

Job Description – Research Fellow

About the Role

The Centre for Policing Research and Learning (CPRL) seeks to appoint a Research Fellow for a 12-month post on an exciting new research project on Victim (Dis) Engagement From Criminal Justice In Domestic Abuse and Rape Cases. This project is funded by CPRL and is led by Principal Investigator Dr Lis Bates

<http://www.open.ac.uk/people/lb27747>

Together with the PI, the Research Fellow will review relevant literature, conduct research, analysis and writing across all the project workstreams. This is an exciting opportunity for a researcher with knowledge of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence and a track record of academic research to help deliver a project with significant national and international impact.

The post is based within the Centre for Policing Research and Learning (CPRL). The Centre undertakes research, education and knowledge into practice projects in collaboration with policing practitioners from 20 partner organisations across a wide range of disciplines and projects. CPRL is led from and located in the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) with active involvement from all other faculties in the Open University. There are over 50 academics at the OU with links to CPRL, who undertake research, develop courses or are involved in knowledge exchange activities such as evidence cafés. Further information on the Centre can be found below and on the website:

<http://centre-for-policing.open.ac.uk/>

Key Responsibilities

The Research Fellow will be a key member of the project team, working across different project workstreams. The main duties/tasks will include:

- Working with the PI to manage and deliver the project workstreams as set out in the project plan
- Assisting the Principal Investigator to conduct a literature and evidence review on domestic abuse & sexual violence (DA/SV) and victim interactions with the criminal justice system
- Helping collate, clean, synthesise and conduct simple statistical and thematic analysis of police datasets on victim, perpetrator and case variables from DA/SV cases in Excel
- Collecting and coding new quantitative and narrative data from a sample of police DA/SV case records (reading case files and extracting key information on victims, perpetrators and the police interactions to a template, refining a coding framework with the team, identifying variables of most interest)

- Helping conduct quantitative analysis (e.g. descriptive statistics, regression analyses) of the police datasets, to develop profiles and typologies of victim (dis) engagement with police and criminal justice
- Conducting qualitative interviews with victims/survivors of DA & SV, developing interview schedules, helping recruit participants, carrying out interviews, developing grounded coding frameworks and conducting thematic analysis of interview data
- Managing research data and processes, including managing communications with police force partners, information-sharing agreements and dataset management
- Consulting and attending meetings with key stakeholders
- Reporting on a regular basis to the CPRL Membership Group meeting, so that the 20 force partnership is kept abreast of emerging and key findings
- Writing up findings from the research project for academic, policy and policing audiences (e.g. articles for peer-reviewed publications, policy briefings, practice guidance).
- Presenting and disseminating project findings at key academic, policing and practice events (e.g. conferences, knowledge exchange events, workshops, practitioner events)
- Adhering to confidentiality, security and data management policies and agreements as required by the OU, the project, and the partner police forces
- Demonstrating an understanding of the importance of developing self-care strategies as a researcher into emotive and difficult topics, supported by the wider team
- Where relevant, taking opportunities to participate in wider Centre and OU training, knowledge development and practice events

This is an exciting opportunity to help build a dynamic team at the formative stages of a project which has already generated substantial interest from police and academic audiences and has significant potential for research impact. The research environment in the Centre and the OU more generally is very supportive, with opportunities for wider research training and learning, for presenting work at national and international academic conferences, and for generating publications.

We are ideally looking to appoint one full-time Research Fellow who can do the quantitative and qualitative work. We recognise that some researchers may specialise more in quantitative or qualitative research and so applications from either approach will be considered though candidates with mixed methods experience may be preferred. Candidates with expertise in one approach will be expected to extend their skills to cover mixed methods. We are able to offer some support on skills training but would expect the candidate to be responsible for acquiring sufficient skills to do the work effectively.

Skills and Experience

Essential:

- A Masters' degree in research methods (or equivalent professional experience) including training on qualitative and quantitative methods and literature reviewing
- A PhD (completed or very close to completion) in a relevant social research topic, preferably domestic abuse, sexual violence or other forms of gendered violence
- Experience of researching domestic abuse and/or sexual violence, including knowledge of the gendered dynamics of abuse, risk factors, victim and/or perpetrator profiles
- An understanding of policing and criminal justice processes and challenges for policing and criminal justice in responding to domestic abuse and/or sexual violence

- Experience conducting literature or scoping reviews to a high standard, including searching, sifting and synthesising appropriate academic and policy evidence
- Confident using Excel to manage, code and manipulate quantitative datasets, and to run simple statistical tests in SPSS or equivalent
- Experience conducting qualitative social research interviews, including development of interview schedules and thematic analysis of interview data
- Strong written communicator, with a track record of producing high-quality written outputs for academic and policy/practice audiences, and the ability to distil and communicate key messages
- Computer and ICT literacy, with competence in at least one research analysis software (e.g. SPSS, NVivo, Excel etc)
- A self-starter, able to show initiative and have the confidence to take a substantial role in the design, conduct, analysis and writing up of research
- Quick and accurate worker, with attention to detail but an ability to identify and distil the most relevant information
- Capable of taking responsibility for own elements of work whilst working collaboratively with others as a member of a team
- Evidence of an ability to produce high-quality work to agreed deadlines
- Willingness to travel (Covid-permitting) to research sites for data collection (principally Manchester and Bristol), possibly with some overnight stays
- Willing to undergo police vetting

Desirable:

- Experience of conducting secondary analysis using police data, especially working with data from police databases (e.g. Niche, IOPS etc)
- Experience conducting more advanced quantitative analysis e.g. for typology development
- Experience conducting interviews with vulnerable people and/or sensitive topics, ideally DA/SV
- Experience of conducting research in collaboration with non-academic practitioners, for example, government and public services, particularly policing practitioners and/or domestic and sexual violence third sector

More about the project

The research proposal arose from consultation with domestic abuse and rape leads within the Centre's police partner forces. Police leads consistently reported that two core challenges for policing domestic abuse (DA) and rape remained the high volume of total reports, and the high (and increasing) rate of attrition (the rate at which cases drop out of the criminal justice system).

We know that the most common outcome for DA cases reported to police is to be closed due to evidential difficulties where the victim did not support a prosecution. These are not new facts – many reviews and research studies over the years have sought to address these persistent problems: some from the perspective of the justice system, others from that of victims/survivors. Most recently, a cross-justice system review in England and Wales found significant drops in rates of prosecution for rape, and there are expectations of government targets being introduced for rape charging.¹ Yet, addressing attrition rates for DA and rape whilst putting victim needs centre stage remain complex challenges, and

the police continue to want better evidence on how to protect and support victims to the right criminal justice outcome for them.

This project draws on police data and practice, but seeks to put victim/survivor perspectives and needs at the heart of enquiry. Building on what is already known, it aims to investigate the profile, reasons for, and implications of victim non-engagement with police and criminal justice processes in domestic abuse and rape cases, analyse and develop a 'typology of engager', and recommend measures to improve engagement and reduce attrition whilst keeping victim/survivor wishes centre stage. As well, it will investigate whether and how the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown affected victim reporting and engagement with police.

The project employs mixed methods, combining several workstreams:

- high-level analysis of several thousand DA and rape reports to police before and after Covid-19
- in-depth analysis of several hundred DA and rape case files from English forces
- qualitative consultation/interviews with DA and rape victims/survivors
- qualitative consultation/interviews with police representatives
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As well as the participating forces and other Centre policing partners, the project has proactively engaged a range of stakeholders including the National Police Chiefs' Council leads for domestic abuse and rape, third sector organisations and academic networks. There is therefore excellent potential for high quality academic findings to truly influence policy and practice on domestic abuse and rape.

This project forms part of the programme of work of the CPRL and the post-holder is accountable for their work to the Principal Investigator for this project, Dr Lis Bates, as well as to the Centre's Academic Director (Professor Jean Hartley). The post holder will be a member of the Centre for Policing Research and Learning, located within the academic department Public Leadership and Social Enterprise, within the Faculty for Business and Law at the Open University.