

Beyond the beat, taking the next step: a peer-led resource for navigating retirement from policing

This project combines interdisciplinary expertise to build a digital narrative hub, providing peer-led resources and roadmap guidance that helps police officers transition smoothly into retirement.

Key details

Lead institution	University of Bradford
Police region	Yorkshire
Collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Ria Vaportzis, University of Bradford (corresponding researcher) Contact the researcher • Dr Natasha Alvarado, University of Bradford • Rob Redman, University of Bradford • Warren Edwards, Durham Constabulary (retired police officer) • Dr Ruth McGrath, Teeside University • National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO)
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	April 2026
Date due for completion	July 2026

Research context

Retiring from the UK police force often presents a psychological 'cliff-edge' transition where an officer's lifelong professional identity can abruptly vanish overnight. This sudden shift introduces significant wellbeing challenges and barriers to a successful transition. The primary aim of this project is to bridge this retirement transition gap by establishing a sustainable, first-of-its-kind peer-led digital resource built on real lived experiences.

Ultimately, the project seeks to provide a scalable multimedia blueprint to support other high-pressure public service professions, such as the National Health Service (NHS) and Fire and Rescue services, ensuring a retirement of dignity and connection. The study will conduct a national survey of retired UK police officers and perform a mixed-methods analysis to document critical transition points and wellbeing barriers. We will conduct audio interviews and produce short documentary-style films to capture diverse lived experiences, curating these stories into a multimedia Digital Narrative Hub featuring video, audio and written guidance. We have partnered with the National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO) to permanently host and integrate the Hub within their national digital infrastructure, making it freely accessible to their members and the wider workforce.

Research methodology

Quantitative and qualitative survey

The research team will develop survey questions informed by existing literature to identify critical transition points and wellbeing barriers.

Multimedia narrative capture

To put a human face on the data, the team will conduct online audio interviews and professional home-visit filming with participants across the UK. This process will capture a diverse range of lived experiences through five audio interviews and five filmed participant narratives.

Data analysis and mixed-methods analysis

The research team will perform a robust mixed-method analysis combining quantitative survey data with qualitative narrative responses to isolate critical transition factors and produce high-quality findings for peer-reviewed publication.

Research participation

Retired police officers in the UK.