



Major funding for flagship research project on AI in Law Enforcement

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## Major funding for flagship research project on AI in Law Enforcement

A Northumbria University-led research team has received major funding from Responsible AI UK (RAI UK) to investigate the future use of probabilistic AI in law enforcement.

Entitled [\*PROBable Futures\*](#) – *Probabilistic AI Systems in Law Enforcement Futures*, the 4-year interdisciplinary research project is one of only three RAI UK Keystone projects and has secured funding of £3.4 million (80% FEC). It will be led by Northumbria Law School's [\*Professor Marion Oswald MBE\*](#), 'in

collaboration with a team of multi-disciplinary co-investigators from Northumbria, Glasgow ([Michele Sevegnani](#) and [Muffy Calder](#)), Northampton ([Claire Paterson-Young](#) and [Michael Maher](#)), Leicester ([Carole McCartney](#)), Cambridge ([Adrian Weller](#)) and Aberdeen (Lizzie Tiarks) universities, and a number of law enforcement, commercial technology, third-sector and academic partners.

The launch of PROBabLE Futures was announced at the [CogX Festival in Los Angeles](#) – a flagship event bringing together tech industry global leaders, changemakers and policy makers to address the question ‘how do we get the next 10 years right’.

Explaining the background to the research project and its impact, Professor Oswald said “AI based technologies can deliver measurable benefits for police, courts and law enforcement bodies, helping to tackle digital data overload, identify previously unknown risks, and increase operational efficiencies. But a key problem for responsible AI is that the uncertain or *probable* nature of outputs is often obscured or misinterpreted. AI tools take inputs from one part of the law enforcement system, and their outputs have real-world, possibly life changing, effects in another part. Our research will aim to improve data quality and help ensure that we avoid miscarriages of justice.

Professor Oswald added “Our project, working alongside our law enforcement, third sector and commercial partners, will develop a framework to understand the implications of uncertainty and to build confidence in future Probabilistic AI in law enforcement, with the interests of justice and responsibility at its heart. We’re excited to work with RAI UK and the other Keystone projects to consider the implications of our research and our framework for other complex domains with probabilistic AI, such as healthcare, and to learn from their research.”

Professor Gopal Ramchurn, Chief Executive Officer of RAI UK, said: “These projects are the keystones of the Responsible AI UK programme. They have been chosen by the community because they address the most pressing challenges that society faces with the rapid advances in AI. We are excited to be announcing these projects at CogX in Los Angeles where some of the most influential AI representatives from industry and government are present.

“The concerns around AI are not just for governments and industry to deal

with. It is important that AI experts engage with researchers from other disciplines and policy makers to ensure that we can better anticipate the issues that will be caused by AI. Our keystone projects will do exactly that and work with the rest of the AI ecosystem to bring others to our cause and amplify the impact of the research to maximise the benefit of AI to everyone in society”.

Professor Louise Bracken, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange) at Northumbria, added: “AI is developing at a rapid pace and its impact on society is significant and far reaching, so this is a hugely important research project. To be the institutional lead, and to be collaborating with other leading universities underscores Northumbria’s global position at the forefront of research in responsible AI.”

Deputy Chief Constable, Chris Todd, NPCC lead for data analytics said: “Advancements in AI are going to bring about significant change to the way policing and the criminal justice system operate. When used appropriately, technology enables policing to be more precise, more efficient and ultimately offer the public a better service.

“As stated in the NPCC Artificial Intelligence Charter, all forces are committed to using AI responsibly and with the support of the public. To achieve this, we must have clear definitions and ways to scrutinise, assure and oversee our development and use of AI-assisted tools and this is something the Keystone project will help to deliver.

“We welcome this work and look forward to seeing what impact it can have on policing.”

Professor Oswald’s research expertise covers the legal and ethical implications of new technologies in policing and national security. She has provided evidence and advice to the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee on the use of new technologies in the justice system, including facial recognition and AI. She is also a Senior Research Associate with the Alan Turing Institute.

Northumbria University has a global reputation for research and teaching in AI and was recently awarded £9 million by UK Research and Innovation to establish a Centre for Doctoral Training in the field of AI. To be known as the Citizen-Centred AI (CCAI), it will focus on the inclusion of citizens in the

design and evaluation of AI – helping to make the rapidly advancing technology work for ordinary people.

Funding has been awarded by Responsible AI UK (RAi UK) and form the pillars of its £31million programme that will run for four years. RAI UK is backed by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), through the UKRI Technology Missions Fund and EPSRC.

Find out more at: <https://www.rai.ac.uk/>

For more information on Northumbria Law School please visit [www.northumbria.ac.uk/law](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/law)

For more information on research at Northumbria please visit [www.northumbria.ac.uk/research](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/research)

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