

# REMOTE INTERVIEWING AND LEGAL REPRESENTATION OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: IS IT 'REMOTELY' POSSIBLE?

HEADLINE REPORT 1

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Economic  
and Social  
Research Council



*"The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on many areas of society and various restrictions around the world have meant that some individuals have not had face-to-face legal representation in police stations. Some interviews have also had to be conducted remotely, which has impacted on criminal justice systems worldwide. The research team, together with our external partners (Fair Trials and 3DVSL), are proud to be working with our national and international key stakeholders to improve research and practice in this much needed area."*

Professor Gavin Oxburgh, Principal Investigator

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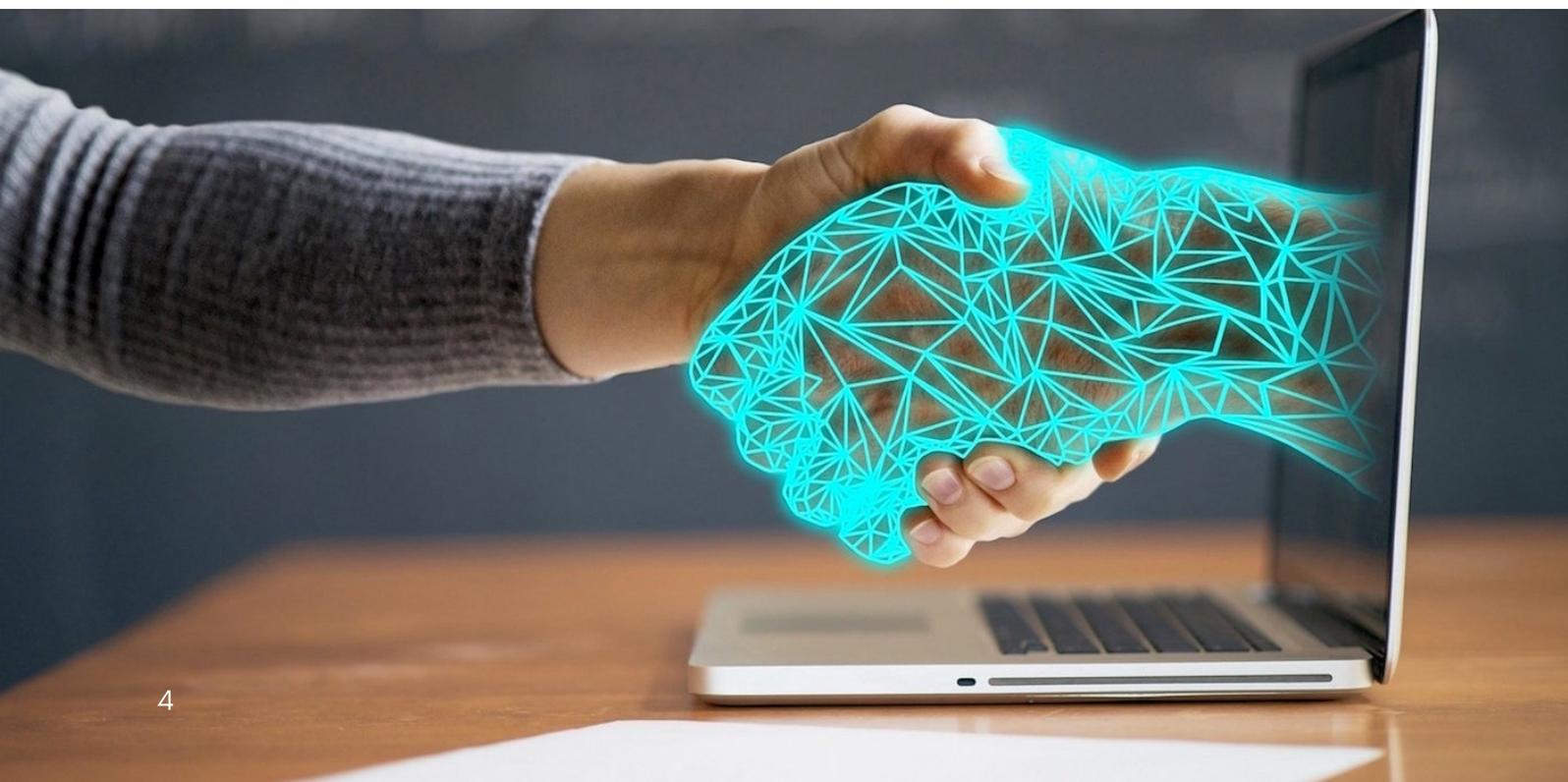
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# BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Reacting to COVID-19 required significant, immediate changes to Government processes including the Criminal Justice System. Clearly, police investigations must continue, and victims, witnesses and suspects of crime must be interviewed. However, lockdowns and social distancing measures means that investigators are unable to conduct interviews, and legal/third party professionals are unable to communicate with clients in a traditional format. Thus, remote communication is one such way currently being conducted across the UK, however, this is not standardised and the current research-base to prove its efficacy is extremely limited.

Our research team comprises experts in the field and will work in collaboration with our national and international partners. We will produce timely and much-needed evidence-based reports and resources to enable immediate and direct impact for our partners and stakeholders.



# RESEARCH TEAM



**PROFESSOR GAVIN  
OXBURGH**

Head of Policing Studies at  
Northumbria University, UK



**PROFESSOR DAVE  
WALSH**

Professor of Criminal  
Investigations at De  
Montfort University,  
Leicester, UK



**DR NICCI MACLEOD**

Senior Lecturer in Forensic  
Linguistics at Northumbria  
University, UK



**DR LAURA FARRUGIA**

Senior Lecturer in Forensic  
Psychology at Sunderland  
University, UK



**JAGO RUSSELL**

Qualified solicitor and  
Chief Executive of Fair  
Trials



**DR ALENA NASH**

Research Fellow on this  
project



# KEY STAKEHOLDERS

We are pleased to be working with the following partners on this project:



[www.npcc.police.uk](http://www.npcc.police.uk)



[www.appropriateadult.org.uk](http://www.appropriateadult.org.uk)



[www.college.police.uk](http://www.college.police.uk)



Commission for International Justice and Accountability  
[www.cijaonline.org](http://www.cijaonline.org)



[www.met.police.uk](http://www.met.police.uk)



[www.politihogskolen.no](http://www.politihogskolen.no)



[www.south-wales.police.uk](http://www.south-wales.police.uk)



[www.icc-cpi.int](http://www.icc-cpi.int)



[www.northumbria.police.uk](http://www.northumbria.police.uk)

# PROJECT UPDATES

## APPOINTMENT OF RESEARCH FELLOW

Dr. Alena Nash started working on the project on 1st February as a Research Fellow. Alena completed her PhD at Aston University in 2019, where she explored how various investigative interviewing techniques such as rapport-building and gaze aversion can affect witness memory reports. She also worked as a Research Associate on another project prior to starting her job on the current research. Working on this project is an exciting opportunity to contribute to timely and impactful research alongside national and international partners.



# PROJECT UPDATES

## LAWYERS' SURVEY WITH FAIR TRIALS

Work is currently under way to explore the experiences, benefits, advantages and disadvantages of providing remote legal assistance to suspects in police custody in the United Kingdom. A survey has been created, and it is currently being distributed to defence lawyers by Fair Trials, a human rights organisation that works to improve the right of fair trial for accused individuals and has a network of lawyers. The survey aims to produce timely and much-needed evidence-based reports and resources to enable immediate and direct impact for all partners and stakeholders.

**If you are a lawyer or a police station representative and would to take part in this research, please [click here](#) to learn more.** If you experience any difficulties with accessing this link, please contact [alena.nash@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:alena.nash@northumbria.ac.uk).



## RECENT RESEARCH BY FAIR TRIALS

***Not remotely fair? Access to a lawyer in the police station during the Covid-19 pandemic***, a joint report between Fair Trials, Transform Justice and the National Appropriate Adult Network has been published. It includes 315 survey responses from appropriate adults active in all police forces in England and Wales, exploring implementation of the protocol and the effects of providing remote legal assistance, particularly on children and mentally vulnerable people. Please [click here](#) to read the full report.

# FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

## WORKING REMOTELY

We are currently developing work to find out how police organisations have adapted to working remotely, particularly with conducting interviews and communicating with clients. For example, how such interviews might be carried out (e.g., using different digital means) and the feasibility of gaining additional support from other professionals such as registered intermediaries or interpreters.

These topics will be investigated with two surveys - one focusing on a more managerial level, with the second one focusing on everyday practical issues from investigators' perspective.

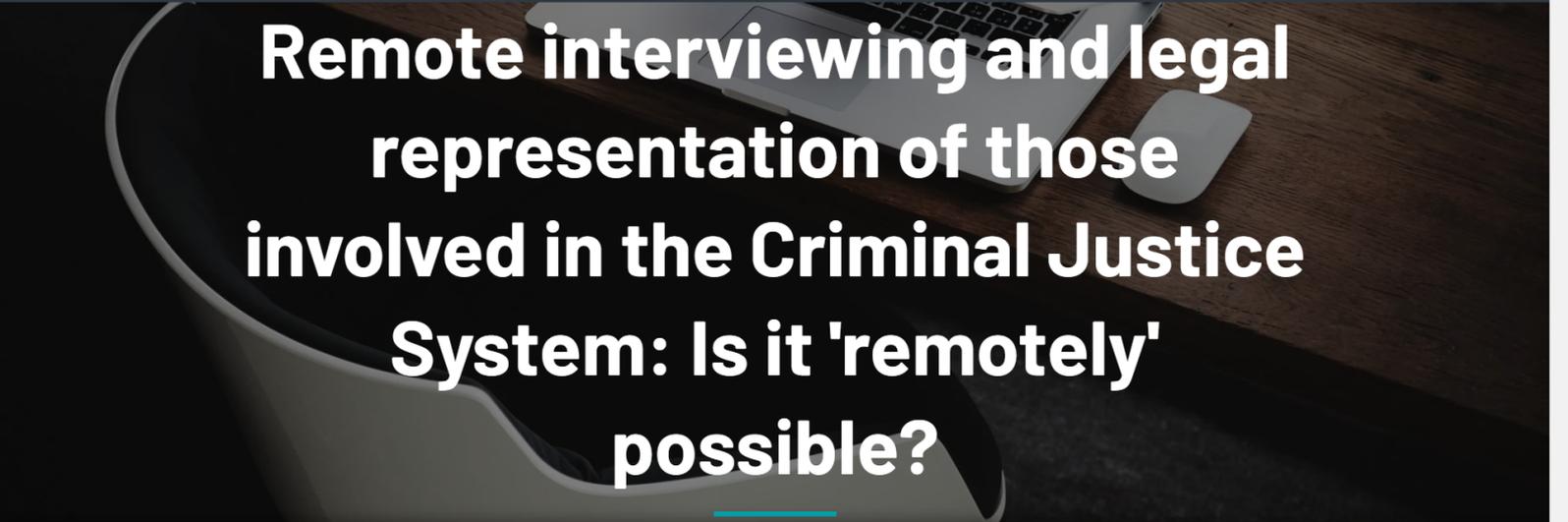
We will recruit participants from our national and international partners in addition to active investigators from policing and law enforcement organisations to take part in the research.

## DISSEMINATION OF LAWYERS' SURVEY

Once recruitment and data collection is complete for the lawyers' survey with Fair Trials, we will collate and analyse the data. The findings will be disseminated with the aim of establishing the perceived efficacy of remote communication on the conduct of interactions between the lawyer and their client. This will include the quality of information and the ability to hear and communicate effectively.



For more information on the research project, please [click here](#) to visit our website, which will be continually updated.



# Remote interviewing and legal representation of those involved in the Criminal Justice System: Is it 'remotely' possible?

For any questions or queries, please contact Alena Nash on  
[alena.nash@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:alena.nash@northumbria.ac.uk)

