19/02/2026

Development of a practitioners accessible model allowing those engaged in police problem solving to make use of behavioural science approaches in developing innovative solutions to policing challenges

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Behavioural science has the potential to allow greater levels of innovation within policing, however, it is often shrouded in complex language and terms.

Key details

Lead institution	University of Portsmouth
Principal researcher(s)	Danny Kett daniel.kett@myport.ac.uk
Police region	South East
Level of research	PhD
Project start date	September 2020
Date due for completion	June 2025

Research context

This research brings together psychology, behavioural economics and existing policing problem solving approaches through an innovative systematic approach that makes principles such as heuristics and biases, influencing techniques and choice architecture available to officers and staff.

The model being developed is equally applicable to challenges from recruitment and retention to improving compliance with policy and regulation, through to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

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The research considers approaches to problem solving from the theory of inventive thinking within engineering, the work of Kahneman and Tversky into behavioural economics and the approach to behavioural change as popularised in 'Nudge' by Thaler and Sunstein.

Acknowledging that current popular models such as the Behavioural Change Wheel and COM-B (Michie and others 2014) relies on a secure understanding of behavioural change principles, psychology and economics, the Product Oriented Delivery (POD) approach that is being developed through this research places complex principles in the hands of those not trained in such disciplines.

Research methodology

Phase 1

National freedom of information research to understand the use of problem solving models, including behavioural science approaches within UK police forces.

Phase 2

Dyadic interviews conducted within an identified force to gain insight into the understanding of front line officers on existing behavioural science approaches.

Phase 3

The testing of the POD approach to enhance the development of innovate solutions to policing problems through the use of an interactive software product that can be used by officers with no to minimal training.

References

Michie S, Atkin L and West R. 2014. 'The behaviour change wheel: A guide to designing interventions'. Silverback Publishing.

Thaler RH and Sunstein CR. 2008. 'Behavioural insights'. MIT Press.