



## **Developing and implementing sustainable approaches to reduce demand for police and public services**

**Supervisors:** [Dr. Paul Walley](#), [Dr. Emma Williams](#) and [Dr. Elke Loeffler](#), Department of Policing, The Open University Business School

### **Project Description**

This proposed Ph.D. project aims to advance current theory and practice around the development and implementation of demand reduction approaches in policing and other related public services. These approaches seek to simultaneously reduce the demand for resources to meet demand whilst maintaining the public value and provision of services where demand from the public comes in. Some public services, such as fire services, have successfully reduced demand through changes in practice and the influence of public behaviour. There has been similar work in health and social care. Police forces also need to find ways in which demand can be reduced without compromising the value or quality of the service when it is required. Some of this work can be conducted in partnership with other public services and voluntary organisations. This project seeks to identify opportunities for demand reduction and find working solutions that can be implemented to reduce resource requirements.

### **Theoretical perspective/field**

We are open to theoretical frameworks drawing on a range of theories. Internationally comparative research is also welcome. The dissertation project may draw on public value concepts (Hartley et al. 2017), collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008), place-based policies (Lyons 2007), demand management (Walley and Jennison-Phillips, 2018; Morris and Walley, 2022) and whole system resilience (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2023). We encourage the development of theories of change and evaluations which can help to demonstrate the impact of prevention approaches on service demand (particularly policing) and public value.

### **Potential for theoretical contribution**

Applicants can produce proposals that focus on one or more of the following sets of questions about demand reduction. There is considerable scope for the candidate to steer the project towards a topic they would like to study within these parameters:

- **Demand management** – how can prevention approaches be designed and implemented in such a way as to reduce the original demand (primary demand reduction), the resource requirements when demand occurs (secondary demand reduction) and impact on repeat demand (tertiary demand reduction)?
- **Collaborative governance** – how do partnerships tap into the synergies which are potentially available to public service organisations by harnessing underused resources in partner organisations?
- **Place-based policy** – current academic research is polarised between research traditions emphasising the need for nationally standardised approaches and research traditions which emphasise the need for locally-relevant prevention approaches. Research is needed which seeks to reconcile these two traditions.
- **Resilience** – how can we strengthen the resilience of service users, communities, organisations (including providers) and the environment? This will involve developing frameworks and strategies for ‘crisis avoidance’ and ‘anti-crisis preparation’ across whole systems.

### **Impact**

CPRL puts a strong focus on achieving and evidencing research impact in conjunction with the 20 or more police forces that are members of the Centre. The Ph.D. candidate will be able to negotiate access to member police forces in order to shape the research design, which will enable mutual learning and dissemination of effective prevention approaches.

The research will therefore have a practical element in identifying opportunities and approaches for demand reduction/prevention that are understandable and implementable in a policing context. Knowledge Exchange and dissemination will form part of the overall task.

### **Proposed methodology**

There is considerable scope to choose a methodology appropriate to the aims of the work. We welcome proposals that include quantitative, qualitative and/or mixed methodology approaches, depending on the specific research questions. In particular, we encourage (and provide guidance on) co-produced research, which involves citizens with lived experience. This methodology is innovative and still being refined and therefore requires further testing in FBL

### **About the Supervisors:**

Dr. Paul Walley’s research interests are: Demand management, improvement science, public sector operations management

Dr. Emma Williams’ research interests are: Police legitimacy, organisational justice, police professionalism and learning/development, public health and law enforcement

Dr. Elke Loeffler's research interests are: Prevention, user and community co-production of public services, inter-organisational partnership working, evaluation of public value, user, community and market resilience.

**Indicative reading:**

Ansell, C. and Gash, A. (2008), Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice

*Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18:4, 543–571,  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum032>.

Lyons, M. (2007), *Lyons Inquiry into Local Government. Place-shaping: a shared ambition for the future of local government*,  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/243601/9780119898545.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243601/9780119898545.pdf).

Bovaird, T. and Loeffler, E. (2023), Managing risk and resilience in the public domain, in: *Public Management and Governance* (ed. By Bovaird, T. and Loeffler, E.), 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Routledge: London and New York, pp. 315-328.

Morris, G. & Walley, P. (2022) Implementing failure demand reduction as part of a demand management strategy, *Public Money & Management*, 42:1, 22-31.

Walley, P. and Jennison-Phillips, A., "A Study of Non-Urgent Demand to Identify Opportunities for Demand Reduction", *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, pay034,  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pay034>.