

## Developing and implementing placed-based prevention approaches in policing to reduce demand for public services and to improve public outcomes

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### Project aims:

This proposed Ph.D. project aims to advance current theoretical frameworks and the empirical evidence base around the development and implementation of prevention approaches in policing and other related public services. These approaches seek to prevent harm or reduce it, either at the point of initial demand or by preventing repeat demand. While prevention is not a new topic in health and social care, there is now increased awareness by police forces of the need to develop and implement prevention approaches. A collaborative governance approach to improve the level of public outcomes and resilience closely aligns with the OU's social mission and addresses societal challenges such as inequalities.

### Theoretical perspective/field:

We are open to theoretical frameworks drawing on a range of theories. Internationally comparative research is also welcome. The dissertation project may draw on public value concepts (Hartley et al. 2017), collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008), place-based policies (Lyons 2007), demand management (Walley and Jennison-Phillips, 2018; Morris and Walley, 2022) and whole system resilience (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2023). We encourage the development of theories of change and evaluations which can help to demonstrate the impact of prevention approaches on service demand (particularly policing) and public value.

### Potential for theoretical contribution:

The dissertation has the potential to contribute to four major debates in public management research:

- **Demand management** – how can prevention approaches be designed and implemented in such a way as to reduce the original demand (primary demand reduction), the resource requirements when demand occurs (secondary demand reduction) and impact on repeat demand (tertiary demand reduction)?
- **Collaborative governance** – how do partnerships tap into the synergies which are potentially available to public service organisations by harnessing underused resources in partner organisations?

- **Place-based policy** – current academic research is polarised between research traditions emphasising the need for nationally standardised approaches and research traditions which emphasise the need for locally-relevant prevention approaches. Research is needed which seeks to reconcile these two traditions.
- **Resilience** – how can we strengthen the resilience of service users, communities, organisations (including providers) and the environment? This will involve developing frameworks and strategies for ‘crisis avoidance’ and ‘anti-crisis preparation’ across whole systems.

#### **Impact:**

CPRL puts a strong focus on achieving and evidencing research impact. A dedicated Director for Knowledge into Practice will provide guidance to ensure that engagement and impact is integrated into the dissertation project from the start. The Ph.D. candidate will engage with several member police forces in order to shape the research design, which will enable mutual learning and dissemination of effective prevention approaches.

The research will therefore involve the development of a theory of change based on a ‘pathways to impact model’ in a number of workshops with external project partners to test prevention approaches.

#### **Proposed methodology:**

We welcome quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodology approaches, depending on the specific research questions. In particular, we encourage (and provide guidance on) co-produced research, which involves citizens with lived experience. This methodology is innovative and still being refined and therefore requires further testing in FBL.

#### **References:**

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Bovaird, T. and Loeffler, E. (2023), Managing risk and resilience in the public domain, in: *Public Management and Governance* (ed. By Bovaird, T. and Loeffler, E.), 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Routledge: London and New York, pp. 315-328.

Morris, G. & Walley, P. (2022) Implementing failure demand reduction as part of a demand management strategy, *Public Money & Management*, 42:1, 22-31.

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