

'The copper's nose' project

This project will explore the phenomenon known as 'the copper's nose'.

Key details

Lead institution	University of Cambridge
Principal researcher(s)	Emily Quin emj44@cam.ac.uk
Police region	Eastern
Level of research	PhD
Project start date	January 2022
Date due for completion	January 2025

Research context

The research is entitled 'The Copper's Nose' (TCN) Project.

The grounded hypothesis states that there exists a perceived colloquial phenomenon in policing: that police officers have an ability, developed beyond the ability of any non-trained civilian, to detect when something 'just doesn't feel right'.

In policing culture around the world, it is referred to as 'the copper's nose'. The phenomenon has been referenced in police recruitment campaigns, social media outreach, police training programmes, in various novels and official correspondence, and even in legal cases in the UK.

Despite this perceived existence of TCN, it is without a definition, and has not been researched or explored anywhere in the world. This research project will be the first to collect and record the views of police officers from around the UK in one of the largest projects of its kind and produce a universal definition and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Research methodology

'The Copper's Nose' project is predominantly a qualitative study consisting of several hundred semi-structured interviews. The interviews will record data from collaborating forces across England and Wales.