

Funding opportunity

Pre-announcement: Trust and confidence in policing: R&I Consortium

Opportunity status:	Upcoming
Funders:	Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) , Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) , Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) , Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) , Medical Research Council (MRC) , Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) , Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) , UK Research and Innovation
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£2,000,000
Maximum award:	£2,000,000
Publication date:	31 July 2026
Opening date:	1 September 2026 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	27 October 2026 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to develop and test dynamic tools and approaches to measure public trust and confidence in policing.

The consortium will develop methods to capture the views of the wider community, underrepresented groups, groups who are a priority for policing and

their partners, with particular focus on the voices of under-18s and victims and survivors of violence against women and girls.

Project leads must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for UKRI funding.

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £2 million. UKRI will fund 80% of the FEC.

The Consortium must start by 1 February 2027 for a duration of 36 months.

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- ! This is a pre-announcement and the information may change.
 - ! The funding opportunity will open on 1 September 2026. More information will be available on this page then.

Who can apply

This opportunity is open to organisations with standard eligibility. [Check if your organisation is eligible](#).

The Project lead must be based at a [UK research organisation eligible for UKRI funding](#).

Business, third sector or government body

Individuals from business, third sector or government body organisations based in the UK can be included on applications as a project co-lead.

Please read the [project co-leads from business, third sector or government bodies policy guidance](#) for details of eligible organisations and costs.

International researchers

International researchers can apply as 'project co-lead (international)'. You should include all other international collaborators (or UK partners not based at approved organisations) as project partners.

Please read the [project co-lead \(international\) policy guidance](#) for details of eligible organisations and costs.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are [committed to achieving equality of opportunity](#) for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- alternative working patterns

UKRI can offer [disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders](#) during the application and assessment process.

What we're looking for

Demand management

Demand management is not currently being applied to this funding opportunity. However, should the level of interest exceed what can be managed within the assessment process, UKRI may introduce limits on the number of applications that can be submitted. Further details will be clearly communicated where this is the case. UKRI encourages organisations to support applicants in preparing well-planned, high-quality applications that are competitive for funding relative to the funding opportunity

Aim

The core aims of this consortium are to:

- develop novel, engaging and dynamic methods which support police and their partners to gain real time feedback on trust and confidence
- test new and innovative ways of improving trust and confidence in the police

Scope

As part of the Safer Streets Research and Development Missions Accelerator Programme (R&D MAP), UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) is launching a funding opportunity focused on understanding trust and confidence in policing in the UK.

The aim is to develop new, engaging and dynamic ways of measuring communities' views, which address gaps in current approaches and remain affordable for police and their partners.

Public trust and confidence in policing have declined in recent years, thought to be driven by a range of factors. Strategies, such as the Safer Streets Mission and the Police Reform White Paper, have been introduced to address this.

Currently trust and confidence in policing in England and Wales is measured through several valuable tools, including:

- Crime Survey for England and Wales (Office for National Statistics)
- The Public Perceptions Tracker (Independent Office for Police Conduct)
- Police and Crime Commissioner Local Crime Surveys

However, while the currently available tools provide a snapshot of public trust and confidence, they do not provide continuous measurement or at a level of granularity to consistently understand the impact of specific policing activities and interventions.

Further, the voices of less heard groups and communities, such as children, victims and survivors of abuse, and justice involved individuals, can be missing through conventional methods of data collection, limiting the representation included in the data.

The challenge aims to address this limitation by investing in the development of new standardised measures, which provide police with real-time data on trust and confidence in their communities, to guide their interventions and activity.

The measures will use evidence based, innovative methods to engage less heard groups, including children, and victims of abuse. To ensure that outputs are useable by police to guide their activities and interventions, they must be affordable, scalable and appealing to the user.

Further, the challenge aims to increase trust and confidence through pilots in at least four areas which identify and test specific policing interventions or approaches. In combination with the measures, this will build understanding of what works well and less well in building and sustaining trust and confidence.

This could include testing the use of technologies, volunteer police, community engagement and public contact methods, understanding the impact of social media campaigns, or piloting new tactics or protocols with ethical policing at their centre.

Under this funding opportunity, one Research & Innovation Consortium will be established.

The consortium will bring together academics (including those with research, lived experience or both, within relevant communities), police, community safety and justice leads, policymakers, third sector organisations and community groups, and relevant industry partners, to co-produce innovative, practical and inclusive measures of confidence and trust in policing.

The consortium will engage with police and other organisations to design and implement a series of pilots intended to increase trust and confidence. The impact of these will be tested through the innovative measures.

The consortium must prioritise:

- understanding and capturing the experiences and perceptions of children under the age of 18
- victims of violence against women and girls

The consortium should also include other underrepresented groups, prioritised with their local forces, and detail and justify their selection. However, it is expected that the measures will be able to provide a comprehensive and dynamic indication of trust and confidence in policing across the British public more generally as well.

The consortium may draw on a range of technologies, which can include social media. The tools and approaches developed should be easy to use, affordable, accessible to a wide range of groups, and capable of capturing real-time data.

Outputs

The consortium is expected to have a core team responsible for delivering its own work packages, but a key feature of the R&I Consortium is its devolved funding pot – a ring-fenced allocation of funding designed to support small-scale pilot projects that test novel, high-risk innovations and that engage with communities. This flexible funding enables rapid experimentation, encourages bold ideas, builds a larger community of practice, and helps surface approaches with strong potential to scale. Through this structure, the consortium will design and manage workstreams to:

- provide an initial scoping phase in which proposed measures which intend to address the challenge will be evaluated. The most promising options will be selected
- develop tools to address the challenge based on the scoping phase findings
- trial and test the tools against real world policing interventions and activity, to identify what works well and less well in building and sustaining confidence and trust, for example, the local use of technologies, volunteers and communication, or the impact of social media campaigns. The areas for investigation will be prioritised with local forces and stakeholders
- refine the tools based on trial and test performance
- integrate the findings of the trial and test data, with the performance of policing interventions and activity to contribute to a Public Confidence in Policing Playbook

Throughout the project the consortium will engage with the R&D MAP steering group established for this project. The steering group terms of reference will include providing expert advice, and direction on proceeding or ceasing activity.

Timescales

The consortium must be ready to mobilise projects from February 2027.

Scoping of initial projects to be completed by July 2027.

Development of tools and interventions, available for piloting by December 2027.

Trial testing and refinement by March 2029.

Contribution to development of Public Confidence in Policing Playbook by December 2029.

Project completion by March 2030.

What is a Research & Innovation Consortium?

A R&I Consortium brings together communities from across academia, public sector at various scales, policing, industry and the third sector, with each partner contributing distinct expertise, experience and relationships. Working collaboratively, members of the consortium cocreate tangible, creative and challenge focused outcomes that address a defined issue and results in real-world impact.

Collaboration

To realise the ambitions of this funding opportunity, projects are expected to set out clear plans for engaging and actively collaborating with relevant stakeholders. You should identify the most relevant stakeholders and describe appropriate and meaningful engagement plans.

Potential stakeholders may include, but are not limited to, the police, third sector, community groups, industry, the public sector, people with lived experience and the public.

By people with lived experience and the public, we mean both individuals and the groups or organisations that support, work with, facilitate engagement with or represent people with lived experience and the public.

Projects should demonstrate how they will work with the relevant research users and stakeholders they have identified to shape, refine and deliver their work. Engagement should ensure that resulting outcomes are meaningful, usable and accessible to those audiences. This is essential to ensure that the consortium can make a substantive contribution to the development and implementation of measurement tools and approaches.

Collaboration in practice

The consortium's core team should include project co-leads from [UK-based research organisations eligible for UKRI funding](#), and [project co-leads from eligible UK-based businesses, third sector organisations and government bodies](#), and could also include [international project co-leads](#), if relevant.

Representation and inclusion of specialist expertise, drawn from across sectors, disciplines and communities, are vital to support the desired outcomes.

The core team should include people who collectively offer:

- core social science leadership, with an in-depth understanding of relevant disciplines, policy challenges and evidence needs
- thematic expertise, place-based expertise or both, beyond the social sciences and beyond academia, reflecting the communities that will be engaged in the consortium (including people with lived experience)
- an ability to engage and collaborate credibly with diverse stakeholders and research users through a range of activities and outputs
- an ability to bring together diverse expertise within projects, conceptually, methodologically and theoretically
- an ability to deliver complex projects to time, considering the variety of activities and outputs
- specialist expertise including programme and project management, finance expertise, a communications function, administrative support and knowledge mobilisation expertise

Applications must include a co-design plan demonstrating how police and members of the target underrepresented communities have been, or will be, involved in designing the tools or approaches before deployment. Co-design must be genuine and documented, and the application must describe the specific design decisions that co-design will inform.

The partnerships formed and research undertaken by the consortium should not be extractive. The consortium must take a transparent, mutually beneficial approach in which the perspectives and priorities of seldom heard communities are respected and meaningfully integrated into outcomes.

Outcomes must therefore work for both the community, and the police. The consortium should articulate its ambition to develop trusted relationships with the communities and stakeholders it engages with. This includes demonstrating how trust and confidence in the project team, the research process, and the proposed co-design activities will be established from the start and maintained throughout.

The consortium will be responsible for the formation of suitable advisory structures. Applications should include detail of the advisory group, including academic and non-academic members, that will support the research and oversee the development of the key activities.

UKRI reserves the right to attend and observe advisory group meetings and suggest advisory group members. Grant holders will also be asked to provide regular and ad hoc project progress reports to UKRI as needed.

Duration

The duration of this award is 36 months.

Projects must start by 1 February 2027.

Funding available

The FEC of your project can be up to £2 million.

UKRI will fund 80% of the FEC.

There will be a proportionate review process towards the end of the award and, dependent on the outcome, additional investment may be made available for further trialling or scaling.

What we will fund

We will fund:

- innovative workstreams and activities, for example, workshops that help to kick-start new collaborations, support the initial testing of new ideas, test tools/approaches, gather feedback from specific stakeholder/community groups, enable co-creation
- Flexible Fund – designed to support small research projects or pilots

Flexible fund

The flexible fund is a ringfenced pot of money that enables the consortium to be responsive, innovative and agile. Flexible funding can be used to:

- co-design tools and approaches with communities/particular less well heard groups
- trial different tools and approaches to test their capability
- work with underrepresented groups and police partners to understand what does and does not work, with the aim to implement changes and improvements
- Prototype or instrument design

You should budget for at least 40% of the full economic cost of the consortium to be assigned to the flexible fund. UKRI will fund 80% of the flexible fund's full economic cost. Flexible fund costs should be included in applications as 'Directly Incurred: Other subheading'. The flexible fund is ring-fenced and funding allocated to the flexible pot cannot be vired for any other use.

The flexible fund should be used to support innovative projects and activities undertaken by researchers outside of the core consortium team. Flexible funds can be allocated to researchers at any [organisation currently eligible for UKRI funding](#).

Exceptionally the network or hub may fund certain project co-leads at 100% FEC where their involvement in the project complies with UKRI and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funding policy. See the [UKRI International PcL policy](#) and [ESRC Business, Third Sector and Government Body PcL Policy](#). These exceptional costs must be met from within the flexible pot funding awarded.

You must define and justify your objectives for the flexible fund and outline how it will be operationalised and governed. You will need to think carefully about how any budget for external distribution will be commissioned through a robust peer review process, and how you will ensure processes for the allocation of funds are fair and transparent within the framework of the [UKRI principles of assessment and decision making](#).

It is expected that the UKRI Safer Streets team will participate in the design of opportunities offered via the flexible fund and the selection of projects.

It is the project lead's responsibility to ensure ongoing governance and correct usage and accountability of the funds. At the application stage, we would expect to see some examples of the types of projects and activities funded via the flexible fund.

The research and innovation challenges are expected to evolve throughout the lifetime of the consortium and should be co-created and collaborative in nature.

The funded projects are expected to engage with the wider programme of activity and report their progress and outcomes to the consortium. These outcomes should be reported as part of the wider consortium programme reporting. UKRI should be consulted throughout the award to ensure good practice is followed in the assessment and allocation of flexible funds.

What we will not fund

We will not fund:

- associated studentships are not eligible for inclusion
- conventional large scale surveys and public opinion polls
- research that makes a purely theoretical or methodological contribution to academic debates
- projects that are not primarily focused on trust and confidence in UK policing

Supporting skills and talent

We encourage you to follow the principles of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) and the [Technician Commitment](#).

Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I)

UKRI is committed in ensuring that effective international collaboration in research and innovation takes place with integrity and within strong ethical frameworks. Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I) is a UKRI work programme designed to help protect all those working in our thriving and collaborative international sector by enabling partnerships to be as open as possible, and as secure as necessary. Our [TR&I Principles](#) set out UKRI's expectations of organisations funded by UKRI in relation to due diligence for international collaboration.

As such, applicants for UKRI funding may be asked to demonstrate how their proposed projects will comply with our approach and expectation towards TR&I, identifying potential risks and the relevant controls you will put in place to help proportionately reduce these risks.

See [further guidance and information about TR&I](#), including where applicants can find additional support.

How to apply

We are running this funding opportunity on the new UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service so please ensure that your organisation is registered. You cannot apply on the Joint Electronic Submissions (Je-S) system. We will publish full details on how to apply when the funding opportunity opens.

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

Full details of the assessment process will be given when the full funding opportunity is launched.

Contact details

Get help with your application

If you have a question and the answers aren't provided on this page

The helpdesk is committed to helping users of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service as effectively and as quickly as possible. In order to manage cases at peak volume times, the helpdesk will triage and prioritise those queries with an imminent opportunity deadline or a technical issue.

Enquiries raised where information is available on the Funding finder opportunity page and should be understood early in the application process (for example, regarding eligibility, content or remit of a funding opportunity) will not constitute a priority case and will be addressed as soon as possible.

Contact details

For help and advice on costings and writing your application please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

For questions related to this specific funding opportunity please contact SaferStreetsChallengeThree@ukri.org

Any queries regarding the system or the submission of applications through the Funding Service should be directed to the helpdesk.

Email: support@funding-service.ukri.org
Phone: 01793 547490

Our phone lines are open:

- Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5:00pm
- Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

To help us process queries more efficiently, we request that users highlight the council and opportunity name in the subject title of their email query, include the application reference number, and refrain from contacting more than one mailbox at a time.

For further information on submitting an application read [How applicants use the Funding Service](#).

Timeline

○ **1 September 2026 9:00am**
Opening date

○ **August 2026, exact date to be confirmed**
Webinar

○ **27 October 2026 4:00pm**

Closing date

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/trust-and-confidence-in-policing-ri-consortium>