

**Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences**

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| **Proposed Title:**  WMNow: An evaluation of the scheme and an exploration on its impact on the public’s fear of crime and victimisation. |
| **School:** School of Social Sciences in collaboration with the School of English |
| **Proposed Supervisory Team:**  Dr Chrisa Pornari (School of Social Sciences/Department of Psychology)  Dr Laura Hammond (School of Social Sciences/Department of Psychology)  Dr Tatiana Tkacukova (School of English) |
| **Abstract:**  This aim of this project is to evaluate the effectiveness of West Midland Police’s (WMP) free community 2-way messaging system called WMNow. WMNow delivers up to date, and local to the users, information from police and partners directly to the signed-up users’ inbox, including a range of information, from local crime updates, local Neighbourhood Watch information, appeals, and safety/crime prevention advice. Users can also provide feedback on these messages, including comments and thoughts. This scheme was developed in an effort to improve the flow of information between WMP and the people living and working across the West Midlands, aiming at increasing public engagement. However, initial evaluations of the scheme conducted by WMP indicate a range of barriers with regards to participation in the scheme, and concerns have been raised as to whether they are having the desired effects and how effective these methods actually are. Independent evaluations of the scheme are currently lacking, and it is unclear how the public receive and utilise such information, and whether they perceive it to be of use/value. It may be that rather than reassuring communities and making them feel safer with regards to crime and criminal vulnerability, receipt of information regarding crime on our own doorstep actually increases fear of crime.  This project will be conducted in collaboration with WMP and it will adopt both a qualitative and quantitative methodology. The findings will assist WMP in gaining an understanding of whether the WMNow messaging service is successful in achieving its aims, or instead whether WMNow might be increasing fear of crime rather than increasing a feeling of safety and trust in the police. As such, the research will provide insight into what needs to and could be done to make it more effective for community engagement and reducing public fear of crime. Suggestions and guidelines will be made to WMP with regards to the most effective way various messages could be communicated. |
| **Research Environment:**  The student will become a member of the Crime and Society research centre within the School of Social Sciences. The Crime and Society Research Centre aims to investigate and develop understanding of societal, criminological and psychological processes underpinning crime, criminality and criminal justice proceedings and criminal case outcomes, through the creation and dissemination of excellent and impactful research, innovation and scholarship, as defined in the School of Sciences Research Strategy, which adheres to and promotes the university’s core values at each and every stage, from inception through to a lasting legacy. The centre itself has many active researchers and all work produced is expected to have a significant impact and influence on communities.  All centres have a strong outward focus, both developing interdisciplinary links and collaborating with partners at local, national and international levels. |
| **Applicant Requirements:**  Essential:   * A good Honours degree (at least 2.1) in a cognate discipline (e.g., Social Sciences, Psychology, Criminology) * A demonstrable ability to conduct independent research.   Desirable:   * A Master’s degree in a cognate discipline. * Evidence of awareness and understanding of subject area. * Experience of conducting evaluations.   The successful applicant will be expected to obtain the PG Cert Research Practice as part of their development and progress in the PhD programme. |
| **Contact: Name, e-mail and telephone number:**  Dr Chrisa Pornari  [Chrisa.Pornari@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:Chrisa.Pornari@bcu.ac.uk)  0121 331 6395  Dr Laura Hammond  [Laura.Hammond@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:Laura.Hammond@bcu.ac.uk)  01210 331 7263  Dr Tatiana Tkacukova  [Tatiana.Tkacukova@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:Tatiana.Tkacukova@bcu.ac.uk)  0121 331 7230 |