

Police Use of AI | Oversight Group Meeting #2

Minutes

Details

Date: 16.12.24

Time: 14:30 – 16:30

Location: MS Teams

Chair: Natalie Byrom

Attendance

Oversight Group

- Ellen Lefley (Senior Lawyer, Justice)
- Prof Lewis Griffin (Professor of Computer Science, University College London)
- Steve Barnabis (Founder of Project Zero, Project Zero)
- Zoe Amar (Director, Zoe Amar Digital)
- Alex Campbell (Senior Policy Manager, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners)
- Louise King (Co-Lead, Just for Kids Law and Director, Children's Rights Alliances for England)
- Scott Morgan (Senior Research Officer, College of Policing)

Home Office

- Cian Bates (Senior Policy Advisor, Home Office)
- Charlotte Moore (Principal User Researcher, Home Office CoLab)
- Sally Halls (Head of CoLab, Home Office CoLab)

Sciencewise

- Elizabeth Cunningham (Program Manager, Sciencewise)

Thinks Insight & Strategy

- Carol McNaughton-Nicholls (Managing Partner)
- Lucy Farrow (Partner)
- Jonny Harper (Director)
- Paul Carroll (Director)
- Adina Pintilie (Associate Director)
- Josh Cohen (Research Lead)
- Anna Humphreys (Senior Research Executive)
- Emily Cowles-Naja (Senior Research Executive)
- Louis Mylne (Research Executive)

Independent evaluator

- Sophie Reid

Minutes

Item 1: Welcome and Introduction

- Chair welcomed members to the meeting.
- Louise King (Just for Kids Law) was welcomed to the group.

- Thinks ran through the agenda for the meeting.

Item 2: Methodology recap

- Thinks outlined the purpose of deliberative research, as well how participants of this type of research should be engaged.
- Thinks recapped an overview of the approach, acknowledging the insight that was gained at the previous meeting. Thinks noted the design survey data was received in the previous week. Thinks outlined the next phase of the research, which will be the design of materials for the deliberative sessions.
- Thinks introduced the locations under consideration in which these deliberations will take place.
- Thinks noted the various outputs from this research, which will comprise the summary findings report and guidance paper, technical methodology report, documentary film and wider training.
- Thinks reiterated the objectives discussed at the previous oversight group for the benefit of new members.
- Members noted that an important aspect of this project will be the raising of awareness of participative methods across government, beyond the Home Office.

Item 3: Design Survey

- Thinks shared findings of the ongoing evidence review and expert interviews.
- Thinks noted that many such AI technologies are in their infancy, and that much of its use is exploratory:
 - The evidence review highlighted the need in the deliberative phase to frame AI in policing within the concept of "policing by consent" and establish trust through clear decision-making structures.
 - The review emphasised the importance of a shared definition of AI, acknowledging public concerns about the police while focusing on future use.
 - It also addressed the interaction between public attitudes toward AI and the police, noting the uneven application of AI across UK police forces.
 - The evidence review suggests case studies and expert testimony are used to explore real-world applications, discuss oversight frameworks based on the Covenant's principles.
- Thinks gave an introduction to the purpose of the design survey, and its role in informing the stimulus design for dialogues.
- Thinks talked through the ten AI use cases that will be explored in the research which were explored in the design survey. Thinks introduced key results from the design survey.
 - Thinks noted the general discomfort with the use of AI, though with the caveat that the Police, and the wider criminal justice system, are the more trusted to use it comparative to other institutions.

- Thinks noted the widespread assumption that AI technologies are already in use within police services, though there are a large number of people who are unsure.
- Thinks noted that the public are more open-minded to the potential benefits of AI use by the police where applications look to improve efficiency, though there is concern that public trust may be eroded by the use of these technologies.
- Thinks noted that administrative and convenience use cases are widely accepted, but those that require a 'human touch'/judgement calls would meet greater resistance.
- Thinks held a question-and-answer session. Members' questions are listed below with corresponding responses:
 - Members asked whether a definition of AI was given in the questionnaire. Thinks responded that the questionnaire used the following definition: *AI is a term that describes the use of computers and digital technology to problem solve and take decisions, imitating human intelligence. AI systems typically process large amounts of data to take actions and achieve specific goals, sometimes without human direction (that means they complete tasks autonomously).* Thinks noted that this was probed within the use cases presented to respondents.
 - The Chair remarked that the potential to increase efficiency/reduce costs to taxpayer should be considered alongside information about the potential costs associated with implementation.
 - Members asked whether the questionnaire included those who are more likely to be in contact with the police. Thinks responded that the survey was a nationally representative study of 1,000 members of the public, and recognised that it does not have the sample size to segment this group to yield statistically significant results. Thinks reiterated that the purpose of the survey was to be informative in terms of the broad public's view. Thinks noted that caution must be taken in terms of how these results would be presented to the public.
 - Members asked whether participants were asked about their general attitudes towards policing, and whether this had an impact on their attitudes towards AI. Thinks noted that this data was collected, and this attitudinal data will be further explored in due course to inform materials design. Thinks noted that this is an area of great importance for the dialogue.
- Thinks led a conversation on the sample profile for the deliberation.
 - Thinks reflected on the evidence review and noted that it revealed differences in attitudes towards policing across different gender, ages, ethnicities and geographies. With this in mind, it would be necessary to ensure that these differences are represented as far as practical within the sample for the deliberation. This would mean broadly adhering to local and regional demographics while ensuring those with meaningfully different views are represented.
 - Thinks introduced Durham, London, and Cardiff as potential options – on account of their spread across geographies, attitudes, and

contexts. Durham can provide the rural context and contextualise with previous experience of the use of AI in policing; London can provide its specific policing context and is expected to have greater diversity; Cardiff can provide devolved context and focus on Wales for urban/rural locations.

- Thinks discussed the overall sample itself, and noted the importance of balancing sociodemographic, attitude, and experience variables. Thinks also noted the intention to capture individual experience of crime.
- Members noted the need to maintain ethnically diverse samples within each location (i.e. not just London), as experiences and opinions will differ. Thinks responded that ethnic diversity will be sought as far as possible within each location, not just London.
- Members questioned why under 18s are not being included. Thinks noted that participatory methods are a new approach for the Home Office/CoLab, and the choice has been made to focus on adults initially for the sake of practicality. Thinks noted that this does not exclude the possibility of reusing these materials to run top up groups with different audiences. Thinks also suggested that none of this precludes the inclusion of younger people's perspectives into the conversation via expert speakers.
- Members questioned whether percentages would be stated in any report in relation to the deliberation. Thinks explained that it would not be appropriate to conduct statistical analysis on the findings of the deliberation, and confirmed this would not feature in any reporting.
- Members questioned with regard to Durham, whether the experience/awareness of AI use in Durham Policing has been overstated. Thinks noted that this would not be commented on directly in any publicly focused materials.
- Members asked about attitudinal screening, and whether participants would be opting into a conversation from a binary position before having the opportunity to deliberate. Members also urged the need for the protection of the 'don't know' questions. Thinks agreed that capturing uncertainty within these groups would be necessary.
- Members flagged that those with experience of migration may have a distinct and relevant perspective on the issues in question, and urged mindfulness of this point. Members acknowledged the practical difficulty of including these groups.

Item 4: Framing question

- Thinks outlined the make-up of a good framing question to members. Thinks then presented proposed framing questions for deliberation:
 - How, if at all, do the public think AI should be used in policing?
 - What are the perceived risks and opportunities?
 - What are you most concerned about when asked what you think of using artificial intelligence in policing in the UK?

- What do you imagine a good scenario for using AI in policing to be?
- What use cases?
 - In which cases should AI be used?
 - When not?
- What trade-offs/balances should be considered?
 - What safeguards should be in place?
 - How can we use AI in policing to enhance public safety while maintaining public support?
- Members joined breakout groups to brainstorm underpinning questions to explore with participants in the deliberation.
 - Members agreed that the dialogue should be grounded in specific AI use cases, rather than abstract concepts.
 - Members suggested that discussions should begin with current AI applications to provide tangible examples.
 - Members suggested that participants will need clarifications over where AI outperforms humans and where the existing risks have been deemed essential.
 - Members agreed that the broader context of AI ownership and development should be transparently communicated.
 - Members noted that AI could reshape public interactions with the police. The implications for the social contract in policing should be explored.
 - Members discussed AI's potential to monitor police conduct, framing it as an accountability tool. Questions could be posed from both the perspectives of being policed and being protected.
 - Members raised concerns about bias, particularly toward over-policed communities, such as ethnic minorities. Data transparency could help challenge stereotypes, for example, countering misconceptions about immigrants' crime rates. Young people were also identified as a key group, given their familiarity with AI-driven technologies.
- After smaller group discussions, the group reconvened in plenary and shared feedback:
 - Members noted practical questions about how AI may change the nature of interacting with police, but also what will this mean for the social contract involved in policing. Members feel the following questions should be considered in the design stage:
 - What is the available redress if AI has made the wrong decision?
 - How do we ground the dialogue not only in these abstract technologies, but in what is happening now?
 - What role does AI have in monitoring policing generally, as opposed to monitoring communities?

- What are the perspectives from which people are answering these questions? (e.g. would there be a difference in the case of them being policed versus being protected?)
- Members noted the need to ensure discussions are rooted in the use cases, rather than the abstract, in order to explore how AI can be used as a force for good. This will be essential to building trust. There is also a need to outline the potential harms, differentially to different groups within the population, and what impact does this have for guardrails and constraints.
- Members discussed the potential for AI to be used as an accountability tool for the police (e.g. to prepare datasets).
- Members noted that the key differentiator is the balance of power: while wanting the research to be focused on AI, it also needs to understand the context of AI in wider power structures. Members noted the need to explore how AI can play a role in police meeting society's needs. Members noted that the aim should be for AI to serve communities, rather than to exercise punitive powers more efficiently.
- Home Office noted the important point that human systems are not infallible. Home Office noted it will be important to explore whether the public would have differing views if they knew the relative accuracy of experts working alone compared to working with the help of AI.

Item 5: AOB

- No AOB was raised by members.
- Chair concluded the meeting.