

Better outcomes for high-stake police investigations in the UK

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The role of the Interview Manager is critical to the success of high-stake crime investigations but research shows that there is little understanding of the role both outside and even inside U.K. police forces.

With little formal training mistakes are often made. A seven-year program of [research](#) conducted at the University of Portsmouth, which gathered data from sixteen U.K. police forces and two counterterrorist teams, showed that this role has been neglected for too long and could be leading to some cases being put at risk.

Interview Managers are tasked with developing effective interview strategies that ensure all parties involved in the process are dealt with ethically and legally. They are also expected to construct an interview strategy for high-stake crime investigations which is designed to cover advice on interview processes including: coordination of the interview, monitoring of the interview, and evaluation of the interview.

Lead author, Martin Vaughan, from the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Portsmouth, spent fifteen years as an Interview Manager. He said, "Until now, there has been a deficiency in the research of this critical role, which has been in existence for twenty years. Officers are being asked to do very responsible and complex jobs with very little experience or training. The stakes are often very high and if Interview Managers get it wrong an entire investigation can fail."

A sample of interview management strategies of high-stake investigations of rape and murder from three forces were reviewed by the researchers. Findings revealed significant failings in the system.

One of the main roles of the Interview Manager is to provide strategic advice on the interview process—including providing the relevant legislative knowledge, outlining interview strategies for the Senior Investigating Officer to consider, and briefing interviewing officers and others involved in the interview.

The program of research found that 70% of the competencies that

underpin the national occupational standards (NOS) concerning the make-up of an interview strategy were deemed not fit for purpose. This was not surprising as there is limited structure and training given nationally on how to construct a robust interview strategy. Another area where the Interview Manager seemed to be underperforming was the briefing of the appropriate adult—an important safeguard within an investigative interview with a vulnerable suspect.

Martin Vaughan added: "Each manager will have different experiences and it's important to match the right case with the right experience. Early on in our research we discovered that people were being deployed to jobs they weren't trained to do. Frequently the case would be allocated to the person with availability instead of the right skills to manage it.

"There have been some tragic cases that we have learnt from, and training Interview Managers in relation to vulnerability management and construction of the interview strategy is key."

The information and learning that has been gathered over this seven-year program of research has enabled the team from the University of Portsmouth to develop a practical solution to the shortfalls found—LOST WEBSITES—a guidance Framework for the construction of ethical and legally sound investigative interviewing strategies that Interview Managers could use when interviewing suspects during high-stake crime investigations. The name LOST WEBSITES is an acronym for the twelve main responsibilities of the Interview Manager.

Becky Milne, Professor of Forensic Psychology, University of Portsmouth, said, "For too long this role has been neglected and Interview Managers have been trying to do their best with little training or guidance. The role requires a unique set of skills that should not be underestimated. Interview Managers need a deep understanding of how to question suspects and how to manage them when they are in custody,

especially those who are vulnerable. They need to be able to look at a suspect and tailor the interview strategy to that specific person otherwise the [interview](#) could fail.

The LOST WEBSITES framework will hopefully be an invaluable tool for all police forces dealing with high stake investigations. It will enable these investigations to be taken to courts with high levels of confidence and in turn this should ultimately lead to higher levels of convictions and greater justice for victims of these crimes."

Provided by University of Portsmouth

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