

## **WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO THE COMMISSION ON JUSTICE IN WALES FROM THE UNIVERSITIES' POLICE SCIENCE INSTITUTE, CARDIFF UNIVERSITY**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This submission reports key evidence and insights from research undertaken by the Universities' Police Science Institute (UPSI) and the Violence Research Group to inform how the justice system in its widest sense could better serve the people of Wales. Drawing upon several recent empirical studies the findings highlighted help to illuminate: the changing nature of crime risks and threats; the importance of maintaining the balance between public facing and digital police-community engagement to ensure public safety in the information age; and the potential for innovative policing responses.

- The demand profile for policing services is changing. This is important for the forward-looking aspects of the Commission's agenda in that the 'size and shape' of police forces in the future may look very different from the past, if they are to reflect public safety needs and demands.
- Accompanying the shifts in demand profile, the nature and type of information that is available to police to drive their preventative and investigatory responsibility is profoundly altering also. Open source communications data is having a transformative impact upon the investigative, intelligence and engagement functions of the police. For example, witnesses at crime scenes tweeting and posting pictures of developments are changing how evidence becomes available and has to be collected by police.
- Police are struggling to secure and retain sufficient analytic capacity and capability to manage digital demand. There are acute pressures currently in terms of analytics and detective functions.
- Reductions in public spending on policing across England and Wales have impacted upon the ability of police to prevent and investigate crime and disorder. The social effects of public sector austerity on policing outcomes in Wales, have partially been off-set by Welsh Government's policy of directly funding circa 500 Community Support Officers.

- There are likely to be ongoing disruptions to the fabric of our urban areas associated with the information age. As greater amounts of our consumption and economic behaviours are transacted online, it is probable that rates of vacant retail premises in city centres will increase. There is a danger that these will become ‘zombie zones’ that function as ‘magnets’ for crime and disorder.
- The submission also reports findings from an innovative project designed to test best practices with regards to communicating crime prevention advice to the public. Police messages frequently try to scare people into changing their preventative behaviours and in doing so they are increasing fear of crime amongst certain audience segments. Evidence is provided of how framing crime prevention messages differently can influence citizens’ behaviours, whilst avoiding negative side-effects of increasing fear or inducing anger.

The submission reflects upon how, in considering the possibility of devolving responsibility of justice to Wales, research evidence such as that presented here can support a Welsh Government narrative both *of* change and *for* change.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** This submission has been prepared by the Universities’ Police Science Institute (UPSI), an integral part of the Crime and Security Research Institute (CSRI) at Cardiff University. It draws upon work conducted by the Violence Research Group, which is also part of the CSRI.

**1.2** UPSI is a specialist research team working with practitioners and policy makers across the UK and internationally, producing new research evidence and insights to understand and improve the conduct of policing. Over the past decade, the Institute has worked with over half of all UK police forces, as well as police departments in several overseas jurisdictions. Notably, this includes all four Welsh forces, three of which have directly commissioned research relating to local issues. In addition, UPSI has been at the forefront of policing policy and practice development, working with significant bodies such as ACPO/NPCC, HMIC, College of Policing and the Welsh Government. Its work has informed major contributions to policy and practice development in such fields as Neighbourhood Policing, counterterrorism and open source communications among others.

**1.3** The materials reported below are drawn from several specific research programmes:

- **OSCAR: The Open Source Communications Analytics Research Centre** was funded to develop new evidence and insights about how the investigative, intelligence and engagement functions of policing are being transformed by the availability of vast quantities of social media data. The work was conducted in partnership with: National Counter-Terrorism Functions Command; South Wales Police; West Midlands Police; Sutton Council; Surrey Police; University of Surrey; and Sussex Police, under the auspices of the Police Knowledge Fund.

- **An evaluation of the work of police Community Support Officers (CSOs)** – funded by the Welsh Government in order to support the local funding of 500 additional CSOs across Wales when central government funding of police forces was significantly reduced. The work was conducted across all four Welsh territorial police force areas and the British Transport Police in Wales.
- **What Works Centre for Crime Reduction** – as part of this larger initiative financed by the Economic and Social research Council and College of Policing, Cardiff University undertook several studies pivoting around the theme of ‘Rethinking Crime Prevention for the Information Age’.

**1.4** The remainder of this submission highlights key findings, relevant to the remit of the Criminal Justice workstream of the Commission.

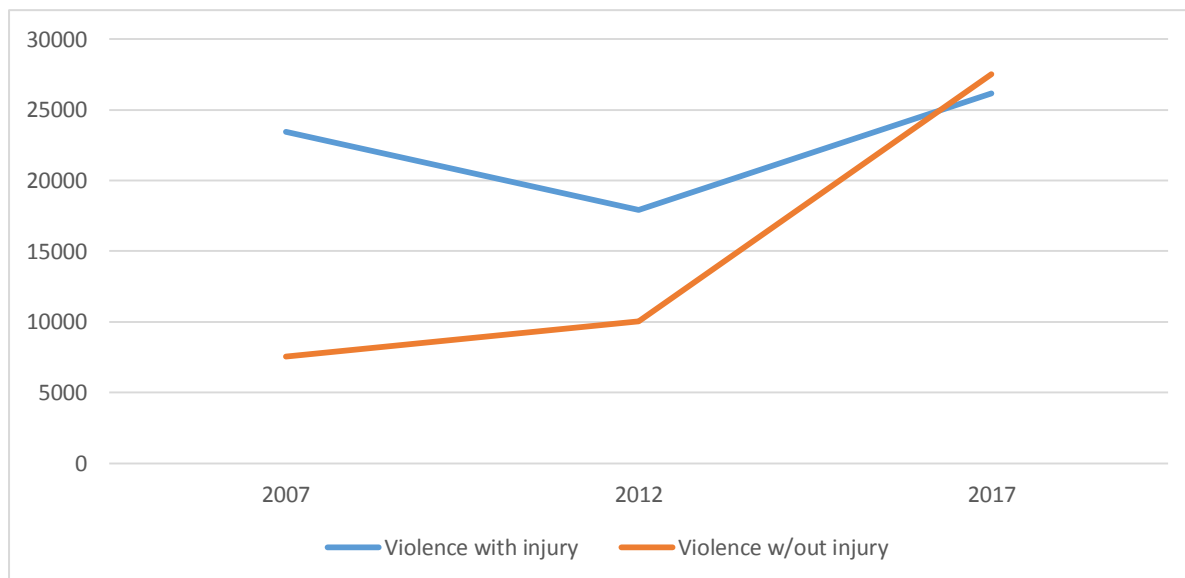
## **2. POLICING PASTS, PRESENTS AND FUTURES**

**2.1** Framing this submission is the notion that understanding the future direction of policing necessitates not only a focus on the future, but also a reflection on the past and a thorough understanding of presently emerging challenges, recognising that effective policing as envisaged by the British policing model is a multifaceted undertaking encompassing tasks of crime management, order management and security management

**2.2** Crime and its management are currently in a period of significant ‘restructuring’. Acknowledging that there are different methods for estimating the prevalence and distribution of crime, it does seem there are some important ‘meta-trends’ currently. After an extended period of crime decline and then relative stabilization, it does appear some key indicators are on the increase. Recorded crime statistics indicate that in Wales, new problems such as sexual, violent and harassment offences are coming to the fore whilst more ‘traditional’ crime problems such as burglary, criminal damage and drugs offences have been falling.

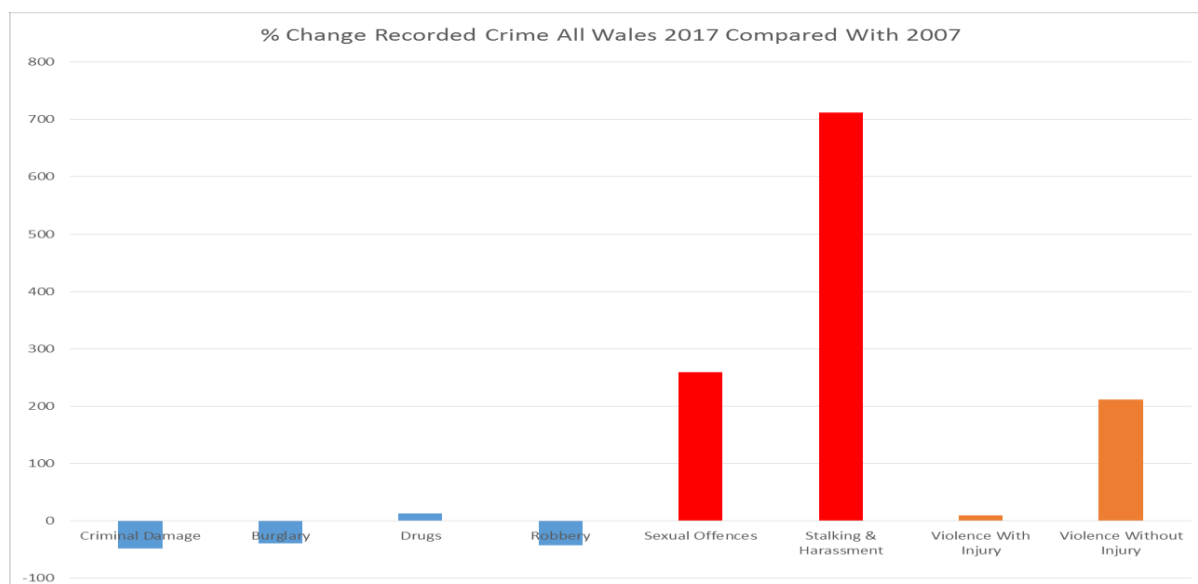
**2.3** Figure 1 overleaf provides an outline of trends in police recorded violence offences for Wales at three points in time, enabling us to see what has happened over the past decade. At first glance the important story appears to be the dramatic surge in offences of violence without injury. Whilst important in terms of understanding what the police are doing, this patterns is, in part, an artefact of changes to police recording practices.

**2.4** In fact the more important story conveyed by Figure 1 may be the return in 2017 to levels of violence with injury that have not been seen for the last ten years. This is important because these are the more ‘harmful’ forms of offending that are liable to sharpen the politics of criminal justice. They are also the types of crime that induce significant ‘downstream’ costs for other public services (such as health and other criminal justice agencies).



**FIGURE 1: Police Recorded Violence Offences All Wales for the Past Decade: Source ONS**

**2.5** If we repeat this kind of outline analysis but for other key crime types we can see not dissimilar patterns. Figure 2 compares police recorded crime figures for Wales in 2017 with 2007 to examine the relative percentage changes seen. This confirms the pattern for violence reported upon previously, but in addition, shows relative declines in the amounts of criminal damage, robbery and burglary.



**FIGURE 2: Change in Recorded Crime All Wales for the Past Decade: Source ONS**

The key issues to emerge from this analysis are the significant increases in reported sexual offences and stalking and harassment. Of course the dramatic appearance of these figures needs to be contextualised by the fact that in terms of absolute numbers there are far fewer of these crimes, than for criminal damage and burglary. But what representing the data in this way does achieve, is to convey how the public demands on the police service are changing.

**2.6** Conceptually, we might think that increasingly the police forces in Wales need to provide a ‘full spectrum’ of policing services that stretch from neighbourhood to national security and all points in between. Of note is the increasing importance of ‘people-based harms’.

**2.7** Being equipped with these sorts of data on key trajectories and patterns is important for the Commission in that the size and shape of the police service of the future may not be the same as it has been historically. The rise of the digital communications age requires a focus on the both the effective use of open source data as an intelligence gathering method and maintaining an analytical capacity to manage the large volume of data generated by the new information environment. All this whilst securing public legitimacy and consent in an age of post truth, soft facts and technological advances is already presenting significant challenges.

**2.8** Looking to the future, policing will need to make greater use of continuing emergence of new and ever complex communication channels in order to influence and persuade whilst ensuring it does not neglect proven face-to-face methods of the past. The ever-increasing sophistication of Smart Cities will require a proactive ‘designing in’ of risk prevention measures to ensure public safety in a technological world. And there must be a shift away from ‘disruption’ to the prevention of crime and incivility across the spectrum, using the principles of Evidence Based Policing to diagnose problems, not just design treatments.

### **3. OSCAR AND DIGITAL POLICING<sup>1</sup>**

**3.1** One area where the preceding statement is especially true concerns digital policing. New technologies are impacting significantly upon the configuration of the kinds of crime and disorder problems that are brought to police attention, but also how police respond. Over the past five years, police forces have invested significantly in people and technology to respond to an era of ‘big social data’ and its transformative impacts upon the interactional and institutional ordering of society.

**3.2** We identify that there are particular challenges and opportunities associated with open source communications data. These are publicly available data, especially social media, that can be used by police in their investigative, intelligence and engagement work. The development of the ‘open source communications’ concept is intended to highlight two key dimensions:

- That social media platforms provide new opportunities for police to ‘listen to’ and ‘talk to’ the public through these channels;

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<sup>1</sup> OSCAR was commissioned under the Police Knowledge Fund. Led by Cardiff University it is based around a partnership between police National Counter-Terrorism Functions Command; South Wales Police, West Midlands Police, Sutton Council, Cardiff Council, University of Surrey, Surrey Police and Sussex Police.

- That this information is not just available to police but can be collected and used by others to create new mechanisms for evaluating police work.

The OSCAR programme examined how open source communications data is being used across a range of investigative, intelligence and engagement policing functions, spanning counter-terrorism, public order, major crime investigations and Neighbourhood Policing.

### **3.3 Key Findings:**

- Police are regularly using 'open source communications data' for investigating and detecting crimes, identifying previously 'hidden' victims, and managing the community harms of these incidents. However, there is no consistent or standardised approach. There is indicative evidence that such methods can be relatively cost efficient when compared with reliance upon other, more established 'covert' policing methodologies.
- The most effective uses relate to specific major incidents and in relation to researching potential suspects. Particular challenges identified include the number of digital devices and platforms that now have to be researched by police, and the issues associated with managing 'soft facts' and other kinds of rumour.
- Police are struggling to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of adequately skilled analysts who can collect, analyse and interpret open source data. Indeed, where other organisations are investing heavily in these data science skillsets (think about how financial institutions are recruiting 'quants'), subject to the effects of austerity, many police forces are seeing reductions in their analytic capability and capacity.
- Social media and other forms of digital data are having a transformative impact upon the investigative work of the police and how crimes are detected. For example, witnesses at crime scenes are routinely tweeting and posting images of crimes in progress and aspects of the police response. These create new demands upon police officers.
- Equally social media communications about crimes can have a profound impact in terms of amplifying the community impacts that such incidents have. As a consequence of which, more attention needs to be paid to effective community impact management.

**3.4** In sum police are starting to harness digital technologies and their affordances, but approaches are piece-meal and lacking a secure evidence base in terms of what works. These developments also induce important and complex legal, ethical and regulatory challenges. There are opportunities for police to be more innovative in how they seek to utilize social media data in particular.

## **4. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING: POLICE SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT – STRIKING A BALANCE**

**4.1** Between 2012-4, UPSI conducted a wide-ranging evaluation of the processes and outcomes associated with the Welsh Government's policy to fund an additional 500 police Community Support Officers across Wales, as central government funding was reducing. The work involved interviewing frontline CSOs, their neighbourhood police officer colleagues, senior operational and strategic management together with secondary analysis of Crime Survey of England and Wales and other survey data.

**4.2** Key findings from the analysis suggested:

- Additional CSOs have resulted in a different trajectory in the public face of policing in Wales compared with England. Whilst the number of police officers has fallen across the UK, the additional CSOs in Wales offset the reduction to some extent, allowing a public facing neighbourhood policing presence to be maintained, in contrast to England. There was emerging evidence that the resulting visibility of policing provided by the additional CSOs is leading to improved public perceptions of safety. Public familiarity with CSOs in Wales was high (88%) and those who felt seeing CSOs on the streets made them feel a lot safer rose from 13% to 18%.
- However, there was some evidence to suggest increasing the 'dose' of visible policing in some communities may fuel concerns that crime is a problem, having the opposite effect than intended and it is important to ensure the level of public-facing policing is titrated according to the crime and disorder profile of the area.
- CSOs in Wales are responding to more incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour which has become the key function for CSOs in Wales, ensuring those incidents that have a significant impact upon perceptions of safety within communities are still prioritised when police officer resources are stretched.
- Two different functions of Welsh CSOs have developed: Community Support and Police Support. In the former, CSOs focus on developing familiarity with the communities they serve, providing a visible and accessible service to reassure the public. In the latter, CSOs are providing a vital support function to their police officer colleagues, performing community-based tasks associated with many aspects of the policing remit. The balance between the two roles is important to ensure CSOs provide a service relevant to the people, places and problems inherent in different areas of the country.

**4.3** In a recent pilot project conducted by South Wales Police officers and staff under the mentoring of UPSI, evidence has emerged to suggest that young people want to engage with the police face-to-face rather than via social media. Whilst willing to engage, they consider social media networks to be 'their space' in which the authority represented by police is unwelcome and attempts to engage counterproductive. This early finding, if replicated across Wales, suggests maintaining a physical policing presence in schools is vital to ensure police legitimacy with the younger generation.

**4.4** Together, these findings would indicate that despite the digital communications revolution, there is still a place for a traditional public-facing neighbourhood policing function. Importantly however, the evidence from the CSO study in particular suggests that even a single policy intervention by Welsh Government was interpreted and implemented very differently across the four police services in Wales. This is important for the Commission's work in evidencing that, because of how the police service is organised and governed, a single policy framework does not necessarily guarantee delivery of similar outputs and outcomes

## **5. REFLECTIONS AND SUMMARY**

**5.1** A recurrent refrain from police leaders is that the police service needs to 'do more with less'. Our evidence and thinking outlined in this submission suggests we need to invert this maxim to think about how policing can deliver 'less with more'. That is: police intervene less but prevent more - by being more impactful on the causes of key problems and doing so in ways that involve more members of the public; and the idea that if there are to be less police officers, then they need to be more skilled and have greater skills and capabilities.

**5.2** Policing as a social institution was established as part of wider regulatory response to industrial revolution and urbanisation. If the 'information revolution' is similarly profound, we should expect changes to the organisation of social control to be similarly wide-ranging.

**5.3** We suggest the justice system would better serve the people of Wales if institutions were to focus on crime prevention, rather than just solving and disrupting crime. An example supporting this position is the Cardiff Model for Violence Prevention, initiated and refined in Wales by Professor John Shepherd's Violence Reduction Group. The model has not been implemented in anything like the organised, systematic way it has in England. Prior to devolution the Community Safety Directorate did much to implement the programme across the country in the mid-2000s. But after devolution this central leadership has all but disappeared. Apart from in the County of Cardiff and increasingly across South Wales where it is working well, England is far ahead now - with published guidance, NHS data codes, a new national emergency care data set, contractual obligations to collect Cardiff Model data embedded in the standard NHS contract, appointment of nurse co-coordinators in every region and so on.

**5.4** Over 15 years, members of the constituent research groups of the CSRI have produced a considerable body of work which has informed and refined a series of effective interventions in the crime prevention field. These include interventions to: identify and address signal crimes and disorders at both neighbourhood and national security level; reduce alcohol misuse at both individual and population levels; and measure and target violence reliably using health data, creating Violence Prevention Boards to help translate police and health data into better outcomes. A significant research programme continues.



**5.5** UPSI are also taking a lead in developing practitioner focus on evidence-based practice via a series of ongoing initiatives co-produced with South Wales Police: The Policing Futures Programme provides a structured approach to developing operationally relevant research skills and analytical thinking among officers and staff of all ranks and specialties under the direction of academics and senior officers; Practitioner Fellowships have been awarded to individuals to provide the space and environment for more detailed research and knowledge exchange relating to currently challenging operational issues; an intensive 2-day multi-agency problem solving event is planned for Summer 2018, focused on tackling 'wicked' issues facing the policing of the increasingly vibrant capital city of Cardiff.

**5.6** Via a network of multi-disciplinary academic and practitioner fellows and consultants, the CSRI continues to bring together cutting-edge research and analysis of relevance to policing and wider security arenas. For example, Institute Director Professor Martin Innes submitted an expert report to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and Honorary Senior Research Fellow Tim Brain QPM is currently conducting an in-depth investigation on the continued impact of austerity measures on police funding.

**5.7** The integration of key academic and justice institutions drives innovation and implementation. The relationship between the UPSI and South Wales Police was, at its inception, unique to Wales and the investment is paying dividends not only in Wales but also more widely in the UK and international jurisdictions. This focus and responsibility for the production and promotion of high grade evidence could be extended to other justice areas too. Increasing the inter-dependence of policing, public safety, probation, victim and prison services in Wales on practical innovation and evaluation, co-led by investigators in research orientated higher education and justice practitioners, is important to achieving improved outcomes in the future.