'Community-centred design and predictive policing in England and Wales: socio-legal dimensions, benefits, and challenges.'

Predictive Policing Network Workshop
Regulating Predictive Policing in Europe: Opportunities, Challenges, and Cases.
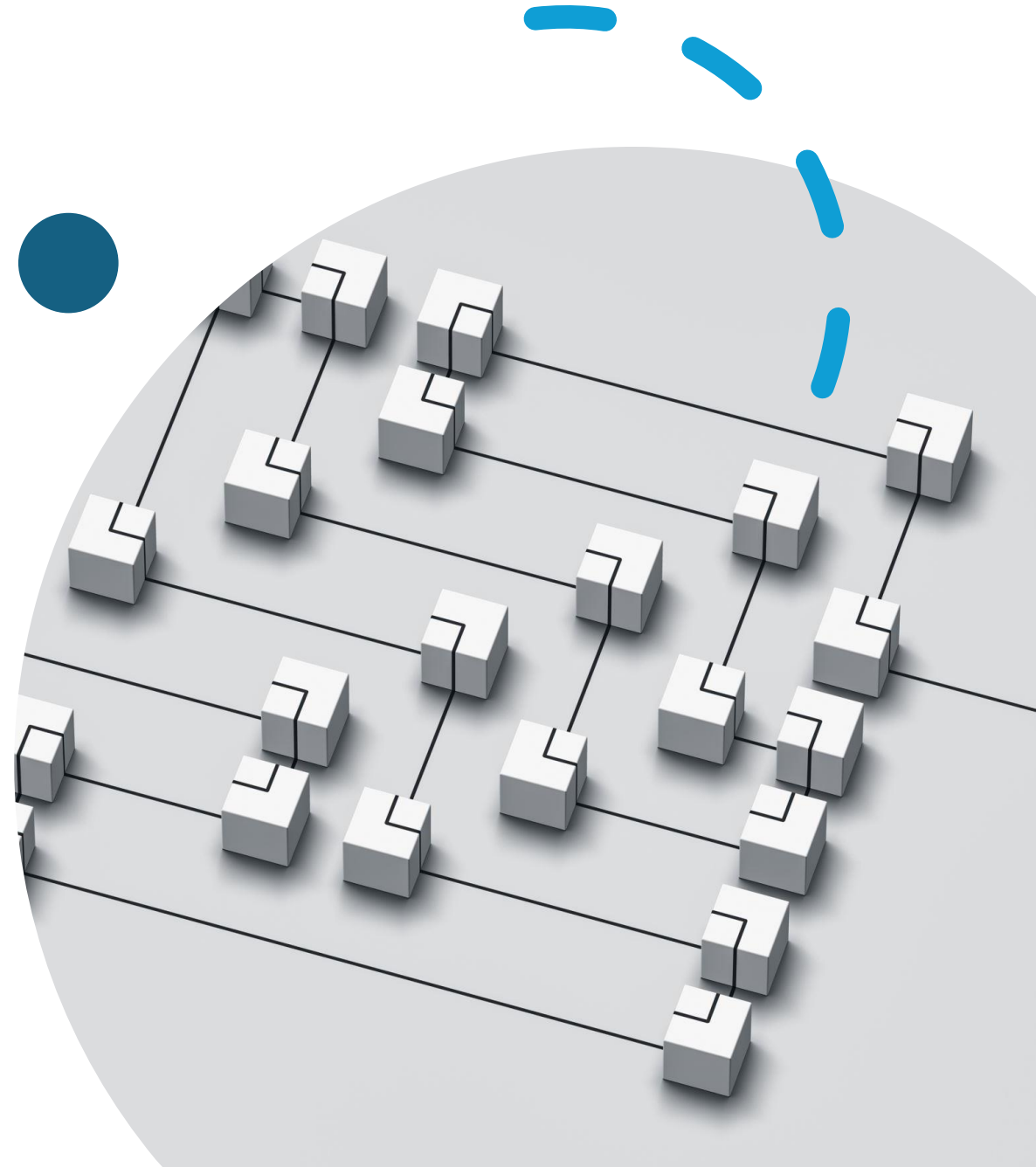University of Sheffield
12th February 2025

Dr David Lydon

Canterbury Centre for Policing Research

Canterbury Christ Church University.

Aim

Examine how a community-centred design approach can challenge predictive policing ethically, legally, and socially.
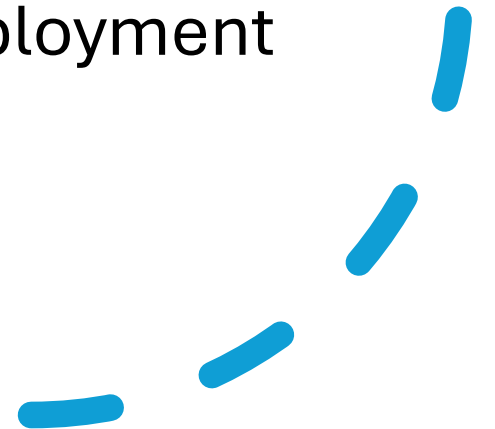
Key Questions:

1. What are the socio-legal frameworks relevant to predictive policing in the UK?

2. How do we ensure community perspectives shape algorithmic design, development and deployment?

3. What benefits and challenges arise from community-centred design?

Thesis in summary

Predictive policing in the UK must adopt a **community-centred design** approach to ensure both operational effectiveness and alignment with ethical and legal standards.

Instead of top-down, technology-driven implementation, the paper advocates for genuine engagement and collaboration between local communities and policing bodies in every stage of predictive policing - from design/development to deployment and evaluation.

Legitimacy and long-term effectiveness of predictive policing hinges on inclusive, community-driven processes backed by robust legal and ethical safeguards.

A holistic approach would reframe predictive policing from a purely technological solution to one that is integrally shaped by, and accountable *to* the communities it is meant to serve.

Context and rationale

Predictive policing growth: rapid adoption in the UK (NPCC, 2023; McDaniel & Pease, 2021).

NPCC – Science and Technology Strategy, 2023, Funding streams, Collaborations

Data-intensive Tools: Reliance on large datasets for real-time forecasting (Home Office, 2024) – _National_ Police Performance 'unit'

Concerns:

- Privacy & human rights.
- Algorithmic bias & systemic inequalities (Veliz, 2024).
- Little or no public engagement on predictives or use of AI decision-making.

Defining community-centred design

Participatory framework:

- Involves residents, community leaders, human rights groups, policing/LA/PCC officials, etc.
- Focuses on <u>collaboration</u> rather than <u>top-down</u> implementation.
- BEFORE decisions are made and launched upon the public.

Practical mechanisms:

- Community advisory boards - Public engagement (precedent here)
- Participatory workshops & real-time feedback loops.
- Emphasis on oversight and inclusive decision-making
- 'Beefing' up Ethics panels.
- (Community-centred design differs from conventional tech-driven approaches).

Relevant Legislation

Human Rights Act 1998

UK GDPR

Equality Act 2010

Emergent Challenges

Non-discrimination in algorithmic decision-making.

Transparency of "black box" AI models/decision-making.
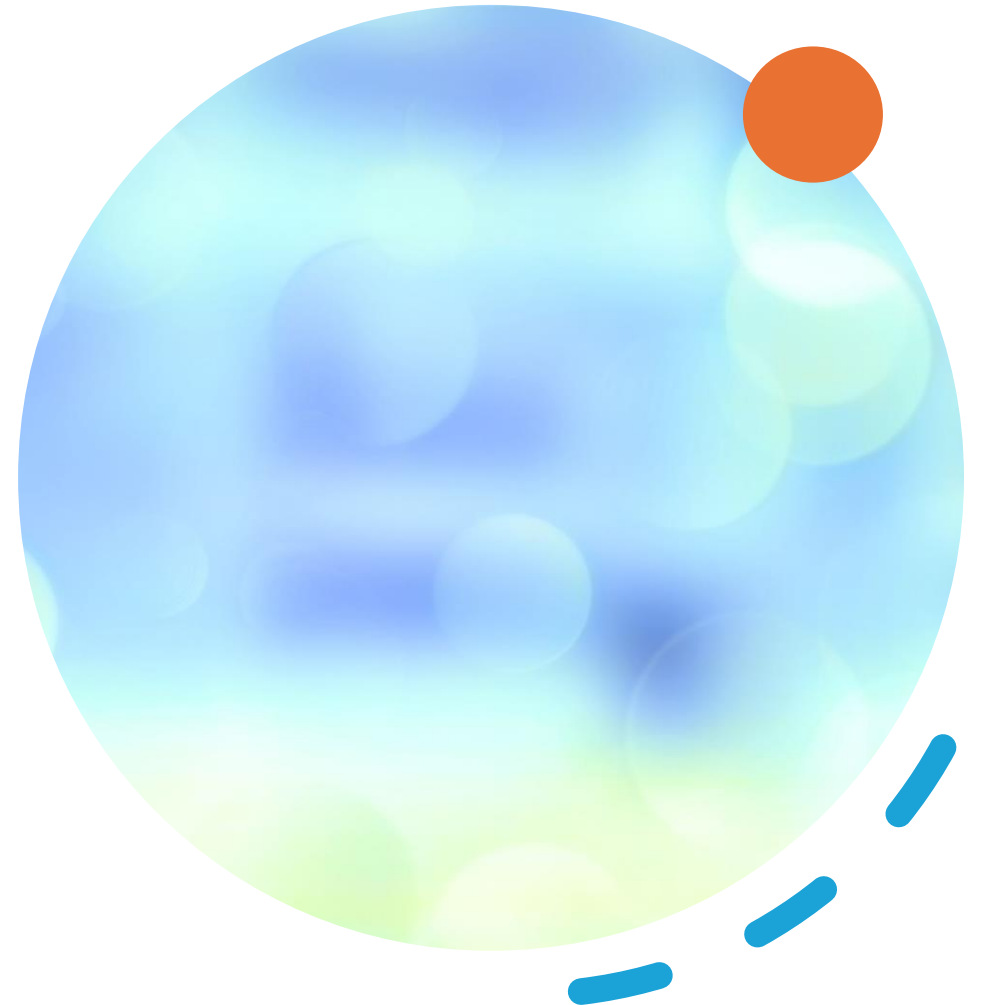
Accountability mechanisms.

Precedent?

Formal and legally mandated mechanisms exist for police-public consultation and engagement already – yet, they appear not to be used for matters relating to predictive policing and AI/digital technologies developed/used by the police

Adaptive legal interpretations

DATA DECISION SHEETS/MANDATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (FLORIDI, 2023).

PUBLIC RIGHT TO CONSULT/CONTEST (BEYOND MERELY PREDICTIVE OUTCOMES AND WHEN HARMS DONE).

Benefits of a Community-Centred Approach

Reduced Bias & Discrimination:

- Early community input can flag problematic data or assumptions.

Trust & Transparency:

- Greater legitimacy when communities are consulted and respected.

Holistic View of Policing/Crime Prevention:

- Identifies social determinants of crime (e.g., poverty, lack of services) beyond techno-solutionism.

Challenges & Limitations

Resource intensiveness:

- Time, funding, and expertise needed for **_sustained_** community engagement.

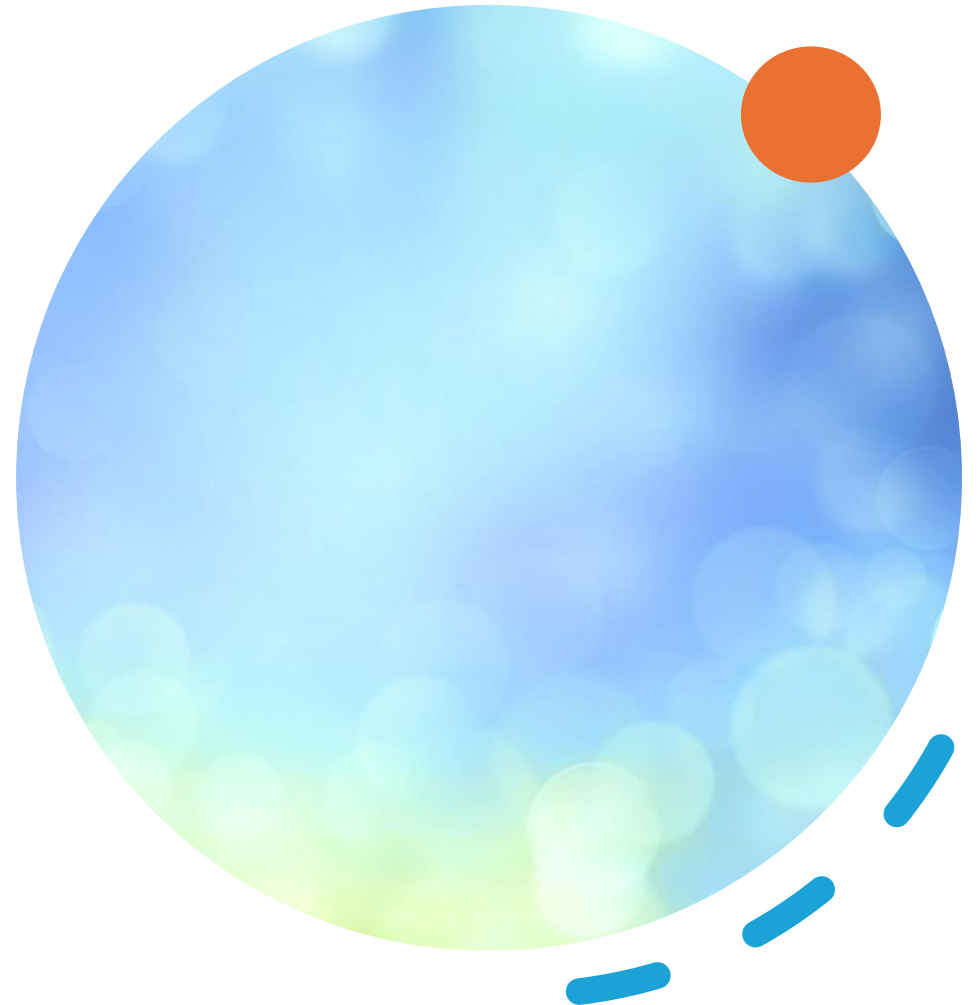**Community fatigue or scepticism:**

- Especially where relations with police have historically been poor.

Representation Gaps:

- Risk of reinforcing existing power imbalances if marginalised groups are not properly included.

Balancing policing & community priorities:

- Police efficiency vs. broader social concerns.

Policy & Legal Recommendations

1. **<u>Mandate</u> Impact Assessments (AIAs):**
   1. Move from advisory to legally binding.
   2. Community consultation as a **<u>core</u>** component.
   3. Humans-in-the-loop – mandatory, not advisory.
2. **Establish Community Oversight Boards:**
   1. Authority to review and potentially halt development/deployment if harms are identified.
3. **Allocate Funding for Pilot Projects:**
   1. Integrate predictive tools with social services and local authorities.
4. **Update Data Protection Laws:**
   1. Clarify consent, and ensure data minimisation, and transparency.

Conclusion & Key Takeaways

- **Central Thesis:** Community-centred design is essential to have legitimate and responsible predictive policing (notwithstanding the problematic nature of PP).

- **Key Message:** Community engagement is not just a procedural formality but a fundamental requirement for trust, transparency, and ethical compliance.

- **Final Thought:** With the right legal, policy, and socially-focused frameworks, the UK could set a benchmark for AI-supported policing BUT it must prioritise human rights and community well-being. NOT the cart before the horse.

Thank You / Contact Information

Email - david.lydon@canterbury.ac.uk

Mobile - 07794 607308

Bibliography

Floridi, L. (2023). *The ethics of artificial intelligence: principles, challenges and opportunities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Home Office (2024). *Improving police productivity*. Available at: Improving police productivity: a response to the recommendations of the Policing Productivity Review (accessible) - GOV.UK. (Accessed 8th February 2025).

House of Lords (2024). *Public Authority Algorithmic and Automated Decision-Making Systems Bill*. Available at: Public Authority Algorithmic and Automated Decision-Making Systems Bill [HL] (Accessed 4th November 2024).

McDaniel, J.L.M., and Pease, K.G. (2021). *Predictive policing and artificial intelligence*. Abingdon: Routledge.

National Police Chiefs' Council (2023). *Science and Technology Strategy*. Available at: NPCC Science and Technology Strategy. (Accessed 8th February 2025).

Vallor, S. (2024). *The AI mirror*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Veliz, C. (2024). The ethics of privacy and surveillance. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdows, H. (2011). *Global ethics: an introduction*. London: Routledge.