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Researching ethical review to support Responsible AI in Policing

Northumbria University, Newcastle, has secured research funding worth £286,000 FEC from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to support a project to investigate the role of ethical review in contributing to responsible artificial intelligence (AI) in policing.

The funding is part of a wider £100 million boost for AI research announced today by UK Research and Innovation ([UKRI](#)), including funding by AHRC through its Bridging Responsible AI Divides (BRAID) programme that will define what responsible AI is across sectors such as education, policing and

the creative industries.

Entitled an *Ethical review to support Responsible AI in Policing – A Preliminary Study of West Midlands Police's specialist data ethics review committee*, the Northumbria research will be led by principal investigator [Professor Marion Oswald MBE](#) from Northumbria Law School, in collaboration with colleagues from Northumbria, Northampton, Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities, and partnering with the office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and West Midlands Police.

The project will investigate how the role of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and the West Midlands Police Data Ethics Committee can improve the legitimacy and responsibility of AI deployed by the police and how its advice has influenced technical developments. The research will also consider key challenges of the ethical review process and how the views and interests of marginalised groups can be better represented.

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 part-time Senior Research Associate with the Safe and Ethical AI Programme at the Alan Turing Institute.

Commenting on the AHRC funding she said: "The deployment of AI and emerging technologies by the police promises more effective use of data for the prevention and detection of crime but brings with it considerable threats of disproportionality and interference with fundamental rights. The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and West Midlands Police data ethics committee aims to bridge the gap between ethical reflection, scientific rigour and a focus on human rights, thus contributing to responsible AI in policing. Our research brings together an experienced and integrated team combining expertise in law, computer science, criminal and social justice, and presents a unique opportunity to analyse operationalisation of AI tools in policing, and the impacts of advice from the West Midlands Police data ethics committee. We are delighted to have been awarded funding for this project and to be supporting the wider aims of the AHRC's BRAID programme."

Professor Christopher Smith, Executive Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council and UKRI International Champion said: "The impact of AI

can already be felt in many areas of our lives. It will transform our jobs and livelihoods, and impact on areas as diverse as education, policing and the creative industries, and much more besides. UKRI's research will be at the heart of understanding this new world. The research which AHRC announced today will provide lasting contributions to the definition and practice of responsible AI, informing the practice and tools that are crucial to ensure this transformative technology provides benefits for all of society. These projects are vital and timely interventions from across the research ecosystem to support responsible, safe and beneficial uses of the transformative power of AI."

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.

For more information on Northumbria Law School please visit www.northumbria.ac.uk

For more information on research at Northumbria please visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/research

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences
rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk
07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences
andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk
07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk
07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact
Student Communications Manager
james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact
PR and Media Officer
kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact
PR and Media Officer
gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk