

September 2026

AI in Policing Dialogue 2026

Final report

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Foreword

The service offered by policing thrives when it enjoys trust from communities, when people know that the police are fair and there to assist. Take away that legitimacy and people don't offer their support, they don't call and they sometimes think there is a hidden agenda. I am convinced that one of the ways to build that trust is involving people in the conversations and decisions we are making.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already changing how policing works. It can assist with translation and transcription, it can search through large sets of data and join up the dots, it can classify child abuse images or help understand where to look in hours' worth of CCTV. It can also initially answer non-emergency calls.

I think the public expect policing to use AI responsibly so that we offer a better service, but as new ways of operating begin to emerge it is hugely important that we have those conversations with communities about what we are doing, how we are doing it and where we go next.

That is what this report set out to do. It asked 98 members of the public across Manchester, Norwich and Swansea to work through three live and near-term hypothetical use cases; online crime reporting, 101/999 call handling, and CCTV-based crime detection. It explored in their own words (and after proper deliberation) where expectations sit.

The findings are a useful corrective to anyone tempted to let technical capability set the pace of adoption. Participants were not anti-AI. They were pragmatic about resourcing pressures and open to AI reducing administrative burden and improving response times. But their support was conditional. There needed to be public benefit, with human judgement remaining central, especially when important decisions were being made. It was also clear that accountability and transparency are important; humans must always be accountable for how they deploy AI and use its outputs.

It is reassuring that much of our work in creating a national registry and responsible AI framework sit squarely in the place the public think we should be. Second, it is a reminder that safe and acceptable are not the same thing: a system can pass technical and legal safeguards and still fail the public confidence test if it removes the human at the point that matters most. This is especially so in cases, like 999 calls, where the public rightly expect to speak directly to a trained, empathetic human.

We are publishing this report in full because of the value of public dialogue. It should inform how forces, the Home Office and PoliceAI itself think about deployment decisions from here on.

Alex Murray OBE

Interim Director: PoliceAI

1. Executive Summary

Objectives of this dialogue

The government view is that artificial intelligence (AI) has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing and deliver better public safety outcomes for local communities¹. It can help officers handle large volumes of information, speed up investigations and reduce time spent on administrative tasks, freeing up resources for neighbourhood policing and engagement with victims and witnesses. The government estimates that AI could save at least 6 million hours of police time each year by 2028-29, helping officers spend more time on frontline duties, supporting victims and investigating crime.

However, the government also recognises that the use of AI by the police requires the consent of the public. Where police forces use AI, it must be deployed responsibly. Deployments should be lawful, ethical and transparent, and based on robust assessment of algorithmic accuracy and bias before use. It should be clear who is accountable for the performance of an AI system and how its outputs are used by police personnel. Clear operating procedures should also set out what appropriate use looks like. These principles are critical to building and maintaining public consent for the use of AI in policing.

Public perspectives are therefore central to decisions about the future use of AI-assisted decision-making. This dialogue was commissioned by the Home Office and the new National Centre for AI in Policing (PoliceAI), in partnership with UKRI. The aim was to understand public views on police use of AI in crime reporting and detection. It recognises that public acceptance is an important consideration alongside technological capability, operational effectiveness and legal compliance.

Key to this dialogue was to test to what extent the public are content for human involvement to be reduced or removed from police decision making with regard to a series of use cases². This was to gauge where human oversight must remain central, and what safeguards and accountability arrangements are expected. The specific objectives of the dialogue were to:

- Deepen understanding of public acceptability of the potential for AI systems auto-detecting and reporting crime, and the extent of human involvement expected;
- Understand the risks, concerns, and trade-offs the public consider when assessing acceptability of AI-assisted decision-making use cases within a policing context;
- Capture public views on the safeguards, governance structures, monitoring and accountability mechanisms that the public want to see in place for AI-assisted decision-making within policing; and

¹ [Police use of artificial intelligence \(AI\): factsheet \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

² Some hypothetical and not currently deployed by the police. One has subsequently been deployed. Further details in Table 1.

- Develop principles to best inform practice, guidance and policymaking on how and when AI-assisted decision-making plays a part in crime reporting and detection.

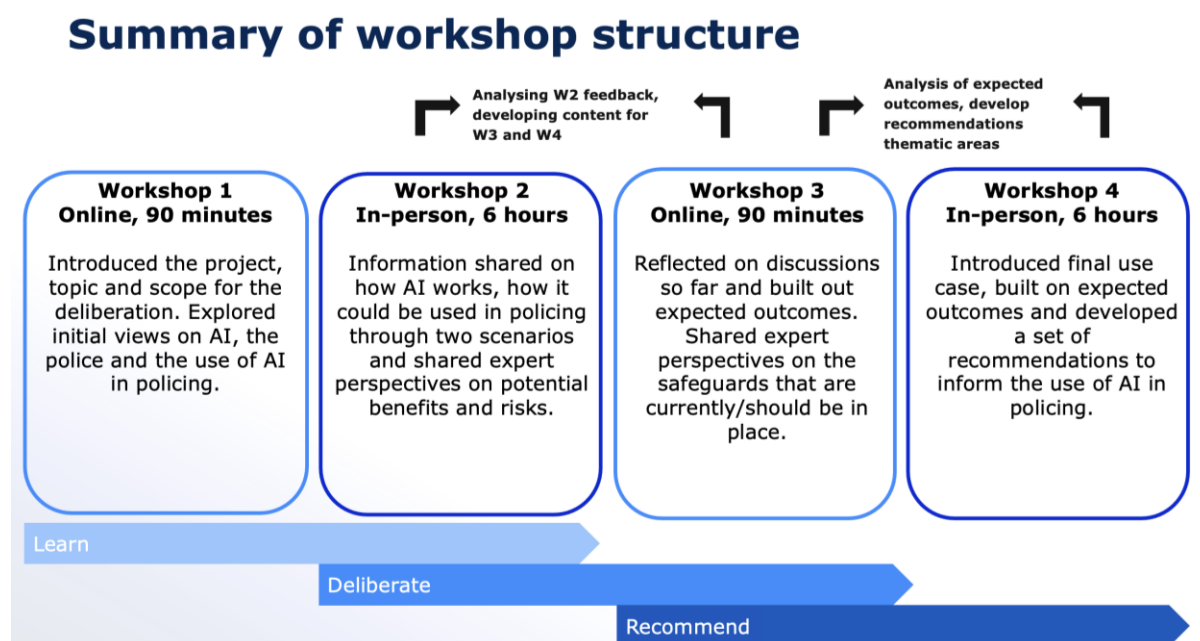
The findings provide an important evidence base for those working on AI in policing. They will help inform policy, guidance and decisions about the development, testing and adoption of AI tools, particularly in more sensitive or publicly visible areas of policing. PoliceAI will use this evidence to support forces to adopt AI rapidly but responsibly and to provide Chief Officers with stronger evidence to inform procurement and deployment decisions. The findings will also help identify areas where further engagement may be needed as the technology and its uses continue to develop.

Method and approach

This dialogue engaged 98 members of the public across four workshops in total: two online workshops and two in-person workshops each in three locations (Swansea, Manchester and Norwich). The sampling approach was designed to deliver breadth and diversity within a group broadly reflective of, rather than strictly representative of, the general public in terms of demographics and attitudes.

This research used a deliberative public dialogue approach as this is a well-established method for exploring attitudes to complex or contentious issues where the public have limited familiarity with the topic, as with upstream technology. Fieldwork took place over a five-week period in June – July 2026. An overview of the approach can be seen below:

Figure 1: Overview of workshop format and content



Starting viewpoints: Participant perceptions on the police

Across participants in the dialogue, there was strong recognition of the challenges faced by the police including staffing and resourcing. Alongside this however, mistrust of police was highly evident, particularly among young people. Further demographic differences could be seen between men and women, with the latter often displaying a greater level of mistrust in police conduct³, and in ethnic minorities, who were more likely to report experiences of discrimination. This mistrust was predominately shaped by two key drivers: high-profile examples of police misconduct⁴ and negative personal interactions with police. This ranged from feeling let down, disappointed and unsupported by the police, to feeling discriminated against⁵.

Across initial discussions, five factors emerged as being key in driving or breaking trust towards the police:

- **Fairness and consistency:** Evidence of the law being applied to everyone in society equally.
- **Integrity:** The police upholding moral standards and the law in a professional manner.

³ Fuelled by the Sarah Everard (2021) case.

⁴ Such as the Henry Nowak (2025) and Sarah Everard (2021) cases.

⁵ Participants were recruited according to quotas based on their levels of trust in policing to get a range of different views.

- **Positive communication:** Members of the public feeling listened to and taken seriously, with appropriate communication.
- **Visibility:** More visible policing to drive confidence that crime is being deterred and/or addressed in their community, often described as a need for more 'community' policing.
- **Effectiveness:** Police responding to and acting on crime efficiently and effectively.

Participants frequently used these factors as tests to determine the acceptability of AI-assisted decision-making in different potential use cases and scenarios.

Starting viewpoints: AI in policing

AI usage across society has increased since prior research on the topic in Spring 2025⁶. Greater familiarity has not alleviated uncertainty, however, as many pre-existing concerns remain, and for some, direct experience has led to greater concerns around accuracy.

Participants generally see increased use of AI as inevitable, and as such, lay out a series of hopes (however cautious) for AI-assisted decision-making in policing:

- **Quicker response times:** AI usage could help police to always be available to the public when contacting them and/or reporting a crime, leading to reduced waiting times both in emergency and non-emergency situations.
- **Greater police presence:** AI usage could reduce the amount of time officers spend on administrative or logistical tasks, freeing them up to spend more time in communities, directly addressing crime and causes of crime.
- **Better working conditions:** AI usage could help reduce the high workloads of police, subsequently helping to reduce stress and improve morale.

While there was optimism that AI could lead to better outcomes, participants also had the following concerns:

- **Loss of human contact:** Concern that AI could replace key touchpoints for members of the public interacting with a human (i.e. officer or law enforcement staff). This was deemed important particularly in high-stress situations or if the person was vulnerable.
- **Bias and discrimination:** The quality and type of data AI would be trained on, and whether this could lead to unjustifiably biased decisions and discrimination.
- **Accuracy:** Whether the AI would be accurate enough to assist officers and law enforcement staff to make decisions that might have serious consequences.
- **Overreliance:** If usage could lead to overreliance on technology, subsequently leading to deskilling and job losses.

⁶ Thinks, Sciencewise, UK Home Office 'AI in Policing: A public dialogue' April 2025

- **Lack of clarity on accountability:** Who would be held responsible in the case of a problem or error - the AI system or human being involved, i.e. officer or law enforcement staff.
- **Increased surveillance:** Whether use of AI to monitor either online or real-world behaviour would increase the level of surveillance of the population, with knock-on effects for freedom of speech.

Responses to AI-assisted decision-making use cases: Key themes

During the workshops, participants were introduced to three use cases of AI in police crime reporting and detection, some of which are hypothetical and not currently deployed by the police, and they explored three different scenarios within each use case, shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Use cases and scenarios tested in the dialogue

Use case	Scenario a	Scenario b	Scenario c
1. Reporting a crime online <i>Introduced in Workshop 2</i>	1a) Current process Online form which is reviewed by police	1b) AI-assisted online crime reporting AI chatbot gathers information which is then reviewed by a human ⁷	1c) Online crime detection (Hypothetical) AI is used to analyse publicly available online content to identify potential crimes, threats or vulnerable people and flag cases review
2. Prioritising 101/999 calls <i>Introduced in Workshop 2</i>	2a) Current process Human response, using the T.H.R.I.V.E framework ⁸	2b) AI-assisted call handling – 101 AI used to provide call handler with prompts – 101 non-emergency calls only	2c) AI triaging 101 calls (now current process as of Aug 2026)⁹ AI used as first point of contact for callers, assessing urgency and triaging accordingly

⁷ While not the same process as 1b, it is worth noting that Thames Valley Police are trialling 'Bobbi', an optional AI virtual assistant that answers common non-emergency police-related questions, gives advice or signposts people to the right service, with human operators taking over where needed (e.g if the AI detects an emergency situation) or desired by the user. It is not a replacement for 999 or a full crime reporting route.

⁸ Threat: What is the threat? Is it ongoing? Harm: What is the extent of the harm? What is the impact of it on a certain individual/group? Risk: What is the likelihood of threat and risk? What may be the impact of the police not attending? Investigation: What evidence or investigative opportunities are there? Vulnerability: Is there a vulnerable person involved? Engagement: What might be the impact on public trust and confidence if the police does not attend? Are there any signposting opportunities?

⁹ Scenario 2c is currently in use by police forces across England and Wales as of August 2026. This was not the case when fieldwork took place. [AI to slash 101 wait times and free vital police time - GOV.UK](#)

		AI-assisted call handling – 999 This scenario was lightly tested with participants during workshop 2 but was not a focus	AI triaging 999 calls (Hypothetical) This scenario was also tested with participants but there are no current plans to implement this technology in this context
3. CCTV footage crime detection <i>Introduced in Workshop 4</i>	3a) Current process Member of public, CCTV camera operator or police officer detects and reports crime	3b) AI-assisted CCTV cameras (under trial) CCTV monitors predefined, observable traffic offences, and AI flags a potential infraction for review ¹⁰	3c) Behaviour monitoring (Hypothetical) AI enabled CCTV cameras analyse patterns of behaviour, and flags activity that may indicate potential criminal activity or harm

While discussing these use cases a number of common themes emerged:

- **Fairness, integrity and consistency:** How AI influences the fairness, consistency and integrity of police decision making. This includes its potential to reduce or reinforce bias and its impact on confidence in the integrity of policing.
- **Effective policing:** Whether a particular use of AI is perceived to improve policing outcomes, including efficiency, responsiveness, accuracy, victim experience and use of police resources.
- **Meaningful human involvement:** The role humans should play in policing, focusing on where human judgement, empathy and discretion remain essential.
- **Proportionality, accountability and transparency:** The governance and safeguards needed to support public confidence in AI, including appropriate use, clear accountability, transparency, oversight and opportunities to challenge decisions.
- **Privacy and civil liberties:** How AI may affect privacy, surveillance and fundamental rights. This includes where boundaries should be drawn to protect freedoms such as privacy, freedom of expression and protection from unnecessary monitoring.

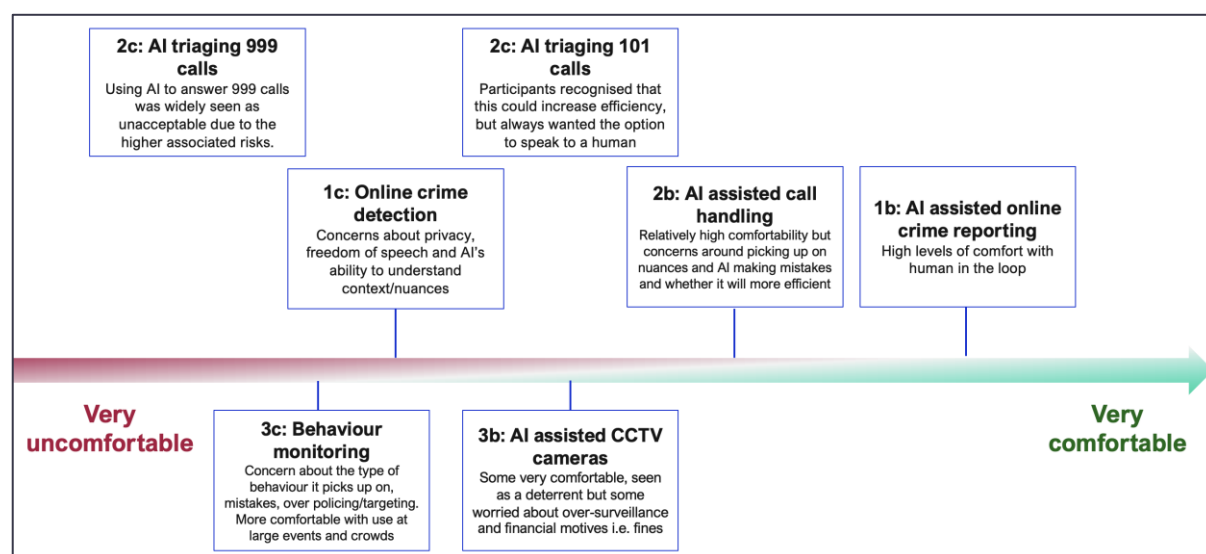
¹⁰ Sussex Police are using AI road safety cameras to help detect drivers using mobile phones or not wearing seatbelts. The AI flags potential traffic offences, which are then reviewed by humans before action is taken. <https://www.sussex.police.uk/police-forces/sussex-police/areas/au/about-us/road-safety/road-safety-...>

- **Data protection:** How data should be collected, used, stored and governed. This includes data quality, security, ownership, retention and compliance with data protection standards.

Responses to AI-assisted decision-making use cases: Deep dive

After exploring the individual use cases and scenarios, participants were asked to rank each on an acceptability scale. An approximate summary¹¹ is shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: How participants ranked the six potential uses of AI-assisted decision-making



The use cases that received the most support were those where participants could see clear purpose and public benefit, where they felt a meaningful level of human involvement remained and where this was seen as proportionate to the potential risks involved in each use case.

Use cases tended to feel less acceptable when participants felt that human judgement or empathy were lost, or where they felt increased AI involvement could negatively impact rights and privacy. These concerns were raised more specifically regarding the hypothetical scenarios 1c and 3c, which involved behaviour monitoring. Participants were most worried about increased monitoring that would result in self-censorship or unintended negative consequences for certain groups or communities. However, this view was not universal, with some female participants expressing how the increase in the monitoring of physical spaces in scenarios 3b and 3c would make them feel safer. Clear redlines were drawn around AI prioritisation of 999 call (a hypothetical example discussed in

¹¹ This was not designed as a quantitative exercise, but as a physical exercise that acted as a 'temperature check' to stimulate subsequent discussion.

relation to Scenario 2c¹²) and the idea of monitoring behaviour, as discussed in hypothetical Scenario 3c.

Conversations on use cases also revealed an interesting set of tensions regarding the practical application of AI. On one hand, there was caution about using AI on more serious, complex and violent crimes. Here, participants argued that such cases should exclusively be managed by a human, to ensure no errors or mistakes due to AI. Conversely however, there was a view that such cases were likely where there was more to be gained in terms of improving efficiency, given they were deemed to be more important to resolve, and assumed to be more resource heavy, and so effective use of AI could be of more benefit here vs low-level crimes.

On the surface participants were more accepting of AI use for what they saw as low-level crime, such as minor traffic violations. Here they felt more comfortable due to the perceived lower level of risk should an error be made. However, several concerns were also highlighted in this application. First, a question of whether AI usage in such scenarios is disproportionate to gains; i.e. are the potential trade-offs/risks associated with AI justified for such cases? Furthermore, some participants had concerns that the police may be financially motivated to increase punishment of such demeanours (in the form of fines), and that focus on such offences could take resources away from serious crime, which was deemed more important to address. Ultimately, participants felt AI application should be considered on a case-by-case basis, dependent on exactly which tasks it is used for and how.

Participant recommendations

At the end of the dialogue, participants developed a series of recommendations for the Home Office, PoliceAI and police forces on the use of AI-assisted decision-making in crime reporting and detection. These were:

1: Human oversight and accountability

Recommendations focused on the baseline conditions for using AI, including a clear public benefit and appropriate human involvement. This means:

- There should be a clear rationale and scope for deploying AI, with well-defined public benefit.
- The aim of AI deployment should be to support rather than replace police judgement and oversight and its deployment should be proportionate to the risks involved.
- People should have a clear route to speak to an officer or staff member.
- An officer or staff member (i.e. trained human call handler) should remain the primary point of contact and decision-maker in emergency situations.

¹² Scenario 2c: AI triaging 101/999 calls.

2: Transparency and public confidence

How and when the public should be informed about the use of AI in crime reporting and detection. This means:

- People should be informed when AI is used.¹³
- People should have routes to challenge decisions made by AI.
- Police should be transparent about their use of AI.

3: Safe and accountable governance

The protections need to ensure AI is tested, with independent oversight and used in ways that protect people's rights and privacy. This means:

- AI systems should be thoroughly tested before deployment, continuously monitored, updated, and independently evaluated.
- Clear governance and remedies should exist for AI errors and misuse of AI.
- An independent body, with appropriate regulatory powers, should be involved in auditing and monitoring AI use in policing
- AI must be used in ways that respect privacy and civil liberties
- AI systems for crime reporting and detection should comply with data protection law.

Conclusions

We, the researchers, drew four key conclusions about how participants felt about AI-assisted decision-making in crime reporting and detection:

- 1.** AI should support rather than replace humans. The most acceptable use cases were those where AI supported humans to report and investigate crime more effectively, without removing humans from the loop. Human involvement was particularly important in emergency situations, where emotional support is required and in more serious/complex cases.
- 2.** AI should deliver tangible benefits for the public. Participants saw the potential for AI to reduce administrative workloads but did not see efficiency as an end in itself. They expected this extra time from AI to result in more police support for victims, and improved call handler job satisfaction and wellbeing. Consideration should be given as to where and how AI is applied; while use in more serious/complex cases was felt to require more caution, this was also felt to potentially deliver greater benefits than use for low-level offences, which were deemed to be less important to address for the public and potentially not worth 'the risk' of using AI.
- 3.** The consequences of decision-making, and error, were important factors in acceptability. Participants were more cautious about AI use where

¹³ Operationally sensitive use cases were not discussed during this dialogue. It should be noted that opinions on transparency may differ in such use cases.

mistakes could have significant or lasting consequences, such as affecting someone's criminal record or incorrectly assessing the urgency of a call. Preventing AI from amplifying unjustified bias (both human and AI) and discrimination in policing was a clear priority. The level of oversight participants expected was therefore closely connected to the potential consequences of a decision: as the stakes increased, so did expectations for meaningful human judgement and review

4. Clear justification and proportionate use were fundamental. Participants expected a clear rationale for using AI in crime reporting and detection use cases, rather than it being introduced simply because the technology is available. They also expected its use and level of human involvement to be proportionate to the risks and consequences involved in each use case. AI systems which increase surveillance and infringe civil liberties are a concern, particularly when used indiscriminately or in relation to crimes with less severe harms. This meant that lower-risk or lower-level offences were not automatically considered appropriate uses of AI simply because they might allow greater automation.

2. Objectives and Methodology

2.1. Background to the work

This project was commissioned jointly by the Home Office and PoliceAI, in partnership with UKRI. The aim was to understand public views on the use of AI in policing through deliberative public dialogue, with a specific focus on AI-assisted decision-making for crime reporting and detection. The work was carried out by the independent research agency Thinks Insight & Strategy.

The Home Office is responsible for policing policy and police funding and the framework in which the police act, including the procurement and deployment of AI. They are not responsible for day-to-day police operations.

PoliceAI is a centre established within policing through a grant agreement funded by the UK Government to accelerate responsible use of AI across all 43 forces in England and Wales. The centre aims to better influence how AI is used by police forces and law enforcement, providing a stronger evidence base to support the responsible adoption of AI in policing, and as part of that, understanding areas where there is not yet clear public consent¹⁴. More information on PoliceAI can be found in Appendix 8.4.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is the UK's national funding agency for research and innovation. As part of the government's Research and Development

¹⁴ PoliceAI will not command or control how AI is used across policing; this will remain the responsibility of Chief constables, who are accountable to locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Factsheet: [Police use of artificial intelligence \(AI\): factsheet \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

Missions Accelerator Programme, the UKRI Safer Streets Challenges will invest £50 million by 2030, with the aims of reducing knife crime and violence against women and girls, and to increase public confidence in the policing and criminal justice system.

Thinks Insight & Strategy are an independent research agency and experts in conducting public dialogue.

The existing legal framework

There is not currently a single, AI-specific law governing police use of the technology. Parliament sets the legal framework within which policing operates, and police use of AI is regulated through existing laws and requirements that apply to the activity in which it is used. Individual Chief Officers are responsible for deciding when and how AI should be used within their forces and for ensuring that deployments comply with all relevant laws and regulations. These include the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR where personal data is processed, the Human Rights Act 1998 where protected rights are engaged, and the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty. Police must also comply with the legislation, common law powers, codes and guidance governing the relevant policing function. Depending on the operational context, this may include the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, investigatory powers legislation and the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.

Additional safeguards apply where personal data is used to make a significant decision solely through automated processing. For law enforcement processing, Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits such decisions only where they are required or authorised by law. Individuals must be able to obtain human intervention, express their point of view, receive an explanation and challenge the decision. The precise requirements will depend on the use case, the data involved, the consequences for individuals and whether any human review is meaningful. Forces must also consider whether a data protection impact assessment is required and whether a deployment is necessary and proportionate.

Current state of AI adoption in policing

The government's approach to AI in policing reflects its wider ambition to maximise the potential of AI to make public services more efficient and effective. Most police AI activity in England and Wales has historically been undertaken by individual Chief Officers using forces' core funding, with accountability to locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners. Since the 2024 election, this has been supplemented by over £50 million of direct Home Office grant funding for specific projects. These include facial recognition, AI-enabled audio-visual redaction, deepfake detection, robotic process automation, AI-supported public contact and research into public attitudes. The Police Reform White Paper subsequently announced a further £115 million over three years to deepen support for responsible police adoption of AI and automation.

PoliceAI, the new National Centre for AI in Policing, was set-up in April 2026 and was formally launched in June. It brings together relevant AI activity in a national team so that functions can be undertaken on behalf of all forces, providing greater consistency and reassurance that AI is being used responsibly. PoliceAI will support the rapid but responsible adoption of AI in areas most likely to improve public safety, including preventing and detecting crime, catching wanted suspects, finding missing people, improving investigations and the experience of victims and witnesses, and freeing officers for frontline duties. Its functions include developing, testing, validating and benchmarking tools, supporting forces with adoption and maintaining a public register of operational police AI use and the checks undertaken before deployment. Operational decisions and responsibility for individual deployments will remain with Chief Officers.

2.2. Objectives of the dialogue

The focus of this public dialogue was on AI-assisted decision-making in crime reporting and detection. This area was chosen because exploring public attitudes towards it is important for PoliceAI, with some elements already being trialled by several police forces and others being developed in the private sector. Facial recognition,¹⁵ private sector use and language services e.g. translation, were out of scope, to keep the dialogues focused and because these topics are covered in other known research projects.

The overarching objective of the project was to test to what extent the public are content for human involvement to be reduced or removed from police crime reporting and detection decision making processes, where human oversight must remain central, and what safeguards and accountability arrangements would be expected. The specific objectives of the dialogue were to:

- Deepen understanding of public acceptability of AI systems auto-detecting and reporting crime, and the extent of human involvement expected;
- Understand the risks, concerns, and trade-offs the public consider when assessing acceptability of AI-assisted decision-making use cases within a policing context;
- Capture public views on the safeguards, governance structures, monitoring and accountability mechanisms that the public want to see in place for AI-assisted decision-making within policing based on these use cases;
- Develop principles to best inform practice, guidance and policymaking on how and when AI-assisted decision-making plays a part in crime reporting and detection.

¹⁵ Having been covered in a separate dialogue project conducted earlier in 2026. Publication forthcoming.

This evidence base will be used to enable PoliceAI to both prioritise its own activity and influence other police stakeholders who will make operational decisions about use of AI.

Why a deliberative public dialogue?

This research used a deliberative public dialogue as this is a well-established method for exploring attitudes to complex or contentious issues where the public have limited familiarity with the topic, such as relatively novel technology. It has been used by the Home Office for other policing topics¹⁶, which are referenced throughout this report. It has a long history and established principles for good practice developed by the UKRI-funded Sciencewise programme¹⁷.

Deliberative research allows participants to consider relevant information from multiple points of view. It enables participants to discuss the issues and develop their thinking together before coming to a view.

Deliberative approaches provide deeper insight into how and why people form or shift opinions when exposed to new information or perspectives. Unlike quantitative surveys, which capture static snapshots of views, or qualitative focus groups that explore surface-level attitudes, deliberative methods reveal the evolution of participants' thinking. Participants engage in structured dialogue, consider trade-offs, and grapple with complexity mirroring real-world decision making. This approach uncovers more considered, informed views, helping to understand not just what people think, but how they arrive there.

Deliberative public engagement therefore offers decision makers public views that are carefully considered and insight into the shifts in opinion that can occur through open discussion and debate. Dialogue is about understanding public judgement and can complement public opinion research.

2.3. Structure of the dialogue

Overview of method

The project began with a short scoping phase designed to ensure dialogue materials were balanced and easy to understand, rooted in the specific context and potential AI-assisted policing practices, and have stakeholder buy-in. Our process was as follows:

- **Evidence immersion:** Thinks undertook a review of findings and lessons learnt from previous related projects, including the recent public dialogue on the use of AI in policing and various projects delivered for the Home Office. This also included a review of existing literature on public attitudes

¹⁶ Thinks, UK Home Office 'Police use of Facial Recognition Technology (FRT)', February 2026; Thinks, Sciencewise, UK Home Office 'AI in Policing: A public dialogue' April 2025

¹⁷ <https://sciencewise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Guiding-Principles.pdf>

towards AI use in policing, key issues and debates surrounding the development of AI technology related to the use cases and what that might mean in theory for police decision making.

- **Stakeholder input:** To inform the design session, Thinks conducted six interviews with key academics, civil liberties groups and police representatives to gather insight into what information to share with participants and how to best deliver this to them.
- **Design session:** A two-hour session led by Thinks with the Home Office to agree on the key design pillars for the online sessions and in-person engagement events.
- **Advisory group input:** An Advisory Group of topic experts provided feedback on the dialogue design, analysis and reporting through three 90-minute sessions in the lead up to the fieldwork. Group members and the role of the group can be found in the Appendix 8.3.

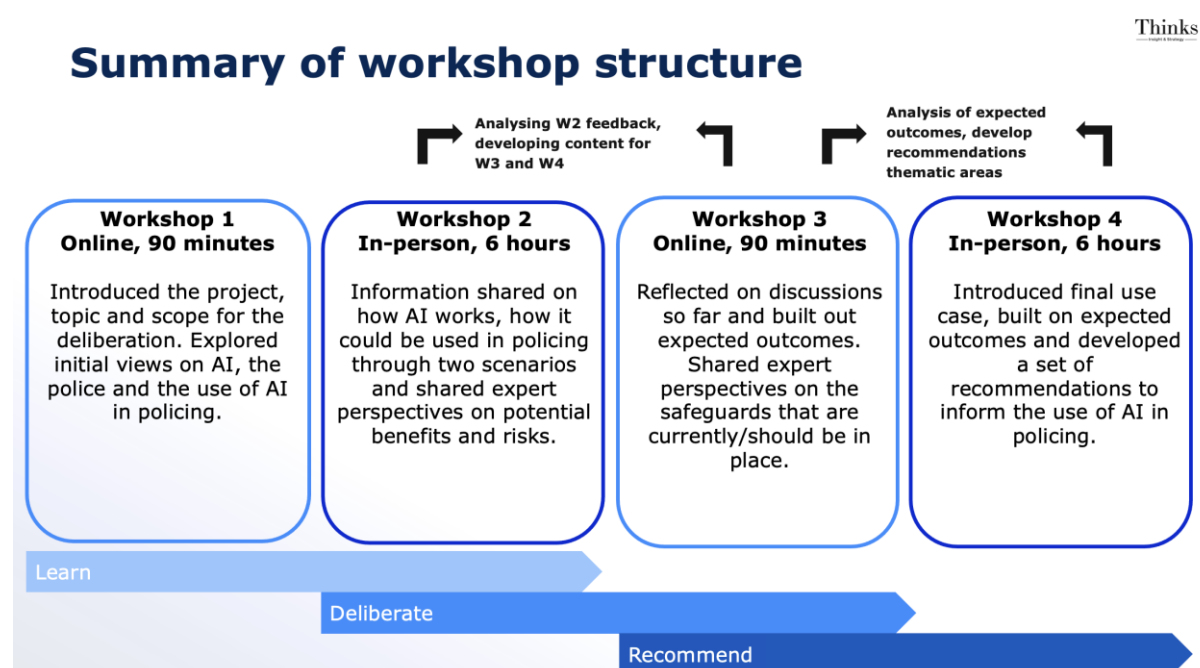
This dialogue engaged 98 members of the public across four workshops in total: two in-person workshops and two online workshops across three locations:

- **Manchester:** Largest city in the North of England and one of the most ethnically diverse cities outside of London. Greater Manchester Police are also one of the largest forces in England and Wales and are trialling AI in several use cases.
- **Norwich:** To provide a more rural/semi-rural context as East Anglia is one of the least urbanised regions of England. The Norfolk Constabulary is also a mid-sized, predominantly rural force and it was important to get insight into how that could impact participant views.
- **Swansea:** Provided the Welsh perspective ensuring full coverage across the two nations. As the second-largest city in Wales it allowed for a mix of urban/suburban and rural participants to be recruited.

These locations also were chosen to ensure variation from previous AI in policing dialogue locations (London, Cardiff and Durham).

Fieldwork took place over a five-week period in June – July 2026. An overview of the approach can be seen in the diagram below.

Figure 1: Overview of workshop format and content



Full details of each workshop can be found in Appendix 8.1.

AI-assisted decision-making use cases

We introduced a series of use cases and scenarios across the dialogue, as shown in Table 1 below, to further discussion and give examples of how AI could be applied to decision making in policing.

Table 1: Use cases and scenarios tested in the dialogue

Use case	Scenario a	Scenario b	Scenario c
1. Reporting a crime online <i>Introduced in Workshop 2</i>	1a) Current process Online form which is reviewed by police	1b) AI-assisted online crime reporting AI chatbot gathers information which is then reviewed by a human ¹⁸	1c) Online crime detection (Hypothetical) AI is used to analyse publicly available online content to identify potential crimes, threats or vulnerable people and flag cases review

¹⁸ While not the same process as 1b, it is worth noting that Thames Valley Police are trialling “Bobbi”, an optional AI virtual assistant that answers common non-emergency police-related questions, gives advice or signposts people to the right service, with human operators taking over where needed (e.g. if the AI detects an emergency situation) or desired by the user. It is not a replacement for 999 or a full crime reporting route.

2. Prioritising 101/999 calls <i>Introduced in Workshop 2</i>	2a) Current process Human response, using the T.H.R.I.V.E framework¹⁹	2b) AI-assisted call handling – 101 AI used to provide call handler with prompts – 101 non-emergency calls only AI-assisted call handling – 999 This scenario was lightly tested with participants during workshop 2 but was not a focus	2c) AI triaging 101 calls (Current process as of Aug 2026)²⁰ AI used as first point of contact for callers, assessing urgency and triaging accordingly AI triaging 999 calls (Hypothetical) This scenario was also tested with participants but there are no current plans to implement this technology in this context
3. CCTV footage crime detection <i>Introduced in Workshop 4</i>	3a) Current process Member of public, CCTV camera operator or police officer detects and reports crime	3b) AI-assisted CCTV cameras (under trial) CCTV monitors predefined, observable traffic offences, and AI flags a potential infraction for review²¹	3c) Behaviour monitoring (Hypothetical) AI enabled CCTV cameras analyse patterns of behaviour, and flags activity that may indicate potential criminal activity or harm

Sampling approach

The sampling approach was designed to deliver breadth and diversity within a group broadly reflective of, rather than strictly representative of, the general public in terms of demographics and attitudes.

¹⁹ Threat: What is the threat? Is it ongoing? Harm: What is the extent of the harm? What is the impact of it on a certain individual/group? Risk: What is the likelihood of threat and risk? What may be the impact of the police not attending? Investigation: What evidence or investigative opportunities are there? Vulnerability: Is there a vulnerable person involved? Engagement: What might be the impact on public trust and confidence if the police does not attend? Are there any signposting opportunities?

²⁰ Scenario 2c is currently in use by police forces across England and Wales as of August 2026. This was not the case when fieldwork took place. [AI to slash 101 wait times and free vital police time - GOV.UK](#)

²¹ Sussex Police are using AI road safety cameras to help detect drivers using mobile phones or not wearing seatbelts. The AI flags potential traffic offences, which are then reviewed by humans before action is taken. <https://www.sussex.police.uk/police-forces/sussex-police/areas/au/about-us/road-safety/road-safety-...>

In line with UKRI Sciencewise guiding principles²² for public dialogue, the sample sought to reflect relevant interests and sociodemographic characteristics. We did this by oversampling for groups identified by existing evidence²³ as potentially being differentially and disproportionately impacted by policing practices which can lead to negative perceptions of the police. We also considered underrepresented in social research. These were: people from a range of racial minority backgrounds, Black men and people aged 18-24. By boosting the sample in this way, we ensured that views of these groups were part of the conversation. They are reported on together in this report with no weighting applied to any participants views.

This approach aimed to ensure that within each of our three locations, and across the sample, we included people likely to have different experiences of, and perspectives on, both policing and AI.

110 participants were initially identified via a purposive recruitment process, with 98 completing all four workshops. Participants withdrew for a range of practical reasons, for example caring responsibilities. The final sample remained consistent with the specification.

To compensate them for their time, and following standard practice for public dialogues, participants received 'thank you' payments of £125 for attending the in-person workshops and £50 for joining online workshops. An extra £25 was given to participants to cover any travel and/or childcare costs incurred to attend each in-person workshop.

Full sample and further recruitment details can be found in Appendix 8.2.

Analytical approach

The process culminated in participants generating advice on what they consider acceptable uses of AI in policing, with their perceptions grounded in the use cases.

Following Workshop 4, the Thinks team synthesised and compared the recommendations developed across all three locations. The findings presented in this report reflect a summary of what participants told us directly during the dialogue. It also includes thematic analysis of the recorded data to draw out common points of agreement and disagreement across locations.

Emerging headline findings were shared with participants at the start of Workshop 2 and 3 to provide an opportunity to feedback and develop further. At the end of Workshop 4, facilitators summarised the recommendations at tables for participants to review, before each location cast final votes on the recommendations. To ensure transparency and involvement from start to finish, the final report will be shared with participants.

²² <https://sciencewise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Guiding-Principles.pdf>

²³ Public perceptions tracker summary report - 2022/23, Yonder / Independent Office for Police Conduct, 2023

Addressing power dynamics

This project was commissioned by the Home Office and PoliceAI, in partnership with URKI. We (Thinks) felt that this context could create a power imbalance in how participants perceived and took part in the research, with the potential for participants to feel limited in their ability to safely express critical views. Some participants in past research²⁴ as well as in this dialogue told us that they have had negative experiences and/or have negative views of the police. We therefore took active steps to emphasise that participant contributions would remain confidential. Their data was held and seen only by Thinks, and they are not personally identifiable in this report.

As we were covering topics related to policing, trust, and the criminal justice system, we recognised the potential for discussions to surface experiences of discrimination. This awareness informed our design and delivery approach, including:

- Providing extra **reassurances around anonymity and participants' identifiable data** being protected.
- Developing a **dedicated participant protection and safeguarding policy**. This included a clearly identified safeguarding lead in each location, quiet spaces for anyone feeling overwhelmed by the discussion, and an escalation policy for any sensitive disclosures.
- **Facilitator briefings** covered best practice in facilitating sensitive discussions and explaining the safeguarding policy. This included checking in with participants who shared any difficult personal experiences between the two sessions.
- Enclave²⁵ groups were **used during Workshop 1 and 3** to help create a safer and more comfortable environment for participation and help to reduce perceived power imbalances within the discussions particularly in conversations relating to policing, trust and discrimination. Enclave groups were sorted based on a combination of ethnicity and age combinations, for example Young Black/African and White British Seniors.
- **Home Office representatives did not observe the online breakout groups**. At the in-person workshop lead facilitators determined whether

²⁴ Thinks, UK Home Office 'Police use of Facial Recognition Technology (FRT)', February 2026; Thinks, Sciencewise, UK Home Office 'AI in Policing: A public dialogue' April 2025

²⁵ An enclave (or 'affinity') group is a discussion group made up of people who share a common identity, lived experience, social position, or perspective, and who deliberate together separately from the wider mixed group. The purpose is to create a safer, more equal space for reflection, especially for people who may feel marginalised, outnumbered, or less comfortable speaking in a mixed forum. In this context the use of enclave groups aimed to create space for participants to discuss their experiences of policing and reflect on how these might inform their views on AI use in policing.

Home Office and police representatives could observe discussions at each table.

2.5. Structure of this report

The report starts by exploring where the participants started from – their knowledge of technology, AI, and policing, as well as their initial views on the potential impact of AI in policing.

It then provides an overview of the key themes which shaped their perceptions of how AI could be used in crime detection and reporting. These themes cover fairness and integrity, effective policing, accountability and transparency, meaningful human involvement, privacy and data protection, and proportionality.

Next, the report gives a deep dive into participant responses to the different use cases and scenarios tested in the dialogue.

Finally, the report summarises the key themes from the participants' advice to the Home Office and police forces on how they think AI in policing should work.

3. How trust shaped views on AI in policing

This chapter discusses participant starting views on policing and AI generally. This lays the foundation for the rest of the report, which will deep dive into responses on different AI-assisted decision-making use cases.

3.1. Drivers of trust and confidence in policing

Participant views on the use of AI in policing were inextricably linked to perceptions and levels of trust towards the police more broadly. Understanding this context is therefore crucial in recognising *why* the participants felt the way they did.

At the beginning of Workshop 1, participants were introduced to the principle of policing by consent and why that was important for this dialogue with a short video from the Head of AI and Automation within Policing Policy at the Home Office. We then went into breakout groups to discuss associations, interactions and perceptions of policing.

Starting levels of trust and confidence

Participants in this dialogue were recruited to bring a diverse (rather than representative) set of perspectives towards the police, including those with higher and lower levels of trust. This means the findings represent the *range* of views the public hold on policing; they do not describe how common each viewpoint is among the population as a whole. Discussions on police trust and confidence took place in enclave groups (see Chapter 2.3. for definition) which created a safer space for participants to share experiences that might be sensitive or difficult to talk about.

Across the dialogue, there was strong recognition of the challenges the police face in delivering effective work. Participants described police forces as understaffed and under resourced. They also acknowledged that police faced new challenges and changing attitudes in society. Some felt led to less respect for the police, where individual rights were being prioritised and affording the police less power. This sentiment was most common among older participants, who reported growing up with a strong sense of connection and respect towards the police. Their younger counterparts generally felt they had less of a relationship with the police and were more sceptical of their actions and motivations.

Consistent with another recent public dialogue on policing²⁶ this dialogue found that mistrust in police was primarily shaped by two key drivers:

²⁶ Thinks, UK Home Office 'Police use of Facial Recognition Technology (FRT)', February 2026; Thinks, Sciencewise, UK Home Office 'AI in Policing: A public dialogue' April 2025

1. High-profile examples of police misconduct and/or media stories of negative interactions with the police from the public.

Key examples referenced in the research include the Henry Nowak case (2025), which was top of mind during the dialogue due to the at the time, recent release of police body camera footage, and Sarah Everard (2021), with the latter being particularly damaging for women in the sample.

"...stuff you see on the news. A lot of the time you're thinking how they hell has this happened, what were they thinking? Over the last few years there's been quite a lot of stuff to make you think 'I don't trust the police anymore'." Workshop 1, Online

2. Personal interactions with the police.

Participants described a range of negative experiences from feeling let down, disappointed and unsupported by the police, to experiencing discrimination in the form of over policing and/or inappropriate stop and searches. The latter was reported most strongly among young people from minority ethnic communities, particularly in urban areas.

"They [the police] were completely insensitive and basically said to me indirectly there's more important crime even though it was a domestic violence case. They kept saying they were coming tomorrow but didn't come till 3 days later." Workshop 1, Online

Factors that can drive or break trust

Across discussions, five key factors emerged as being key in driving or breaking trust towards the police:

- **Fairness and consistency:** Evidence of the law being applied to everyone in society equally. Conversely examples of bias and discrimination, including seeing unequal treatment at the hands of the police, damaged trust.
- **Integrity:** The police upholding moral standards and the law themselves in a professional manner. Examples of individual police misconduct seriously damaged trust.
- **Positive communication:** Members of the public feeling listened too, taken seriously and communicated to in a friendly manner. Dismissiveness and aggressive communication broke down trust, particularly in emotional and stressful situations.
- **Visibility:** More visible policing to drive confidence that crime was being deterred and/or addressed in their community, often described as a need for more 'community' policing. Trust that police were serving and protecting public safety was damaged with little to no officers on the street.
- **Effectiveness:** Police responding to and acting on crime efficiently and effectively. Long waiting times, poor follow-up communication and lack of

response indicated low efficiency, reduced public confidence and subsequently trust.

"Integrity is important, taking care of their local community and fulfilling the needs of that community." Workshop 1, Online

"I've got quite a negative view of the police overall. I don't blame the people, it's just the sort of, whole thing about them having power over people and the misuse of that power." Workshop 1, Online

These factors set the blueprint for participants as they went through the dialogue process; used as tests to determine the acceptability of AI-assisted decision-making in different use cases and scenarios.

3.2. Initial views on AI-assisted decision-making

Later in Workshop 1, we then presented a short video from the Head of AI and Automation within Policing Policy at the Home Office, who gave a brief overview of how AI is already used in policing i.e. transcription, translation and searching for evidence. He also broadly introduced AI-assisted decision-making, which is not current government policy, and asked participants to consider whether it should assist or replace the decision maker.

Initial reflections on AI-assisted decision-making in policing

Awareness and familiarity of AI, as well as personal experience in using it, was higher in this dialogue than past research. Even as recently as the first AI in policing dialogue in 2025²⁷, there was less reported prevalence of AI in the public's personal and working lives.

Greater familiarity has not alleviated uncertainty however, with the key concerns raised in past dialogues still evident. Older participants were concerned about AI becoming too powerful and felt there is a risk of deskilling humans by overreliance across society. Meanwhile, direct experience at times led to greater concerns around accuracy, with many participants having seen first-hand the mistakes that AI can make. Some who used AI regularly in their personal life or workplace questioned whether AI is 'good enough' yet to be applied to a sector as high stakes as policing, and suggested the technology needs more development and regulation.

"I know it [AI] can get it wrong. I use AI in my work (compliance) and while AI can be great, if you use one word wrong it can throw things on its head. I also found it has very

²⁷ Thinks, Sciencewise, UK Home Office 'AI in Policing: A public dialogue' April 2025

limited options. There is no room for something outside of those options." Workshop 1, Online

Reflective of the previous dialogue on AI in policing²⁸, participants shared a sentiment that increased AI usage across society seems inevitable; that it is part of society now and will be used regardless of their views. Participants therefore felt it should be embraced, however reluctantly for some, so that some benefits can be gained.

"It's just the world we live in. Some AI for basic tasks is great, but we don't want it to replace people." Workshop 1, Online

Initial hopes and concerns for AI-assisted decision-making in policing

Participants were able to identify a series of potential benefits in using AI in policing, albeit with the caveat that human oversight remained. They hoped that by automating tasks and improving efficiency AI use could deliver:

- **Quicker response times:** AI usage could allow police to be always on and immediately available to the public when contacting them and/or reporting a crime, leading to reduced waiting times both in emergency and non-emergency situations.
- **Greater police presence:** AI usage could reduce the amount of time officers spend on administrative or logistical tasks, freeing them up to spend more time in communities, directly addressing crime.
- **Better working conditions:** AI usage could help reduce the high workloads of police, subsequently helping to reduce stress and improve morale.

"If that makes the whole process quicker then potentially that's a benefit. I'm cautiously optimistic that it could be of benefit."
Workshop 2, Manchester

While there was cautious optimism for AI to lead to better outcomes, participants had the following concerns at this early stage of the dialogue:

- **Loss of human contact:** Whether AI would replace key touchpoints for members of the public interacting with a human (i.e. officer or law enforcement staff). This was deemed important particularly in high stress situations or if the person was vulnerable.
- **Bias and discrimination:** The quality and type of data AI would be trained on, and whether this could lead to unjustifiably biased decisions and discrimination.
- **Accuracy:** Whether the AI would be accurate enough to assist officers and law enforcement staff to make decisions that might have serious consequences.

²⁸ Ibid.

- **Overreliance:** If initial usage could lead to overreliance on technology, subsequently leading to deskilling and job losses.
- **Lack of clarity on accountability:** Who would be held responsible in the case of a problem or error - the AI system or human involved i.e. officer or law enforcement staff.
- **Increased surveillance:** Whether use of AI to monitor either online or real-world behaviour would increase the level of surveillance of the population, with knock on effects for freedom of speech.

"Could AI amplify all the biases? Who would be accountable for that? At the end of the day, it's about accountability. If a mistake has been made, what's the accountability?" Workshop 1, Online

4. Cross-cutting themes: Over-arching priorities across the three potential use cases of AI-assisted decision-making

This chapter outlines six cross-cutting themes that emerged across participant assessments of the use cases and scenarios that were tested in this dialogue. A deep dive on each use case and scenario can be found in Chapter 5.

Across the dialogue, participants explored three different use cases:

- Reporting a crime online (introduced in Workshop 2)
- Prioritising 101/999 calls (introduced in Workshop 2)
- CCTV footage crime detection (introduced in Workshop 4)

Each use case then had three corresponding scenarios: the first scenario (a) outlined the current process; the second (b) introduced potential AI use based on existing trials and emerging technologies; and a final scenario (c) explored a hypothetical use involving increased automation with AI²⁹. More detail on the use cases and scenarios can be found in Chapter 2.3.

While participants explored each use case and scenario individually, a series of cross-cutting themes emerged consistently across discussions. These are shown in Table 2. Please note that this was a qualitative exercise and ordering of themes is not an indication of priority or importance.

Table 2: Cross-cutting themes from assessment of use cases and scenarios

Theme	Description	Supporting quote
4.1. Fairness, integrity and consistency	How AI influences the fairness, consistency and integrity of police decision making. This includes its potential to reduce or reinforce bias and its impact on confidence in the integrity of policing.	<i>"Seems to be one set of rules for us and different set of rules for other people at times." – Workshop 1, Online</i>
4.2. Effective policing	Whether AI is perceived to improve policing outcomes, including efficiency, responsiveness, accuracy, victim experience and use of police resources.	<i>"If that makes the whole process quicker then potentially that's a benefit. I'm cautiously optimistic." – Workshop 2, Manchester</i>
4.3. Meaningful human involvement	The role humans should play in policing focusing on where human	<i>"Getting through to a person rather than a</i>

²⁹ Scenario 2c in which AI is used to triage 101 calls has been rolled out across forces in England and Wales since the completion of fieldwork

	judgement, empathy and discretion remain essential.	<i>'beep beep'; someone who listens to you and your concerns and takes them seriously.'</i> – Workshop 1, Online
4.4. Proportionality, accountability and transparency	The governance and safeguards need to support public confidence in AI, including appropriate use, clear accountability, transparency, oversight and opportunities to challenge decisions.	<i>"How are individuals are held into account? If it's wrong, what the consequences might be? Where do you think the checks need to be?"</i> Workshop 2, Norwich
4.5. Privacy and civil liberty	How AI may affect privacy, surveillance and fundamental rights. This includes where boundaries should be drawn to protect freedoms such as privacy, freedom of expression and protection from unnecessary monitoring.	<i>"People are going to be sceptical when they first hear it, it's like a Big Brother thing. We are in a world where we are being watched but it's about balance."</i> Workshop 4, Manchester
4.6. Data protection	How data should be collected, used, stored and governed. This includes data quality, security, ownership, retention and compliance with data protection standards.	<i>"If your data is across multiple systems, what if it's of a sensitive nature and leads to false information?"</i> Workshop 2, Manchester

4.1. Fairness, integrity and consistency

Participants felt strongly that policing, whether involving AI or not, must be conducted with fairness, integrity and consistency to build trust and confidence. Integrity was clearly defined, and participants often had strong examples of individual police misconduct which they held up as counterpoints.

- **Integrity** meant that police officers and policing institutions act honestly, ethically and in the public interest, exercising their powers responsibly while maintaining high professional standards.

Consistency and fairness were trickier to define, and participants sometimes found themselves at odds.

- **Consistency** referred to police applying the same standards and processes to similar situations, reducing unnecessary variation in how

decisions are made and helping to ensure people can expect similar treatment in comparable circumstances.

- **Fairness** referred to policing that is proportionate and responsive to the circumstances of each individual case, recognising that treating everyone identically does not always result in equitable outcomes.

Participants often started the discussion by equating fairness and consistency. However, as participants explored more examples, both in the use cases introduced and those shared by their peers, they emphasised flexibility as an important part of fairness. They felt factors like gender, disability or neurodiversity could influence the most appropriate approach for interacting with an individual, whether victim or perpetrator, and expect police to take this into account. This became a key challenge to the use of AI tools in emergency situations.

Consistency via standardisation

Participants were positive about the use of AI to improve the consistency (and therefore the quality) of police responses to processes they saw as 'low risk', such as non-emergency crime reporting. They felt that this could help overcome the variation in policing they had experienced, for example, differences in the time taken to respond to crime reports. Examples such as the use of an AI chatbot to gather details of low-level crimes when reported online, and an AI tool to transcribe and record 101 calls, were seen as straightforward and common-sense use cases that could improve efficiency while also ensuring consistent reporting experiences for the public. Some thought the use of AI could collect more useful information, particularly where an AI tool like a chatbot offered a more interactive experience than a static reporting form.

However, whilst standardisation was seen as a strength in terms of consistency of service, participants still highly valued the ability to interpret nuance and context that they felt can only be provided by a human (discussed further in Chapter 4.4.). This meant they only supported AI use in specific situations.

"For those [police] who have been there for a long time, rules go out the window, AI is there to maybe bring some consistency."

Workshop 2, Manchester

Bias and discrimination as a risk to integrity, consistency and fairness

Concerns about bias and discrimination were heard in all three dialogue locations, with many participants fearing that the use of AI could increase these issues in policing. Participants were worried that if AI was trained using unchecked, biased, low-quality data, the subsequent tools could embed bias into police processes at a systemic level. This was seen as unacceptable as it could lead to unjust treatment of members of the public by the police, with concerns being the greatest for minority racial and ethnic communities. Furthermore, there were concerns over AI tools with embedded bias being abused by individual officers to justify their

own, existing prejudice. Were this to occur, perceptions of police integrity could be undermined significantly.

"My concern is that the data from these stop and searches are being fed into the AI. Like the AI will then think that he should be subject to more random stop and searches." Workshop 4, Swansea

However, there was some variation in views. A small minority of participants - who argued current bias to be at an individual level, not a broader systematic one - suggested that AI tools could help mitigate bias (particularly racial bias) by standardising processes or by directly supervising officer behaviour.

Accessibility and inclusion: meeting people's needs fairly

One of the most common concerns raised was whether AI systems would be able to recognise and respond appropriately to the different ways in which people communicate and behave, for example taking into account disabilities, neurodivergence, language and accents. This reflected a broader assumption that AI systems struggle to interpret human difference.

"How is AI going to interpret accents? How is it going to grasp that and what is going to happen if someone talks slower and fast? When people are stressed, you would be speaking differently." Workshop 2, Manchester

Similarly, as participants saw increased AI usage to be part of a broader shift to online/digital services, they raised concerns about those facing digital exclusion, in particular older people. They felt that those who lack confidence in using technology and/or who do not have reliable access to digital devices could face challenges without offline alternatives (i.e. alternative to online report forms). They may also be less likely to identify if they are interacting with AI, potentially causing confusion and/or frustration.

"I know my grandparents wouldn't feel comfortable and that might be something they have to get used to a bit. Like my grandparents just don't understand." Workshop 2, Norwich

On the other hand, participants could think of examples where AI could make policing more accessible to people with different needs. Live translation during call handling was one example that demonstrated the potential for technology to reduce existing barriers. Participants were optimistic about the potential for members of the public who had English as their second language to be able to communicate in the language that was most comfortable for them. This potential to adapt services to different communication needs and make it easier for some people to get access to help was seen as a significant potential strength of AI usage.

"There's so many different languages, that's where AI can become useful." Workshop 2, Swansea

Overreliance and deskilling as risks to integrity

Participants felt strongly that maintaining integrity was dependent on avoiding overreliance on AI, which participants feared could weaken the professional judgement required for policing. This concern was particularly relevant for staff that work on the frontlines and/or in emergency situations, for example police officers and 999 call handlers. Key to this, participants felt, is ensuring that officers and staff do not simply defer to AI recommendations, but make decisions grounded in professional training, experience and their understanding of the wider context.

Participants also considered what reliance on AI could mean for police integrity in the long term. Drawing on their own experiences of using AI in their work and everyday lives, some described becoming less practised at tasks once technology began doing more of the work for them. This led to concerns about the police becoming gradually deskilled because of persistent AI use, affecting their skills and confidence. The continued ability of frontline officers and staff to be able to do their job to a high standard without the need for AI, was seen as vital for maintaining public perceptions of police integrity.

"Overreliance on AI. Even if it's a human sitting behind the AI, if there is an inherent thought that the AI is right, are they going to assume it is right without checking?" Workshop 4, Swansea

Participants felt that introducing AI would need to be accompanied by measures to protect professional standards over time. This included clear guidance about the appropriate role of AI, ongoing training, and regular checks to ensure that emergency staff retained the knowledge and skills needed to perform their roles independently. The overarching expectation was that AI should strengthen officers' ability to do their jobs, rather than create a dependency on technology that could weaken the judgement and capability on which faith in the integrity of professional policing depends.

"Training and people should be tested. Could you imagine you have a Chief Inspector, and they don't pass the test? I do think that everyone should have to do it. If everyone is using it everyone should be tested." Workshop 4, Norwich

Honest motivations for using AI

Participants were clear that motivations for using AI should be defined by honesty and integrity. The police should be driven by a desire to protect the public and reduce crime across the country in a meaningful way.

This view emerged most clearly in discussions about whether AI use is most appropriate for lower-level or more serious crimes, which served as a key tension throughout the dialogue. In the context of integrity, one key component of this was whether there may be a financial incentive – through public fines for offences such as minor traffic infringements – to use AI for lower-level crimes. This was raised in relation to Scenario 3b³⁰. Participants were clear that AI should not be used as a tool to issue more fines to the public, particularly for what they saw as relatively inconsequential offences such as not wearing a seatbelt, as discussed in Scenario 3b. They instead wanted the motivation for AI use to be purely defined by integrity and public good.

"The appropriateness [AI assisted cameras] varies for different places. Also, money grabbing councils make a difference in that."
Swansea, Workshop 4

Similarly, participants were clear that while improving crime rates is a crucial, ultimate goal, this should be primarily focused on serious and more complex crime for it to result in meaningful change for the country.

4.2. Effective policing

Participants felt that the key reason for AI to be introduced should be to support the police to deliver their work effectively. For many, this meant tangible evidence of improved outcomes; reduced response times, better quality investigations and ultimately, less crime nationally.

Participants recognised that AI *could* help to reduce administrative workload and increase efficiency in policing. However, they emphasised that accuracy and quality of data was key in ensuring this translates into meaningful improvement.

Participants' felt strongly that AI should be introduced to address a clear need, rather than for its own sake. They wanted the police to demonstrate that a proposed use offered a meaningful improvement over existing ways of working.

"It does feel like that're forcing it. It does feel a bit more like they're doing it for the sake of doing it." Workshop 2, Swansea

Efficiency gains need to lead to better outcomes for the public

Increased efficiency was seen as one of the clearest potential benefits of AI in policing. After hearing from one of the expert speakers³¹, participants were struck by the amount of administrative work modern police officers undertake and the time this can take away from investigating crime, supporting victims and being present in their communities.

³⁰ 3b) AI-assisted CCTV cameras

³¹ Stacey Rothwell, Director, 7 Force Network spoke on the potential benefits of the use of AI for police services

Crucially, participants wanted time saved from AI support to translate into higher-quality, more personal policing. Rather than efficiency simply reducing costs, they wanted it to create more capacity for visible community policing, faster investigations and better victim support. AI was therefore most valued where it freed officers to focus on the parts of policing where human presence, judgement and interaction would be most impactful for the public.

"A more efficient police service that can focus on 'front line' policing rather than admin and bureaucracy prevention of crime, safer communities and a growing trust in the intentions and capabilities of the police service in general." Workshop 4, Swansea

Despite the initial optimism, after further reflection, some participants were not convinced that AI would make policing more efficient overall. They argued that time saved would need to be weighed against the training, human oversight and upfront investment required to use AI effectively.

"Yeah, you have a point if like if there was something at minute 5 for example and it wasn't flagged by the AI and its inaccurate, somebody will have to go back and check and verify and might even take longer." Workshop 2, Manchester

Participants also considered the wider impact on the criminal justice system: if AI resulted in an increased detection of low-level crime that previously went unnoticed, this could increase the number of cases reaching an already stretched court system. For some, broader questions were also raised about whether AI would help address the type of crime they deemed more important to stop (large scale, violent, serious) or whether it could risk shifting focus onto low-level offences, thereby actually distracting attention from where it is most needed.

AI needs to be highly accurate to deliver effective policing

While efficiency was seen to be an important part of effective policing, participants were clear that it could not come at the expense of accuracy. Although participants recognised how quickly AI capabilities had developed, learning more about the technology from expert speakers³² also increased awareness of its limitations. They were particularly struck by learning that generative AI models are probabilistic³³ and can produce different responses to the same prompt. This challenged any assumption that an AI-generated output could guarantee standardisation, consistency and accuracy.

³² Professor Dame Muffy Calder, University of Glasgow and a Visiting Fellow at Centre for Emerging Technology and Security gave explanations on what AI is and how it works (Workshops 2 and 4)

³³ Probabilistic in this context means that an AI model works with likelihoods rather than fixed answers. Given some input, it estimates which possible response is most likely to be appropriate, then generates an answer based on those probabilities.

Participants recognised that humans make mistakes but did not see this as a reason to overlook errors that could be created by AI. In fact, many felt AI should be held to a higher standard, particularly if it was being introduced specifically to improve an existing process.

Accuracy was not judged in isolation by participants, and they did not have one single view of what counted as 'accurate enough' in policing. Tolerance for error depended on the consequences of getting something wrong; the impact it could have on the quality of policing and on the person(s) involved in the crime. On the surface, participants were often more comfortable with AI playing a greater role in what they saw as 'lower stakes situations' but wanted stronger human involvement as the perceived seriousness of the situation increased. This was demonstrated most clearly in discussions on call handing: participants were broadly comfortable with AI supporting 101 calls, but much less comfortable with its use in 999 calls, with the latter being seen to have greater potential consequences if an error occurred.

"Consequence of an error matter. A 999 call has higher consequences so it's not the same [as AI assisting with a 101 call]." Workshop 2, Norwich

However, this was often also at odds with what they saw as the most *efficient* use of AI. The public saw more serious, complex cases as being where more support is needed. They voiced fears that only using AI for lower-level crimes could not only distract focus from where it is perceived to be most needed and may not properly justify taking a risk on the potential downsides of AI usage. Ultimately, participants wanted reassurances on the types of tasks AI would be used for, as well as appropriate safeguards and human checks.

AI use should lead to more officers and staff, not the reverse

Participants also considered how AI could support a more effective police workforce through its potential impact on an officer's day-to-day work. They recognised the pressures of heavy workloads, high-stress environments and limited resources, and felt that reducing the administrative burdens could free officers to focus on work they felt delivers better outcomes for the community. One use of AI that felt particularly positive about was the potential for AI to reduce officers' exposure to traumatic material, such as child sexual abuse images. Participants hoped that using AI to reduce these pressures could improve job satisfaction and support the recruitment and retention of experienced staff, ultimately contributing to higher quality policing.

"It was very interesting. With those images, you wouldn't think of that: how it could prevent mental health problems which is actually very beneficial." Workshop 2, Swansea

However, participants were clear that they did not want improved efficiencies to result in widespread job losses, particularly among staff in administrative roles,

who were seen to be the most at risk. Many voiced scepticisms about the motivation for AI being introduced; questioning whether it is being used as a cost-cutting tool rather than a way to actually improve policing. Instead, participants wanted AI to strengthen the workforce and help people do their jobs more effectively, with efficiencies reinvested in delivering better outcomes for the public.

"Try and avoid job losses because I can't see them avoiding that to be honest, whatever industry that new technology comes into there are job losses, but they're trying to put a positive spin on it all the time. I think what they're saying is 'we'll save time on the admin time so we'll put more police on the streets' but I don't think that'll ever happen." Workshop 4, Manchester

4.3. Meaningful human involvement

Across the dialogue, participants consistently reiterated the view that AI should act as a tool to make the job of a police officer and staff more effective and enjoyable, rather than a replacement. This was most prominent in two areas where participants felt humans brought value that AI could not replicate: human judgement and emotional connection.

The importance of both in policing increased with the perceived seriousness, complexity and emotional sensitivity of a situation. Underpinning this was a wider concern about trust, as participants wanted confidence that people would remain responsible and accountable for policing (including errors made), even when AI tools were in use.

Human emotional connection should not be replaced by AI

Participants saw human interaction as an irreplaceable part of policing and important for building and maintaining public trust and confidence. This mattered in all areas of people's contact with the police, from reporting a crime and receiving updates during an investigation, to accessing victim support. Participants felt that AI could support these interactions but did not want it to replace the role of humans within them.

Human contact was seen to be particularly important in stressful, complex or emotional situations, where participants felt AI could not match a person's ability to show empathy, understand context and respond sensitively. This formed the basis of why using AI to triage 999 calls was particularly unpopular among participants. Participants felt that emergency callers may not only be distressed or vulnerable, requiring reassurance or support. They may also provide complex, or in some cases, cryptic information, as a method to disguise that they are calling 999. As such, human understanding and empathy in these circumstances was seen to be non-negotiable.

"A human would understand emotions; humans will understand that there's something wrong and AI might not." Workshop 2, Swansea

Even in lower-stakes situations however, participants wanted the option to speak to a person, even if that could not be achieved immediately. AI was seen to be able to provide an additional way to access services, but participants felt it should not become a barrier to human contact, particularly for those who are vulnerable and/or less confident in using digital services.

"Human contact is very important. I was looking for a mortgage, and you do still prefer to speak to a person because you do get more knowledge and support." Workshop 2, Swansea

Participants also emphasised human contact as having an important role in maintaining the police's public reputation; being unable to speak to a person could create a perception that the police did not care or were not listening, potentially undermining public trust.

Human judgement was more trusted and valued by participants

Ensuring that human judgement remains at the centre of police decision making was also seen by participants to be vital for maintaining trust and confidence. Participants had greater confidence in trained officers and staff making consequential decisions than AI, believing their training, experience and understanding of the circumstances would always deliver better results than a system. As such, participants wanted to ensure human involvement goes beyond simply approving an AI recommendation. They felt that real people should still lead decisions, and that decision makers should be able to disagree with or override AI if they feel it is incorrect or wrong.

"Human oversight and human judgement should be the ultimate decision-maker, with officers able to override AI." Workshop 4, Swansea

Participants expected there to almost always be a 'human in the loop' for AI-assisted decision-making, particularly as the severity of a situation, and by extension the potential consequences, increased. Where a decision could contribute to someone receiving a criminal record, for example, participants felt a person should review the evidence and make the final decision.

There was more flexibility for lower-stakes decisions. Some participants were comfortable with AI making decisions on what they saw as minor infringements, such as littering or not wearing a seatbelt whilst driving. In these instances, the benefits of efficiency and consistency were felt to outweigh the need for direct human oversight. However, this depended on having a robust and efficient appeals process, where a person could review and overturn the decision (see Chapter 4.5.).

"A human has the final say on serious crime and court trials. AI makes basic admin and basic crimes (speeding, phone use, traffic)." Workshop 4, Manchester

For participants, trusting professional judgement did not mean giving officers unrestricted freedom in how they use AI, as they were wary of the potential for misuse. Their preferred model involved checks on both sides: officers and staff should be able to challenge AI, while the way they used AI itself should remain accountable.

Those working with AI should be know how it works and influence how it's used

For human judgement to remain meaningful, participants felt officers and staff needed more than basic AI training. They need to understand its limitations, be able to assess outputs critically and feel confident challenging AI tools.

Participants also wanted officers and staff to have an active role in shaping how AI was used. They recognised that implementation was unlikely to be perfect from the outset and expected the police to learn from experience. Regular opportunities for staff to discuss what works, identify problems and share lessons were seen as an important part of improving the use of AI over time. This was also seen to be key in ensuring those using AI maintain their sense of autonomy; so that technology supports professional practice rather than beginning to dictate it.

"That's important - being honest on what is going well and what hasn't work so we can put in a plan to improve." Workshop 4, Manchester

4.4. Proportionality, accountability and transparency

Participants felt that human oversight and control is key in day-to-day management and usage of AI. However, on a broader level there was an expectation of additional safeguards to look at what AI is being used for, the level of responsibility it is given and the consequences if something goes wrong.

The scope and purpose of any use of AI should be clear from the outset

Participants wanted the police to provide a clear justification for when and how AI is being used. The availability of new technology was not considered sufficient reason to introduce it; participants felt there needs to be a specific problem that needs addressing and clear added value of using AI compared with existing approaches.

This was particularly clear in discussions about online monitoring. The theoretical use of AI to monitor public online spaces for potential criminal activity was seen by some as excessive and an unnecessary intrusion on privacy. More targeted uses, such as monitoring public online spaces known for criminal activity or focusing on serious crimes such as terrorism, were more acceptable. Participants

therefore wanted decisions about AI use to consider both whether the technology would be necessary and how much power it should be given.

"Participant 1: [Online crime detection] might help catch certain criminals, but resources should be focused carefully.

Participant 2: AI can check a vast amount of data.

Participant 3: I think it should only happen when there's a reason for it, when something has happened and there is a target or investigation." Workshop 2, Manchester

The environmental impact of AI added another consideration to these decisions. As participants learned more about its energy demands, some felt even more strongly that AI should not be used without a clear purpose. For those concerned about energy use and climate change, the potential benefits needed to justify the resources involved and these benefits need to be made clear in governance decisions in order to maintain transparency and proportionality.

"Environmental impact? Will it bring up energy costs the more reliant we are on it?" Workshop 4, Swansea

Independent oversight is vital for accountability and transparency

Independent oversight was considered an important part of ensuring that the impact of AI is being monitored and assessed across all 43 police forces. This was seen as vital for ensuring that tools are operating as they should, and that they are being used appropriately, as well as identifying and punishing any misuse. Participants felt that this should be carried out by an independent body with the necessary expertise and power to carry out checks, which is objective, neutral and free from external pressures.

"The police aren't perfect, you'd like someone overseeing them because errors are going to happen. You should have somebody regulating it making sure where it's gone wrong and why it's gone wrong to make sure it doesn't happen again." Workshop 4, Manchester

Participants felt that independent oversight should not only involve checking the outputs of AI tools, but also the data that is being used to train the AI models in the first place. This would be to ensure that the data is of high quality and to limit the risk of biased or inaccurate outcomes. It was felt that checks on data used and outputs should happen consistently and frequently, especially in the early stages of implementation, to ensure that rough edges are smoothed out as soon as possible and reduce the chance of mistakes damaging trust and confidence in the police. Oversight was therefore understood as a broader and continuing safeguard around AI use, rather than only simply having a 'human in the loop'.

A human should always be ultimately accountable for decisions made

Even with appropriate oversight, participants recognised that mistakes and errors in AI usage would likely still happen. Participants voiced concerns that AI could lead to a lack of clarity around responsibility and could even be used as a scape goat for individual officers or staff members to escape punishment for incorrect or harmful decisions.

Ultimately, participants felt that the person using AI should bear responsibility for any errors, even if it was the AI itself that produced the error. However, responsibility did not stop with the individual. Participants also felt, if mistakes were persistent and/or significant in scale, that senior police leaders who had made the decision to introduce and authorise the technology should also be held responsible.

"Who is liable? You can't come out and say as police 'well it wasn't our fault it was the AI's fault in a courtroom'." Workshop 2, Manchester

Participants were also concerned about the idea of the police potentially being exploited by tech firms for profit and felt strongly that they too should be held accountable if their products fail to perform. While on the surface it was understood that errors were inherent in this type of technology, participants often struggled to completely absolve private corporations of responsibility. In these instances, participants wanted the police or the governing body to be able to break contracts and give fines in instances of serious failure. Accountability was seen as shared across those who use, authorise and provide AI systems, depending on the specific cause of the failure.

"If the officer using AI has put in something wrong or using it wrong, then the responsibility is theirs. If the software makes a mistake, it's the AI company." Workshop 4, Swansea

Regular communication is important for accountability and transparency

For participants to have confidence in these safeguards, they advocated strongly for transparency about AI usage. This was not simply about informing people that the police use AI, but specific detail on where it is being used, what it is being used for and the role it plays.

At an individual level, participants felt strongly that people should know when they were interacting with AI rather than a person. This was relevant in discussions on scenario 2c³⁴; participants voiced concern that if the public are made to interact with AI without being aware they are not speaking to a human, this could come across as deceptive and undermine trust. This was considered particularly relevant

³⁴ Scenario 2c: AI triaging 101/999 calls

for older people who are less used to interacting with technology in this way and would expect to be talking to a human being when on the phone.

"I think trust is very important. If you speak to someone on the phone, you're trusting that person that you're talking to. I do think it's an age thing, younger people are online all the time so they wouldn't be fussed if they were speaking to an AI. It's a generation thing, a more mature person will want to speak to somebody, and nothing is going to replace that, I just don't think they trust it." Workshop 2, Swansea

There was also strong support for transparency at a broader, organisational level. Participants felt that the police should be open with the public from the point that that tool is being trailed. They advocated for a publicly available register setting out where AI was being used in policing. This was felt to give the public greater visibility, make the scale and purpose of AI use clearer and provide a basis for wider public scrutiny.

4.5. Privacy and civil liberties

Participants recognised that, whilst AI could strengthen the police's ability to protect the public, it would also significantly increase their capacity to monitor them. This created an important tension: effective detection and prevention of serious crime versus public privacy and civil freedom. While detection and prevention could strengthen confidence in the police if it led to better policing outcomes, if the methods used are seen as unnecessarily intrusive, they could be seen as a breach of individual rights, undermining confidence in the police.

It is important to note that many participants were less familiar with the language of civil liberties and discussions on this topic emerged after hearing from expert speakers³⁵. As a result, the depth of discussions held on the topic tended to be more limited than other areas.

Crime prevention capability needs to be balanced with respect of privacy

Participants felt that people in England and Wales were already subject to significant surveillance, pointing to the widespread use of CCTV to illustrate this. However, they recognised that AI could substantially increase the scale and capability by allowing large amounts of activity to be monitored continuously.

These concerns were most pronounced in the online and physical crime detection and behaviour monitoring scenarios (1c³⁶, 3b³⁷ and 3c³⁸). Some participants – in particular female participants – were relatively comfortable with more surveillance

³⁵ Ellen Lefley, deputy legal director at JUSTICE spoke on the risks to privacy and civil liberties posed by AI in policing (Workshop 2)

³⁶ Scenario 1c: Online crime detection

³⁷ Scenario 3b: AI-assisted CCTV cameras

³⁸ Scenario 3c: Behaviour monitoring

where there was a clear public safety benefit, particularly when it was being used to detect serious crimes such as abuse or terrorism. For these participants, greater intrusion could be justified by the seriousness of the threat and potential to keep people safe by extension. These participants felt that AI monitoring of public, physical spaces could help the public (especially women) feel safer when being out by themselves, particularly at night.

"I would feel safe knowing that a good AI CCTV is watching me walking alone as a woman at night." Workshop 4, Manchester

Other participants were uncomfortable with continuous AI monitoring. Concerns about potential misuse by individual officers, combined with questions about whether the level of surveillance was proportionate, meant that some felt that public safety benefits did not justify the infringement on privacy. Here, questions of whether AI is best applied to low-level or higher stakes crime arose, with participants asking if increased surveillance is a worthwhile trade-off for minor offences.

In a broader sense, participants that were not comfortable were concerned about the long-term consequences of a population content with round the clock surveillance, debating its cultural and societal implications. They argued that if the system of government was to change and AI-assisted monitoring infrastructure was already in place, this could open the door to institutional exploitation for the purposes of control.

"I'm from Pakistan, and the police have looked through social media. Politicians use this to target protestors, dissenters. It's easy to frame somebody. They could frame you from the post you made 12 years ago." Workshop 2, Manchester

While there were differences across participants about continuous, most agreed that such tools could have a place in specific circumstances, such as large-scale public events, where police presence would normally be increased anyway.

Self-censorship vs crime deterrence: implications for civil liberties

A central debate across discussions on AI-assisted surveillance was whether awareness of such tools would have a positive or negative effect on public behaviour. Participants feared that people might behave differently if they knew they were being monitored but disagreed over whether this represented successful deterrence or harmful self-censorship.

For some, increased monitoring could deter offending. If the use of AI surveillance was clearly communicated, people might be less likely to commit crimes because they believed there was greater chance of getting caught. From this perspective, changing behaviour was a positive outcome that could contribute to public safety and confidence by lowering crime levels.

"Could be a deterrent, could catch more people so you don't get away with it. A positive for the police, maybe negative for the person that did it." Workshop 4, Manchester

For others, the same effect raised significant concerns. People who were doing nothing wrong might change how they act in public spaces due to a fear that they could be incorrectly flagged as suspicious due to AI-assisted monitoring. These concerns were heightened by doubts about AI's ability to correctly interpret human behaviour and intention, including nuanced forms of communication such as humour or sarcasm. This was particularly relevant for Scenario 1c, online crime detection, where many felt that nuances of human communication (like humour and sarcasm) would be even less apparent in online spaces like social media. Participants worried that this, combined a potential future overreliance on AI recommendations could lead to serious consequences for perfectly innocent members of the public. This went to the heart of participants' concerns about trust. Surveillance intended to make people safer could have unintended consequences if law-abiding members of the public felt they were being treated as potential suspects.

"When [Scenario 1c] goes looking for key words it can misinterpret the context. We know each other because we've known each other for years. A group of friends might have inside jokes that AI can't interpret." Workshop 2, Manchester

4.6. Data use and protection

Participants recognised that AI systems depend on access to data, and as such, had concerns regarding the highly sensitive information about victims, suspects and members of the public held by the police. They were fearful about the risks of such data being breached and called for robust protection measures.

AI use of data in the policing context comes with added risks

The sensitivity of police data made the potential consequences of data breaches particularly concerning for participants. Specifically, they were fearful of:

- Victim data containing identifiable information being used to train AI systems;
- AI tools gaining inappropriate access to data, leading to (accidental or purposeful) access and misuse of data by members of the police;
 - Participants had concerns about instances where individuals could use data for personal gain.
- Hackers or cyber criminals exploiting potential security failings in AI tools to gain access to sensitive information.

"The security for data. That'd be the big one. Who's going to oversee the data security? That's my biggest concern as a member of the public." Workshop 4, Norwich

Participants felt these risks had implications for levels of trust towards the police. There was an expectation that the police to treat data with particular care and felt that AI should not make it easier for sensitive information to be accessed or used inappropriately.

Robust protection measures are non-negotiables

Participants wanted strong safeguards around any data used by AI. At a minimum they expected AI tools used by the police to comply with UK data protection laws and standards.

There was also a preference for police data to be stored and managed in the UK on police-controlled systems, rather than being handled by overseas private companies. This reflected a desire to retain greater control over where sensitive information was held, who could access it and the standards governing its use.

"If it's going to rolled out it needs to be kept in house it can't be outsourced." Workshop 2, Manchester

Participants also saw staff training as an important safeguard in this context. They felt officers and staff using AI need to understand how the technology processes information and how its introduction could create different risks around data breaches, leaks and inappropriate access. Data protection was therefore not viewed solely as a technical issue; it also depended on the people using AI understanding their responsibilities.

5. Acceptability and key concerns around the three potential use cases of AI-assisted decision-making

This chapter explores participants' acceptability of the use cases, the key tensions and conditions that emerged during deliberations.

5.1. Summary of the use cases

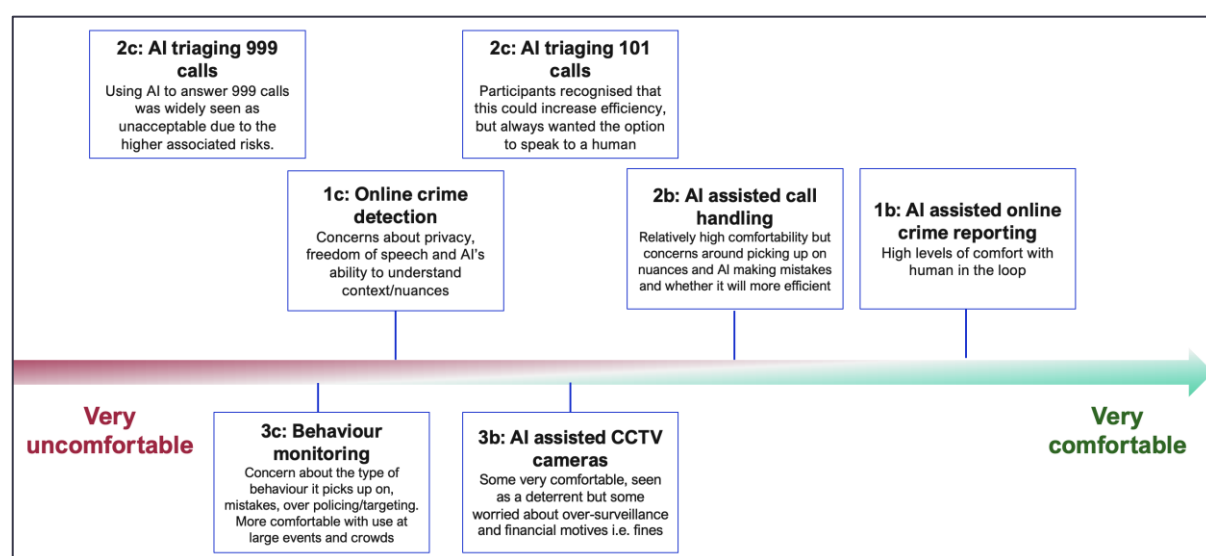
Across the dialogue, participants explored three different use cases:

- Reporting a crime online (introduced in Workshop 2)
- Prioritising 101/999 calls (introduced in Workshop 2)
- CCTV footage crime detection (introduced in Workshop 4)

Each use case then had three corresponding scenarios: the first scenario (a) outlined the current process; the second (b) introduced potential AI use based on existing trials and emerging technologies; and a final scenario (c) explored a hypothetical use involving increased automation with AI³⁹. More detail on the use cases and scenarios can be found in Chapter 2.3.

Participants were asked to rank all six potential uses in order of acceptability, from 'most acceptable' to 'least acceptable'. The use case ranking is summarised in the diagram below⁴⁰.

Figure 2: How participants ranked the six potential uses of AI-assisted decision-making



³⁹ Scenario 2c in which AI is used to triage 101 calls has been rolled out across forces in England and Wales since the completion of fieldwork

⁴⁰ This was not designed as a quantitative exercise, but as a physical exercise that acted as a 'temperature check' to stimulate subsequent discussion.

The use cases that received the most support were those where participants could see clear purpose and public benefit, where they felt a meaningful level of human involvement remained and where this was seen as proportionate to the potential risks involved in each use case.

Use cases tended to feel less acceptable when participants felt that human judgement or empathy were lost, or where they felt increased AI involvement could negatively impact on rights and privacy. These concerns were raised more specifically regarding the hypothetical scenarios 1c and 3c, which involved behaviour monitoring. Participants were most worried about increased monitoring that would result in self-censorship or unintended negative consequences for certain groups or communities. However, this view was not universal, with some female participants expressing how the increase in the monitoring of physical spaces in scenarios 3b and 3c would make them feel safer. Clear redlines were drawn around AI prioritisation of 999 call (a hypothetical example discussed in relation to Scenario 2c⁴¹) and the idea of monitoring behaviour, as discussed in hypothetical Scenario 3c.

Conversations on use cases also revealed an interesting set of tensions regarding the practical application of AI. On one hand, there was caution about using AI on more serious, complex and violent crimes. Here participants argued that such cases should exclusively be managed by a human, to ensure no errors or mistakes due to AI. Conversely however, there was a view that such cases were likely where there was more to be gained in terms of improving efficiency, given they were deemed to be more important to resolve, and assumed to be more resource heavy. Therefore, effective use of AI could be of more benefit here than for low-level crimes.

On the surface participants were more accepting of AI use for what they saw as low-level crime, such as minor traffic violations. Here they felt more comfortable due to the perceived lower level of risk should an error be made. However, several concerns were also highlighted in this application. First, a question of whether AI usage in such scenarios is disproportionate to gains; i.e. are the potential trade-offs/risks associated with AI justified for such cases? Furthermore, some participants had concerns that the police may be financially motivated to increase punishment of such misdemeanours (in the form of fines), and that focus on such offences could take resources away from serious crime, which was deemed more important to address. Ultimately, participants felt AI application should be considered on a case-by-case basis, dependent on exactly which tasks it is used for and how.

⁴¹ Scenario 2c: AI triaging 101/999 calls.

5.2. Use case 1: Reporting a crime online

Scenario 1a: Current process; Online form which is reviewed by police

During Workshop 2, participants were presented with the current online process for reporting a minor, non-emergency crime, in which a member of the public completes an online form that is subsequently reviewed by a police officer. Whilst participants valued having a consistent route for reporting a non-urgent crime, many described the process as long winded and had low expectations of receiving a timely police response.

"I don't expect an instant response, and you're lucky if you get another look." Workshop 2, Norwich

Participants valued consistency less for efficiency itself and more for its potential to improve victim experience. This became an important reference for assessing AI use in online crime reporting and detection.

Scenario 1b: AI-assisted online crime reporting; AI chatbot gathers information which is then reviewed by a human

Fairness and integrity

Participants distinguished between improvements to the reporting process and improvements to policing outcomes. Many were not convinced that a quicker or better reporting process would lead to a faster or more meaningful police response. Participants also raised wider concerns about online reporting more generally and questioned whether increased AI use enabled a greater push towards digital services, that risked excluding digitally disengaged groups.

"Will officers be sufficiently freed up to be able to handle those reviews quicker than they do at the moment? I suspect they won't and what will happen is there will be a lot of public frustration when it doesn't speed up." Workshop 2, Norwich

Effective policing

Participants could see value in AI where it made reporting quicker and easier for the public. They valued the chatbot's interactive role in helping an individual produce a report that they could review and amend, alongside quicker generation of a crime reference number (CRN). This was seen as improving the reporting experience and potentially the quality of information provided. Some participants also noted AI's potential to draw on previous cases to identify patterns.

"I like the fact that it is used to gather the facts accurately and get the necessary facts needed for this case." Workshop 2, Manchester

Human involvement

Human review was considered an important safeguard, particularly where an error could result in a serious incident being missed. At the same time, participants recognised a tension between maintaining this oversight and achieving efficiency gains. Whilst no clear boundary was identified, greater automation (i.e. prioritisation of online crime reports by AI) was considered more appropriate for minor non-emergency situations (e.g. fly tipping). As complexity or more severe potential consequences increased (e.g. house burglary), participants expected human involvement in reviewing AI decisions on prioritisation.

Proportionality

Automation felt more acceptable where offences and potential consequences were perceived to be relatively low level. AI's role in assessing the seriousness and priority of reports also raised concerns about accuracy and the consequences of misclassification.

"If you keep going back and forth with the AI on events and what happened the AI might get mixed up and confused causing the details to mismatch." Workshop 2, Manchester

Scenario 1c: Online crime detection; AI could be hypothetically used to analyse publicly available online content to identify potential crimes, threats or vulnerable people and flag cases review

Effective policing

Participants' concerns about this hypothetical example centred both on the reliability of the AI systems and the wider implications of AI use. Many participants questioned whether the technology could interpret the context and nuance of online content, such as jokes or historic posts, and raised concerns about AI incorrectly flagging content and wrongful criminalisation as a result. Some participants argued this type of system would inevitably result in many more flags than could be meaningfully dealt with, adding to rather than reducing the burden on police time and diverting attention from more serious offences.

"If it's going through social media how is it going to distinguish satire and jokes?" Workshop 2, Manchester

Human involvement

Views were also mixed on appropriate level of AI-assisted decision-making where vulnerable people could be affected. No consensus on appropriate level of human involvement was reached, but participants felt these warranted separate treatment or additional safeguards.

"[With children it] is a bit more sensitive so it should be more human involved. I wouldn't want it to rely on AI. Initially for the

detecting stages AI could be used but after that you want it to be [handled] more personal[ly] or sensitive[ly].” Workshop 2, Swansea

Proportionality

Acceptability for this scenario was mixed, although for many participants the perceived risks outweighed the potential benefits. Some participants could see potential value of this use of AI, particularly for tackling serious crime (e.g. terrorism, organised crime) or protecting vulnerable people, including children. However, acceptability depended on there being a clear justification for its use and tightly defined safeguards. For some - in particular male participants who were less likely to voice personal safety concerns - the level of surveillance and invasion of privacy made the use unacceptable regardless of these conditions.

“Yes and no. Using AI to identify abuse and patterns of hatred can be a good thing. But again, there's that 'Big Brother' feeling, that someone is looking at everything, even when you're not doing anything wrong. We used to think of other countries as having fewer freedoms, but sometimes it feels like we're moving in that direction.” Workshop 2, Manchester

Privacy and civil liberties

Some participants questioned the powers this could give to the state, including who would determine what was flagged, and whether the scope of what was monitored could expand over time. These views were expressed mostly through references to 'Big brother' or a feeling of being constantly monitored; some participants also raised concerns about unintended consequences of this use case with people self-censoring online or amplifying bias against different groups, and that this could change depending on what government was in power.

“What happens to free speech? Who decides what online content is offensive? That is really dangerous.” Workshop 2, Swansea

Where vulnerable people were involved, views were mixed on the benefits of automated detection, but participants felt these situations warranted separate consideration, including potentially greater human involvement.

5.3. Use case 2: Prioritising 101/999 calls

Scenario 2a: Current process; Human response, using the T.H.R.I.V.E framework⁴²

Participants valued the human interaction the current process provides, particularly a call handler's ability to exercise judgement, recognise emotions and context and adapt conversations to a caller's needs. However, they also identified limitations, including potentially long waiting times, inconsistency in the questions asked and the administrative burden on call handlers, which they felt could contribute to delays. These views shaped how participants approached the subsequent scenarios. Whilst they saw scope for AI to improve efficiency, they expected meaningful human involvement to be retained where callers required support or where judgement and contextual understanding were important.

"It works supremely well because you have experienced empathy, listening and even to some degree, if you have an experienced call handler you have an intuitive ability which might not always be regarded highly...we think this is pretty normal, but this is quite a complex situation." Workshop 2, Norwich

Scenario 2b: AI-assisted 101 call handling; AI used to assess urgency and provide call handler with prompts

Effective policing

Acceptability of this scenario was high, with participants identifying clear benefits for both call handlers and callers. In particular, they saw value in AI reducing the administrative burden of call handling, allowing call handlers to focus more on supporting the caller.

"It gives more access to information for the human to build a better understanding of how serious it is and what kind of severity they're dealing with." Workshop 2, Manchester

Human involvement

This aligned with what participants valued the most about the current process (i.e. retaining human interaction during potentially sensitive or emergency situations). Some also felt that reducing administrative burden could make the call handler role more manageable, with broader potential benefits for job satisfaction and retention.

⁴² T.H.R.I.V.E. is a framework used by UK police call handlers to assess incoming calls consistently, considering the threat, harm, risk, investigation opportunities, vulnerability and engagement needs involved.

This acceptance was conditional on AI remaining a supportive tool rather than replacing or overriding human judgement. Participants questioned whether AI could reliably interpret tone of voice, emotion and background noise, or demonstrate empathy required in sensitive situations.

"AI is not going to be sympathetic. If you're ringing up and you're really worried you need somebody on the other end of the phone who's going to calm you down. AI can't calm you down."
Workshop 2, Swansea

Proportionality and accountability

There was also uncertainty about accountability if something went wrong. These concerns contributed to participants' wariness of overreliance on AI. They wanted call handlers to remain in control over whether to follow or override AI outputs, rather than AI suggestions determining their response. Participants saw maintaining call handlers' skills and independent judgement as an important condition for introducing AI into their role.

Scenario 2c: AI triaging 101 calls; AI used as first point of contact for callers, assessing urgency and triaging accordingly⁴³

Effective policing & proportionality

Scenario 2c involved an AI system acting as the first point of contact to triage incoming 101 calls and determine its priority for police response. Participants were fairly mixed in their responses to this scenario. On the one hand, they understood that current 101 call handlers must deal with lots of calls that are not actually policing matters, for example prank calls or ones that are simply best directed to another public service. As a result, they saw potential for AI to help filter out these irrelevant calls to allow handlers to focus on the ones that matter.

However, there were many that were not happy with the idea of speaking to an AI handler without being made aware of it. Those that were uncomfortable felt that this should at least be made apparent from the outset to maintain total transparency and not undermine trust. Acceptability of this scenario increased if AI use was to be advertised and if the public still had the option of speaking to a human if they wished.

"I don't think you should interact with AI during the conversation at all. I think AI can take notes down on it, to transcribe, then after they call the police officer if there is a quote they need to look at, they can then send it off to someone." Manchester,
Workshop 2

⁴³ During conversations on this use case participants were also prompted on the hypothetical use case of triaging for 999 calls.

When prompted with an example in which AI hypothetically triages 999 calls however, the negative sentiment was near universal. Participants questioned AI's ability to accurately interpret a caller's needs in an emergency. They were concerned that errors could delay responses or potentially miss a serious emergency. As a result, use in this context was deemed unacceptable.

"If I'm dialling 999, I would want to immediately be put through to a human, I do think AI in the background [is ok], but I don't think it should be the first point of contact." Workshop 2, Swansea

Human involvement

Participants were hesitant about AI triaging 101 calls without a human in the loop. Key concerns around AI being unable to spot nuances and lacking empathy meant some form of human involvement was deemed important.

"When people call, they might expect a certain level of empathy, and I don't think AI can do that. There will be a certain amount of sympathy or understanding but you're not going to get that talking to a robot." Manchester, Workshop 2

"I need someone there listening to the phone call." Workshop 2, Manchester

Human interaction was seen as fundamental to emergency call handling, with participants strongly opposed to AI replacing human judgement or dispatching police officers. AI solely triaging 999 emergency calls was seen as a red line for participants.

"In panicked, stressful situations, I've worked on phones in stressful situations. You have to clarify multiple times, and that was really hard. For emergency services, to expect AI to have that capability, I can't see it." Manchester, Workshop 2

5.4. Use case 3: CCTV footage crime detection

Scenario 3a: Current process; Member of public, CCTV camera operator or police officer detects and reports crime

Scenario 3a introduced participants to the current process of detecting and reporting road infractions. Participants valued human judgement in interpreting the context and determining a proportionate response, whilst recognising the public safety benefits of holding road users accountable. They also recognised the limitations of the current process, including the resources required to review footage and the potential for offences to be missed. These views shaped how participants assessed AI use. Whilst greater efficiency and consistency were valued, their primary concern was whether it would result in fair and proportionate police response.

"A lot of manual work involved for the people to try to get the crime resolved. Either the police officers are trying to catch people doing that or they could be doing more valuable police work elsewhere." Workshop 4, Swansea

Scenario 3b: AI-assisted CCTV cameras; CCTV monitors road traffic behaviour and AI flags a potential infraction for review, in some cases issuing a fine automatically

Fairness and integrity

Participants wanted appeals to be considered by a person, rather than simply passed through another automated process. In this sense, they saw the appeals process to retrospectively provide human judgement when needed. It was therefore seen as a way to facilitate greater automation in lower-risk situations while ensuring the protection for the public. They also wanted reassurances that appeals would genuinely be reconsidered and reevaluated regardless of the AI recommendation.

"High automation would save time but the accuracy not so much." Workshop 4, Manchester

Participants were also concerned about the potential financial incentive for the police and local council to use AI to identify low level crimes that could result in fines, generating more money from the public.

Effective policing

This scenario explored the use of AI enabled CCTV cameras to automatically detect minor non-compliance offences, with varying levels of human involvement in reviewing cases and issuing notices (low automation v high automation). Participants saw potential for AI to make reporting more efficient and consistent, but many questioned whether this would deliver a clear public benefit, or if this was a good use of police resources. Many were concerned that higher automation could create additional work for police rather than improving police response.

"I feel like many of them would get flagged and then they would have to review that and decide. [AI output reviews] would take more time." Workshop 4, Manchester

Human involvement

Participants saw a strong, transparent and human-led appeals process as particularly important in the scenarios in which AI could be taking action without oversight, like Scenario 3b. As discussed in section 4.3., some participants were willing to accept AI-assisted decision-making for lower-level offences such as littering or not wearing a seatbelt, where the consequences were considered relatively small scale. However, this acceptance depended on people having an effective way to challenge that decision.

Proportionality

Acceptability was highly conditional, with participants preferring lower levels of automation. In low automation, participants expected a human officer to review cases, if a decision was challenged or appealed. In high automation, participants expected AI use to be highly restricted to low risk situations, where the consequences of a false positive were limited.

Privacy and civil liberties

Participants also deliberated on the extent to which this use improved public safety but had an impact on privacy and civil liberties. Some participants saw automated detection as a potential deterrent to improve public safety. Others felt uncomfortable as they saw this as a potential for increased surveillance, which for them was not necessarily a worthwhile trade off, particularly if primarily applied to low-level crimes.

"Would you know if you're being watched. Would it say AI camera in use? If people are aware, then that could prevent you from doing it." Workshop 4, Swansea

Data protection

Some participants questioned how recorded images would be stored and used, seeing this as safeguard that should not be compromised. They expected transparency about how object detection would be managed.

*"What is happening to the data of these recordings? This is only acceptable if I know what is going to happen to the data."
Workshop 4, Swansea*

Scenario 3c: Behaviour monitoring; AI enabled CCTV cameras could be used to monitor and detect behaviour it has been trained to detect as potentially criminal or harmful

Fairness and integrity, Data protection

Discussions on this use case resulted in a clear expectation that AI technology used to monitor behaviour should be handled by qualified, trained and experienced officers. They expected AI to flag potential concerns rather than determine police action and for multiple qualified officers to review evidence and decide how to respond to AI outputs. Another important expectation emerged around transparency. Participants wanted reassurances about how behavioural monitoring data would be used with other databases or technologies, particularly facial recognition.

Proportionality

Scenario 3c⁴⁴ involved the hypothetical example of AI enabled CCTV cameras used for behaviour monitoring in which an AI system is programmed to identify patterns of potentially suspicious or criminal behaviour and flag these for police review. Participant views were mixed and acceptability of this scenario was highly conditional. Some participants saw potential value of AI in supporting complex investigations and monitoring busy locations, such as airports, shopping centres or the underground. However, they expected its use to be highly restricted and limited to a clearly defined purpose.

"Participant 1: If a car was parked in a layby every day, they could check the number plate and find if it's a paedophile.

Participant 2: Maybe we could limit the scenarios. Are we saying there are going to be cameras everywhere?" Workshop 4, Swansea

Privacy and civil liberties

Participant concerns centred on surveillance, bias and discrimination. They worried that AI could reinforce existing bias and discrimination, targeting what they saw as overpoliced groups or areas. Participants also questioned if this level of surveillance was a justified trade-off to protect against low-level offences.

A small proportion of participants also raised concerns about increased surveillance and intrusion into privacy, with questions around how long data would be stored for in order to detect patterns over time to build a substantial case. Any potential use was expected to be limited to specific locations and circumstances rather than deployed across public spaces. However, for many, these concerns made the use unacceptable.

"Why don't we walk around with CCTV cameras strapped on our bodies, at what point enough is enough?" Workshop 4, Norwich

⁴⁴ Scenario 3c: Behaviour monitoring

6. Participant recommendations

This chapter outlines the participant generated recommendations that were created following deliberation with the key topics of the dialogue including the use cases and scenarios.

During Workshop 4 participants developed recommendations for the Home Office, PoliceAI and police forces on the use of AI-assisted decision-making in crime reporting and detection. Participants drew on their deliberations on the three use cases and on the risks and benefits of AI use in each scenario. Across all three locations, recommendations centred on three key themes:

- **Human oversight and appropriate use:** the baseline conditions for using AI, including a clear public benefit and appropriate human involvement.
- **Transparency and public confidence:** how and when the public should be informed about the use of AI in crime reporting and detection.
- **Safe and accountable governance:** the protections needed to ensure AI is tested, with independent oversight and used in ways that protects people's right and privacy.

Participants focused their recommendations on what mattered most to give the public confidence that AI is used responsibly in crime reporting and detection. This chapter explores participant recommendations, including their redlines for AI use in crime reporting and detection and the conditions under which they support its use.

Participant recommendations were generated in each location, presented below is a synthesis by the research team which aimed to retain all the different topics raised while avoiding repetition where recommendations were repeated across locations.

6.1. Human oversight and appropriate use

Participant recommendations:

- There should be a clear rationale and scope for deploying AI, with well-defined public benefit.
- The aim of AI deployment should be to support rather than replace police judgement and oversight and its deployment should be proportionate to the risks involved.
- People should have a clear route to speak to an officer or staff member.

- An officer or staff member (i.e. trained human call handler) should remain the primary point of contact and decision-maker in emergency situations.

Participants were open to AI being used to assist decision making and to some extent felt its increased use was inevitable, especially due to awareness of the increasing use of AI for criminal activity. However, they were clear that AI use in crime reporting and detection should be subject to strong human oversight and clear justifications for each use case.

Participants outlined three key conditions for responsible AI use:

- **A clear purpose and public benefit:** Participants expected any use of AI to have a clear rationale, defined scope and identifiable benefit to the public. It should not be introduced in order to cut jobs or for police benefits only. It should aim to increase public safety, improve the public's experience of reporting crime and improve police support for victims.
- **Human judgement should remain central:** Views on the extent to which human involvement is necessary varied by scenario. However, participants agreed that whilst AI could support or automate parts of a crime reporting and detection process, they did not want it to replace human judgement. The level of human involvement should also reflect the potential risks and consequences of a decision.
- **The option to access human support:** Participants wanted people to be able to speak to an officer or staff member, particularly in sensitive and high-risk situations. A clear redline was the use of AI as the first point of contact for 999 calls.

6.2. Transparency and public confidence

Participant recommendations:

- People should be informed when AI is used.⁴⁵
- People should have routes to challenge decisions made by AI.
- Police should be transparent about their use of AI.

Participants generally wanted greater transparency from the police about where, when and why AI is used. Views differed on how often the public should be informed about the use of AI in crime reporting and detection. However, they did agree that greater transparency around AI use in policing would be important for maintaining public confidence. Their recommendations focused on three areas:

⁴⁵ Operationally sensitive use cases were not discussed during this dialogue. It should be noted that opinions on transparency may differ in such use cases.

- **Communications to the general public:** Participants shared different views on how much information should be communicated. Some participants expected to be told each time AI was used, particularly if they interacted with police services whilst others expected a one-off communication. Participants agreed that at a minimum, the public should be informed about the purpose, use case and location where AI is being used.
- **Publishing evidence on the impact of AI use:** Participants agreed that more detailed information about trials, audits, and deployment of AI should be available to the public. Many participants felt this added an extra layer of accountability for police forces, as it would require officials to show evidence and would fulfil their conditions of providing a justifiable purpose of use.
- **Providing a clear appeals process:** Participants wanted a clear, human led process for challenging decisions involving AI. Knowing that a decision could be reviewed by a person was important for building confidence in its use by the police.

6.3. Safe and accountable governance

Participant recommendations:

- AI systems should be thoroughly tested before deployment, continuously monitored, updated, and independently evaluated.
- Clear governance and remedies should exist for AI errors and misuse of AI.
- An independent body, with appropriate regulatory powers, should be involved in auditing and monitoring AI use in policing
- AI must be used in ways that respects privacy and civil liberties
- AI systems for crime reporting and detection should comply with data protection law.

Participants expected strong safeguards to govern AI use, from testing before deployment to ongoing monitoring and oversight. Their recommendations focused on four areas:

- **Rigorous testing and ongoing monitoring:** Participants also saw independent involvement in testing, auditing and handling errors and misuse as an important safeguard. They also expected that AI would be tested for bias before being introduced to policing and were clear that these safeguards should not be compromised.
- **Clear responsibility when things go wrong:** Participants recognised that both AI systems and humans could make mistakes but did not want AI itself to become the default explanation for poor outcomes. They felt that both senior officers and technology developers should take responsibility for

errors. They expected mistakes to be handled seriously and misuse to be treated as disciplinary offences. They differentiated between errors and misuse:

- **Errors:** Police decisions made as a result of AI errors e.g. flagging lawful behaviour as criminal, issuing a penalty notice for lawful behaviour. Senior police officers should take responsibility for this, suspend use of AI, and forces should learn from mistakes.
- **Misuse:** Individual officers using AI for personal gains, to harm others or using an AI system outside its intended purpose. Misuse should be taken seriously within existing disciplinary police processes, with robust measures to redress harms and prevent recurrence.
- **Protecting rights and civil liberties:** Participants expected AI to be used in ways that respect existing rights and legal protections. They were concerned that increased surveillance could contribute to self-censorship, over-policing or disproportionate impacts on some communities and wanted clear limits and safeguards around its use. They were clear that AI use should not enable discrimination.
- **Data protection and privacy:** Participants expected AI systems to use accurate data with strong safeguards around how personal information is collected, stored and used. This felt particularly important if the AI was searching existing databases or connected to existing databases in order to provide a report or output.

7. Conclusions and implications

This chapter brings together all learnings from the dialogue into a final set of conclusions and implications for the Home Office and PoliceAI.

From our (Thinks) analysis of the four workshops, we drew four key conclusions about participants' position on AI-assisted decision-making in crime reporting and detection:

- 1. AI should support rather than replace humans.** The most acceptable use cases were those where AI supported humans to report and investigate crime more effectively, without removing humans from the loop. Human involvement was particularly important in emergency situations, where emotional support is required and in more serious/complex cases.
- 2. AI should deliver tangible benefits for the public.** Participants saw the potential for AI to reduce administrative workloads but did not see efficiency as an end in itself. They expected this extra time from AI to result in improved police support for victims, and improved call handler job satisfaction and wellbeing. Consideration should be given as to where and how AI is applied; while use in more serious/complex cases was felt to require more caution, this was also felt to potentially deliver greater benefits than use for low-level offences, which were deemed to be less important to address for the public and potentially not worth 'the risk' of using AI.
- 3. The consequences of decision making, and error, were important factors in acceptability.** Participants were more cautious about AI use where mistakes could have significant or lasting consequences, such as affecting someone's criminal record or incorrectly assessing the urgency of a call. Preventing AI from amplifying unjustified bias (both human and AI) and discrimination in policing was a clear priority. The level of oversight participants expected was therefore closely connected to the potential consequences of a decision: as the stakes increased, so did expectations for meaningful human judgement and review
- 4. Clear justification and proportionate use were fundamental.** Participants expected a clear rationale for using AI in crime reporting and detection use cases, rather than it being introduced simply because the technology is available. They also expected its use and level of human involvement to be proportionate to the risks and consequences involved in each use case. AI systems which increase surveillance and infringe civil liberties are a concern, particularly when used indiscriminately or in relation to crimes with less severe harms. This meant that lower-risk or lower-level offences were not automatically considered appropriate uses of AI simply because they might allow greater automation.

7.1. Implications for the Home Office, PoliceAI and police forces

Participants' views point to several safeguards and conditions that should be considered for responsible AI use in policing:

- **Demonstrate public benefit:** The public need reassurances around why AI is being used and how its use will benefit the public. This should include demonstrating the value of efficiency improvements and determining if the risks and trade-offs of AI use are justified for the crime being addressed. AI needs to deliver better outcomes for the police and public in the form of lower crime, better victim support and higher officer and staff satisfaction.
- **Ensure safeguards and use are proportionate to risk:** Consider the potential consequences of each use case and ensure safeguards and human involvement reflect the risks involved. Higher-level and more serious crimes are expected to have more safeguards and human oversight.
- **Provide independent oversight and assurance:** Clearly demonstrate where independent oversight is involved in testing, evaluating and auditing AI systems. This also includes systems for the police to learn from mistakes.
- **Establish clear accountability and processes for when mistakes happen:** Be clear about who remains responsible for AI-assisted decisions and what processes are followed when mistakes or misuse happens.
- **Consider implementing specific safeguards to prevent bias and discrimination:** Demonstrate how AI systems are tested and monitored to prevent them from amplifying unjustifiable bias and discrimination. This includes scrutiny over data that is used for training and ensuring police are trained and equipped to use AI systems.
- **Provide clear communication around how rights and privacy are protected:** The public need reassurances that their rights and privacy are being protected. Consider what reassurance different groups may need to know about how these are being protected.

7.2. Future considerations

Across the deliberations, participants raised questions about how AI systems intended to support victims and callers would remain accessible and avoid excluding members of the public. Concerns centred around those who are digitally excluded, older adults and those living with disability. Further targeted engagement with these groups could provide a deeper understanding of their views towards AI use in policing and their expectations for its use. Understanding how these views shape acceptability of different use cases could lead to better insights around how AI deployment in policing can lead to better support and avoid exclusion.

It is also important to note that this dialogue focused on public attitudes to the use of AI in crime reporting and detection. Some of the more hypothetical use cases we explored with participants extend beyond a change in the tools used to more fundamental shifts in the powers exercised by the police.

Using AI to monitor and detect potential crimes online, or AI powered CCTV to identify 'suspicious' behaviour, would both represent a significant expansion of police surveillance into public spaces. This shift was of concern to participants in this dialogue, but as just one topic among many discussions, it was not detailed. Further engagement would be needed to provide a robust account of public attitudes to those use cases with more far-ranging consequences for police powers, should the police or government decide to pursue them.

8. Appendix

8.1 Structure of the dialogue

In **Workshop 1** participants were introduced to Thinks, the Home Office and PoliceAI, given detail on the purpose of the dialogue and the theme of crime and reporting, and introduced to the concept of policing by consent. This information was shared by the Thinks team the Head of AI and Automation within Policing Policy at the Home Office. Participants were then split into break-out groups, organised as enclave groups to have conversations covering:

- Views of the police
- Confidence in policing
- Their relationship with the police
- Initial thoughts on AI in policing.

This workshop took place online, lasted 90 minutes and was a mixture of plenary and break-out groups.

Workshop 2 took place in person, at each of the three locations outlined above (Swansea, Manchester and Norwich). Each workshop lasted six hours and was a mixture of plenary and break-out tables. They were supported by short presentations on the following topics by key experts:

- An introduction to AI technology, from Professor Dame Muffy Calder, University of Glasgow and a Visiting Fellow at Centre for Emerging Technology and Security.
- The potential benefits of AI technology, from Stacey Rothwell, from Kent Police and Network Director of ERIN (Eastern region innovation network).
- The potential concerns and risks of AI use in policing – with a focus on privacy and surveillance and bias and discrimination – from Daragh Murray, Reader in International Law and Human Rights at Queen Mary School of Law.
- Potential challenges and risks for privacy and civil rights, from Ellen Lefley, Deputy Legal Director at JUSTICE, a cross-party charity that advocates for UK justice reform.

During **Workshop 2**, participants were asked to discuss two use cases; they were first talked through the current process for each and then shown three different scenarios for how AI could be used to support them. These were:

- **Use case 1: Reporting a crime online**
 - Scenario 1a) Current process; Online form which is reviewed by police
 - Scenario 1b) AI-assisted online crime reporting; AI chatbot gathers information which is then reviewed by a human
 - Scenario 1c) Online crime detection; AI is used to analyse publicly available online content to identify potential crimes, threats or vulnerable people and flag cases review

- **Use case 2: Prioritising 101/999 calls**

- Scenario 2a) Current process; human response, using the T.H.R.I.V.E framework
- Scenario 2b) AI-assisted call handling; AI used to assess urgency and provide call handler with prompts
- Scenario 2c) AI triaging 101 calls; AI used as first point of contact for callers, assessing urgency and triaging accordingly

Each use case and scenario was discussed in detail, covering initial reactions, perceived intended impact, perceived benefits and risks, as well as what participant preferences in terms of the type of crime for each scenario to be used for, and the role of a human versus AI. A persona exercise was also used to stretch thinking and discussions. At the end of the Workshop, participants created a pros and cons list of AI use in policing.

Workshop 3 took place online, following the same format as Workshop 1. The workshop began with the following presentations:

- The limitations of AI tools, from Professor Muffy Calder.
- We shared a brief explanation of bias in machine learning from YouTube⁴⁶.
- The current oversight and safeguards in place to ensure safe implementation of AI in police services, from Dylan Alldridge, Deputy Director, Strategic, Oversight & Coordination at PoliceAI.
- Reflections on the current oversight and safeguarding measures in place, from Michael Birtwhistle, Ada Lovelace's Associate Director in Law and Policy.

Participants were asked to reflect upon what they heard after each presentation, before moving into a final discussion to build on the pros and cons generated in Workshop 2.

Workshop 4 took place in person, following the same format as Workshop 2. The workshop began with a video from expert Professor Muffy Calder to provide detail on how AI works to analyse images and videos, followed by a Q&A.

Participants were then introduced to a final use case and subsequent scenarios:

- **Use case 3: CCTV footage crime detection**

- Scenario 3a) Current process; Member of public, CCTV camera operator or police officer detects and reports crime
- Scenario 3b) AI-assisted CCTV cameras; CCTV monitors road traffic behaviour and AI flags a potential infraction for review, in some cases issuing a fine automatically
- Scenario 3c) Behaviour monitoring; AI enabled CCTV cameras could be used to monitor and detect behaviour it has been trained to detect as potentially criminal or harmful

⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59bMh59JQDo>

As in Workshop 2, participants discussed the use case and scenario in detail, using personas to stretch thinking.

Participants were shown a final video compilation of expert speakers giving their 'most important thing to bear in mind' for the afternoon. Workshop 4 culminated in participants generating a series of recommendations relating to the use of AI for crime detection and reporting, which they were then asked to prioritise. The themes covered included:

- Redlines: Where should AI not be used?
- Human involvement: What role should people play?
- Safeguards and accountability: What needs to be in place to ensure this is used effectively and who should be responsible for this happening?
- Transparency and public trust: What is important for the public to know and how can they be reassured it's being used safely?

8.2 Sample

Recruitment approach

98 members of the public were engaged across four workshops. Our recruitment partner was iThoughts, an independent market research company with expertise in participant recruitment and accreditation from the MRS Recruiter Accreditation Scheme⁴⁷. We took a purposive approach to recruitment in order to efficiently reach the pre-determined sample criteria. To reach participants we:

- **Used mixed outreach approaches** – through a range of routes including local community organisations/hubs, youth workers, location connections from recruitment partners, word of mouth and snowballing and recruiter databases.
- **Stratified within demographic groupings as well as other relevant aspects** – e.g., opinions on AI and attitudes towards policing – before selecting candidates using random sampling where we had multiple candidates that met quotas.

Questions used to recruit our sample

For sex, age, and race potential participants were asked to answer in their own word. Sampling location and socio-economic grade were captured using pre-determined categories aligned with ONS standards. For sampling attitudes and opinions, participants were recruited using multiple-choice questions from validated surveys. The question determining levels of trust in police was adapted from an OECD survey on drivers of trust in public institutions (2023)⁴⁸:

⁴⁷ <https://www.mrs.org.uk/learningCPD/recruiter-accreditation-scheme>

⁴⁸ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-2024-results-country-notes_a8004759-en/united-kingdom_cec47bf8-en.html

- 'This question is about your trust in various institutions in the UK. Even if you have had no contact with these institutions, please base your answer on your general impression of them. Please tell me on a score of 1-5 how much you personally trust the police. 1 means you have very little trust in the police, and 5 means you have complete trust.'

To determine their opinion on AI, we asked an adapted version of a question asked on the Pew Research Center's Views on AI Survey (2024)⁴⁹:

- 'On a scale of 1-5, how positively do you feel about AI? 1 means you feel very negatively towards it, and 5 means you feel very positively towards it.'

Demographics table

The table on the next page shows the quotas and actual number of participants for each location. The demographics outlined are all the ones that had a quota to fulfil: sex, age, race, location, SEG, trust in police, and opinion on AI.

The column on the left shows the total actual numbers of participants across locations.

⁴⁹https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2025/03/pi_2025.04.03_us-public-and-ai-experts_questionnaire.pdf

Characteristic	Overall	Swansea	Manchester	Norwich
Sex	45 x Male 60 x Female	14 x Male 21 x Female	14 x Male 19 x Female	17 x Male 20 x Female
Age	24 x 18-24 18 x 25-34 24 x 35-44 16 x 45-54 13 x 55-64 10 x 65+	9 x 18-24 4 x 25-34 7 x 35-44 6 x 45-54 5 x 55-64 4 x 65+	6 x 18-24 8 x 25-34 9 x 35-44 5 x 45-54 3 x 55-64 2 x 65+	9 x 18-24 6 x 25-34 8 x 35-44 5 x 45-54 5 x 55-64 4 x 65+
Urban/Rural	39 x Urban 45 x Suburban 21 x Rural	9 x Urban 19 x Suburban 7 x Rural	13 x Urban 17 x Suburban 3 x Rural	17 x Urban 9 x Suburban 11 x Rural
Socio-economic grade	Min. 17 x AB Min. 63 x C1C2 Min. 25 x DE	6 x AB 20 x C1C2 9 x DE	7 x AB 19 x C1C2 7 x DE	4 x AB 24 x C1C2 9 x DE
Ethnic minority groups	17 x Black 9 x Asian 4 x Mixed ethnicity	4 x Black 2 x Asian 3 x Mixed ethnicity	9 x Black 4 x Asian 1 x Mixed ethnicity	3 x Black 4 x Asian 1 x Mixed ethnicity
*Attitude towards AI	47 x feel positive about AI 34 x feel negatively about AI 29 x feel neutral	8 x feel positive about AI 13 x feel negatively about AI 14 x feel neutral	21 x feel positive about AI 8 x feel negatively about AI 4 x feel neutral	18 x feel positive about AI 10 x feel negatively about AI 11 x feel neutral
*Attitude towards police	33 x have very high or high trust in police 35 x have very low or low trust in police 37 x feel neutral	8 x have very high or high trust in the police 16 x have very low or low trust in the police 11 x feel neutral	10 x have very high or high trust in the police 9 x have very low or low trust in the police 14 x feel neutral	15 x have very high or high trust in the police 10 x have very low or low trust in the police 12 x feel neutral

**Neutral = scored 3 out of 5 on a scale 1-5 where 1 means very little trust in an institution/feel very negative towards AI, and 5 means complete trust in an institution/feel very positive towards AI, indicating a more neutral view.*

8.3 Advisory group

An Advisory Group was established by the Home Office to act as a sounding board throughout the design, delivery and reporting of this dialogue. This group included:

Full Name	Role
Sophie Reid (Independent Chair)	Social researcher, evaluator, and facilitator.
Meka Beresford	Head of policy at Action for Race Equality
Professor Marion Oswald, MBE	Professor of Law at Northumbria University and Senior Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Emerging Technology and Security (Alan Turing Institute)
Ellen Lefley	Deputy Legal Director at JUSTICE- UK Legal Reform Charity
Jeni Tennison	Founder and Executive Director of Connected by Data
Professor Dame Muffy Calder	Visiting Fellow at Centre for Emerging Technology and Security (Alan Turing Institute) and Senior Lecturer at the University of Glasgow
Professor Ben Bradford	Professor of Global City Policing at the Department of Security and Crime Science, University College London.
Dr. Daragh Murray	Reader in International Law and Human Rights, Queen Mary University London School of Law.
Dr. Yusef Bakkali	Legacy in Action Fellow at Stephen Lawrence Research Centre, De Montfort University Leicester
Paul Quinton	Evidence and Evaluation Adviser, College of Policing
Rebecca Bruce	Senior Research Officer, College of Policing
Octavia Field Reid	Associate Director (Public participation & research practice), Ada Lovelace Institute

There were 3 advisory group meetings in total, each with a focus on supporting with the design at crucial points in the project:

- **Advisory Group Meeting 1:** Helping shape the content and approach to Workshop 1 and 2, including the first two use cases and relevant scenarios.
- **Advisory Group Meeting 2:** Feedback on the initial design for Workshops 3 and 4, including the third use case and relevant scenarios.
- **Advisory Group Meeting 3:** Feedback on emerging findings and advice on presenting the participant recommendations.

In addition, the Advisory Group provided written feedback on this report.

8.4 About PoliceAI

Vision

PoliceAI empowers forces in England and Wales to use AI in a trusted and transparent way. It sets the standard for responsible, evidence-based AI deployment, improving public safety, and strengthening public confidence.

Mission

Enhancing public safety and improving services for victims and communities. PoliceAI achieves this by **leading** the strategic delivery of AI, **assuring** its responsible and ethical deployment, and **enabling** police forces to accelerate effective, evidence-based AI solutions.

1. Better Outcomes for the Public

PoliceAI exists to help policing deliver better outcomes for the people it serves. Its focus is not on technology for its own sake, but on the practical difference AI can make to victims, witnesses and communities. By helping officers investigate crime more quickly, make better use of evidence and respond to emerging threats, AI can support faster justice, stronger safeguarding and improved public safety. Ultimately, PoliceAI's goal is to help policing provide a more effective service that protects communities and improves outcomes for victims.

2. More Productive Policing

Policing faces rising demand, increasing complexity and finite resources. AI provides an opportunity to reduce bureaucracy and streamline time-consuming administrative tasks, allowing officers and staff to spend more time focused on frontline activity. From processing evidence to preparing case files and managing routine workflows, AI can help improve productivity across the policing system. By releasing capacity and reducing backlogs, PoliceAI is helping forces maximise the time available for protecting the public and supporting victims.

3. Supporting the Workforce

AI should support the workforce, not replace it. PoliceAI is committed to ensuring officers and staff have the tools, skills and confidence to use AI effectively and responsibly. By reducing repetitive tasks and supporting complex investigations, AI can improve working lives and allow people to focus on the aspects of policing that require professional judgement, empathy and human decision-making. In areas such as child abuse investigations, AI can also help reduce exposure to harmful material, supporting workforce wellbeing while improving operational effectiveness.

4. Responsible Adoption

Trust is fundamental to the successful use of AI in policing. PoliceAI exists to ensure AI is adopted responsibly, transparently and with appropriate safeguards. Every solution supported by PoliceAI is subject to rigorous testing, evaluation and assurance, alongside clear governance arrangements and human oversight. PoliceAI is committed to openness about how AI is used, why it is used and the standards it must meet. Through initiatives such as the National AI Registry and public reporting on our activities, PoliceAI aims to build and maintain confidence in the responsible use of AI across policing.

5. National Leadership and Value for Money

PoliceAI provides a national approach to AI adoption that helps policing solve problems once rather than repeating the same work across 43 forces. By bringing together expertise from policing, government, academia and industry, PoliceAI will enable proven solutions to be tested, assured and shared at scale. This reduces duplication, improves consistency and makes better use of public investment. Its role is to provide the leadership, standards and coordination needed to ensure AI adoption delivers maximum value for policing and the public.

6. Building the Future of Policing

Artificial intelligence will play an increasingly important role in the future of policing. PoliceAI is helping to build the foundations that will enable policing to take advantage of technological change while maintaining public trust and confidence. Through investment in skills, partnerships, governance, innovation and national capability, PoliceAI is creating the conditions for sustainable and responsible adoption of AI. PoliceAI's ambition is to help create a police service that is equipped to meet future challenges, respond to evolving threats and continue delivering high-quality services to the public.