



## **Trust, Blame and Confidence in Police Organizations: A Deliberative Case Study**

*ESRC-funded Collaborative DPhil Studentship  
Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford and South Wales Police*

### **Introduction**

The Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford is looking for a suitably qualified person to conduct a doctoral research project on 'trust, blame and confidence in police organisations'. The full-time study will be conducted in collaboration with South Wales Police. It will be supervised by Dr. Katrin Mueller-Johnson and Professor Ian Loader from the Centre for Criminology and supported by Superintendent Ceri Hughes from South Wales Police.

The studentship is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) through the Grand Union Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) for three years from October 2019. Details on eligibility for ESRC studentships may be found on the [Grand Union DTP website](#). The successful candidate will also be expected to meet the standard entrance requirement for a DPhil in the Centre.

### **Outline Proposal**

Over recent years there has been an emerging national concern in the police service that police organizations are characterised by a blame culture. Such a culture, it is claimed, produces risk aversion and a reluctance to innovate, fosters a lack of trust and confidence, and erodes the well-being of officers. Police forces are typically contrasted in this regard with organizations that operate with a no-blame response to organisational failure that encourages collective lesson learning and improvement.

This project will investigate these claims about a blame culture and its consequences by means of an intensive case study of one force: South Wales Police. It will explore the roots and extent of risk aversion, address police and civilian staff fears of a blame culture within the organisation, and seek to understand the effects of current practices and perceptions on the culture and workings of the force. Research questions are likely to include the following:

- How are attitudes to risk, blame and scrutiny formed?
- To what extent are issues of blame, risk aversion and lack of trust and confidence an issue for staff within South Wales Police?
- What influences these attitudes and how do they affect behaviour?
- How can the problems identified best be addressed?

The research will seek to address these questions using a range of methods including in-depth interviews and group discussions among officers. Particular efforts will be made to develop deliberative methods that foster dialogue and reflection on these issues among officers from across ranks and between the police and its partners.

It is anticipated that the study will draw upon and make a novel contribution to current debates on police culture, organizational justice and police legitimacy.

*Please note:* this is an outline framework for the proposed study. The successful candidate will be expected to develop the aims and objectives, theoretical framework, research questions and methodology of the study in close consultation with their supervisors and South Wales Police.

### **Engagement and impact**

In addition to completing a DPhil, the successful student will be expected to engage fully with the project partner throughout the duration of the research and produce agreed outputs at regular intervals. These will aim to maximise the impact of the study both for South Wales Police, the police service nationally, and other organisations and regulators, such as the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

### **How to apply**

To apply for the studentship you need to submit an application to study for a DPhil Criminology at the University of Oxford by midday, Friday **25th January 2019**. Your application should include a two page research proposal indicating how you would conduct the proposed study if offered the studentship, which can draw on the description of the research detailed above.

In addition you must complete a [Grand Union DTP Application Form](#) and upload it, together with your graduate application form. Please ensure you also select 'ESRC Grand Union DTP Studentships in Social Sciences' in the University of Oxford scholarships section of the University's graduate application form. Information about ESRC studentships at Oxford and eligibility can be found on the [Grand Union DTP website](#).

Informal enquires about the studentship are welcome and can be made to Prof Ian Loader – [ian.loader@crim.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ian.loader@crim.ox.ac.uk)