

College of  
**Policing**

# Going equipped

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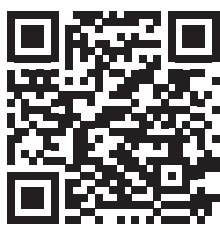
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# Editorial

**Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Katy Barrow-Grint ♦  
Thames Valley Police**

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**W**elcome to issue 6 of  
Going equipped, written  
by policing for policing.

As always, this issue is full of  
informative articles by colleagues  
across the country. You'll find a  
wide variety of topics inside,  
from drones through to projects  
about protecting sex workers and  
using defensive planting to deter  
residential burglary.

Our first long read – by Sgt Lee  
Johnson from Lincolnshire – focuses  
on assaults on officers and describes  
the likelihood of violence against  
police officers based on place,  
activity and factors such as gender.  
This is a really interesting read that  
links to Op Hampshire and the work  
of [Oscar Kilo](#), the national service  
for officer and staff wellbeing.

The second long read is by  
Chief Inspector Kate Firman  
from Cambridgeshire. Her article  
examines the concept of procedural  
justice, with a focus on people's  
subjective experiences of their  
interactions with power holders, like  
police officers. Based on research in  
custody suites, this excellent article  
considers how custody sergeants



interact with detainees and explores  
the impact we can have in our roles.

Elsewhere, we include insights on  
how being a child of Deaf parents  
can lead to informal interpretation  
for emergency services, deep dives  
into the drugs expert witness and  
stolen vehicle examiner roles, and  
an article following a domestic  
abuse innovations officer's shift in  
Durham. We also have an excellent  
book review, which will have you



hooked in no time on the gloomy but fascinating world of disaster victim identification. I certainly couldn't put this book down!

The Going equipped editorial board were delighted to be awarded a CEO commendation from Chief Constable Andy Marsh at the College of Policing in April 2023 for all our work bringing together the content for you to read. We

couldn't do it without our authors and peer reviewers, so thank you to everyone who has contributed so far. If you'd like to write an article or be a peer reviewer in the future, please do contact the team on [goingequipped@college.police.uk](mailto:goingequipped@college.police.uk). We'd also like your feedback on Going equipped – just scan the QR code on the last page to tell us what you think!



## PRACTICE NOTE

## Protecting sex workers

PCSO Fairbanks ♦ Humberside Police

Sex work is a dangerous profession. Often, sex workers meet unfamiliar clients and get into vehicles they don't know, which can put them at risk. My PCSO role is dedicated to safeguarding the sex workers in Hull, in order to help reduce that risk. This has been challenging, as sex workers often have a mistrust of the police.

My approach is to be a consistent and regular face in the area, interacting with the sex workers and getting to know them, which has helped me to gain their trust. As a result, I have become an expert resource when a serious offence has occurred within the sex worker community. Crime teams have used my skills and knowledge to support sex workers in engaging with the judicial process. One investigation resulted in the offender receiving an eight-year prison sentence for rape.

## Protecting sex workers and reducing risk

My role includes the following elements.

- Keeping up-to-date information on active sex workers, which is shared by outreach workers and by Civic CCTV (which provides me

with footage and still images of sex workers and clients).

- Proactive patrolling in the areas used by sex workers, to identify who is working. I engage with many of the on-street sex workers, which helps me to gather intelligence and offer safeguarding advice. I also conduct patrols with partner agencies and neighbourhood policing teams using these methods.
- Maintaining good relationships and chairing a bi-monthly meeting with partner agencies, including probation, domestic abuse partnerships, Civic CCTV, outreach workers, drugs and alcohol rehabilitation, and life skills providers. During these meetings, we share our up-to-date information about active sex workers and identify concerns, making referrals to the relevant agency for support and safeguarding.
- Being the point of contact for enquiries and investigating incidents reported to the police around sex work. I often conduct enquiries following information received and referrals made from partner agencies.

- Supporting the senior leadership team by attending focus groups and supporting other forces to develop their approaches to policing the sex trade and supporting sex workers.
- Delivering presentations to student officers around the sex trade industry and ensuring that they know I am the point of contact. I also deliver presentations to university criminology students, as well as nurses and midwives, particularly on some of the behaviours exhibited by sex workers that are often linked to substance misuse.

## Responses to clients

On-street sex work often occurs on residential streets, in plain sight. It can have a detrimental impact on the local community and businesses, and can result in increased anti-social behaviour, such as sex in public, as well as discarded condoms, needles and drugs paraphernalia. Members of the public can be propositioned, and children may witness sexual acts.

To reduce this, I am currently trialling a new problem-solving diversion approach with clients of sex workers as an alternative to prosecution. Those suitable for the programme are given a conditional caution if they admit to the offence, while those who do not admit the offence receive a summons. It involves educating them and offering

free health checks to reduce the risk of re-offending and to improve the local areas.

The programme covers:

- information that humanises the sex workers and focuses on their actions as clients, as well as the consequences and impacts that sex work can have on their employment and relationships
- sexual health risks to themselves, partners and unborn children
- free voluntary and confidential screening
- support signposting at the end of the course

In recognition for devising the course, I was recently nominated for innovation at the National PCSO Awards. I am also working with the University of Hull to analyse and measure its success. To date, there is no information to suggest that the individuals who attended the course have re-offended.

This article was peer reviewed  
by Detective Sergeant  
David Thomason, Cheshire  
Constabulary



## What I learned from... Being a child of Deaf adults

**Detective Constable James Dainton ♦ Police Scotland**

I thought I knew a lot about British Sign Language (BSL). I am a child of Deaf adults (CODA) and I assumed the de-facto interpreter role as a child, conveying personal and complex information. I happily carried out this role, as it gave me a sense of independence and responsibility. This article is a reflective piece on what I learned from being a CODA and, later on, as a police officer.

### Interpreting as a CODA

CODAs sometimes interpret information they are not emotionally or developmentally able to fully understand. CODAs may also not possess the necessary language skills to interpret what was required effectively. As I facilitated communication between hearing adults and my Deaf parents, I saw how reliant professionals were on me as the language broker.

There are many issues with this, including the negative impact on a child's wellbeing and the potential for vicarious trauma. Another issue is the inference of influencing a child's evidence – for example, when a child witnesses domestic abuse and is then expected to manage communication between victims and professionals. Having experienced domestic abuse



as a child, these situations resonate with me.

There should also be consideration relating to the version of events being passed between the CODA and their parents, concerning any clarifications that took place and the use of language. CODAs can have a vested interest in the situations they are interpreting, so they cannot be expected to be impartial. CODAs can also be vulnerable to editing information in an attempt to minimise circumstances, including any potential impact on their relationships and dynamics with family members.

## Complex language

Deaf people, especially those with limited vocabulary, can find complex terminology and nuances in questioning styles difficult to comprehend. BSL has its own grammatical and sentence structure. This, combined with interpretation by a CODA, can further add to difficulties with comprehension. An example of the limitations of language is the historic sign for domestic abuse. A common sign for 'domestic' is the same as the one for 'home', with a different lip pattern. The sign is interchangeable, but you would mouth the word you wished to convey. As a result, Deaf victims who have additional cognitive needs may not identify themselves as victims of domestic abuse, as their interpretation may be that abuse can only occur within the home.

## Reliability

My knowledge of BSL suggests that vulnerable Deaf victims, specifically those who encounter abuse, neglect or sexual abuse, may provide accounts that could prove to be unreliable. This is due to the potential for conversation in sign language to be unintentionally suggestive or speculative, and because of the introduction of new language.

From my experiences, the consequences of allowing a CODA to assume the de-facto Interpreter role could be significant, with



inaccurate recording of evidence and the subsequent consequences. In my view, a qualified BSL interpreter should be used to properly support victims at the outset, to protect the integrity of the enquiry and to ensure the admissibility of evidence.

For further information see:

**[British Deaf Association](#)**  
**[Sign Health](#)**

For more information about Police Link Officers for Deaf people (PLOD) contact **[dei@gmp.police.uk](mailto:dei@gmp.police.uk)**  
For Police Scotland guidance on how to support Deaf persons, please contact **[PPCWdiversityunit@scotland.police.uk](mailto:PPCWdiversityunit@scotland.police.uk)**

This article was peer reviewed by Chief Inspector Emma Gilbert, Greater Manchester Police and National Coordinator for Police Link Officers for Deaf people (PLOD).

## Spotlight on a role

### Stolen vehicle examiner

**PC Jamie Orme and PC Neil Clark ♦**  
**Merseyside Police**

**T**he Vehicle Crime Group within Merseyside Police is made up of three police officers, who are all qualified stolen vehicle examiners (QSVEs). We have a combined 60 years of policing service between us, with varied backgrounds from neighbourhood policing to roads policing.

We carry out physical examinations of vehicles and vessels on a daily basis, including cars, motorcycles, caravans, trailers and boats, as well as plant and agricultural machinery. When a vehicle's identity has been altered, it's our responsibility to work out why and how, and to find out its true identity. We use various methods to do this, such as overt and covert security features, identifying component parts and chemical recovery. This is a process used to restore a vehicle's identifiable features when they have been erased or ground out.

On a typical day, we'll assess, prioritise and then carry out requests to examine vehicles. We use dedicated police recovery garages



and have to be forensically aware, as we examine some vehicles prior to any form of CSI work. We also compile reports and photographs for each examination, and update officers with our findings.

Our role has become far more diverse over the last few years, due to advancements in vehicle technology. We assist with telematic and digital enquiries, for anything from stolen vehicles through to murder. We often advise officers – for example, on whether a vehicle is supported for embedded data tracking services.

We're also a single point of contact between officers and vehicle manufacturers. All forces nominate





officers to be placed on the LEAD list (Law Enforcement Auto-Industry Directory), with our function being to triage enquiries and to prevent manufacturers from being asked any unnecessary questions.

We're often called upon to attend chop-shops. These are locations used to dismantle stolen vehicles, where their parts are then sold on or used to repair crash-damaged vehicles. A chop-shop may be discovered by spontaneous incidents or pre-planned from intelligence. We examine complete vehicles and their component parts, to identify where the parts originate from.

The QSVE role varies between forces. As it doesn't require a warranted officer to perform the role, many forces in England and Wales have accredited police staff as their QSVEs. Some forces have a

'multi-hatted' approach, where the QSVE will also have another role, such as roads policing or rural and wildlife crime team.

We have an excellent support network among fellow QSVEs, and we are all active members of the **National Association of Stolen Vehicle Examiners** (NASVE), which holds regular meetings to discuss current trends and experiences.

Colleagues are often surprised to hear we exist and what expertise we can offer. We recommend you to find out your force's QSVEs, as they may be able to get you that bit of information you need for an ongoing investigation.

This article was peer reviewed by Detective Sergeant Maddie deBuse, Thames Valley Police.

## LONG READ

# How procedurally just are custody sergeants?

**Chief Inspector Kate Firman ♦ Cambridgeshire Constabulary**

## Introduction

How we treat people when they come into custody can be the difference between life and death. As Head of Custody, I wanted to know how detainees were being treated by sergeants who authorise their detention. Skynns and others (2017) describe custody as the 'ultimate place' for teachable moments, where detainees can learn about the law and legal authorities.

## Literature review

This study draws from broader criminological work on legitimacy (Beetham, 2013; Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012, 2017) and the concept of procedural justice (PJ). This concept was first introduced by Thibaut and Walker (1975), who discovered that satisfaction with the legal system was influenced not only by the outcome of the trial, but also by the way in which it was conducted (see also: Tyler and Folger, 1980). Similarly, the Milwaukee Domestic Violence Experiment showed that if arrested suspects believed that the police had acted in a procedurally just manner, their reoffending rates decreased to



the same extent as suspects who had been given a warning (Paternoster and others, 1997).

PJ refers to people's subjective experiences of the quality of interactions that they have with power holders, like police officers. It is a multi-dimensional judgement comprising respect, neutrality, trustworthy motives and participation. PJ does not prescribe non-enforcement. It is about 'how, not whether, police authority is exercised' (Worden and McLean, 2017).





PJ research has often involved surveying citizens following an encounter with the police (Mazerolle and others, 2013). Other research has involved ‘ride-alongs’, where researchers assess interactions first-hand (Worden and Mclean, 2017; McCluskey and others, 2019). However, these studies struggle to overcome the Hawthorne effect, which is the possibility of people changing their behaviour if they know they are being watched. Nawaz and Tankebe (2018) addressed this in their stop-and-search research by basing their analysis on body-worn video recordings.

This study extends this methodological innovation by coding CCTV footage of encounters between custody sergeants and detainees, aiming to answer questions that include the following.

- How closely do custody suite encounters between detainees

and custody sergeants match the PJ standards for decision makers treating people who are subject to their authority?

- To what degree does measurement of PJ displayed by custody sergeants vary across detainees, custody sergeants and custody suites?
- Is there a correlation between PJ scores and the age and length of service of custody sergeants?

## Data and methods

The data was collected from three months of custody CCTV recordings (June to August 2020) at three police custody suites. All were graded ‘good’ when inspected in 2018.

CCTV footage availability dictated the selection of the three months for the study, although the encounters assessed during that period were randomly selected. Given that custody CCTV records constantly, the entire booking-in process was captured.



A complete sampling frame of interactions was developed, with 50 interactions selected from each suite providing a total sample size of 150. Detainees were only included if they went through the whole booking process, if they co-operated and if they were not under the influence. Of the 35 full-time custody sergeants, 34 were included through this method of selection. Due to the low throughput of detainees at one suite, and because there were only two female custody sergeants, all records from there with a female sergeant were coded.

### Measuring procedural justice

Jonathan-Zamir's validated instrument for measuring PJ was used to develop a framework for coding PJ elements in relation to interactions between detainees and custody sergeants (Jonathan-Zamir and others, 2015).

All elements were treated with equal importance and given a binary score to allow for comparisons to be made. This provided an overall assessment of legitimacy and fairness for these interactions.

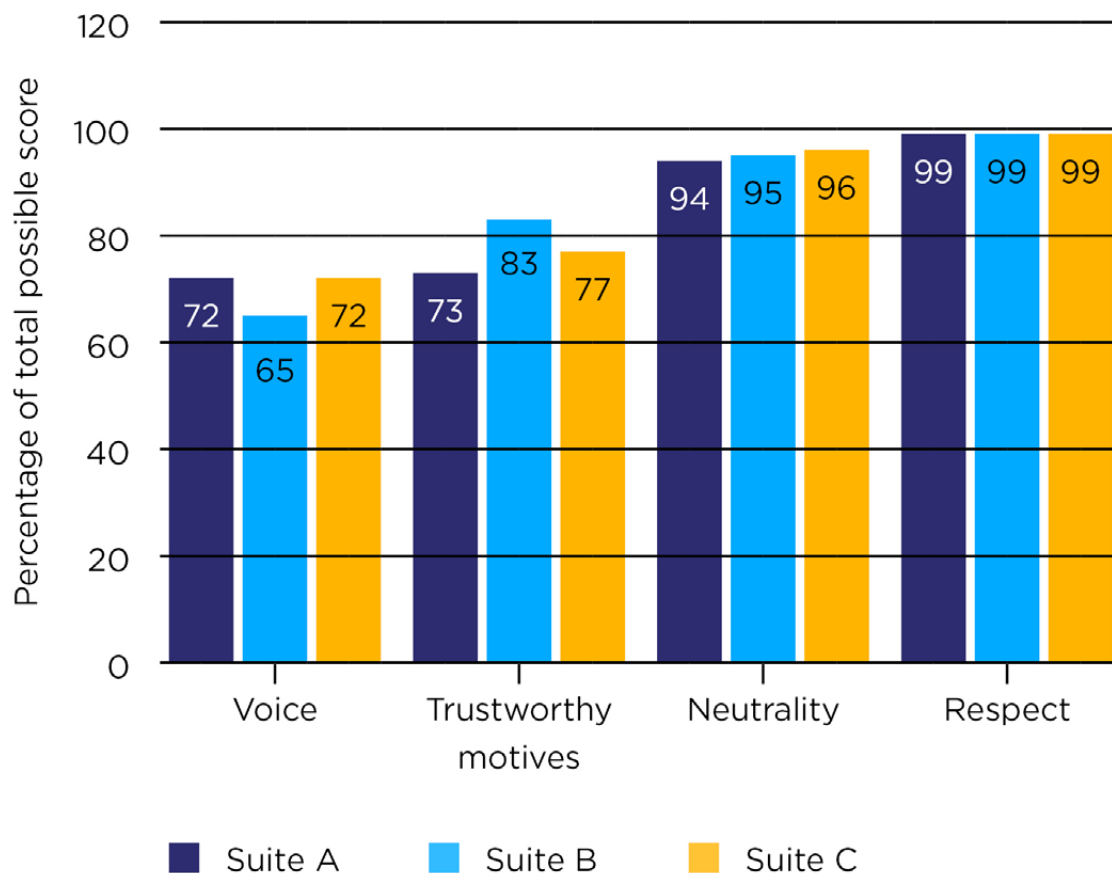
It took approximately 30 minutes to view and code each encounter and capture additional qualitative data, which equated to over nine days' work.

The PJ coding framework derived from Jonathan-Zamir is as follows.

- Voice (or participation) – whether the detainee had been allowed to express their views by being asked for information, whether the detainee had been allowed to respond without being interrupted or rushed, and whether the sergeant listened to them.
- Trustworthy motives – whether the sergeant was motivated to do what was good for the person, and whether the sergeant explained why they were authorising detention and what would happen next, even if the person had been in custody before.
- Dignity and respect – whether the sergeant was respectful and courteous, and whether they used a respectful tone of voice.
- Neutrality – whether the sergeant acted in a transparent and impartial manner based on facts, not prejudice.

### Findings

There was a negative association between trustworthy motives and an officer's length of service and experience in custody. In other words, as officers gained more experience, trustworthy motives declined. Police subculture literature reports that police officers sometimes develop cynicism on the job, which affects the quality of their interactions with some of the community, especially offenders (Reiner, 2010).

**Figure 1. Procedural justice scores linked to PJ elements by custody suite.**

The evidence shows parity in procedural justice across the three custody suites. The chart shows that Suite A scored lowest for trustworthy motives (73%). Suite B had the lowest score for voice (65%). There was only a marginal difference between the level of respect and neutrality shown at each of the three suites.

The sections below offer some examples and context for the scores given for each element.

### Voice

High PJ framework scores were awarded where sergeants made comments like, 'Let me know if you have any questions, I know it can

be a bit daunting' to a detainee who hadn't been in custody before. Some sergeants asked detainees if they had any questions and gave them the opportunity to ask them. Lower PJ framework scores were given where a detainee was rushed or interrupted. One detainee said, 'What, attempt murder?' when the officer was relaying the reason for arrest to the sergeant and was told to 'Let him [the arresting officer] speak, please'.

### Trustworthy motives

Over half of the sergeants observed showed motivation to do what was good for the detainee. Examples

include saying, 'We'll look after you' and 'If you start to feel unwell, you'll need to let us know.' A detainee who asked, 'If I feel anxiety in your cell, what do I do?' was told, 'You need to tell us'. In another high-scoring interaction, a sergeant asked an immigration detainee how long he had been travelling from his home country, reassuring him that he would be placed in a cell, but 'You will be safe here.'

High-scoring interactions included good explanations about how things worked, like cell buzzers if a detainee needed something and reassurance about what would happen: 'When you are sober, you will be able to go back to your mum. If we get you sobered up quickly, you can leave.'

One sergeant said to a suspect for an alleged sexual assault: 'These are not very nice allegations to have said about you, I would be feeling devastated too.' When asking whether the detainee had taken any drugs in the last 24 hours, the sergeant also said, 'I'm not trying to trick you.' They explained, 'What will happen now is my colleague will do your hand swabs and then we will get you a drink and make you as comfortable as we can.'

There was a good use of humour between sergeants and detainees, particularly at Suite C, with a sergeant responding to a detainee who said that he had consumed five pints by saying, 'Nice day for it too'. This can help to build rapport and

encourage compliance (Skinns and others, 2015).

Less positive and lower-scoring PJ framework interactions sometimes took place where there was a history between the officer and detainee. One sergeant told the detainee to get back from the desk, saying, 'Last time, we ended up putting you on the floor. You're the making of your own issues really.'

### Neutrality

A sergeant at Suite A said he always advised detainees to have a solicitor, as it was in their best interests, a fact that was observed by the researcher. Others showed their high-scoring impartiality: 'Just because you are here doesn't mean you are guilty, and I won't look at you like that.' When a detainee said, 'I'm really sorry guys,' the officer replied, 'I'm not here to judge you.'

Generally, officers remained calm, even if the detainee was agitated and shouting. However, officers sometimes displayed behaviour that scored low on the PJ coding framework. One officer ignored a detainee who had been arrested to prevent a breach of the peace. When the detainee said he could go to his daughter's house, the officer said that, 'I'm not calling anyone, you had your chance.' This detainee stood with his back to the officer, prompting them to say, 'Turn round, I'm talking to you.'

This sort of low-scoring ‘parent-child’ interaction was observed in other encounters. One sergeant said, ‘You haven’t learned, have you?’ to someone who had been arrested for drink-driving a second time. This detainee also stood with his back to the officer, with his hands in his pockets and head down when answering the risk assessment questions.

## Respect

There was evidence of sergeants showing respect to detainees and for their rights. Some high-scoring examples included a sergeant at Suite A who explained the role of a solicitor to a detainee. Another outlined the difference between being arrested on suspicion of an offence and being charged for one. When explaining that a right had been delayed, a sergeant said, ‘You get an extra right if you are a non-UK national,’ and added that, ‘The inspector has put a delay on your right to have someone told of your arrest, sorry about that.’

Less positive observations and lower-scoring interactions included dismissive or rude comments like, ‘I’ve no idea what you are talking about.’ One sergeant asked, ‘Do you normally have an appropriate adult when you are here?’, then rushed through the detainee’s rights. When the detainee asked if his rights could be explained, the sergeant said,



Custody officers at all three suites showed high levels of neutrality and respect in their interactions with detainees.

‘They are written here,’ although the detainee said he had difficulties reading.

## Discussion

Custody officers at all three suites showed high levels of neutrality and respect in their interactions with detainees. This respectful treatment of citizens supports findings by Skinns and others (2017), who found that custody officers were polite and non-judgemental. PACE Codes of Practice and the Authorised Policing Practice (APP) for Custody specify how custody should operate, with much of this reflected in question sets used when booking detainees in. This may account for high scores for neutrality and respect.

Sergeants at the suite with the highest throughput showed the highest trustworthy motives, possibly because they knew that if they gave good explanations, detainees wouldn’t need to ask questions and could be processed quicker. Time



pressures on processing detainees may account for voice being the lowest scoring element of PJ.

### Research implications

This study identified that custody sergeants deliver high levels of respect and neutrality, regardless of which custody suite they worked in and whom they interacted with. However, the coding identified that as the shift wears on, the level of respect decreases, possibly because detainees are under the influence of drink or drugs and are less compliant, or because sergeants are tired from working shifts and are less tolerant. If the latter is the case, police managers should review

custody shift patterns with a view to ensuring that EU directives are being complied with and that shifts are being adequately staffed. Improvements in neutrality might be linked to reduced throughput, with detainees given more opportunity to have their say and sergeants showing greater impartiality.

Police forces should consider introducing PJ training for custody officers – particularly for long-in-service sergeants – that focuses on improving trustworthy motives and giving detainees a voice beyond risk assessments. Custody sergeants should also ask all detainees, not just those new to custody, whether they have any questions about the process. In addition, checklists could





PJ is also important in terms of police legitimacy and will assist in improving public trust and confidence in policing.

remind them of good practice.

It might be possible to design a PJ tracking standard for systematic random auditing of interactions, with the potential to provide continuous monitoring and identification of officers at risk of not using PJ.

### Limitations and future research

Due to the small sample size, there is limited scope for generalising the findings of this study. Future studies that sample from the entire population of arrests over 12 months would help to address this. By analysing recordings from police body-worn cameras from the point of arrest to arrival in custody, future studies could also address the lack of data on the impact of interactions that take place before the booking-in process.

Notwithstanding these limitations, findings from this study have important practical implications, raising the possibility of tracking PJ

standards demonstrated by custody officers to detainees, not just in the police areas covered but nationally. This could form part of the auditing processes carried out by police custody inspectors with a view to improving interactions. PJ is also important in terms of police legitimacy and will assist in improving public trust and confidence in policing.

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This article was peer reviewed by Chief Inspector Michael Cox, West Yorkshire Police.

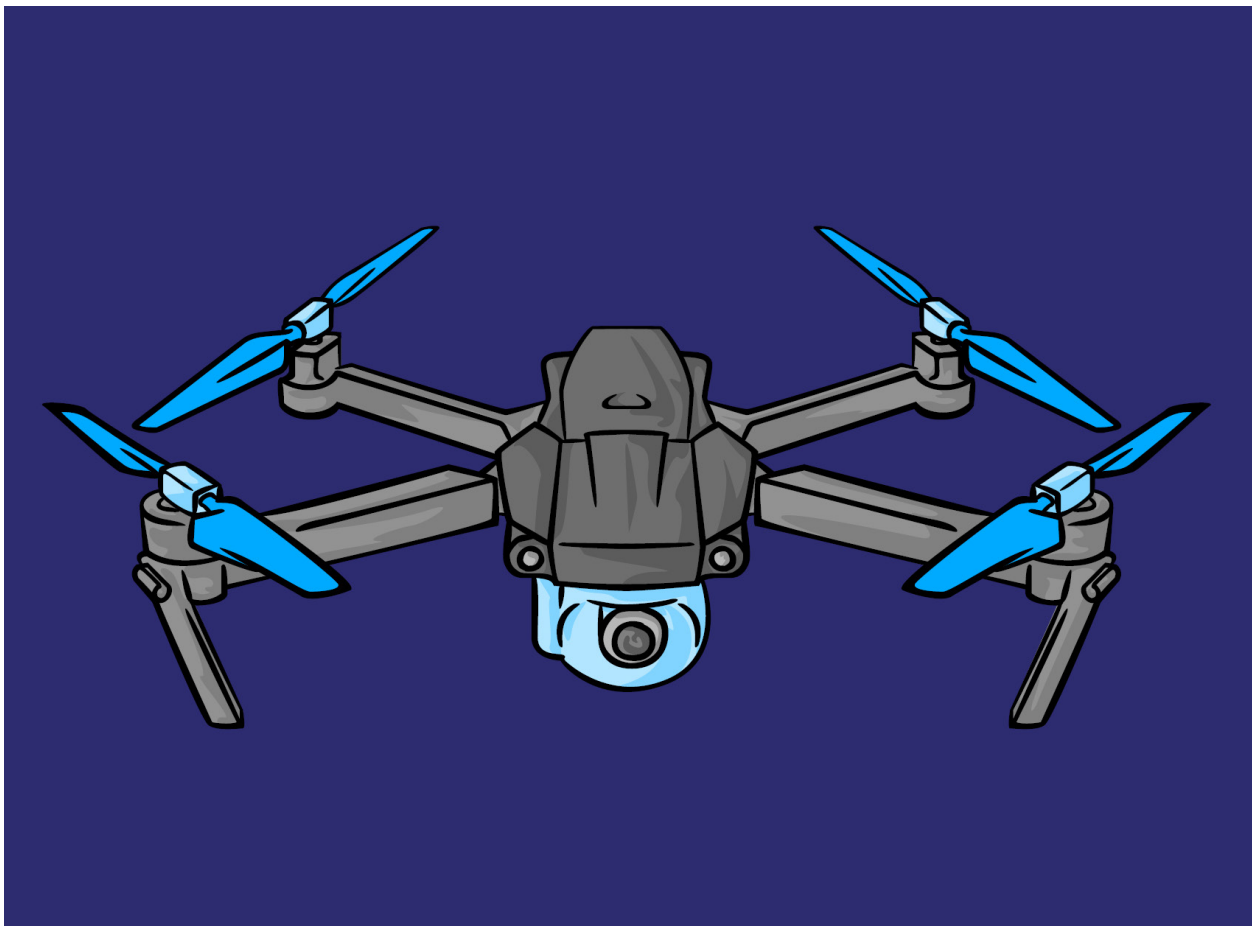
## Five things about... Drones

**Jake Fitzsimmons, Drone Coordinator ♦ Norfolk Constabulary**

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**1** 'Drone' refers to any vehicle that is operated remotely, rather than by an onboard pilot or controller. Drones can be aerial, land or maritime. For a policing benefit, aerial drones are primarily used. The drone industry is developing rapidly, allowing police drones to operate for longer durations, in harsher weather conditions and while carrying more effective equipment. Drone units use multiple types and sizes of aircraft alongside bespoke response vehicles.

**2** Drones can be equipped with a range of equipment, including thermal imaging cameras, high-powered cameras (up to 30× optical and 200× digital zoom), lights and speakers. Improved drone efficiency now allows for flying indoors, during both day and night-time. Drones can cover large geographical areas safely and provide a live camera feed to commanders and control rooms.



**3** Using this technology, drone units are now able to assist in numerous deployments, including:

- search and rescue
- suspect and property search
- crime scene policing response
- disaster response
- gathering evidence
- hazmat response
- road traffic collisions
- firearms incidents
- public order

**4** With technological innovation also comes criminal misuse and recreational negligence. Drones may be used within protests or disruption, surveillance of property vulnerability, counter-policing or stalking. Drone negligence can also cause collisions with aircraft, other drones, or people

and property on the ground. All pilots must be aware of the airspace they are operating in, due to no-fly zones, restrictions and other safety concerns. Informing the public on **how to fly them safely and legally** is imperative to avoid risks.

**5** Innovation within drone technology is leading us towards the ability to pilot aircraft remotely out of sight of the pilot from strategic locations, such as rooftops, enhancing responsiveness and operational capacity. Another example of innovation includes larger drones, such as fixed-wing planes, which can cover much larger distances and carry greater payloads, such as more effective camera systems.

This article was peer reviewed by Detective Constable Ben Pereira, City of London Police.

PRACTICE NOTE

## Defensive planting for burglary prevention

**Detective Chief Inspector Alick James** ♦ **Surrey Police**

In the winter period of 2020/21, having identified that burglars often gained entry by climbing over fences and gates, I promoted defensive planting as part of a prevention campaign, resulting in a significant reduction in offences in the target areas. Our problem-solving team analysts produced data on winter

burglary hotspots, which was shared with all of the 11 boroughs in Surrey. This data was then used to develop preventative plans based on the areas that had seen the greatest volume of offending in the previous two years.

We started our plan development with scanning and analysis, adopting a problem-solving approach so that resources could be focused effectively. The recurring hotspots were geographically defined and a Neighbourhood Support Officer (NSO) reviewed all burglaries in prior winter periods. PCSOs then visited all properties to conduct a visual audit and to identify the common factors.



A checklist was used to note features, which were subsequently populated in a Microsoft Excel document so the data could be interrogated easily. We identified the most common days and times when burglaries were committed, and identified that that the majority of properties were:

- in a cul de sac where they were not overlooked
- often burgled via the rear
- sometimes accessed via a locked side gate
- subject to the theft of jewellery and cash

As a result of this analysis, we provided very specific and targeted information about burglary prevention in the hotspot area. Having identified the type of property most at risk, we were able to conduct joint patrols with the Neighbourhood Watch during the frequent offence commission days and times. This allowed us to deliver targeted crime prevention advice at the same time as providing a visible deterrence in the areas. The crime prevention advice was either delivered in person or through a letter. I wrote the letter to make it personal and specific to the individual and their property.

Some properties were vulnerable, due to their side gates not being locked and due to access and egress being through the side or over fences. In these cases, the possible benefits of defensive planting were considered. Defensive planting had the potential to make the properties less attractive for burglars and more difficult as targets. This would involve, for example, planting a trailing rose over a side gate or along a fence line, or placing plants with natural defences – such as thorns, barbs or spines – against fences or around windows.

We produced a video to raise awareness of the mechanism of offending in the area, as well as the preventative benefits of defensive planting. I contacted the Royal Horticultural Society and, with their advice and support, suggested

suitable plants for this purpose. The video not only encouraged people to use defensive planting, but also raised more general preventative advice by engaging with an audience on a topic that they were interested in. The video was released on social media and has received thousands of views: [\*\*Defensive planting to deter burglary.\*\*](#)

Compared to the previous winter period, there was a reduction of 82% in burglaries within the hotspot area. The overall reduction in burglaries for the division was around 40%. However, these figures should be approached with caution, as COVID-19 lockdowns were an identifiable contributor. This approach could be used in other settings to reduce vulnerability to burglary.

This campaign was shared with all boroughs and the approach was taken up in a neighbouring borough for a residence that had been targeted by burglars multiple times. The victim was helped to target harden their property, using Safer Streets funding for a landscape gardener to do some defensive planting. The victim has not been targeted since the work has been completed.

This article was peer reviewed by  
Temporary Detective Inspector  
Tanya Shotbolt, Bedfordshire  
Police

## Diary of a ... Drug expert witness

**Rob Hood ♦ Drug Expert Witness Coordinator**

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Following a 30-year police career, mainly as a detective within the world of serious and organised crime, I am now a drug expert witness coordinator in Thames Valley Police (TVP). Our team of four full-time coordinators are all members of the national Drug Expert Witness and Valuation Association (DEWVA) group. Every drugs investigation with an element of supply involved can require a drug expert witness report. This is a snapshot of my 'typical' week.

### Monday

Having received a court warning last week, I am at Reading Crown Court, presenting my drug expert witness evidence in a multi-handed cocaine

supply trial. I comment on an array of phone downloads and the valuation of drugs seized. Although employed by TVP, I am independent of the investigation and engage with both prosecution and defence barristers to see whether there is any further material they want me to consider. I must remain impartial and simply seek to assist the court in understanding the drug evidence, not to assert guilt, which is a big change from when I was a police officer.

### Tuesday

A continuing professional development day for the team has been arranged with the Crown Prosecution Service. We use a vacant magistrate's courtroom at Oxford Magistrates Court and replicate the process of delivering expert evidence in front of a judge, including evidence in chief and cross-examination. While travelling home, I receive a call from TVP's Serious and Organised Crime Unit. They have just arrested a subject, seizing three kilograms of cocaine and a significant sum of cash. To assist in the remand of their subject, they need an urgent, abbreviated report that covers the circumstances of their investigation and the valuation of the drugs seized.



They are hoping to go to CPS for a charging decision, so they have asked for this report within two hours. The full report, covering the entire investigation, will be completed at a later date.

## Wednesday

An office-based day catching up with the numerous reports, which contain my opinion around phone messages, including slang terminology for types of drugs, as well as quantities, circumstances of investigations and valuations of drugs seized. Within TVP and across the region, we regularly update each other about current drug prices, from wholesale, mid-market to street level of supply, as well as engaging with the National Crime Agency for national trends. Most of these updates are obtained from current investigations where prices have been discussed within phone communications or from intelligence reports. Each report is unique and could take anywhere from a couple of hours to a number of weeks to complete.

## Thursday

It is the county lines intensification week in TVP and we have offered assistance with any pre-planned activity, as well as any urgent reports. I'm going on a warrant to a suspected cannabis factory, to guide and advise the resolution team on site. This gives me first-hand experience of the

professionalism of the setup within the address, enhancing my knowledge when I come to prepare a DEW report on the investigation. I am also on standby to assist another investigative team, following a warrant at an address where a dedicated drugs line phone from the West Midlands has been located.

## Friday

Back to the day-to-day role of reviewing any incoming requests for DEW reports, allocating these out to the police officers who have the DEW role as a secondary skill and completing my own reports. We have between three and five requests every day for a report, ranging from low-level street supply to complex conspiracies involving organised crime groups. The afternoon brings a call from a colleague within the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit, who wants to discuss a potential report based on phone conversations obtained from a prison establishment. Having reviewed what they have obtained, it is highly likely that an official request for a report will follow!

A long but good week and, with the DEW Cadre within TVP receiving around 600 requests per year for reports, it's likely to be busy again next week!

This article was peer reviewed by Detective Sergeant Mark Hibbert, West Yorkshire Police.

## Shift in the life of...

# A domestic abuse innovations officer

**Susan Makin** ♦ **Durham Constabulary**

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**A**rriving at Darlington Police Station, I check the arrest list to see if there have been any incidents overnight concerning my clients. I'm not a police officer – I'm employed within Durham Constabulary's Safeguarding Team to support medium-risk victims of domestic abuse. Other team members focus on the perpetrators. One of my clients has been arrested, so I have a quick chat with her to find out what's happened and how we can help her when she gets out of custody.

I head back to the office, where an investigating officer asks me to support a victim who is coming in to make a statement for a new investigation. The victim is distressed and needs a cup of tea, so I calm her down and try to reassure her. I sit with her as she makes her statement, then I take her home. On the way, we discuss some support she can access.

Next, I return to the office to review the latest medium-risk safeguarding reports and look for opportunities to make follow-up calls or visits. I move on to review a case that has been referred to our Multi Agency Tasking & Coordination Scheme (MATAC) and I phone our



domestic abuse navigator to discuss how we can support the victim and perpetrator, who want to stay together. We agree to do a joint visit to try to reduce the amount of callouts, by identifying triggers for any key issues to signpost both parties to support service. This will be dependent on their agreement and engagement.

I also visit the victim of a medium-risk stalking case, which seems to be escalating. The perpetrator has

recently moved house to be close to her and I am concerned that he is able to watch and monitor her from his address. We decide on several options, including a referral to counselling and target hardening. I also encourage her to go to the housing office to discuss relocation. I help her find a solicitor for obtaining a non-molestation order and I offer to help with the paperwork if she can't afford legal advice. I then write to the housing provider with a letter of support for a house move to protect her from further harassment.

My next appointment is a home visit with a client to deliver a SmartWater spray that she can keep in her pocket or handbag. SmartWater has a unique DNA reference and doesn't wash off skin or clothing. When a perpetrator is brought into custody, they can be scanned under a UV light to prove their presence near the victim. In this case, the perpetrator has tried to breach a non-molestation order by coming to the victim's house. I put some SmartWater grease around the fencing and I place notices in the windows as a deterrent. She has been feeling anxious since reporting the breach but this helps her to feel a bit safer.

After lunch, I go to deliver a Claire's Law disclosure with an officer, as I'm not sure about the situation I'll be walking into. We deliver the disclosure and I offer

support and advice. The woman we're visiting says that she knows most of the information already and that he hasn't been like that with her. I reassure her that we are there to help and tell her about red flags to look out for. She takes my details in case she wants to contact me later, when she's had the chance to digest what we've told her.

My last visit of the day is with a woman who has been the victim of a nasty assault. She lets me in and we talk about keeping herself safe, as the perpetrator had been released on bail conditions. We discuss changing her routines and the routes she takes, either to work or the supermarket, to avoid chance meetings that might put her at risk. She doesn't have any money left, as the perpetrator has cleared the bank account, so I visit the food bank to fetch her some basic supplies.

I'm always part of any conversation about incidents and ongoing cases, and I often overhear things that will be coming my way. I really enjoy my job – sometimes I get so involved in these discussions that I have to remind myself to go home!

This article was peer reviewed by PCSO Stacey Croxton, Hampshire Constabulary.

LONG READ

# Assaults on police: Culture, legitimacy and risk

**Sergeant Lee Johnson** ♦ **Lincolnshire Police**

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## Introduction

When I became a police officer in 2010, one of the earliest lessons my tutor taught me was about being ready for the first time I would be assaulted. For my tutor, assaults were an inevitable 'part of the job'. When I started working on my thesis in 2011, I wanted to consider key trends around assaults against police officers. As the study progressed, my focus moved towards analysing interactions between suspects and victims, cultural responses to assault, and the reaction to – and internalisation of – assaults by officers. The thesis focused on what the data tells us around assaults, the impact of the role of the police, the occupational police culture and police legitimacy. The work identified a gap in the academic literature related to violence against police officers, certainly in the UK context, and sought to reflect on this risk.

## Literature review

Despite assaults being a key concern for police officers and staff, the focus of academic literature and the media has often been on the police use of



force. Lack of focus on assaults was keenly demonstrated in the mid-2010s, when data on assaults had to be directly requested from the Home Office, as it was not widely published and was often incomplete. Failure to collect data was reflected in the figures, which recorded only 4,730 assaults against officers in 2013-14. In 2021-22, in the context of a more detailed political and policing focus on assaults, around 41,000 assaults were recorded against officers in the UK. The number of assaults has been on an upwards trend, potentially indicating a greater risk to police officers from violence, but also better recording and reporting of assaults.

This has been supported by recent legislation, including the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. One key challenge in understanding the breadth of assaults is the definitions used. Legally, the introduction of the offence of ‘assault of an emergency worker’ removed the phrase ‘in the execution of duty’, which framed the offence of assaulting a constable. Instead, the focus is now on the performance of the role of emergency worker at the time of the incident.

Aside from legal definitions, the concept of assault is also framed individually by officers, potentially dependent on experience or learning in the role. Officers may make decisions to arrest for assault based on the intention of the suspect, the nature of the assault, any injuries caused or factors such as the perceived capacity of the assailant. The opinions of other officers could also influence police decision-making, as could the perceived way in which the courts would respond to the incident. Each of these factors can affect decision making and can change how officers define an assault.

Findings from academic studies identified several themes relating to assaults. Research by Brown (1994) and by Christopher and Noaks (1990) found a connection between alcohol and the night-time economy, with

a heightened chance of assaults around 11pm and midnight. Other studies identified risks associated with attendance at domestic incidents (for example, Rabe-Hemp and Schuck, 2007). These risks included entering private spaces and being unaware of escape routes or hidden risks, such as position of potential weapons, making decisions to remove people from properties and entering situations where substances such as alcohol are mixed with violence. In the night-time economy, domestic incidents or other violent occurrences, existing frustrations or aggression can become focused on police officers who intervene to enforce lawful powers and protect the public.

Other studies have demonstrated the risk of assault in custody (Deehan and others, 2002). Custody acts as the final barrier from point of arrest to placing into a cell. It can be an opportunity for one last act of defiance and resistance when being searched, booked in or taken to a cell.

## The context of risk

My study focused on three key themes, which emerged from the literature and contextualised assaults and violence.

Firstly, Bittner (1975) suggested that a police officer’s role is to deal with something that should not be happening, and that someone should be doing something about. Police officers have the unique ability to use



force in efforts to de-escalate conflict and tensions, restore order and enforce the law. Reiner argues that where there is a necessity to exercise authority over the public and enforce lawful powers, police officers act in the 'shadow of the law' (1991). This potentially places them in direct conflict with citizens, leading to the escalation of aggressive non-compliance.

Secondly, Tyler (2006) explored the concept of procedural justice, arguing that the policing function could only operate when the actions of officers were seen as legitimate. If police officers did not offer people the chance to explain, or were perceived to not be fairly applying the law, then there was a risk of assault. Tyler (2006) states that people want an explanation for police action if they are to accept the application of control and follow orders. Acting without explanation could therefore lead to an aggressive and resistant response.

Thirdly, the occupational police culture is a long-debated theme in policing (Skolnick, 1966; Reiner, 2000; Waddington, 1999), underpinning cultural adaptations and values that informally guide police behaviour through the passing of generational experience via parade room talk. These traits include a desire for action, machismo and solidarity, and allow police officers to make sense of their role (Skolnick, 1966; Reiner, 2000). These cultural values and traits

may, to some extent, guide how police officers interact with the public and how they respond to being assaulted. It is suggested that as officers leave training and enter the policing world, they become socialised to a rulebook of behaviours. However, the extent to which they adhere to them may depend on several factors, including role, rank and experience.

## Methodology

The research began with a review of the assault data from Lincolnshire, recorded from 2011 to 2015. Participant observation forms were designed using the data trends. Working as a police officer for the duration of the study gave me privileged access to observe incidents of assault and aggressive non-compliance. Observations took place over a period of one year and totalled 50 incidents from three towns, which allowed for the identification of themes related to contexts and factors.

Towards the end of participant observation, I conducted 11 interviews with police officers, one of which was a pilot interview using a schedule that was then changed for the final interviews. The interviews required officers to reflect on assaults and related themes, including the assessment of risk and the decision to arrest for an assault. The study used an overt methodology, where all officers were aware of it taking



place and could remove their consent. Having experience of being an officer allowed me access to direct observational methods, following ethical approval.

## Results and discussion

Some of the key results emerging from the thesis included the following.

- Assaults occur throughout the policing process, from initial attendance to police custody, with some additional risks seen at the point of arrest and detention, immediately following arrest and in custody.
- The definition of an assault is subjective, with some officers reflecting on the intention of the suspect, the seriousness of the offence and the meaning of the uniform. In context, officers have different thresholds around engagement and facing aggression and resistance from suspects.
- The method of assault tends to show risk when people are being directly controlled but are resistant to police action. Data shows a higher level of kicking, spitting, biting and punching as the main methods of assault. There have also been some identifiable trends that reflect societal changes. For example, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in the use of coughing as a method of assault.
- There are not always significant trends in the data, with assaults occurring in every month of the year. However, there are sometimes noticeable increases in the summer months and around key events, such as Halloween, Christmas and the New Year.
- Streets, dwellings and custody remain the areas where the risk of officers being assaulted is highest, especially when moving people from the location of arrest to a police vehicle.
- The proportion of victimisation in terms of male or female officers does not seem relevant. For example, in Lincolnshire, the difference was often around 70% assaults on male officers to 30% on female officers, which reflects the proportion of male and female officers in the force.
- According to initial data from a recent follow-on study, assaults tend to occur in areas of higher deprivation and where there are hotspots of other offending, such as violence and drugs offences. There also appears to be a higher proportion of female suspects who assault officers when compared with proportions of female offenders arrested for other violence offences.

Through creating a renewed focus on assaults, developing policies on

support and encouraging confidence in reporting assaults and violence, police forces are now in a much better position to understand the true level of assaults and the national data to reflect the true risk towards police officers. There are still some instances where officers may choose not to record an assault, which include the following.

- Where mental health powers have been used and the suspect is deemed to be too ill to prosecute.
- The age of the offender, where the suspect is deemed to be too old or too young.
- Where the officer feels that they may be burdening their colleagues if they were to make an arrest.
- Associated paperwork and administration when the assault is deemed as being lower-level.

The role of the police has an impact on the risk of assault, with officers entering violent situations and applying lawful powers and orders over people who may disagree or challenge these actions.

One of the key points emerging from the research was the occupational cultural traits that influenced assaults and officer response to assaults. These factors included the following.

- A desire for action among some officers, which drew on

reverence to those who attended the most high-risk incidents and were involved in policing public order incidents in the night-time economy.

- A ‘them and us’ status, which guided how some officers sought to establish control during incidents and approached some incidents.
- Machismo-guided officer reaction, which was often dictated by not emotionally responding to assaults and risk, and by demonstrating toughness in front of colleagues.

While this article has focused on the context of assaults in police forces in England and Wales, the experience of violence is not unique to these forces. Although this study was conducted in one force, the data and conclusions appear to be replicated in the ongoing data collection, in national discussions and across European forces. At a recent conference with European police forces, the nature of the problem of assaults and police force response focused on the same issues on police culture, response to assaults and public confidence in policing.

## Recommendations

In my initial thesis, I proposed nine recommendations for policing. As time has progressed, some of these remain current but others have been updated. The main recommendation



should be that police forces and the criminal justice system continue to make this a priority and aim to achieve the following objectives, which have formed the basis for our local policy and the wider policies of Operation Hampshire and [The National Police Wellbeing Service](#).

- Gather and analyse data across police forces to identify key trends and themes, which develop a better understanding of assaults and a valid record of the number of assaults against officers and staff. Maintain centralised lessons learned, which reflect on the circumstances of assaults and allow input into training to protect officers.
- Ensure that all officers and staff who are assaulted have access to

support from their force and the wider policing family.

- Work closely with other criminal justice agencies (such as the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts) to ensure the right outcomes following incidents of assault.
- Reflect on the reporting of assaults and outcomes. With the work being conducted nationally around assaults, forces need to ensure that all officers and staff are aware of reporting assaults and available support. Consistent outcomes on assaults should develop, followed by a reduction in their overall number.

The role of the police is ever-changing. With new challenges comes the requirement for training and awareness, including a focus on

the impact of mental ill health and neurodiversity. Police forces could adopt reflective learning around assertion of control and use of force to prevent future assaults, by looking and reflecting on factors such as risk, experience and their approach to potential incidents of violence.

Assaults against police officers and staff remain an unfortunate risk but should never be accepted as ‘part of the job’. It is not written into police conditions that officers should expect to be assaulted. Police forces should work to reduce the frequency of assaults, and to improve protection and support following being harmed on duty.

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- This article was peer reviewed by Sergeant Nicola Macgregor, Northumbria Police.**

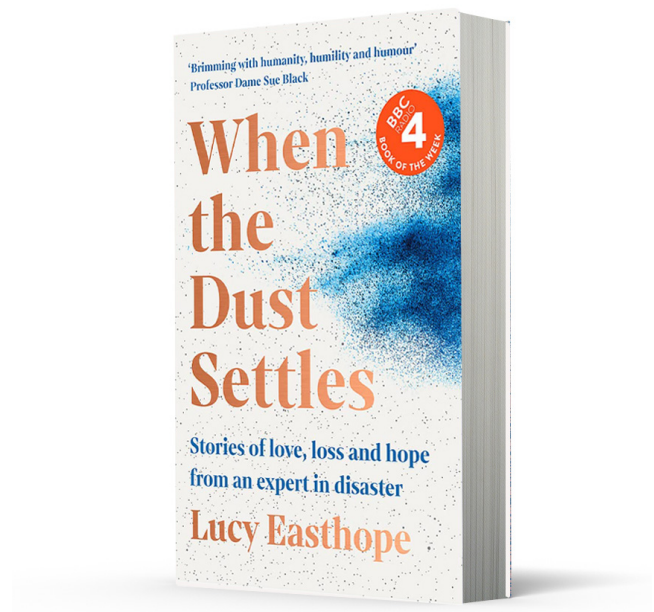
## BOOK REVIEW

## When the Dust Settles by Lucy Easthope

Detective Inspector Anna Rickards ♦ Greater Manchester Police

‘When the Dust Settles’ is an autobiographical account of Lucy Easthope’s experience in both disaster planning and post-disaster intervention. It details several high-profile disasters, including a flooding in Doncaster, the MH17 plane crash and the Fukushima nuclear reactor disaster. As well as providing the reader with the complexities of disaster response, the book also reflects on the personal costs involved. This includes not only loss of life and serious injuries, but also the ‘furniture of self’, a term coined by sociologist Kai Erikson to describe photographs, clothing and items that hold sentimental value and make us who we are. This was evident in the property left in the aftermath of the London 7/7 bombings. Easthope lists items such as Tupperware with salads inside, laptops and an unfinished PhD thesis, still being annotated up until the point when the bomb exploded. These objects are reminders that it was a normal commute until it wasn’t.

An early chapter informs us that the word ‘disaster’ originates from the Latin ‘dis’ and ‘astro’, meaning ‘bad stars’. This can be viewed as the opposite to the proverb ‘when



the stars align’, with both trying to explain an experience as an astronomical phenomenon. Whatever the cause, this book details the profound impact on individuals, families and communities. (A trigger warning is warranted here, as the book features graphic content). One deeply saddening example is Easthope’s description of distressed children who lived near Grenfell Tower. Looking out of their bedroom window, some of the children saw the silhouettes of police officers carrying large bags and assumed they were bodies. Easthope’s respect for the deceased, including those who are unaccounted for, is evidenced throughout the book.



The importance of a formal identification using primary – and not secondary – indicators was well advocated by the author. Misidentifications were described from historic cases, demonstrating the need for a professional disaster victim identification (DVI) process, the governance of which sits with HM Coroner. A family member may consider a birth mark or a personalised tattoo to be a unique indicator proving identity, but Easthope makes a strong argument for a scientific conclusive process. This gives more certainty and minimises the avoidance of giving the wrong person back to the wrong family, which sadly has happened.

As a detective inspector trained and experienced in family liaison

and disaster victim identification, I found this book to be professionally interesting. Professor Easthope's academic and operational background makes this book an authentic read, and I valued her empathy and insight. As I have witnessed first-hand, if we take care in protecting the personal effects of people caught up in disasters, this can have a significant impact for families. If you are interested in – or are already – working in disaster planning or response, I encourage you to read 'When the Dust Settles'.

This article was peer reviewed  
by Shrey Jhalani, Business  
Change and Engagement  
Manager, Police Digital Service.

# With thanks to

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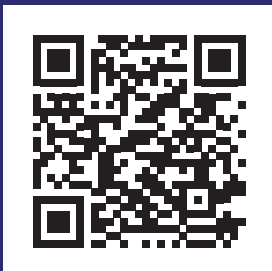
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