Practice, developed collaboratively by OU academics and PFEW's Learning and Development team, registered its first cohort intake in Autumn 2025 following the conclusion of the PFEW elections.

The two-module programme, which has undergone extensive academic approval, is the first externally recognised qualification tailored specifically to the role of Federation representatives. It aims to enhance the knowledge, skills and behaviours that underpin effective representation, advocacy and member support in a policing environment facing increasing public expectations and operational complexity.

Module One focuses on personal professional development, encouraging learners to critically reflect on their role and impact, while Module Two allows specialisation through a research project in areas such as wellbeing, equality or misconduct — combining academic rigour with practical application.

Dr Sean Bell, Lecturer in Policing Organisation and Practice at The Open University, and David Bamber, PFEW's Learning and Development Lead, co-designed the curriculum to ensure it is rooted in real-world representative practice. Mukund Krishna, CEO of PFEW, said "This accreditation programme is not just about individual achievement; it is about strengthening the Federation as a whole. By investing in our representatives, we are investing in our members, and by extension, the public they serve. This initiative underscores our continued commitment to putting members first, enhancing professional credibility, and ensuring that PFEW remains a relevant, forward-thinking organisation at the heart of UK policing."

This milestone initiative reflects a shared commitment to professional excellence, consistency and growth within policing representation.

CPRL at the OU supports research-based postgraduate study, offering part-funded PhD studentships for police officers and staff from partner forces. These studentships enable part-time or full-time doctoral research, with tailored support in developing research proposals and access to financial assistance that may cover up to 50 per cent of fees for eligible candidates. The programme aims to strengthen evidence-based policing through academically rigorous, practice-focused research addressing real-world policing challenges.

CPRL's doctoral community brings together researchers working across key policing priorities, including investigative decision-making, digital capability, safeguarding, workforce development, and evidence quality. Close collaboration between academics and policing professionals ensures doctoral research is grounded in operational realities and delivers clear practical relevance.

Current CPRL PhD students and research titles include:

- Charlotte Gaskell – The effect of using an interpreter on the accuracy of witness accounts gathered from police interviews
- Davin Parrott – Can hypernetwork theory provide new methods of abstracting useful information from police intelligence?
- Kimberley Ward – Exploring the role of online dating sites and mobile dating apps in sexual offending
- Russ Hinton – A framework for the introduction of new technologies into law enforcement applied through an example of exploratory data analysis and data mining
- Nicole Woodhall – Indecent images of children in the UK: Has the current threat gone beyond policing's capability to respond to it
- James Dickety – Halting the tide – retention within DC pathways

Together, these projects demonstrate the PhD programme's growing impact, delivering research that is both academically rigorous and operationally relevant.

If you would like more information or wish to register your interest, please contact oupc@open.ac.uk.



KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE

EXPERIMENTATION WITH AI CULMINATES WITH AN NPCC AWARD

OUTPUTS, PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES

MEAL BREAK OR BREAKDOWN? THE IMPACT OF INADEQUATE BREAK FACILITIES ON OFFICER WELLBEING

EXPERIMENTATION WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CULMINATES WITH AN NPCC AWARD

DR PAUL WALLEY AND DR HELEN GLASSPOOLE-BIRD

There has been much discussion about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within policing in applications ranging from facial recognition through to intelligence analysis. Policing, like all public sector organisations, are also questioning the role of AI to improve productivity. Can AI be used to speed up tasks such as report writing, saving officers' time when completing administration?

Hertfordshire Constabulary are one of the first forces to have asked this question and started to test the development of AI to help produce MG11 witness statements. They began experimenting with AI to take audio transcripts from Rapid Video Response calls and convert them automatically into full MG11 documentation. Herts were awarded a "Test and Learn" grant to continue this work and CPRL were invited to provide an independent evaluation of the system as part of the work.

Dr Helen Glasspoole-Bird and Dr Paul Walley conducted this evaluation from January to March 2025, through a series of interviews and analysis of MG11 documents. Output from AI and human authors was compared to see what differences existed between the two. They found that the AI produced text that was more academic in tone, often using complex wording that witnesses didn't use themselves. The AI also produced "hallucinations", adding incorrect content into statements. Hallucinations included the invention of the timing of an offence or the clothing worn by an offender. Such subtle additions are difficult to detect, with costly additional checking becoming a necessity. Furthermore, additional unused material was generated as a consequence of using AI, which also needed costly additional redaction for disclosure to the CPS. There was resistance to the use of AI reports within the Criminal Justice system as a consequence.

This work informed the Force Executive's decision to conclude the proof of concept having highlighted these key difficulties. It significantly influenced the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to develop a new joint operating procedure governing the introduction of AI into the criminal justice process.

The academic evaluation was disseminated to key stakeholders, including the NPCC AI Lead, who commended the work undertaken by Hertfordshire Constabulary and its partners. In recognition of these efforts, the NPCC AI Portfolio Coordinator nominated Hertfordshire Constabulary for an award in the newly introduced category of 'Falling Forward'.

This category is designed to encourage police forces to embrace calculated risk-taking and to foster a culture of transparency in sharing lessons learned from challenging projects.

The citation for the award states:

This award recognises an individual or team who has demonstrated exceptional courage and insight by embracing failure as a catalyst for innovation. Through intelligent or vicarious failure, the recipient has shown how setbacks—when approached with reflection, responsibility, and resilience—can lead to meaningful progress, improved practices, and a stronger culture of learning. Their experience serves as a powerful reminder that innovation is not the absence of failure, but the mastery of learning from it.

OUTPUTS, PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES

DR HELEN SELBY-FELL, DR JENNIFER NORMAN AND JO LAMBERT

A new open-access book showcasing innovative practice across business, law and policing has already gained impressive traction, achieving more than 12,000 downloads within its first month of launch.

Creativity and Critique in Digital Learning and Teaching offers timely and thought-provoking insights into the pedagogical challenges and opportunities associated with teaching and learning in an increasingly digital world. The collection highlights creative approaches to curriculum design, critical reflection on digital pedagogy, and practical responses to evolving professional education contexts.

The book was formally celebrated at a campus launch event, featuring presentations from its three editors: Professor Jacqueline Baxter, Dr Helen Selby-Fell, and Dr Andrew Gilbert. As co-editor, Dr Helen Selby-Fell played a central role in shaping the volume's cross-disciplinary narrative and in advancing critical conversations around digital education across professional domains.

Among the book's 14 chapters is a significant contribution from CPRL academics Dr Jennifer Norman and Jo Lambert, written in collaboration with Lee Partridge of North Yorkshire Police. Their chapter, Police-Academic Partnerships: Delivering the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), explores how collaborative models between universities and police forces can enhance the delivery, relevance and effectiveness of policing education. The chapter highlights the value of applied, partnership-driven approaches to professional learning—an area that sits at the heart of CPRL's mission. CPRL academics Abigail Salter and Stephen Moss (with Amanda Smith from Law) authored a chapter on using reflective practice to assess learning within a work-based PCDA module, offering insights for both practitioners and tutors.

The launch event also provided contributors with an opportunity to reflect on future directions in digital learning and teaching, while showcasing the breadth of expertise across CPRL, the Department for Policing, and the wider Faculty.

The book can be accessed [here](#).

CPRL was represented at the 25th European Society of Criminology (ESC) conference in Athens, Greece. The ESC is a leading international forum for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to exchange knowledge and foster dialogue on criminology, criminal justice, and policing.

Dr Norman's paper presented findings from her eight-year longitudinal PhD at the University of Southampton, examining how police officers and staff experience police-specific higher education and how it is recognised and valued within police organisations. Drawing on mixed methods data from four time points, the study found clear individual benefits, including greater confidence, stronger professional identity, and enhanced critical and analytical thinking. It also identified ongoing organisational barriers to applying knowledge in practice, with implications for organisational justice, workforce engagement, and retention. These findings resonated with international panel contributions, encouraging shared reflection on the challenges of translating educational learning into policing practice across jurisdictions.

A key aspect of the conference for CPRL was engagement with the ESC Policing Working Group, a leading international network for policing scholarship. Emerging Special Interest Groups, including strands on police education and accountability, also offer opportunities for CPRL to engage in international partnerships, comparative research, collaborative funding, and capacity-building across Europe.



MEAL BREAK OR BREAKDOWN? THE IMPACT OF INADEQUATE BREAK FACILITIES ON OFFICER WELLBEING

DR SEAN BELL

The decline of police canteens and shared spaces has emerged as a significant challenge for police officer wellbeing. Since 2010, austerity measures have led to the closure of 663 police stations across England and Wales, drastically reducing access to communal facilities. Operational changes - such as single crewing, staggered shifts, digital working practices and rising workloads - have compounded isolation and stress among officers.

With support from the Police Federation of England and Wales, Police Federation Scotland, Police Federation of Northern Ireland, and the British Transport Police Federation, the research team surveyed approximately 2,000 police officers across the UK. The findings reveal concerning trends in refreshment break practices and their impact on wellbeing.

The survey revealed that 61% of officers regularly work through breaks, while 25% report having no allocated break time at all. Even when breaks do occur, they are increasingly solitary: 44% of officers spend their breaks alone, compared to just 16% in previous years. Mental health indicators are equally troubling, with 51% of respondents experiencing frequent stress or low mood and 67% attributing mental health issues directly to work pressures.



Officers often feel guilty about taking breaks, fearing managerial disapproval. High workloads force quick, inadequate rest, contributing to fatigue and burnout. Fewer than 25% of officers have access to hot food, and many rely on poorly maintained spaces, with reports of broken equipment and unhygienic conditions reinforcing feelings of neglect. Breaks once served as opportunities to process trauma and decompress, but this practice has declined sharply, leaving officers in a state of continuous high alert and contributing to burnout and compassion fatigue. Shared spaces previously nurtured camaraderie and resilience, but their absence reduces peer support and leaves officers feeling isolated. Furthermore, many officers perceive senior leaders as indifferent to wellbeing, prioritising operational demands over rest.

The erosion of "canteen culture" - historically linked to solidarity and professionalism - undermines morale and retention. Without proper facilities and structured breaks, officers face long-term physical and mental health risks, increasing absenteeism and reducing operational effectiveness.

Police forces must prioritise wellbeing by reinstating adequate refreshment break provisions, improving facilities to meet basic standards, and fostering supportive environments that value rest and recovery. Shared spaces are not luxuries—they are essential for mental health, team cohesion, and effective policing.

This research highlights an urgent need for cultural and structural change. Addressing these issues will help create a healthier, more resilient workforce capable of meeting the demands of modern policing.

Findings were presented at Canterbury Christ Church University's Annual Policing Conference (January 2025) and in November featured in [Police Magazine](#).



DEPARTMENT FOR POLICING

NYP STUDENT OFFICER SELECTED TO PRESENT RESEARCH AT LEADERSHIP AND WORKFORCE SUMMIT

RESEARCH CAPABILITY HUB OFFERS NEW TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

HONOURING PROFESSOR NICKY MILLER: A LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE

NYP STUDENT OFFICER SELECTED TO PRESENT RESEARCH AT LEADERSHIP AND WORKFORCE SUMMIT

DR JENNIFER NORMAN AND JO LAMBERT

PC Jemma Grant from North Yorkshire Police was selected to present her final year project at the College of Policing Leadership and Workforce Summit in February 2025, following nomination alongside a small group of outstanding Student Officers from Merseyside Police, West Yorkshire Police, PSNI and Northumbria Police. This national platform reflects the growing emphasis on strengthening the visibility, credibility and influence of student research within policing and the wider criminal justice sector.

As part of her PCDA, Jemma's research explored the impact of recent high-profile events, including the Casey Review, on police legitimacy and the effect this has on serving officers. Her project examined how public perception and confidence in policing influence officer wellbeing and professional identity. At the summit, Jemma presented a research poster outlining her project's aims, methodology and key findings. Through interviews with policing practitioners, she identified growing concerns about public trust, with many officers reporting increased verbal abuse and feeling unfairly judged or "tarred with the same brush" following national controversies. Social media discourse was highlighted as a significant factor shaping these experiences.

Jemma's presentation attracted strong interest from delegates and senior leaders, including a visit from Jo Noakes, Chief Operating Officer at the College of Policing, and was praised for its relevance, insight and contribution to national conversations around workforce wellbeing and public confidence in policing. Her invitation to present exemplifies wider sector-wide efforts to raise the profile of policing student research.

Dr Jennifer Norman's work through the National Policing Education Research Hub (NPERH) has focused on developing shared approaches to showcasing high-quality student projects at a national level.



Photo: Jo Noakes, Chief Operating Officer, College of Policing and PC Jemma Grant, North Yorkshire Police

This includes the launch of the International Journal of Criminology and Policing Education, which provides a platform for disseminating student research more widely.

Building on this, NPERH is collaborating with the Society of Evidence-Based Policing (SEBP) to deliver a Police Graduate Research Showcase at the National Evidence-Based Policing Conference 2026, enabling officers and staff to present their research and dissertations to national audiences.

By creating routes for apprentices to disseminate their work beyond individual institutions, these initiatives demonstrate how student scholarship can contribute meaningfully to professional debate and policy-relevant conversations. Jemma's presentation at the College of Policing Leadership and Workforce Summit stands as a strong example of the collective effort to recognise student research as a valuable source of insight into workforce wellbeing, legitimacy and public confidence in policing.

RESEARCH CAPABILITY HUB OFFERS NEW TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

DR PAUL WALLEY AND DR HELEN SELBY-FELL

CPRL played a significant role in the award of a £5m ESRC grant to develop a Research Capability Hub over the next five years. Former CPRL Director of Learning, Dr Paul Walley and Dr Helen Selby-Fell from the Department for Policing were part of the bid team given the award. Professor Bart Rientes, from the OU's Institute for Educational Technology (IET) is leading the work. The new Hub will network social scientists across the UK, providing improved access to research methods (RM) training for both academics and practitioners.

The award is rather poignant as CPRL Director Professor Nicky Miller played a key role in starting the bid, building the original team. Nicky and Paul saw this as a good way to help improve police access to research methods training that would support CPRL's work in expanding Evidence-Based policing practice. Sadly, it was after Nicky passed away in December 2024 that we learned the bid had been allowed to progress to the final stage. The award was confirmed in June 2025 and the project started late September / early October.

Two of the main aims are:

1. To develop a wide range of new training programmes in research methods, co-creating these with partners.
2. Enhance access to research methods training through the use of online courses that people can study at any time or location, usually at no cost.

The first phase of the project is to build the online Hub that will curate research methods training from a wide range of UK providers. It aims to be a "one-stop shop" for people wishing to find research methods training. Users will be able to conduct advanced searches for specific types of training.

A second phase of the project will be to help develop new training resources mainly through the OU's Openlearn Create (OLC) platform.

Some officers have already completed the highly successful Operation Soteria Investigator CPD, a strong example of co-created training delivered through OLC.

The team are now consulting experts across all stakeholder groups about the gaps in RM training provision, working towards a set of training needs priorities. Policing organisations are included in this consultation as it is important that people working in police research departments and EBP have access to the right training.

One feature of the grant is a "Flexible Fund" of £1m that has been reserved to cover the cost of developing new content. In the spring of 2026 this fund will launch its first invitation for training developers to submit proposals for new courses. The first grants will be offered for small projects with budgets of up to £20,000 and short timescales. Later grants will fund more ambitious programmes with budgets of up to £200,000 and timelines of 2-3 years.

More information on the Research Capability Hub can be found [here](#).

The Research Capability Hub will present a great opportunity for researchers within policing organisations to access research skills training.

Dr Paul Walley
The Open University



Photo: Research Capability Hub team

HONOURING PROFESSOR NICKY MILLER: A LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE

Amongst the many CPRL achievements this year, 2025 has been marked by the noticeable absence of Dr Nicky Miller. Having become CPRL Director for Knowledge into Practice in 2019, Nicky shared her knowledge and enthusiasm with many colleagues and police partners, transforming research and evidence into practice.

In October, Nicky was honoured with a posthumous professorship which was awarded at the Brighton graduation ceremony to recognise a 'groundbreaking contribution to UK policing' and the lasting impact of her work. This very special occasion was attended by Nicky's family and colleagues from CPRL.

Executive Dean Mark Durkin delivered a moving tribute which captured both the scale of Nicky's influence and the warmth of her character. His address celebrated her as an academic whose commitment to people was matched only by a commitment to ideas. Mark highlighted her early foundations in investigative psychology, influential work at the Home Office and the College of Policing, and leadership in major national initiatives such as the Police Knowledge Fund which helped shift policing culture towards evidence-based practice.

Her OU contributions played a key role in shaping the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA). As Director of Knowledge into Practice, Nicky championed the importance of connecting theory to real-world change. Nicky would regularly remind colleagues – with good humour – that even the best ideas need a roadmap if they are going to matter in practice.

It was not only her professional legacy celebrated – Nicky's kindness, generosity and mentorship make her such a much-loved and missed colleague. Her influence lives on through the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded Research Capability Hub which she played a fundamental role in shaping last year.

It is with deep pride and reverence, that we confer upon Dr. Nicky Miller the title of Professor, posthumously, in recognition of her groundbreaking contribution to UK policing and of the enduring impact of that contribution to both current and future society across the UK.

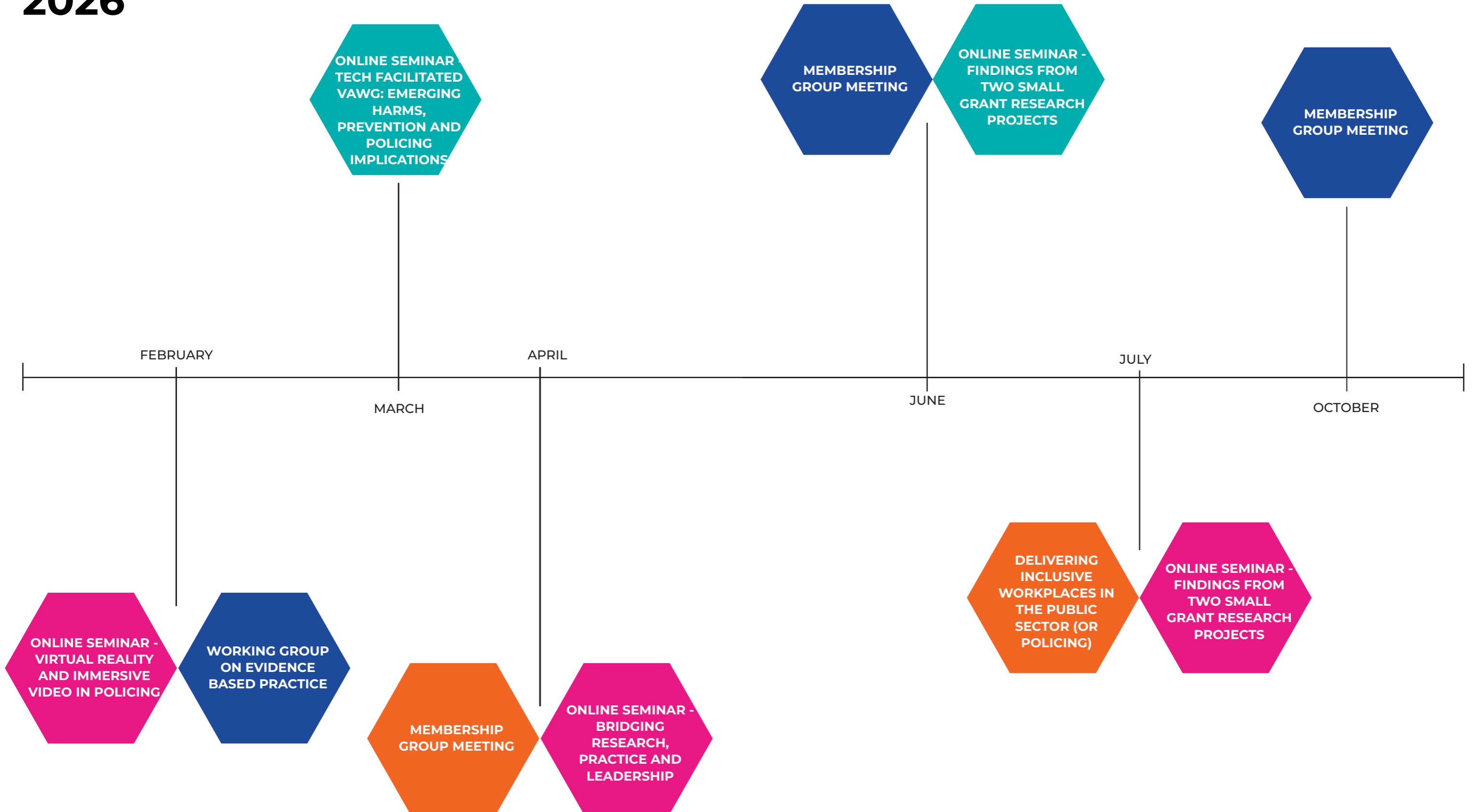
Like all Professors of note, Nicky was devoted to knowledge exchange and to bridging and indeed narrowing that gap between theory and practice, in her case focusing on the important context of UK policing. She showed us that evidence, when applied with insight and care, could transform the way policing serves the public. The impact of her work reached police stations, policy offices, and communities across the country.

Mark Durkin
Executive Dean, The Open University



Photo: Professor Nicky Miller

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2026



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2026

CPRL at the Open University is pleased to share its programme of upcoming events for 2026.

Designed to bring together researchers, policing practitioners, and partner organisations from across the UK, these events reflect the Centre's continued commitment to advancing evidence-based practice, supporting professional development, and strengthening collaboration across the policing landscape. By connecting academic research with frontline experience, CPRL provides a dynamic forum for shared learning, innovation, and meaningful dialogue.

The year begins with a series of engaging seminars and working groups that offer members the opportunity to explore emerging research and practical developments. On 10 February 2026, an online seminar will examine how virtual reality and immersive video technologies can enhance policing training. The session will explore their use across a range of contexts, from courtroom preparation to safeguarding scenarios, highlighting how new technologies can support operational effectiveness and professional learning.

Later in February, CPRL will host the Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice on 24 February 2026. This session will focus on how research evidence can be effectively translated into operational decision-making, policy development, and strategic planning. The Working Group will provide an opportunity for members to share experiences, identify challenges, and help shape future research priorities, ensuring that CPRL's work remains closely aligned with the needs of policing practitioners.

Insights from the Working Group will feed directly into the first Membership Group Meeting of the year, which will take place on 9 April 2026 via Microsoft Teams. This meeting will bring together representatives from member forces to discuss ongoing research collaborations, share learning, and contribute to the Centre's strategic direction. It will also provide a valuable opportunity to reflect on recent activity and consider how evidence-based approaches can continue to be embedded across policing practice.

On 10 March 2026, CPRL will host a seminar on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, delivered in partnership with the Centre for Protecting Women Online. This session will explore emerging online harms, examining current research evidence alongside practical considerations for policing responses and safeguarding.

The programme continues into the spring with a seminar on 14 April 2026, led by Dr Iain Britton and Dr Anna Hopkins, focusing on bridging research, practice, and leadership. This session will highlight the ways in which academic research can inform frontline policing and leadership development, illustrating how evidence can be used to support organisational learning and improvement.

Across the summer, CPRL will continue its programme of seminars and engagement events. On 1 July 2026, the Centre will host a knowledge exchange event, "Delivering Inclusive Workplaces in the Public Sector (or policing): Evidence, Experience and Real-world Change". This event will bring together research evidence, lived experience, and practical insight to support meaningful change in workplace inclusion across policing and the wider public sector.

Further seminars and Membership Group Meetings are planned for May, June, and July, covering topics including maternity experiences within policing and the support needs of neurodivergent members of the public. Dates for the remainder of the year, including additional events and meetings in the autumn, will be confirmed shortly.

Together, this programme demonstrates CPRL's commitment to fostering a vibrant, evidence-led policing community and supporting the application of research into practice to improve outcomes for policing and the communities it serves.

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