



**POLICING  
RESEARCH  
PARTNERSHIP**

**Police Priority Grants  
2026 Call  
Guidance**

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# Introduction to the N8 PRP Policing Priority Grants

## Purpose of the Police Priority Grants

The Policing Priority Grants are research awards providing pump-priming funds for collaborative, targeted research into high-priority areas, new challenges, and pressing concerns in policing.

Proposals are invited for research projects which **address EITHER** one of the **N8 PRP Police Research Priorities for 2025/26** (next page) **OR** on a different **topic identified by the researcher**.

This is a seedcorn fund intended to enable N8 researchers to develop ideas, preliminary evidence and collaborative relationships with police stakeholders, so they can bid for external funding awards. The grants are also intended to be of mutual benefit to police stakeholders, especially those in the N8 PRP, in terms of potential changes to policy, practice and its impact on wider society.

## Funding Available

The total value of the fund for applications in 2026 is £86,890. It is expected this will fund 3 projects. Projects will start in August 2026 for 12 months. This is likely to be the final round of Police Priority Grants in this funding cycle of the N8 PRP.

## Summary of Award Requirements

Projects must have a principal investigator and/or a co-investigator who both hold an academic post at an N8 university and must be in collaboration with two N8 PRP police partners.

Police Priority Grants will not fund projects that are a continuation of, or very similar to, previous N8 PRP awards. Applicants are asked to review [previous N8 PRP projects](#) before developing their proposal to ensure this criteria is met.

In this final year of the PPG scheme, whilst we welcome all applications in accordance with the eligibility criteria, we will prioritise researchers who have not previously received N8 PRP funding.

## Developing a proposal

Applicants should discuss and develop possible research projects with N8 PRP police partners and their agreement to support the project should be agreed in advance of submission.

Applications are particularly invited on topics related to the N8 PRP Police Research Priorities for 2025/26 (next page). There is no requirement for applications to cover all the suggested questions raised under each priority.

Applicants are also invited to submit proposals that are not covered by the Priorities. This is to encourage innovation and open dialogue between policing and academia.

If you do not have a police partner to work with, you may contact the [N8 PRP Academic Lead](#) at your university, one of the [Police SPOCs](#), or the N8 PRP project manager, [Helen Gordon-Smith](#).

Please read the Guidance in full before developing an application.

# N8 PRP Police Research Priorities 2025/2026

From October 2024-September 2027, N8 Policing Research Partnership (N8 PRP) activity will be informed by an annual Statement of Research Priorities for N8 PRP activity identified by the N8 PRP Policing Partners and agreed by the N8 PRP Steering Group. Co-ordinated communication from police partners on their priorities for N8 PRP-supported activity will enable more effective use of existing and ongoing research, and prompt innovative, socially significant research that would not otherwise have been generated or prioritised.

## 1. Investigations and Outcomes

In 2025, HMICFRS published '[An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime](#)', with 11 recommendations to help forces improve the standard of their crime investigations and achieve better outcomes for victims. In the [2023-25 PEEL Assessments](#), 'Investigating crime' emerged as a key area for improvement. Proposals are sought in response to this call for improvement.

- What does a 'good' investigation look like and a 'good' outcome for victims and the wider community?
- What are the benefits of having omni-competent vs. specialist investigator roles? Do omni-competent or specialist teams improve investigation outcomes? What is the right balance and what is the impact on workforce development and skills?
- What makes for a 'good' investigator? How should response officers understand their investigative role? What are the relative roles and advantages of police vs. civilian investigators vs. direct entry investigators?
- What makes for 'good' interview practice with suspects, victims and witnesses?

## 2. VAWG and Domestic abuse: Demand and Victimisation

Violence Against Women and Girls has been called a '[national emergency](#)' by the NPCC and College of Policing, accounting for 20% of all recorded crime 2022/2023, while 1 in 6 murders related to domestic abuse, and incident reports are increasing in number and complexity. In 2025, the government has announced a new strategy to [halve VAWG in 10 years](#) (publication due autumn 2025). This is a vast and complex topic with significant existing literature; proposals are sought focusing on specific types of crime within VAWG and Domestic Abuse that examine the following:

- Demand: Understanding the rise in recorded domestic abuse and VAWG incidents - is this a product of increased crime or changes in reporting behaviour? Over what time period has this increase occurred? Is this a sustained increase pre- during and post the COVID pandemic?
- Case continuation: How does the reporting and investigation process impact victims? What is the relevance of initial contact with the police and the recording of these interactions? What are the reasons for victims continuing or not with the criminal justice process and, in particular, for Outcome 16 i.e. cases when a suspect has been identified but the victim does not support further police action.
- Victim satisfaction: To what extent are victims satisfied with their experiences of the police and the outcome of their case?

## 3. Workforce: How can police officer workloads be managed effectively?

There has long been a challenge in understanding the nature of police workloads and how to ensure they are manageable, from the number of crimes to incidents attended, suspects arrested, detained and

investigated. Proposals are sought that focus on specific areas of police business (e.g. response, neighbourhood policing, custody, investigation) that investigate the following:

- How can policing understand better the links between workload, officer wellbeing, retention and effectiveness, efficiency and supervision?
  - Understanding the impact of higher proportions of early-in-service officers in the workforce
- Understanding police officer workloads
  - How can policing better use data to improve understanding and practice?
  - Do officers think current data accurately captures their workload?

#### **4. Neighbourhood Policing: Understanding neighbourhood and hotspot policing**

The UK Government has launched a National Neighbourhood Policing Programme, including a [Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee](#) and in January announcing [£200 million funding](#) for neighbourhood policing. These developments raise questions for the relevance and role of [Hotspot Policing](#). In 2023, a [Home Office Evaluation](#) found that Hotspot Policing required commitment to building the right analytical and technological capability to implement successfully. Within this context, proposals are sought to investigate how neighbourhood policing is understood and examine the role of Hotspot Policing in the future of neighbourhood policing.

- How relevant is the practice of Hot Spot Policing today?
- How can analytics and data improve the practice of hot spot policing and be applied to increase public confidence and reduce crime?
- How can hotspot policing be translated into practice in the UK context and in specific police force areas, taking into account the conclusions and recommendations in the 2023 Home Office evaluation and the neighbourhood policing uplift programme?
- How have definitions and applications of neighbourhood policing shifted since 2005 and its role and value relative to other policing functions?

#### **5. Policing and Health**

The police and healthcare providers have long worked in partnership with each other, given the vulnerable nature of those they encounter in their everyday interactions. Proposals are sought on the following topics:

- Healthcare in police custody, including Health Care Professionals and Liaison & Diversion teams
- Police responses to mental health, including 'Right Care, Right Person'
- Drugs policing, drug diversion and harm reduction
- Suicide prevention and policing
- Violence reduction units
- Policing and public health
- Officer wellbeing
- Inter-agency relationships between the police and health professionals

#### **6. Open Category**

The N8 PRP Police Priorities are intended to support policing research and are not considered in any way exhaustive. Proposals that meet the Police Priority Grant criteria are welcome on topics beyond the 5 priorities listed above.

## 2026 Awards

An overview of funding, duration, requirements, deliverables, IP arrangements, and award schedule.

### Funding Available

The total value of the fund is £86,890. It is expected this will fund 3 projects.

Funding will be awarded at 100% of eligible costs. The grant-holding institution **must** retain control of the budget and will be responsible for submitting a final expenditure report to N8 PRP.

### Eligible Costs

- Academic staff costs at N8 institutions only.
- Directly Incurred costs.

### Award Duration

Projects will start 1 August 2026 for 12 months.

### Deliverables

#### Final report

A summary report, which will be publicly available on the N8 PRP website. This will act as a briefing of the project and its key findings for non-academic readers.

#### Webinar

Researchers will present a webinar following the completion of the project. This will be arranged, organised, and promoted through N8 PRP.

#### Project-specific

The Award Letter will identify deliverables that have been outlined in the proposal. They are not a condition of funding and can be changed with approval of N8 PRP.

### Intellectual Property

Authors retain Intellectual Property rights. N8 PRP has the right to publish, share, and use the 4-page summary report.

### Award Schedule

Invoices will be paid in full on approval of the Final report and expenditure statement at 12 months.

## 2026 Call

Applications led by an academic at one of the N8 Universities, in collaboration with two N8 PRP police partners, on either one of the 2025/26 Police Research Priorities or an open application, are invited for submission by 7 April 2026.

### Timeline

16 Feb 2026 **Call Open**

30 April 2026 **Deadline for applications**

w/b 18 May 2026 **Funding Decision**

1 August 2026 **Projects Start**

### Eligibility

The Principal Investigator and at least one Co-Investigator must hold an academic post at an N8 university for the duration of the project.

A Co-Investigator with an academic post at an N8 university is required to mitigate against the risk of project non-delivery given the time-limited nature of N8 PRP funding.

Additional parties who are not part of N8 PRP can contribute as Co-Investigators or Research Partners as an in-kind contribution.

Researchers who have not previously received N8 PRP funding will be prioritised.

Early Career Researchers are encouraged to apply.

### Award Requirements

#### N8 PRP Police Partners

Proposals must include a minimum of two N8 PRP police partners as research partners. The inclusion of data from both partners is encouraged, to increase the applicability and impact of the project. However, if sufficient data is available from one police partner and other sources, a second N8 PRP partner must still be included in an advisory role to support the development and delivery of the project.

If you do not have a police partner to collaborate with on the bid, you can contact the N8 PRP Academic Lead at your university, one of the Police SPOCs, or the N8 PRP project manager, Helen Gordon-Smith.

#### Research Topics and Non-Duplication of previous N8 PRP Grants

Applications are invited EITHER on one of the priorities listed in the N8 PRP Police Research Priorities Statement (see p.4-5) OR on a topic identified by the researcher. Applicants should discuss and develop possible research projects with N8 PRP police partners.

Police Priority Grants will not fund projects that are a continuation of, or very similar to, previous N8 PRP awards. Applicants are asked to review previous N8 PRP projects before developing their proposal to ensure this criteria is met.

### Selection Criteria

All applications must meet the Award Requirements to be considered for funding.

1. Intellectual Rigour, Originality, and Significance;
2. Feasibility;

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- 3. Potential for significant impact on police policy and practice, with attention to breadth and longevity (i.e. beyond the research partner/s)
- 4. Potential for academic development - i.e. how the investment will lead to external funding;
- 5. Collaborative approach to research, including a good level of cross-police collaboration.

## **Funding Decision**

Applications will be reviewed by a working group selected from the N8 PRP Steering Group, adjusted to account for conflict of interest (see below). A recommendation will then be made to the Steering Group who will make the final funding decision.

Proposals will be anonymised and the working group will score the proposals according to the selection criteria.

Brief qualitative feedback will be provided to unsuccessful proposals on request.

### **Conflict of interest**

The working group will be selected following the application deadline to ensure there is no conflict of interest. If a Steering Group member, a close colleague (i.e. line manager), or close relative, is an investigator on an application, that will be considered a conflict of interest, and the relevant Steering Group member will be recused from participation in the working group.

N.b. Submission of an application by a member of the same organisation does not in itself constitute a conflict of interest.

## **How to Apply**

Applications should be sent to Helen Gordon-Smith by the deadline, using the form below. Applications will be reviewed by a working group of the N8 PRP Steering Group, and a final funding decision will be made by the N8 PRP Steering Group in May 2026.

# Application Form Guidance

## Application Form

<https://www.n8prp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/315/2025/10/Policing-Priority-Grants-Application-Form-2025.docx>

## Application Overview

The application form is a summary of the proposed project which will be the basis of the funding decision. It comprises the project summary, academic and practical significance and pathways to impact, project plan, supporting context, and costs. Guidance for each section is below.

## Formatting Requirements

Complete the application in single spaced size 11 Calibri (Body) font.

Please adhere to the word count limit for each text box. Text within images must be legible.

## Section One: Project Summary

### Project Title

### Investigators

List the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators on the project. The Principal Investigator and at least one Co-Investigator must be from an N8 University.

### Research Partners

List the non-academic research partners on the project. I.e. individuals or organisations who have committed to making a specific contribution to the project, such as data or facilitating finding interviewees.

### Letters of Support

All research partners must commit to undertaking all reasonable efforts within the scope of their contribution to ensure successful delivery of the project.

N8 PRP police partners are expected to provide additional commitment to supporting and recording the impact of the project, by:

- Ensuring findings and recommendations are presented to those in relevant leadership positions;
- Reporting on the impact of the project at the force through the force's N8 PRP lead;
- Where practical and required, participating in dissemination and impact activities.
- A Letter of Support is required per research partner organisation, including N8 PRP partners. This must be signed and dated on headed paper and outline the commitment to the project.

### Letter of Support Template

<https://www.n8prp.org.uk/policing-priority-grant-letter-of-support-template/>

## Which Police Research Priority does this project address?

Identify the relevant [N8 PRP Policing Research Priority](#) your project addresses and briefly outline how your project addresses it. If your project addresses a topic not covered by the N8 PRP Policing Research Priorities, briefly outline why this is a relevant and timely topic for a Policing Priority Grant (e.g. how it aligns with other regional and national police priorities).

## Project Summary and Aims

Give a brief outline of the project and project aims.

## Section Two: Significance and Pathways to Impact

### Academic significance

Applicants should briefly outline the theoretical foundations and significance of the project, demonstrating intellectual rigour, originality, and significance. References can be attached as an appendix.

Applicants should also outline why the project is an appropriate use of Small Grant funds – i.e. how internal investment will enable the research team to apply for subsequent funding, and what this will contribute to the wider field of policing research.

### Practical significance

This section should outline the potential for impact on policy and practice. Applications will be judged by the *significance* of the impact, potential for development, and the strength of the pathways to impact, not immediate geographical reach.

#### **Practical** impact can be:

- Conceptual – changing how a topic is thought about;
- Educational – changes to training;
- Evidential – addresses a gap in knowledge;
- Developmental – trialling existing ideas in new contexts;
- Procedural – changes to processes like record-keeping;
- Other – this is not an exhaustive list; if your application has the potential for another kind of practical impact, please include it.

**Significant** practical impact is change which results in improved outcomes and/or understanding. There should be clear pathways for impact reach beyond the research partner(s).

### Pathways to impact

Pathways to impact should show how project-specific deliverables and strategy for collaboration will enable the impact to be achieved.

Academic pathways can include publications, conference papers, funding bids, etc.

Applicants are encouraged to be as specific as possible (e.g. ‘develop a 3-year ESRC Major Research Grant application’, rather than ‘bid for funding’).

### Example of a Pathway to Impact

A project has practical significance for procedure -> the report will recommend changes to current procedures -> these will be presented to relevant decision-makers (as identified by research partners) with a plan for implementation.

## Section Three: Project Plan

### Methodology and Deliverables

Deliverables should be project-specific; the Final Report and Webinar (p.2) should **not** be included.

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## Strategy for Collaboration and Research Co-Production

N8 PRP Small Grants Award supports collaborative projects. Please consider how your research partners will be included in the project, from design and delivery to dissemination and pathways to impact.

Please also consider the breadth of collaboration. Applicants are encouraged to establish Advisory Groups for the project (see below), and proposals that collaborate across N8 universities are encouraged.

### Timeline

A table or chart e.g. a Gantt chart may be inserted, within the allocated space. Text is included in formatting requirements.

## Section 4: Supporting Context

### *Feasibility*

When considering the feasibility of the project design, please consider that the Grant Holder (Principal Investigator) will be responsible for arranging data sharing agreements, ethical approval, participant recruitment, and adherence to all associated policies as per the rules of their institution.

### *Data Sharing Agreements*

It is not possible for N8 PRP to provide template agreements e.g. for Collaboration Agreements, Data Processing Contracts, DPIAs, Memorandums of Understanding etc. Applicants should discuss the necessity of any data sharing with research partners as early as possible in the development process and how this process will work in their respective institutions. Up to 6 months project set-up time is given on award to allow any data sharing arrangements to be completed in advance of the project start.

### *Contingency Plans*

Innovative projects may include aims or strategies that are at relatively high risk of failure. Applicants should show how they intend to mitigate these risks/respond to undesired outcomes so the project will still create practical and academic value.

## Costs

Funding will be awarded at 100% of eligible costs.

The grant-holding institution **must** retain control of the budget and will be responsible for submitting a final expenditure report to N8 PRP.

### *Eligible Costs*

- Academic staff costs at N8 institutions only.
- Directly Incurred costs. This covers:
  - Directly incurred staff costs
  - Travel and subsistence
  - Consumables
  - Payments to project partners

Directly incurred staff **must** be employed by the grant-holding institution.

### *Ineligible Costs*

- Overheads
- Staff costs at non-N8 universities
- N8 PRP police partner contributions (these can be listed as in-kind-contributions)