

Institution: The University of Leeds		
Unit of Assessment: 18 Law		
Title of case study: Transforming organisational learning in policing through research co-production partnerships		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name:	Role (e.g. job title):	Period employed by submitting HEI:
Adam Crawford	Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice; Director of the N8 Policing Research Partnership (2013-20)	1993-
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Professor Crawford's research into policing partnerships informed the design, establishment and implementation of a large-scale, innovative and sustainable police-academic research partnership – the N8 Policing Research Partnership (N8PRP) – that has transformed organisational learning. This transformation has changed how police forces and partners in the North of England organise and use research evidence, generate and share knowledge and value research-informed policing practice. The N8PRP operationalises and builds on Crawford's conceptualisation and methodologies of research co-production and partnership-working. Implementation of the Partnership has enhanced the application of research leading to changes in frontline policing. It has also influenced the development of evidence-based policing and mechanisms underpinning effective police-academic partnerships more broadly across the UK.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The use of research evidence in policing lags considerably behind other public services, such as healthcare, medicine and social care. Yet robust research knowledge can play a vital role in underpinning police legitimacy and the delivery of effective policing strategies and frontline practices. With radically different conceptions of what constitutes evidence, academic researchers and the police are influenced by contrasting demands and interests, and driven by distinct values and motivations, undermining the application of research evidence in policing. In 2012, the Home Office Review of Police Leadership and Training identified the need for a fundamental 'transformation of the culture of learning in the police service' to translate research evidence into policing. Organisational learning from research across the 43 separate police forces in England and Wales has been piecemeal, fragmented and poorly coordinated.</p> <p>Through his career-spanning research, Crawford has identified barriers to constructive policing partnerships [1-3] and developed a model of how the co-production of research could be applied to policing and translate into policing practices [4,5]. It is explicitly based on the philosophy that those who use research and apply the knowledge base should be involved in building it by actively co-producing the evidence [4-6]. Crawford's research findings and philosophy were translated, applied and adapted to policing through a series of research grants [a-d] and resulted in designing, establishing and implementing the N8PRP in 2013. This provided a platform for collaboration between the eight research-intensive universities that comprise the N8, 11 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), 11 police forces and other community safety partners across the North of England. The N8PRP is the largest and most ambitious police-academic research partnership in the UK and possibly across the globe.</p> <p>Crawford's methodologies of co-production were piloted, tested and refined through an ESRC Knowledge Exchange Grant [a] with West Yorkshire Police and the Office of the PCC. Empirically, this project also provided a detailed analysis of policing partnerships working in the context of safeguarding children [3]. A College of Policing Grant [b] enabled Crawford to build research capacity among the N8 universities and engage policing partners across the</p>		

North of England. A HEFCE Catalyst Grant [c] provided funding for an ambitious five-year programme (2015-20) of research and knowledge exchange to implement Crawford's model of co-production through the N8PRP's police-academic collaborative platforms and engagement mechanisms. In 2019, Crawford secured commitments from all N8PRP partners to a jointly funded, co-governed model that will sustain the Partnership beyond the end of the Catalyst Grant through pooled investments [d]. This further embedded the co-production philosophy, as informed by Crawford's critical reflection on partnership implementation [4-6].

Findings

Crawford's research identified barriers to effective policing partnerships [1] including: agencies' conflicting interests, priorities, and cultural assumptions; poor conflict management processes; inappropriate governance and managerial structures; lack of trust between organisations; a desire to protect budgets; lack of capacity and expertise; technological and cultural barriers to sharing data; and over-reliance on informal contacts which lapsed if key individuals moved on. Successful policing partnerships require meaningful, enduring, open and trusting relationships across agency boundaries [1-3]. Crawford has piloted and developed co-production as both a means and an end to effecting organisational change. The model involves police and academics co-producing and sharing knowledge, with supporting structures and an ethos to support durable, mutually beneficial partnerships at multiple levels of the organisations [a] to ensure change is anchored within cultures [4,5].

The N8PRP's governance and process structures create a distinctive model for co-production, cognisant of the barriers to policing partnerships [1-3] and based on the following findings:

- A reformed conception of what constitutes knowledge – as socially-distributed, transdisciplinary, action-oriented and subject to multiple accountabilities – as well as how frontline practitioners can co-create, mobilise and use knowledge [5,6].
- A normative concern to translate and apply the knowledge base focused around public outcomes and benefits [4,5].
- Benefits derive from frontline police staff and academics working together using different perspectives to jointly frame and shape questions, methodologies and impacts [4,5].
- Change is rooted in, and occurs through, relationships and processes; it can be non-linear and have many causes [5,6].
- Impacts arise from processes of mutual learning, often involving a gradual series of changes undertaken collaboratively [6].

3. References to the research

- [1] Crawford, A. 2015. 'Working in partnership: the challenges of working across organisational boundaries, cultures and practices', in J. Fleming (ed.) *Police Leadership – Rising to the Top*. Oxford University Press, pp. 71-94. ISBN 9780198728627. Supplied on request.
- [2] Crawford, A. and Evans, K. 2017. 'Crime prevention and community safety', in A. Liebling, S. Maruna and L. McAra (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology* (6th edition). Oxford University Press, pp. 797-824. ISBN 9780198719441. Supplied on request.
- [3] Crawford, A. and L'Hoiry, X. 2017. 'Boundary crossing: networked policing and emergent "communities of practice" in safeguarding children'. *Policing & Society* 27(6), 636-54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2017.1341508>.
- [4] Crawford, A. 2017. 'Research co-production and knowledge mobilisation in policing', in J. Knutsson and L. Thompson (eds) *Advances in Evidence Based Policing*. Routledge, pp. 195-213. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315518299>.
- [5] Crawford, A. 2020. 'Effecting change in policing through police/academic partnerships: the challenges of (and for) co-production', in N. Fielding, K. Bullock and S. Holdaway (eds) *Critical Reflections on Evidence-Based Policing*. Routledge, pp. 175-97. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429488153>.
- [6] Crawford, A. 2020. 'Societal impact as "rituals of verification" or the co-production of knowledge?'. *The British Journal of Criminology* 60(3), 493-518. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azz076>. Listed in REF2.

The programme of research was secured through peer-reviewed grants in open competition:

[a] ESRC 'An Exploratory Knowledge Exchange Platform for Policing: Exploiting Knowledge Assets, Utilising Data and Piloting Research Co-production' (GBP99,315; 2014-15, ES/M006123/1). GBP132,000 'in kind' contribution from West Yorkshire Police.

[b] College of Policing 'N8 Policing Research Partnership' (GBP50,000; January – April 2014). This grant enabled the development of the N8PRP.

[c] HEFCE Catalyst Fund 'Innovation and the Application of Knowledge for More Effective Policing' (GBP2,999,822; May 2015 – December 2020, Ref: F09), plus matched funding from N8 (GBP2.26m) and policing partners (GBP2.24m), total over GBP7.4 million.

[d] N8PRP Co-Funding: A collective grant of GBP241,500 from 11 policing partners and the [N8 Research Partnership](#), plus 'in kind' contributions of over GBP200,000 in 2020-21.

Crawford was the architect, author and named PI on grants **[a-c]**. He led the implementation and management of the N8PRP (Director 2013-20) and successfully negotiated grant **[d]**. In late 2020, Cleveland Police agreed to joined the N8PRP and all the partners committed to a further three years funding (2021-24); a total GBP440,000 (GBP146,667 p.a.) in direct costs.

4. Details of the impact

Crawford's research and its implementation through the N8PRP have (i) transformed how police forces in the North of England organise and derive benefits from research and engage with academic researchers, and (ii) enriched the perception, value and use of research-informed practice across policing organisations in the UK. Direct beneficiaries of the impacts include police and partners, with indirect benefits to service users and communities.

(i) Transforming organisational learning and engagement with research/researchers

The N8PRP's infrastructure, operating principles and activities have positively transformed police-academic relations, improved the quality of inter-professional dialogue and enhanced the value of, and access to, research within policing. Key to this transformation in organisational learning have been the collaborative governance framework and new platforms for engagement, which have mitigated common barriers to policing partnerships identified by Crawford **[1,2]** and allowed the partners to reach collective decisions on priorities, investments and co-designed research projects to be awarded funding. Partners are represented on the decision-making N8PRP Steering Group, which includes College of Policing representation to ensure national learning and engagement.

A further operating principle of partnership governance has been the sharing of co-produced research across the partners, the benefits of which was corroborated by the Strategy Manager at West Yorkshire Police: *'As all police forces strive to be more evidence-based, to be more innovative and to implement good practice/what works, the N8 structure allows those conversations to take place, with different perspectives between policing and academia shared. The infrastructure also allows for academia and police professionals to share research findings more widely with other forces so that there is a cumulative benefit'* **[A]**. This helped embed an evidence-based approach to the police force's strategic planning process **[A]**.

As a result of the Partnership, police have reorganised and adapted how they engage with the production and application of research. Informed by Crawford's research on effective partnerships **[1,3]**, new platforms for engagement have included: annual policing innovation forums focused on collectively agreed priorities; data mobilisation events at which police identify under-utilised datasets; and the [Register of Experts](#), providing accessible means of connecting researchers and practitioners to build inter-organisational research capability and enable knowledge exchange. Innovation forums have highlighted knowledge gaps and opportunities for practice-based innovation (some have been supported by N8PRP small grants – see below). The PCC for Durham evidenced the benefits: *'Through events, such as the Policing Innovation Forum and the N8PRP's register of experts, Durham Constabulary has gained a means of accessing research expertise on a plethora of subjects'* **[B]**.

The Strategy Manager at West Yorkshire Police attested that these platforms create conducive environments for police *'to mix with academics, partners and fellow practitioners in order to share ideas, good practice and to discuss potential research requirements'* **[A]**. Consequently, the Chief Constable of Merseyside confirmed that the Partnership has *'helped to foster police*

innovations through research, enabled collaborations, provided skills training for analysts and fostered organisational learning across policing’ [C]. As a result of this new infrastructure, police forces have changed how they engage with and commission research and use research evidence [B,C]. West Yorkshire Police cited the N8PRP as a key element in helping embed an evidence-based approach into their strategic planning process and providing ‘a greater understanding of the scale and nature of our crime and demand threats’ [A].

Consequently, evidence is now used more strategically and policing organisations share learning across force areas in new and more effective ways. The former Head of West Yorkshire for Innovation (based in the PCC’s Office) confirmed: *‘the framework of the N8PRP has, for the very first time, brought the twelve police forces of the north together where they are now sharing effective practices, discussing operational challenges and identifying common research requirements to better protect the communities they serve’ [D].*

An *Independent Review* of the N8PRP – based on a survey of over 150 officers from participating forces and interviews with 20 senior police officers and PCCs within the participating forces, plus national policing leaders [E] – found that: awareness of the partnership is high amongst senior staff; establishing the organisational infrastructure for the N8PRP was seen as a significant achievement; and those who used N8PRP ‘products’, such as research reports, conferences and courses, valued them. One interviewee concluded: *‘It [N8PRP] is a really impressive product... I think the infrastructure that was laid was probably as impressive as I’ve ever seen’ [E]* [Interviewee 05, p. 13]. Another stated: *‘The N8 is an example of genuine co-production... [it] is probably the best example of a major funding programme to particularly facilitate the relationship between academics and the police... I think the police attitude to research has changed dramatically’ [E]* [Interviewee 06, p. iv].

Central to the Partnership’s working has been how Crawford’s research co-production philosophy [4,5,6] and practice have fostered organisational change, as highlighted by the Strategy Manager at West Yorkshire Police: *‘co-produced research is a critical part of us achieving our ambition to be a more innovative and evidence-based organisation. The co-produced element is a fundamental principle as it enables the blend of academic rigour with practical policing knowledge. Fundamentally, it allows police professionals to be involved from the onset, to influence the design and content and to ensure that the research is undertaken in a timely manner and most importantly can have practical application’ [A].*

(ii) Enriching the perception, value and use of research-informed practice in the UK

The Partnership has: raised the profile, understanding and value of research evidence in informing policing; engaged frontline practitioners and managers in creating knowledge, using data and applying research to policing practice; and fostered *‘greater recognition and understanding of the importance of policing research’ [F].* Police forces have directly gained new knowledge from the Partnership’s activities, including the training programme, innovation forums and the ‘Empowering Data Specialists in Policing’ continuing professional development (CPD) programme. Data resources have been put to new uses through data mobilisation events and processes, developed as a direct response to the research finding that data exchange was a key barrier [1].

In line with the Partnership’s philosophy, the CPD programme was co-produced and co-designed by academics and practitioners in the N8PRP [G]. Across the three cohorts, it has received considerable praise for its knowledge and skills development from participants and (international) observers. The *Independent Review* found that the CPD course for data analysts was especially valued, *‘with large majorities of participants saying that it had improved their understanding of the issues and their knowledge of the evidence base’ [E].*

Former Lancashire Police Data Analysis and Insight Manager confirmed: *‘Perhaps for the first time for many of the participants, police analysts have been exposed to a series of modules that expanded their knowledge and tested their existing skill sets’ [G].* In recognition of its pioneering contribution, the lead facilitators Fiona McLaughlin (Leeds) and Dr Jude Towers (Lancaster) were recipients of the 2020 [‘Excellence in Analysis’ Award](#) from the International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA). Data analysts have become more active and vocal champions of evidence-based policing within their organisations [G].

The Partnership's small grants programme has helped translate co-produced research outputs into practice with benefits to end-users [H]. This scheme has resourced and sponsored cutting-edge co-designed research by inter-professional teams with a strong focus on application. The College of Policing's Director of Knowledge & Innovation attested: *'The small grants programme has offered perhaps the most tangible examples of how research outputs can be translated into impact on policing practice, supporting police-academic co-produced research projects on various policing priority areas'* [I]. The corroboration cites the example of 'Policing Bitcoin' (PI David Wall, Leeds), which brought together police and academic experts to explore the novel challenges posed by criminal use of bitcoin: *'The project... helped facilitate practical application of the research findings by translating these into the design and delivery of national training to UK law enforcement leads and other key stakeholders'* [I]. In another example, the Partnership was 'instrumental' to impacts derived from the 'Coercive Control' project (PI Charlotte Barlow, Lancaster) with Merseyside Police, as evidenced by the Chief Constable [C]. Through such projects, learning has been spread across forces, resulting in benefits from specific research that has made *'an impact on how forces do business'* [J] and *'helped to fill evidence gaps'* [H]. These have produced benefits to policing and communities.

The N8PRP is recognised far beyond its geographical base in the North of England for producing insight and learning. The contribution of Crawford's research to national policing via the N8PRP was corroborated by the national College of Policing: *'His critical reflection on his experience of leading N8PRP has provided valuable learning and insight on the key mechanisms and approaches underpinning effective partnership working. Co-production between police and academics defines the philosophy and strategy of N8PRP, recognising the importance of joint working between partners in bringing about positive change in police culture and practice... N8PRP has made a valuable contribution to the evidence base on effective co-production... We have been able to draw on this work to inform the support we provide to police-academic research collaborations across the UK'* [I]. Crawford's research consequently 'fed into' the College's 'strategies for embedding evidence-based practices' [I].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] Strategy Manager at West Yorkshire Police, in relation to 4(i). Letter of corroboration dated 30 June 2020.

[B] Durham PCC, in relation to 4(i). 'Foreword', in *N8PRP Annual Report 2018/19* (p. 5): https://n8prp.org.uk/about_us/annual-report-2019/.

[C] Chief Constable of Merseyside Police, in relation to 4(i) and 4(ii). 'Foreword', in *N8PRP Annual Report 2019/20* (p. 3): https://n8prp.org.uk/about_us/annual-report-2020/.

[D] Former Head of West Yorkshire for Innovation (WyFi), West Yorkshire PCC's Office (2013-18), and Detective Inspector, West Yorkshire Police, in relation to 4(i). 'Northern powerhouse: police research partnerships are forging ahead'. *Policing Insight*, 14 January 2019: <https://policinginsight.com/opinion/northern-powerhouse-police-research-partnerships-are-forging-ahead/>.

[E] Institute of Criminal Policy Research, Birkbeck College, 2020, in relation to 4(i) and 4(ii). *The N8 Policing Research Partnership: Examining the First Four Years*: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/32044/>.

[F] Assistant Chief Constable, Greater Manchester Police, in relation to 4(ii). 'In conversation', in *N8 PRP Annual Report 2019/20* (p. 15).

[G] Former Data Analysis and Insight Manager with Lancashire Constabulary, in relation to 4(ii). 'Why the Programme for "Data Specialists in Policing" is more important now than ever', in *N8PRP Annual Report 2019/20* (pp. 30-31).

[H] Director of the Police Foundation, in relation to 4(ii). Letter of corroboration dated 26 October 2020.

[I] Director of Knowledge & Innovation, College of Policing, in relation to 4(ii). Letter of corroboration dated 17 June 2020.

[J] Assistant Chief Officer, North East Transformation Innovation and Collaboration (NETIC) lead, Humberside Police, in relation to 4(ii). Letter of corroboration rec. 15 December 2020.