

Future of Policing Report Series

INFLUENCE POLICING:

**Strategic communications, digital nudges,
and behaviour change marketing in Scottish
and UK preventative policing**

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In 2020, the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) provided funding to support several research projects which focussed on challenges and emerging issues related to the **future of policing** within Scotland.

Five projects were awarded and will be presented as part of the SIPR Future of Policing Research Report series.

Published August 2023



Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Scottish Institute for Policing Research for their support and funding for this research. We would also like to thank our participants in the two focus groups we have run so far. Finally, we extend our thanks to the SVRU and to Police Scotland - particularly to the Police Scotland Communications Specialist Services Team - for their considerable help, openness, and generosity in this research.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: 'INFLUENCE POLICING' IN SCOTLAND AND THE UK

Influence policing is an emerging phenomenon: **the use of digital targeted 'nudge' communications campaigns by police forces and law enforcement agencies to directly achieve strategic policing outcomes.** While scholarship, civil society, and journalism have focused on *political* influence and targeting (often by malicious actors), there has been next to no research on the use of these influence techniques and technologies by governments for preventative law enforcement. With grant funding from SIPR and support from The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR), we have studied how this novel mode of police practice is developing through an in-depth study of Police Scotland's strategic communications unit and a wider systematic overview of these campaigns across the UK.

Key findings: Police Scotland

1. Since 2018, Police Scotland has had a dedicated team devoted to strategic communications marketing campaigns - developing methods for crime prevention through communications. These adapt classic forms of 'strategic communications' and 'social marketing' to incorporate novel techniques and tools, tailoring them to crime prevention - particularly the use of behaviour change theory and digital targeting and segmentation infrastructures
2. These influence (including 'nudge') communications go beyond 'information' campaigns or those which simply tell or ask the public to do something, and instead incorporate psychological design elements which attempt to alter the decision environment in which members of the public make choices about their behaviour - often linking up with other interventions such as the redesign of public services.
3. In a wider policing context, these innovations can be understood as a development of problem-oriented and intelligence-led policing models in a digital context
4. The campaigns - focusing on areas with a perceived 'online' component, such as violence against women and girls, online grooming, and hate crime - are conceived as part of a public health prevention approach, often using perpetrator-focused adverts to deliver messages to those profiled as 'at risk' of offending. This is part of a move away from campaigns which simply rely on telling the public what to do, or which focus on putting the responsibility for crime prevention on victims.

5. There are two main elements to campaigns - the first are attempts to directly change people's behaviour through 'nudge' communications, and the second are wider attempts to shape the cultural narratives that are perceived to contribute to crime.
6. In Scotland, digital targeting is mostly used at the broad demographic level (i.e. age and gender), although some use of fine-detail location and interest-based targeting is evident.
7. Online targeted paid advertising is used in conjunction with conventional media buying, and organic and 'earned' communication with stakeholders and civil society partners.
8. Campaigns are largely developed in house, but the media buying and some campaign development is done with commercial advertising and marketing partners. Civil Society stakeholders play a key role in consultation and development of campaigns, and in the 'organic' promotion.
9. The digital platforms themselves play a major role in shaping what is possible, sometimes redirecting the intervention through algorithmic processes or promoting organic sharing.
10. Evaluation of the campaigns is able to use some outcome measures but also still relies heavily on 'vanity' metrics (such as apparent views and click-throughs) provided by the platforms - and effects are difficult to measure.
11. The use of influencers (usually well-known public figures) in some campaigns to amplify messages is a clear innovation - though raises some concerns. These influencers have legitimacy with and knowledge of targeted communities, and generally retain their audiences across multiple platforms (even when these platforms change or fail).
12. We suggest the term Influence officers to describe the professional police communications specialists who design and develop these campaigns, who represent a growing new role in 'frontline' policing.
13. The centralised unit and single national force structure in Scotland has had some positive effects when compared to English forces, providing mechanisms for accountability (and saying 'no' to unsuitable or harmful campaigns) where more formal structures don't yet exist. However, this is reliant on the tacit knowledge and expertise of a small group of practitioners - and some aspects of this approach would benefit from being on a more formal institutional footing.

14. Despite its proliferation across the UK, this is a distinctively Scottish mode of 'influence policing' and the 'influence officer' as a possible emerging role within policing.

Key findings: law enforcement and security in the wider United Kingdom

1. The use of targeted digital influence, or behaviour change, campaigns is widespread across UK law enforcement, but there is enormous variation in models, practices, theories, and institutional relationships between different forces and agencies; this often looks very different to how things are done in Scotland.
2. Within an extremely diverse range of practices, we identify six broad models underpinning these campaigns: based respectively on *choice*, *risk*, *co-ordination*, *community*, *opportunity*, and *territory*.
3. Campaigns are run by many different kinds of law enforcement bodies and their partners - including local divisions and forces, centralised agencies, government departments, security services, charity partners, local PCCs, and others.
4. There is a major focus on violence prevention (often through local VRUs), counter-radicalisation, and security themes. More recent campaigns include action around online harms and there has been a large increase in communications prevention activity around violence against women and girls in the last two years; though topics vary extremely widely in line with local police strategic priorities.
5. Targeting ranges from the very broad (all men in Manchester, or all people in England) to the hyper-specific, incorporating interests, behaviours, and very detailed location data (combining MOSAIC marketing, Census data and police intelligence with social media platform profiling techniques). Police are able to develop 'patchwork profiles' built up of *multiple categories provided by ad platforms* and detailed location-based categories using the platform targeting categories to reach extremely specific groups.
6. Paradoxically, as platforms have refined or in some cases removed the ability to target people by ethnicity and religion directly, this appears to have caused many law enforcement actors to adapt by adopting extremely invasive targeting via proxies for these protected characteristics, such as low-level postcode location data or microtargeting via interests and behaviours.
7. We have found evidence of some unethical and harmful practices in particular areas - most notably, the invasive targeting of extremely vulnerable refugees by the Home Office. More generally, we see the repeated use of language, interest and fine-detail location as proxies to access protected characteristics, such as ethnicity and sexual orientation. There is some particularly troubling and invasive targeting of Muslim and Black communities. The ethics of targeting are extremely complex, and law

enforcement and public sector campaigns add a new dimension to these issues.

8. The different forms this takes are clearly shaped by local strategic priorities, wider political environments, and the operational history of particular forces and agencies - particularly where there is a history of significant counter-terror activity and counter-radicalisation work.
9. Commercial marketing and advertising partners are promoting their expertise to forces, and work as contractors in development and media buying.
10. Some forces are being 'left behind' and doing essentially no strategic marketing - in these areas, much is being done by PCCs, charities, NGOs, delivery partners, charities, and other non-police actors, including national agencies
11. There is generally more emphasis on 'hotspots' and predictive policing approaches (often under *risk* or *opportunity* models) in England, with nudge communications offering a 'smart policing' complement to operational deployments.
12. There appears to be little central oversight at the bureaucratic or political level, and the legal and political position of these approaches is unclear - campaigns are often visible but the targeting is hidden. Some centralised agencies (e.g. the NCA) are much more developed in terms of accountability, legal case, proportionality, and ethics
13. Emerging platform Ad Libraries of political and social campaigns, particularly that of Meta, are making the use and reach of public sector advertising more transparent. We note that this has resulted in the platforms potentially revealing information intended by government agencies to be kept secret.
14. The strategic priorities of the Government Communications Service (GCS), including innovative use of new technology, sharing of audience data, professionalisation, and partnership working can draw directly on developments within policing in the UK, but also needs to support and reinforce the unique requirements of policing and the particularly sensitive nature of the social issues addressed in police communications

Outline and recommendations

The spread of this approach shows the clear (if still embryonic) emergence of a novel mode of operational policing (influence policing) - and a new kind of 'frontline' police sub-profession (the influence officer). Police communications officers are attempting to shape the culture and the behaviour of the public directly through behavioural marketing campaigns in order to achieve core strategic priorities around crime prevention. The digital tools provided by social media platforms allow them to find specific groups that are harder to reach - to project power and stake ownership of crime problems and online harms in digital spaces in which the police presence has struggled to establish itself.

We begin with an overview of the current landscape of digital communications, setting out the history and context of Police Scotland's use of strategic communications approaches. We then discuss our study design and methods. This empirical section of this study is split into three sub-reports. The first of these is a study of Police Scotland's strategic communications team, involving interviews and document-based research. The second is a review of four case studies of campaigns run by law enforcement in Scotland, based on analysis of key campaign documents. The third report extends the scope to all law enforcement digital campaigns run in the UK on Meta platforms, and is accompanied by a dataset of 12,000 campaign segments, how they were targeted, and audience data. We then discuss our key findings across the research project. In our final chapter, we give a set of key conclusions and recommendations.

Based on our research, we make a number of recommendations within the following five key areas. Our detailed recommendations can be found in Chapter 7 of the report.

Recommendation 1: Transparency

There is a clear need for improved transparency around the use of digital targeting for strategic communications campaigns by law enforcement; we recommend the creation of a public register of digital campaigns and the targeting approaches used.

Recommendation 2: Formalising regulation and oversight

While some areas of good practice are emerging, there is little consistency between different forces and agencies, and no formal regulation within law enforcement other than that used for traditional communications. Much of the good and ethical practice is reliant on 'load-bearing' experts and their professional experience, and there are numerous examples of unethical practice in the wider UK. We recommend the formalisation of law-enforcement-specific best practices and accountability frameworks that recognise the unique environment of law enforcement, and the

additional capacities and risks of these approaches compared to traditional communications.

Recommendation 3: Improving monitoring and evaluation

Although some campaigns appear to have promising pro-social results, evaluation is extremely difficult and based largely on 'vanity' metrics provided by the platforms. Significant additional investment is required for monitoring and evaluation, especially to assess the potential for unintended consequences and 'blowback'.

Recommendation 4: Co-production and consent

The emerging Police Scotland model contains many distinctively 'Scottish' aspects, particularly an emphasis on partner engagement and some examples of fully co-produced campaigns. We recommend the further development of democratic and deliberative involvement of the public - especially targeted communities - in the development of campaigns.

Recommendation 5: Public awareness and engagement with political actors/civil society

There is still little public knowledge (including among politicians, policymakers, and law enforcement themselves) of the use of digital targeted influence campaigns for preventative law enforcement. This needs to be part of a wider public discussion of these approaches. Further, these approaches are becoming a core part of law enforcement reactions to 'online' or 'emerging' harms - and need to be systematically considered and explicitly set out in strategy and law relating to online harms, including the potential harms and risks which they themselves may pose.

Further Research

This report covers an initial overview of the use of strategic communications in the UK, with a particular focus on Scotland. However, several key questions remain unanswered or only partly-understood; substantial additional research is needed into this important emerging phenomenon. Further research is needed into how law enforcement practitioners across the UK (and across a range of policy areas) are adapting these communications techniques for preventative law enforcement. The role of private sector consultancies across this landscape is a crucial aspect of this developing set of practices; we also have little understanding of how the platforms and social media sites - Facebook, Twitter, Google, and others - are adapting to these new use cases. Complementing this research, there is a need for a better appraisal of how these campaigns are being experienced by the public (especially communities that are heavily targeted).

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1. Background - strategic communications in UK policing

1.1 Introduction

Governments have always used communications to influence, inform or shape public narratives and behaviours. As the Government Communication Service Evaluation framework states "The vast majority of government communication seeks to change behaviours in order to implement government policy or improve society." (GCS 2018). In the UK Post-1945, various attempts were made to formalise 'public information' informed by emerging interest in communications, diffusion of information and cybernetic theory. Marketing science and practice became more systematically integrated in to some public sector policy actions from the 1970s (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971), combining commercial approaches to development of products and services, market segmentation, consumer research, and communications; but modified for social issues for which there was often no product or price (Andraeson 1994). Many of these could be considered public information campaigns, on topics such as paying tax, claiming benefits, recruitment for government service, or public education. Other campaigns involved actively promoting personal and social behaviour change on themes of public health, pro-environmental behaviours, blood and organ donation, road safety, fire safety, or public security, to adult populations. The state and public service organisations made use of their own capacities and those of contracted agencies to identify issues, do research with target communities, and test campaigns, often at quite local levels. However, much of this constituted government 'public relations', conducted with very little concern for measuring impact. Many of the challenges related to government use of paid advertising that exist today were already identified at this time (Bloom and Novelli, 1981).

In recent years these approaches to behaviour change were challenged by the development of ideas from design and behavioural studies, particularly the ideas of "Nudges", "Boosts" and choice architectures (Thaler and Sunstein 2008; Sunstein 2016; Shafir 2013; Straßheim and Beck 2019; Hertwig, 2017). This used the power of the state to shape citizen's behaviour via non-fiscal and non-regulatory means in the design of tax forms, opt-out organ donation, or streetscapes for example; leveraging a whole range of psychological biases, and introducing much more careful design approaches in the how citizens interact with state provided services. The 'scientific' approach introduced a much stronger focus on understanding audiences, design of programmes, and continual measurement of outcomes against policy targets, attempting to justify public spending. This redesign of the 'infrastructure' of citizen-state interaction is often characterised as 'libertarian paternalism' in which the citizen is not ordered to change their behaviour in line with government policy, rather, communications are used to co-ordinate citizens to the 'improved' public services (Pyckett et al, 2014). Public health campaigns in particular became much more influenced by developing insights into psychology of behaviour and influence (Michie, et al 2011). However this approach has been frequently criticised as being

overly simplistic and focused on individual 'lifestyle' choices, and ignoring the wider social determinants of health (Quigley and Farrell, 2019).

During the 2010s many governments took formal steps to incorporate insights and practices from marketing, commercial strategic communications and behavioural science, developing frameworks and training for evidence gathering, understanding target audiences and communications channels, and common policy evaluation schemes (Macnamara 2018), including in the UK, Government Communication Service (GCS). From 2015-2023 the GCS has invested considerably in developing guidance, good practice and training that starts to bring bringing together these approaches: the "Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM) 2023" has been through 3 iterations, the latest in 2023 (MCOM 3.0) , which includes the GCS Evaluation Framework (GCS, 2018) and many other standardised, but nevertheless work-in-progress frameworks. The focus on understanding citizens as 'audiences', and of evaluating campaign impacts has deepened the commitment to 'data-led' approaches to understanding, classifying, and targeting citizens. While targeting has always relied on some types of research and negotiation of cost-benefit (for example in health screening programmes) (Grier et al., 2010), the datafication and computational modelling of the population, and potential to render citizens amenable to algorithmic sorting across all the functions from the state has come to characterise much of contemporary 'e-government'. Controversial computational techniques in governance such "risk modelling" of particular citizen groups - those likely to commit benefit fraud or commit crime has been well documented (e.g. Završnik, 2021). Government intelligence sources from local government, criminal justice, welfare and transport services, or health agencies is routinely complemented by a customised version of commercial socio-demographic classification systems such as "Mosaic Public Sector"¹ (Experian 2011).

However, this standardisation and formalisation of practice is extremely recent, and although certainly given a boost by the frantic scramble to deploy communications in COVID, is not systematically and widely adopted in the public sector. The methods, approaches and evidence are drawn from very specific areas of public communications, and the 'standard' model will need to be appropriated, redeveloped, and integrated into the practices of the domain of government (and each functional unit, such as different police services) through experiment and social learning.

This report attempts to document and reflect these processes by exploring case studies from recent Police Scotland campaigns, not as 'by the book' activities, but informed and shaped by

1. Historical practice in PR and police communications
2. Formal frameworks in government communications

¹ Currently based on Mosaic 7 (2021)

3. Theory and conceptual approaches
4. Personal experience from inside and outside the police
5. Ideas from partners and the wider industry
6. The dynamics of the Police Scotland team
7. The creative and interactive processes around developing, running and evaluating each campaign
8. The internal and external reactions of the public, peers, partners, and powerful stakeholders.

1.2 Internet platforms

Although these methods have adapted as communications technologies have changed over the past 100 years, the rise of novel digital infrastructures and social media platforms has given communications a new set of capacities with which to shape public behaviour. Since the 1990s there has been a broad hopes that the Internet would facilitate a more democratic society, where citizen, among other things, would be were able to more effective 'talk back' to government, especially groups traditionally excluded from political debate (e.g. Couldry 2010) This hope was also nurtured, not only from the perspective of democracy, but also as a way to make government more effective and efficient. However, as the development of 'Strategic communications' as a key plank of government communications (GCS 2015) suggests, the one-way model maintains its dominant position (Macnamara 2010).

Online services, especially the ecosystems around the giant ad-funded platforms (such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, and others), facilitate communication for the purposes of exertion of influence in a number of distinct ways - through 'organic' influence via horizontal social networks, via agents that develop audiences, large and small, often dubbed 'influencers', and via paid targeted advertising using targeting and purchasing that is executed algorithmically and automatically ('programmatic advertising'). Policing research has generally focused on the *influencer* model; the role played by official police social media accounts run by their comms teams, and sometimes individual police officers with large social media followings, in exerting police presence and influence online (see, for example, Ralph, 2021; Bullock, 2016, 2018). Reflecting the interactive model of government in the Internet age, during the 2010s a core vision was that two way communication would "democratise" engagement and interactions with the police, turning police communications into a dialogue with communities, rather than a monologue (Bullock 2018). Police are moving away from bidirectional encounters with 'influencer' police officers and police forces on social media (e.g. Ralph, 2022; Henry, 2023), towards using *influence* infrastructures of major platforms to support directly targeted advertising based on the collection of large amounts of intimate data on the behaviour, social network, location, and interests, as well as more conventional socio-demographics, of their users.

Through extensive advertising businesses and their own services, the firms in the influence infrastructure are able deliver the tailored messages of their advertising customers to particular groups in a whole range of ways: by automatically placing ads on websites and apps, in social media and video feeds, or through influencers. Many different goals can be pursued, from following leads based on ecommerce searches, to building brand awareness among established audiences. Generally this is based on computationally converting signals from consumer behaviour such as previous interactions with websites and social media, search behaviour, and data collected from all sorts of other sources into usable targeting mechanisms. In many cases these advertisements facilitate direct conversion into sales by clicking on a link onto an ecommerce page, but may also involve interaction with a website or a chatbot, reacting to or sharing a message, which in turn provides the advertiser with new data.

This business model, often termed 'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff 2015) allows a move beyond traditional postcode, demographic and consumption pattern segmentation to tailored, campaigns which address people in groups based on detailed behaviours, interests, and real time location data (e.g. Busch, 2016; Cotter et al 2021). The mechanisms by which this targeting is facilitated are far from straightforward, involving a huge 'intermediary' industry of data sources and algorithmic imputation of interests and behaviours (often branded "AI") . The whole behavioural-data based targeted advertising approach has been under considerable regulatory scrutiny in recent years, related to misinformation, political influence (Dommert & Zhu 2022), competition (CMA 2020) and privacy (Sartor et al 2021). It is also a moving target; the affordances, practices and regulations are constantly changing. However, a mature ecosystem of marketing consultancies and support services has developed around this business model, from large marketing agencies like Saatchi and Saatchi which offer 'full service' digital marketing campaigns, to a range of SMEs that provide creative services, audience development, targeting, evaluation, and other services. In the UK, the public sector has increasingly been drawing on this ecosystem to deliver targeted behavioural marketing campaigns in the service of achieving policy objectives across most areas of government (Collier et al, 2022a). The Government Communication Service is committed to deepening its use of these technologies and infrastructures (Baugh 2023).

These services and technologies have given police communicators the ability to target and segment their campaigns to an unprecedented degree - via fine-detail location, behaviour, interests, and other categories. Combined with a 'behaviour change science' approach, this raises important questions about the future of police communications and the ways in which the police power and image is deployed to different segments of the population.

1.3 The Police Scotland team

This report focuses on the use of digital behaviour change campaigns by Police Scotland - and particularly the work of the Communications Strategy and Insight Team within the Communications Department. This team was fairly recently created - in 2018 - and currently comprises a small team of 3 main officers within a larger department of between 60 and 70 dedicated police communications staff. The genesis of the team lies with the formation of the national force, which integrated the 8 existing Scottish Police Forces into a single organisation: Police Scotland. As part of this centralisation, the 8 existing local force communications teams were combined into a single department, tasked with running communications and PR campaigns for all the legacy force areas in Scotland. The Police Scotland transformation in 2018 led to further changes in the organisation of communications. This additionally involved attempts to professionalise communications within the single force and bring it into line with leading practice in industry, including establishing a team focused on strategic communications. This brought together mostly staff with a marketing or PR background, led by a long-term police communications specialist. The team is run as a centralised unit that has responsibility for the strategic direction of communications campaigns run by Police Scotland; as all funds for campaigns of any size or locality across the wider force need to be handled and signed off by the PS national communications department, any strategic campaigns emerging from other units or legacy forces are passed to the strategic communications team, and either redeveloped or cancelled.

As part of an initial focus on professionalisation and a move to a digital-first communications strategy, the team has drawn on best practice frameworks from the UK's Government Communications Service discussed earlier, for guiding practice and ideas. The GCS, building on the legacy of more than a decade of 'nudge' and behaviour change policy practices in the UK and devolved governments, has foregrounded behavioural communications in their past several strategies, and a wide range of documents and guidance are provided on the GCS training materials website. In particular the MCOM 2.0 (MCOM 3.0 from July 2023) framework sets out to encourage the professionalisation of communication to meet the digital age drawing on evolving best practice in strategic communication, marketing evaluation etc, and ensure that it is inserted in early stage strategic policy development, not as a 'tactical add-on' (GCS Heads of Strategic Communication network 2018/21) . Although the GCS approaches (which are designed for civil service communications applicable across a wide range of policy areas) were the main resource drawn on by the PS team, wider sharing of practice from other police forces, the Home Office, and security services has led to other sources of expertise being incorporated. This includes tactics and frameworks taken from the Prevent duty, wider frameworks from preventative and 'public health' policing in areas such as knife crime and drug crime, personal expertise and experience from individual communications officers' own engagements with developing best practice in the commercial sector, and wider shifts in the field of digital marketing within law enforcement. More broadly, this move can be seen as part of a wider wave of professionalisation in public sector communications.

2. Methods

In order to make sense of the emerging scope and use of these novel digital strategic communications practices in UK policing, we conducted an in-depth case study of a single force: Police Scotland. Police Scotland is an apposite case study, being particularly advanced in the development and deployment of these approaches compared with many other police forces in the UK.

Having become aware of the use of these targeted digital law enforcement campaigns in our previous research (Collier et al., 2022a), we were particularly interested in understanding how police were adapting these theories, practices, and technologies which had become established in the commercial marketing field and other policy areas to the unique landscape of law enforcement. To that end, we sought to explore, primarily in a Scottish context:

1. What do the campaigns look like - what theories and practices contribute to their design? Where do these come from?
2. How is this new approach changing the 'job' of police communications - and how are these methods establishing themselves in the institutions of policing and the comms role?
3. How do the campaigns work in practice? What role is being played by partners in the corporate and charitable sector? How are they being evaluated?
4. What formal institutional arrangements are being developed to manage these campaigns? What is their wider role in the business of policing?
5. What ethical and practical issues are emerging, and how are they understood by police?

Police Scotland were extremely helpful in facilitating our research, with access intermediated through the Scottish Institute for Policing Research. We had extensive access to Police Scotland's dedicated strategic communications team, including 3 in-depth interviews with practitioners, wider participation in discussions and focus-group sessions, and analysis of 21 documents relating to 7 campaigns, including 5 strategy documents, 6 evaluations, 5 insight reports, and 5 communications plans. We also received 2 additional Police Scotland communications strategic documents relating more broadly to the adoption and evaluation of strategic communications approaches.

These sources form the basis for the case studies in the subsequent sections. For our case studies, we discuss the theoretical frameworks and rationales employed, the institutional structures, external relationships, and specific practices and workflows. We also discuss how targeting, risk and evaluation were considered and handled in each case. We were particularly interested, drawing on analytical approaches from Science and Technology Studies and institutional criminology, in exploring the different ways in which these police staff attempted to adapt and

develop the practices of police communications to the novel capacities of the digital platform infrastructure; how this aligned or conflicted with existing strategic trends in UK policing, the professional culture which has developed around this, and their attempts to establish this as a 'legitimate' form of police work.

Further, we conducted two day-long workshops - the first involving academics studying digital advertising platforms from a range of perspectives (including computer science, geography, economic sociology, art, public services, digital ethics, counter-radicalisation, policing, Internet law, criminology, science and technical studies), with 16 participants; the second aimed at police practitioners, involving communications officers from 12 forces (and additionally, Police Scotland, the British Transport Police, Counter Terrorism Policing UK, a representative from the National Crime Agency, and a private sector practitioner).

Although initially it seemed that discovery of use of targeted online ads would require contacting every Police Service individually, and would be outside the scope of this study, at the end of 2022 the Meta Ad Library became available as an extensive and valid resource to obtain information directly from one of the major platforms. This enabled us to first explore, then systematically document and compare the wider use of these campaigns by UK law enforcement (and the UK government in general). Under political and legal pressure after widespread concerns about political interference in the US and around the world conducted via the micro-targeting of Facebook adverts and other on-platform communications, including the Cambridge Analytica scandal, in 2018 the major ad platforms started to make records of political advertising available publically, and over the last 5 years have slowly expanded this functionality. At present the most developed service is the Meta Ad Library, which has both a searchable public interface, and more complete researcher interface made available in May 2022. The Meta Ad Library allows customers to search *all* the ads and advertisers of any type. The Google Ad Library is starting to offer the same functionality. Unlike Google, Meta defines special category types that are broader than just 'election' ads. The decision to include a wide range of "social issues, elections or politics" has led to a requirement for stricter review not only of election ads, but also of adverts run by government and law enforcement.

Due to specific laws in some countries, advertisers in the areas of housing, finance and employment are also included. In the specific guidance about ads in the UK, a range of topics that include almost every issue that a government might want to communicate on are included, such as : *"Ads about crime, with ad content that includes discussion, debate and/or advocacy for or against topics, including but not limited to hate crime and crime rates, are subject to review and enforcement."* All advertisers are currently being required to register their 'Page' with valid real-life credentials. After validating a first wave of overtly political advertisers, government agencies in the UK including police services are being validated and registered. This is an ongoing process, and over first months of 2023 increasing numbers of

government agencies were included. Most of these include records of advertising campaigns dating back to 2021. Occasionally the library interface shows a public sector ad being taken down, either because it does not include a disclaimer or the advertising Page was not registered in the correct way.

The Meta Ad Library takes the form of a queryable pair of databases - one of which contains the details of particular adverts, and the other of which contains details of targeting (geographical, demographic and behavioural), spend, potential and actual reach (in bands). Combining these, adverts and their targeting can be searched using simple SQL commands - for example, returning a dataset of adverts run by all advertisers with "Police" in their name. Not all the returned results are accurate, either on the public or research interfaces - completely unconnected results are returned on occasion.

For the purposes of our study, we queried the names of all police forces and law enforcement agencies in the UK. We additionally searched for ads run by relevant government departments (the Home Office and Ministry of Justice, Scottish and Welsh Governments) and conducted exploratory research to identify any gaps - including all UK advertiser pages with 'police' or 'constabulary' in their name, for example - and verified the results manually, in some cases picking up more local accounts for particular stations or districts (e.g. an account for Birmingham North East Police in addition to West Midlands Constabulary). Finally, we searched for the names of relevant charities and partners, including Crimestoppers and the Violence Reduction Units. Since the obligation to register a Page has been rolled out recently (from the end of 2022), during the period of research new instances of police services would appear when a new search was conducted. Due to the nodal and distributed character of policing in the UK, this is unlikely to be an exhaustive list of all relevant partner agencies, however we argue that it provides a starting point for a systematic overview of the core of 'influence policing' as a contemporary mode of crime prevention.

Our analysis of these campaigns focuses in this exploratory survey on the *targeting* profiles used by the relevant police forces and agencies; the categories selected on the Meta platform (including both Facebook and Instagram advertising) which select for particular segments of the public. These include a range of different options - from detailed *location* data, to declared, detected and imputed *interests* and *behaviours*, and more traditional *age* and *gender* based demographics. Audiences can be filtered on including and excluding people based on these categories. Ad buyers can select from a limited tree of interests and behaviours, or search for more specific terms. *Behaviour* categories on Meta include categories such as 'Friends of Football Fans' 'New Business', 'Anniversary' 'iphone 5 user', 'returned from travelling 2 weeks ago' and 'Lived in' a country. Advertisers are additionally permitted to create 'custom' and 'lookalike' audiences from existing Page followers or tracked by 'Meta Pixel' code on their website, or by uploading an encoded (hashed) list of names of customers, website visitors etc, and Meta finds a 'similar' extended

audience that will be shown the advert. After an advert is created and targeted, the platform engages in post-targeting optimisation, detecting who is engaging with it most and retargeting the advert so that it is shown more to similar people. All this gives a vast range of different ways in which law enforcement can use the system to 'construct' different publics - we discuss these targeting profiles in depth and analyse the approaches we have found being used. However - we note that this is only a single platform, and the capacities of, for example, Google, Tiktok or Twitter, differ significantly. We also note that Meta's own targeting system - the categories available - changes very regularly, with different options being available to advertisers week-to-week. In many cases there is no single category to reaching a particular market segment: Advertisers will often end up selecting a 'patchwork' of categories ("Hollyoaks, Eastenders, Parent with teenagers, Asda, gardening"), drawn from research, existing consumer profiles, and from experimentation - changing targeting everyday depending on reach and response. On most platforms exclusionary targeting using direct selection of categories that include protected characteristics ("Muslim", "gay") has been significantly reduced in recent years by filtering thousands of keywords, and platforms continually merge or consolidate categories (Cotter et al 2021).² Targeting directly on 'multicultural affinity' constructs such as 'african american' have been deprecated.

What also emerges from exploration of Meta policies on government advertising is the degree to which they have become invested in Government as a major client for their services. While much of this has been focused on the messaging tools such as Whatsapp or Pages, it also includes marketing and support for paid advertising as a means to engage citizens and attain policy goals.³

The research was subject to institutional ethical review by the University of Edinburgh. While the ethical issues for an elite interview and official documents research project are generally straightforward, in this case we gave additional consideration to the ethical challenges posed by the Meta Ad library data and the campaign case study targeting materials.

² For example Meta: Facebook Business (2020) [Updates to Ad Targeting Categories to Improve Ads Experience](#). Available at: [Updates to Ad Targeting Categories to Improve Ads Experience](#) (accessed 19 July 2023). Meta for Business (2021) [Removing Certain Ad Targeting Options and Expanding Our Ad Controls](#). (accessed 19 July 2023).

³ Meta "Government, politics and advocacy" <https://www.facebook.com/gpa>

3. Police Scotland's strategic communications team

3.1 Introduction

We first discuss our findings concerning the Police Scotland strategic communications team. The empirical core of this study was an in-depth exploration of Police Scotland's (PS's) centralised unit that handles all strategic communications campaigns for the national force. The genesis of this team emerged from a reorganisation of communications following the formation of the single Scottish force in 2013, the implementation of the Corporate Communications Department transformation in 2019, and a desire for the professionalisation of communications practice and alignment with Government Communication Service best practice. The *Police Scotland Corporate Communications Department Strategy* document sets out this new approach to communications, involving a change in focus to measurable, behaviour-change based communications practices, upskilling in the use of digital delivery, and managerial transformation through a centralised internal commissioning structure for campaigns, which would be refocused at the national level. In general, this can be seen as a move from a Corporate Communications department focused on PR and media management skills and work, towards a role in the wider institution of the police that is more centred around marketing skills - particularly a desire for industry-leading digital strategic marketing approaches. This also stems from the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, which sets out a responsibility for police to improve the safety and wellbeing of people, places, and communities in Scotland; thus, driving a shift in the role of the Scottish police towards further engagement in prevention activities.

The work of the Communications Strategy and Insight Team within the Communications Specialist Services team has involved significant ongoing experimentation. Each of their campaigns, which we detail below, attempts to address a different 'wicked problem' in policing, takes a different approach, and uses data and technology rather differently. Rather than the ad-hoc, small-scale, or locally-driven awareness campaigns which have historically predominated communications work in a Scottish policing context, the team focuses on a small number of priority areas for the year in which to conduct major national campaigns. These campaigns come from the core strategic priorities set by Police Scotland each year, and from demand from individual 'business areas' within the police.

"So first of all, is it in our Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment? Is it a policing high priority for the year? Yes. Right, there's the four or five that are the very high priorities for policing. And then we start to look at, right, well, who are the audience, and what can we as a comms team actually contribute to this?"

Police Scotland communications officer

In practice, these campaigns attempt to move away from the 'broadcast' approach which underpinned traditional police information campaigns. Rather than directing the public to change their behaviour (for example, campaigns exhorting people to wear seatbelts, not take illegal drugs, or adopt security behaviours), relying solely on the authority of the police image, this involves instead decomposing an issue into small behavioural components and developing a campaign to target a single factor that influences the desired behaviour.

I think it's just through trying to understand more about the audience that we've become a bit more aware of the... more, you know, psychological, getting behind the problem... And I think that's led us down a path of getting more into the kind of behavioural world, and I think that's also reflected in the way that the government are running their campaigns now. And you know, we've seen that with coronavirus in terms of how you influence someone, and how you get into their head to make it... it's more an indirect way of getting them to do something, where they feel it's their choice, and they're quite happy to go down that journey. Rather than being told from a kind of parent teacher type, you know, parent child type, um, do not do this. And I think, I've not been in policing long enough, but I think my feeling is, and from just hearing that, you know, back in the day in terms of policing messaging, it was very much based on fear. Do not do this or you'll be locked up. You know, and I think fear doesn't work as well now.

Police Scotland communications officer

Once a set of campaign issues is decided for the year, the team begins development of campaign rationales and conducting research. In addition to directly designing and delivering interventions, the team has a research capacity, in the form of a dedicated research (or 'insights') role, tasked with preparing 'insight' reports that inform their campaigns. These reports aim to scope out the wider evidence base around particular crime issues, narrowing the focus to a target group and a behaviour with the potential to be 'nudged' through communications. In the next sections, we step through and analyse each stage in the process of development of a police 'strategic' communications campaign. We then discuss the broader issues which these novel practices pose for police communications.

3.2 Adapting UK Strategic Comms frameworks and behaviour change models to the police communications environment

3.2.1 Focusing on strategic communications

An early change motivated by the move to strategic communications was an attempt to move away from 'broad-brush' traditional campaigns that call out the public to stop or start a particular behaviour, relying solely on the *authority* of the police. Instead, the team have attempted to make these campaigns more specific, focusing communications around 'nudging' individual behavioural aspects of a crime problem to address particular perceived barriers, motivations, or capacities. Further, the focus on heavily-researched *strategic* campaigns was accompanied by a reorientation away from large numbers of local and piecemeal campaigns with small target audiences towards instead a small number of national campaigns per year that directly flow from core police strategic priorities.

3.2.2 Behavioural Communications

The base of the behaviour change model used by the Police Scotland team is the 'COM-B' approach (Michie et al 2011), which is heavily featured in Government Communications Service MCOM communications frameworks developed by the UK Civil Service discussed earlier.. This is a psychological-behavioural framework that underpins the widely-used 'behaviour change wheel'; it argues that particular behaviours occur when a person has the *capability* to engage in them, a feasible *opportunity* exists, and they are more *motivated* to engage in that behaviour than other behaviours. This synthesises 'rational actor' frameworks of choice with aspects of socio-cultural and environmental positivist theories⁴. Opportunities are conceptualised as social or physical features of the environment in which a person is situated; capabilities are physical and mental features of a person which together interact with the environment to permit a particular behaviour; and motivations can either be conscious and directed desires, or more instinctive or habitual drives. Employed as part of a framework for changing behaviour, helps direct marketers and policymakers to identify and reduce barriers to desired behaviours, to evaluate and potentially support individuals' capacity to change, and to then use messaging to establish motivations - often in the form of particular cultural narratives, peer associations, or shifting perceptions of risk and reward - to engage in one behaviour rather than another.

Rather than simply transposing this established model from behaviour change literature primarily aimed at health communication, the unique constraints of policing have necessitated a number of adaptations by the Police Scotland team in

⁴ This is not unlike the 'routine activities' model of crime, in which crimes occur when a motivated offender meets a suitable target in the absence of a capable guardian. Similarly, responses bear comparison to 'situational crime prevention' techniques.

practice. Most notably, rather than starting from scratch, the team had been working in the context of several years of PS communications campaigns (and prior campaigns by legacy force areas and at a national level). Thus, these more novel methods and approaches had initially taken the form of refinements and alterations to existing practices. Particularly for the early campaigns led by this team, the focus was on enhancing existing models at a smaller scale through incorporating insights from COM-B rather than the fuller applications of the complete package of insights which are more evident in later campaigns. In addition to insight from COM-B, the Police Scotland team has also adapted aspects of Prevent in their practices - particularly the focus on shaping the behaviour of wider 'pre-criminal' risk groups as well as an emphasis on countering narratives circulating in broader national culture.

3.2.3 Targeting behaviour change in those at risk of offending

Another alteration has been a change in *whose* behaviours these police campaigns attempt to address. Traditional police communications campaigns focused overwhelmingly on the victims of crime - encouraging protective behaviours, reporting to the police, or the purchase of security products - with offender behaviour seen as largely intractable to police communications. The perceived power of strategic communications campaigns to change behaviour has, however, created a novel focus on the politics of *responsibilising* the public in crime prevention. Initially in the context of violence against women, but subsequently extending to other forms of crime, the strategic communications team has led an increasing narrative within Police Scotland that it is inappropriate to expect victims of crime to take the responsibility for changing their behaviour. Underlying this has been a more general queasiness around 'using' these tools on victims, stemming from changes in the strategic environment and professed values of Scottish policing (rather than COM-B). This has led to a focus on changing the behaviour of offenders or, more often, those seen as 'at risk' of offending. The novel approach has also driven an increased optimism around the tractability of social issues (in this case crime problems) to communications and to police prevention work more generally. This focus on perpetrator behaviours is itself quite a radical change within police preventative communications, contrasting with heavily victim-focused communications that often emphasised purchasing security products or adopting secure behaviours.

3.2.4 Research basis

Putting these changes to communications practices into effect has necessitated a wider focus on *research* in order to develop a more detailed picture of particular crime issues and how they might be affected by communications - understanding with whom to communicate, and how that communication might work as part of broader police and social policy actions. As well as incorporating existing police research, engagement with academics, and the work of research teams elsewhere in the force, the communications department have created their own 'insights'

officer role, tasked with understanding the behavioural environment around a particular crime or business area need from a communications perspective. As we discuss in the following subsection, this involves developing theories of particular crime or policing issues and subsequently theories of change. These wider 'theories', as shown in the case studies below, are not only drawn from the COM-B framework; these social issues are undoubtedly complex and in practice the campaigns we studied exercise a rather more creative and holistic approach, which integrates collaboration with partners, academic knowledge, their own experience as professional marketers, and police operational data and intelligence.

3.2.5 The policing context

Finally, the unique requirements of policing and the particularly sensitive nature of the social issues addressed by these campaigns have necessitated their own adaptations of mainstream social and strategic marketing frameworks. While particular campaign messages and targets may well be developed in line with a COM-B approach, they need to be approved by the rest of the organisation - namely police leadership and the relevant business area 'customers', and are refined throughout the process to accommodate the desires of uniformed colleagues and the opinions of those involved in delivery at each stage. The PR constraints of policing are also unique compared to commercial or other governmental applications - they are subject to substantially more media and political scrutiny. This is partly due to the unique position of law enforcement as a central democratic institution; which in practice leads to far more heightened aversion to risk and concern with propriety than for other private or even public 'brands'. Additionally, unlike other marketing environments, target audiences often have very little trust in the police 'brand' or are directly oppositional to it, and the topics addressed by the campaigns are often not ones which the public have any desire to think about or seek out. Finally, the 'brand' of policing and law enforcement itself carries significant weight - it is uniquely backed by the legitimised use of the lethal and coercive force of the state. Although any marketing team will face constraints in practice, these unique aspects make the police unlike any other actor attempting to use 'strategic' approaches to communications. In the subsequent sections, we discuss how these approaches are being used by the police in practice.

3.3 Campaign development pathways

3.3.1 Research and insights

Once a campaign topic has been agreed from core police strategic priorities, the first stage involves 'insights' research to determine what aspects of the topic might be amenable to strategic communication, and what a campaign might involve. This has important differences to the existing forms of internal operational research undertaken within the police, involving a focus on marketing skills and behavioural-psychological profiles. This results in the creation of an insight report that identifies, for each campaign, theories of the social issues at hand, a psychological and demographic profile of offender risk groups, a purported mechanism of behaviour change, and maps of digital behaviour and demographic profiles (or 'audience segments') for targeting.

This happens in two main stages. The first of these is focused on the crime phenomenon as a whole, understanding the main causes of a particular strategic issue faced by Police Scotland (often one perceived as a 'hard' crime problem) and, ultimately, what aspects may be amenable to targeted behavioural interventions. While some of this does identify broader structural factors (such as deprivation), these are essentially practices of marketing research, and hence tend to boil down issues affecting communities and social groups into individualistic models and theories of action. In the context of a crime issue, this involves focusing on the psychological characteristics of the 'likely offender', *modus operandi*, motivations, and other factors which might pose barriers to some kinds of communications and opportunities for others in their social environment. In practice, this involves the research officer drawing on a wide variety of different sources of data and expertise - some directly from the criminal justice system, such as reading trial documents and analysing crime data from the Police National Computer (PNC), some from tailored internal research, including interviews with offenders, surveys of the practitioner and academic literature, and from external sources, such as liaising with partner groups, relevant charities, and academics.

This generates a broader and rather heterogeneous 'theory' of the crime - often bringing together multiple different theories, not all of which are strictly behavioural. In some campaigns, for example, the Communication Strategy and Insight Leads bring in ideas from feminist theory, social norms, or peer association to understand barriers to change, in others, these focus on strictly medical or psychological issues, broader cultural ideas, or economic factors. These wider theories are often drawn from Police Scotland's partners in academia and the third sector - for example, charities working with victims or offenders who are seen as having an alternative viewpoint than might be gained from police data alone. We provide selected examples of this in practice in our case studies in the following section. Once this broader research has been done, the COM-B approach comes in more directly; the findings are fitted into this framework in order to home in on a behavioural

component that might be 'nudged' through communications. In this way, the team then moves from a theory of the crime itself to a theory of behaviour change.

Once a behavioural component is selected, the insight research focuses on the second set of outputs - a marketing profile of the people who will be targeted by these ads, their online behaviours, their interests and demographics, to establish how they may be reached. The ads may not be targeted at the people whose behaviour is ultimately being shaped - they may target friends, peers, or parents of the eventual target, for example. This phase of research uses much more traditional marketing theory and research, as well as the expertise and experience of the marketers themselves. It generally takes the form of a series of demographic categories - i.e. an age range or set of age ranges, speculated ethnic groups (based on likely offender profiles) and other factors such as income and location which can be used to target communications and refine the messages. The following was developed for the *Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) Campaign* in 2019 against grooming.

Common offender pathologies:

- Emotionally inadequate
- Loner or poor social networks
- Difficulty interpreting emotional cues in others
- Depressive
- Impulsiveness and inability to consider consequences
- Lack of empathy
- Naïve

Target audience:

- All sexually active men in Scotland who are at risk of grooming/contact offending.
- Women do offend but the numbers are very small.
- This group is mostly heterosexual, white Scottish, but does include East European men.
- Online grooming is not as common an MO in BME communities.
- There's some evidence to suggest that the peaks of interfamilial offending age-wise are mirrored in cyber-enabled offending. These are 18-25 (early sexual maturity), young family (20s-40s) and retirement (late 50s-60s).

CSA Campaign Insight Report, 2019

Coupled to this is a behavioural-psychological profile taken from the first stage which outlines factors that will shape the intervention itself. For example (as in the That Guy campaign, discussed in our case studies report), if the target offender group is seen as emotionally fragile and unlikely to respond well to a direct challenge to their behaviour, the intervention might focus instead on people in their

extended circle of peers and advise them to challenge the negative behaviour of the target in private rather than in front of the wider group. Finally, this stage of the research includes details of likely media consumption habits which can assist in targeting the intervention: not only the forms of digital media consumed by this group, in terms of platforms and devices, but their other media habits, newspaper readership, and viewership of 'physical' out-of-home platforms such as billboards and bus stops.

Offenders' lack of emotional maturity means they are wholly focused on their own needs and will not respond to messages requiring empathy for victims. Developing an understanding of the consequences of their actions tends to be part of the post-charge diversion and recovery process. Evidence from practitioners and offenders suggests that the principal driver for stopping offending is fear.

CSA Campaign Insight Report, 2019

The officers identified that some areas - particularly security and counter-terrorism work - had significant advantages in terms of the data and research available.

One of the campaigns we worked on was COP26. In counter-terrorism policing there is a lot of resource and research... the research allows us to better understand how people who are maybe planning activity go about planning, what they look at. So this gives us a lot of data in terms of how you plan a comms campaign to tackle that and the effect it might have.

Police Scotland communications officer

Although the profiles generated by these insight reports are detailed, there was a desire for further development - particularly beyond the kind of demographic profiles which police data are able to generate - and towards the incorporation of approaches with a stronger basis in marketing practice, such as *personas*. The communications officers we interviewed identified these as potential future directions for their work:

We really would like to get a bit more into, um, understanding you know, that you can get MOSAIC data about different demographics, where they live, and what they do. And you can create personas about people, rather than just saying, male, you know, student, 18-23, or whatever it is, start to understand who they are, what do they do, what do they like? What is the lifestyle around that particular person? And I think that would help us a lot more.

Police Scotland communications officer

We could do it on age and interest, but we're still very light on getting really down into, you know, where these people are in terms of communities. And I

think in England, from speaking to other forces and just, my own opinion is that I think they are smaller, , we police 28 thousand square miles. You know, the forces down south are in the main small compared to us, and they have very distinct communities within those areas. So I think the use of MOSAIC allows them to target more specific people. People who are dependent on the police, people who aren't dependent, low deprivation, high deprivation, whatever it is. So I think that probably helps them.

Police Scotland communications officer

The insight report produced by this process synthesises these different profiles into a set of recommendations for a campaign. We analyse four of these insight reports in Section 4.

3.3.2 Finding the 'nudge'

Within this insights process, the practice of finding the 'nudge' - the specific behavioural intervention - is particularly important and warrants specific consideration. It is the identification of this mechanism of action, which emerges from the various profiles, that turns the considerable research involved into the basis of a suitable campaign. The approach taken in practice is holistic; while behavioural frameworks such as COM-B form the bedrock of the insight approach, COM-B is used by the Police to 'translate' a wide variety of different kinds of knowledge, evidence, and ideas from police and stakeholders into a common language that can be used to shape an intervention.

We observe a number of different paths being taken to arrive at behavioural interventions. (1) Some campaigns are developed through what is effectively a process of elimination - scoping through established, hypothesized, or historical comms strategies and evaluating them based on the COM-B framework. (2) Other campaigns emerge from the profiles of the offender and their 'Modus Operandi' - working backwards through the crime script or 'criminal career' to establish enabling and blocking factors that might be amenable to communications. There is a particular emphasis on developing *psychological profiles* within these reports - profiles which identify key enabling narratives and psychological types (e.g. 'low empathy' or 'compulsive'). In combination, the psychological profile is used to assess each entry in the 'menu' or 'map' of enabling or disabling narratives for their amenability to nudging. For example, a campaign targeting child sexual abusers assessed some of the key enabling narratives (around perceptions of survivors by perpetrators) as not amenable to nudging due to the low empathy of the perpetrator as profiled. (3) In other iterations of this process, interaction with stakeholders and the theories emerging from consultation and research themselves suggest mechanisms of action. For example, some campaigns drew explicitly on feminist theory to rule out nudges targeting survivors, or to identify wider misogynist

narratives in male peer groups as a key facilitating factor for violence against women.

Some campaigns aim at directly encouraging cessation of the primary criminal behaviour itself, using direct nudges in the moment of action. An example of this is the Police Scotland anti-CSA campaign, which targeted a 'hard hitting' image at men online late at night; or a campaign run by the NCA which displayed a deterrent message to people searching for illegal services 'in the moment' they were deciding to purchase them (Collier et al., 2022b). However, for some campaigns this was seen as unlikely to succeed, either due to specific psychological features of the target profile, or other situational factors seen as blocking or enabling a particular action. In these cases, diversion from narratives and behaviours earlier in the pathway were sometimes attempted - for example, for the That Guy campaign. This tended to involve priming targets or those in their peer group with alternative narratives to counter particular enablers for the undesired behaviour or to set up potential enabling narratives for diversion or cessation. Although the ultimate focus is usually the perpetrator of the crime in question, often the mechanism of action involves targeting someone else - a bystander, a friend, or a family member - who then influences the behaviour of the indirect target. COM-B is used to assess different aspects of a particular criminogenic situation; assessing whether the likely offender (based on a police profile) has the capacity, opportunity, or motive to change their behaviour - often this is not the case, so the campaign either targets someone else, such as a bystander or peer who can then act to support capacity, provide opportunity, or create a motivation. Alternatively, some campaigns act to support (rather than responsabilise) victims through linking them up to police and partner services.

With the adverts themselves, we have evidence of a wider split between two different types of campaign: those that aim primarily to change culture and narratives, and those that more directly shape immediate behaviour 'in the moment'. This second type can be seen as a 'hypodermic' model of communications, as described by McLuhan, in which communications are able to impart narratives directly and deterministically to their target.

I think it's using communications as a tactical tool to, to really make a difference in public. You know, and I think that's maybe slightly different to the long burn of a domestic abuse or a sexual crime campaign, where you may not see results for many, many, ten, twenty, thirty years, but it's about, I suppose, where we're trying to head down is to start to change the narrative out there, in terms of how people are talking about certain things. And we've seen that in the last few years about MeToo and the public reaction to the rape and murder of Sarah Everard, and about, you know, we've seen a lot of big changes in how people are talking. So I suppose, it's about contributing to the narrative there. Whereas the counter-terrorism policing thing is actually

trying to do something on the ground at a specific time to either put someone off or to, to, you know, to uncover something, or to make a difference.

Police Scotland communications officer

3.3.3 Delivering measurable change

Despite the appeal of this 'hypodermic' model, there was an awareness from the PS team that the communications on their own were (1) unlikely to have easily-establishable effects and (2) that those effects would not be measurable through the metrics provided by the platform (i.e. views, clicks, etc.). Even with campaigns aiming to directly shape behaviour, the advert was rarely seen as solely operating 'in the moment' through its message and creative content. Instead, while the advert is seen to have a direct effect on the viewer when consumed (and in some cases the content becomes part of a wider cultural conversation or set of narratives), it also acts to co-ordinate the viewer with other forms of intervention. Thus, the desired, measurable behaviour was often linked to engagement with a secondary product or service - accessing a support website or clicking through to further content.

It's an iceberg. And the bit that shows, the ad is the bit that shows above the surface. And that's attention-grabbing... The stuff that actually persuades people is the secondary content, and what you're trying to do is grab their attention with the top-level ad, and then drive them to the secondary content. And that, that secondary content can take any form whatsoever, it can be all sorts of different things, in all sorts of different media, but the... you can't, you're not going to change people's behaviour just with the advertising. And that's the mistake a lot of people make, they think it's just about producing an ad. That's the easy bit. Um, it's about all the other stuff.

Police Scotland communications officer

This secondary content was not always owned by the Police - often campaigns linked to partners in the charitable sector or to non-police supportive services. In addition to secondary content, campaigns were often linked to more material forms of intervention, such as a door-to-door enforcement campaign, an ongoing update or redesign of another service, or wider changes to police practice. Sometimes, the secondary content was itself a supportive service - for example, a campaign website linking the audience to drug support services or a scheme for survivors of domestic violence. This draws out the two distinct ways in which communications can be understood to operate within a 'behaviour change' framework - either as a set of direct effects, in which the messages themselves shape the decision environment and hence behaviour, or alternatively as a tool to coordinate and align the public with other (often more expensive) 'behavioural' interventions. In the Police Scotland campaigns to date, both of these modes can be observed, often operating in concert.

Further, underpinning all these mechanisms of action was an attempt to deploy the wider 'force', image, and power of the police itself. This was seen as a key part of making the interventions 'work' - underwriting the nudges and narratives with the authority (and ultimately, the hard and potentially lethal power) of the police. However, the campaigns were also an opportunity for these professional communications practitioners to directly wield, modulate, and shape the way in which the police image and its symbolic power was depicted - rather than rely on influencing media reporting, cultural products made by others (like crime shows), or dry press statements. These direct engagements in shaping the cultural position of the police were seen by the practitioners through the lens of 'brand' - akin to 'encounters' with police power which could be designed through traditional marketing skills and novel digital tools.

3.4 Developing and delivering an 'influence policing' campaign

3.4.1 Strategic planning

At this stage, when an insight report has been prepared and a 'theory of change' developed, the team begins development of the advert itself. This initially takes the form of a strategy document addressing several key areas systematically and synthesises the results of the insight process:

1. What is the problem we are trying to solve?
2. Who are the target audience?
3. How will we reach them?
4. What do they currently think?
5. What do we want them to do?
6. What are we saying to them (the proposition)?
7. What is in it for them (benefit)?
8. What do we want them to think and feel?
9. What barriers exist to them doing what we want them to do?
10. Why should they believe us?
11. What is the first thing we want them to do?
12. How will we measure - outputs, outtakes, outcomes (both influence and behaviour)?
13. What relevant experience (lessons learned) should we take into account?

Police Scotland Campaign Strategy Template

This, which includes the key 'messages' and 'audiences' for the campaign, is then used to direct the development of campaign creative content. Police Scotland corporate communications have their own in-house creative team, which is able to create much of the static visual content for these adverts in-house. For video and radio content, they outsource to a creative agency.

There are clear shared aesthetic aspects of these campaigns, reflecting a Police Scotland 'strategic communications' brand that is remarkably consistent between campaigns. The 'tone' of the ad is set out in the strategic plan - often including explicit aspects of 'Scottishness' in order to connect with the audience. For video and image content, the photography is often quite grim and serious, reflecting the topics, using bleached and dark colours, high contrast and stark lighting. A key choice within the design of the campaign is the prominence or presence of Police Scotland branding. In some cases this would be prominent, but in others completely absent (unbranded) where this was seen as a way to improve reception for audiences who were perceived to react negatively to police presence.

Although our interest is primarily in the novel digital targeted forms of influence involved, it is important to note that these are not solely delivered through targeted

digital advertising on social media. Rather than focus on a single delivery mechanism, the campaigns generally involved several - often including adverts a range of digital platforms as well as traditional newspaper ad buying, bought editorial space or comment pieces, interviews on national television and radio, statements of support by celebrities, and even more traditional real estate such as out of home advertising on buses, phone boxes, and billboards. Digital spend is particularly tailored to the target group, based on the specific platforms or sites where they spend time. Beyond the purchase of advertising space, some Police Scotland campaigns (such as the That Guy campaign) have also engaged directly with the 'influencer economy'; involving paid content from influencers, often at a lower level than that of the 'celebrity endorsement', aiming for a more 'peer' or 'authentic' character of communication.

3.4.2 Partnership working

The design and delivery of the resulting campaigns involved co-ordinating a network of private sector partners, ranging from creative agencies to targeting companies. Some of them are subject-specific or specialised, whereas others incorporate a wider menu of services, including classic commercial marketing. These included creative agencies who make content for campaigns, media buying agencies that manage targeting and purchasing adverts, and monitoring and evaluation agencies, among others. These were contracted under national procurement frameworks. Rather than marketing consultancies and ad buying agencies being a privileged site of expertise (as we have seen with the major agencies working with government departments in England, such as the Saatchi and Saatchi partnership with the Home Office), in fact, despite their expertise in broader marketing strategies, the agencies tended to require substantial direction - and sometimes resistance - from Police Scotland in tailoring these approaches to the unique environment of police work.

But where the kind of... where the skill comes in from us is the pushback and the querying and the holding to account... We'll interrogate their proposal, and go and do some of our own research into that as well, and make sure that we know that that is the case. We have to question that, we're the holders of the public purse, and, you know, our view was, for a really sensitive subject like this, and getting men to understand what we wanted them to understand, we thought peer-to-peer was going to be the right route to go, and we did our own insight, as I said at the beginning, and talked about, the best people for this audience are people who they trust, and they understand, and they know, and they will take information from these people, they are not necessarily going to take it from the police. So we said, we want to spend some of the money on influencers. The agency will say I think you might be better doing this, or doing that, but ultimately that's our call. And we said no, we're spending some of the money on influencers.

Police Scotland communications officer

In this process, the *image* of targeted marketing held by the police communications officers, including the different ways that the targeting can be done, played a major role. On a number of occasions, the police communications staff began with an idea - often one being actively exploited in commercial marketing, such as fine-grain location geotargeting - of what was possible, then approached their contractors with a set of requirements. The contractors were sometimes unaware of these more esoteric or innovative uses of the platform infrastructure, going on to develop with the police a set of practices for exploiting these in a public service context.

The requirements of a police behaviour change campaign were often bespoke and not always covering topics or behaviours that were familiar to contractors from commercial marketing background. While these capacities were firmly in the domain of 'innovative' or 'leading edge' practice in the commercial sector (rather than core business requirements), they show up the key differences between the requirements of commercial and public service behaviour change programmes, and the particular uniqueness of the police and the relationships they have to democracy, speech, and public space. Similarly, some capacities that were well-established for commercial advertisers - such as the use of 'edgy' creative strategies - had very different risks when combined with the police power and image. Thus, this was a process of the police teaching the contractors how to do this public service messaging as they were developing these approaches themselves. However, once the contractors had developed these practices, they were subsequently able to market themselves as experts to other forces, agencies, and departments.

The team was also actively involved in co-ordinating a range of delivery partners in the charitable sector and civil society. Although the main topics and goals of an individual campaign were set by core police leadership and strategic policing priorities, a range of partners with long-term on-going commitment to the issues shaped these campaigns at the insight, assurance, and delivery stages, and subsequently contributed to evaluation. These include victim-focused charities as well as those who support people at risk of offending (who are often the 'final step' providing support). This was seen as part of the 'responsiveness' of these campaigns to wider issues faced by the public - partner charities were seen as able to represent particular views of the problem as well as providing expertise, standing in for community interests and a 'democratic' character for the interventions. Partners were generally involved from the outset and throughout the campaign development - shaping understanding of causes and the wider environment in the insights stage, reviewing draft creative content, and producing their own web content or supplementary websites. Finally, these partners played a role in dissemination and evaluation of campaigns - reposting the adverts, discussing the content on social media, and finally tracking resulting referrals to their own services.

3.5 Monitoring and evaluation

The team uses a monitoring framework developed by the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC). In their evaluation reports, this details:

- Outputs - the campaign activity and reach
- Outtakes etc. - platform audience engagement metrics like clicks, likes, views,
- Outcomes or 'impacts' - evidence of measurable changes in behaviour or 'influence towards behaviour change'

This evaluation is complemented by a large and developed ecosystem of monitoring and research companies attached to various providers throughout the process. Although PS gets the direct reports on views etc., these companies are generally able to help provide a more critical interrogation of the analytics reports generated by each advertising platform.

The digital aspects of these campaigns provide both opportunities and challenges for robust evaluation. 'Awareness' or 'reach'-based metrics - i.e. those provided by the platform - were generally considered to be ancillary to measuring impact by the practitioners we interviewed. A core contention of the 'strategic' approach is that campaigns need to be judged not based on what is produced, or how widely it is seen, but on the *measurable effects* it has on key indicators and outcomes. The digital platforms incorporate a wide range of measurement tools - ostensibly allowing for moment-to-moment evaluation of the performance of a campaign among different audiences. However, these are focused around market penetration - how many people see the advert, and who they are - and 'engagement' with the advert - i.e. whether the person clicked on it or not. What the actual effects of these adverts are on criminal justice outcomes is still extremely hard to measure. Although, for a marketer working in ecommerce, the metric of 'conversion' is relatively straightforward - i.e. whether the individual went on to buy the product on the website directly, other aspects such as the longer-term effect on the brand, or whether the advert caused the person to purchase the product (or convinced them not to) at a later date are not measurable in this way, relying instead on traditional surveys and focus groups.

For state campaigns, and for the police specifically, substantial administrative datasets exist of operational outcomes - such as crime rates, reports, or services used - however the timeframe for reporting for these is often at the resolution of years rather than the instantaneous timeframes of digital platforms, and longer-term change is likely to be determined by so many different factors that the effect of the ad itself is extremely hard to evaluate. In the evaluations we studied, administrative data from partner agencies and services proved more useful than police data for conducting evaluations in the immediate to medium term - usually through

increases in referrals or access to services, which could often be directly linked to a particular ad.

The broader media environment additionally contributes to these tensions. The campaigns are generally conceived at the design stage as very specific and highly targeted campaigns, but the aim (and the perceived success of the campaign) is generally for wide reach and delivery on platform metrics such as impressions and clickthrough - even though the campaigns have generally been designed for a smaller and more specific group. This is partly to do with the culture of what the customers and providers understand by the metrics. However it also represents a wider struggle with implementing strategic campaigns in the context of a public sector organisation - the desire from core business areas to deliver change is easily subsumed within the PR mode once a campaign is in the public eye - i.e. the campaign is reinterpreted the way it reflects cultural values, the overall mission of the police, or political values. Thus, much of the future work of the team in establishing these campaigns is likely to focus on internal education and the development of metrics of *behaviour change* beyond measuring public perception of whether the campaign was a success.

3.6 Institutional factors

The institutional structure of Scottish policing played a key role in shaping the use of 'influence policing' campaigns, from administrative to more practical concerns. These play into tensions between central and local control within policing which are well-established features of policing scholarship.

As a unified single force (since 2013, prior to which Scotland had 8 regional forces), Police Scotland manages all corporate and external communications through a single centralised communications department. Rather than individually producing and buying communications on a region-by-region level - as in England and Wales - all spending on communications has to be managed through this central department. This gives the strategic unit substantial oversight of the use of digital marketing by Police Scotland; it additionally means that, while day-to-day communications can address local priorities, strategic campaigns are limited to four or five major priority areas every year. Campaigns at the force level are therefore by definition also necessarily 'national' campaigns for Police Scotland - a feature which distinguishes them from forces in England and Wales.

In terms of delivery, operating at a national level allows the team access to the Scottish Government's national procurement framework for communications and marketing services; this means it does not rely on bespoke procurement from local agencies. The unified force also serendipitously aligns with the categories provided by the digital advertising infrastructure. As 'Scotland' is always provided as a category by social media sites, and campaigns are run at the national level through the centralised unit, there is no requirement for campaigns that address Police Scotland's full audience to use location-based targeting beyond that directly supplied. Conversely, in England, force boundaries don't correspond to the areas provided by targeting platforms like Google, so the forces often need to create custom geographies which use more invasive forms of location targeting.

Some of the team's work as a result involves providing a tacit 'oversight' function to Police Scotland communications, deploying their central institutional position to prevent local divisions, officers, and support staff running their own campaigns without approval. The relatively cheap and accessible nature of the social media ad platforms means that campaigns can be extremely cheap and targeted at very local areas, groups, and issues; the digital targeting suites provide extremely intimate ways to reach particular communities that pose a clear reputational and harm risk if misused. However, as marketing budget is reserved to the central comms team, they are able to exercise oversight over this kind of ad-hoc spending. In addition to the funding, the use of HootSuite⁵ and digital centralisation of accounts means that local divisions are mechanically unable to buy ads on their own official accounts.

⁵ A commercial social media account dashboard platform that allows centralised control of an organisation's social media estate

"We're a national corporate communications department... we're doing comms for all communities all over the country. So we rely heavily on police officers in local divisions to be running their social media channels. They're running social media channels, they're dealing and engaging with local media, and they're helping us to get our campaigns out to these communities, but they have a full time policing job - they're not comms professionals. There's a line there as to how much they can do, and how much we can do. And we don't have that control right out. We had a request in for materials for licensed premises... about how women can protect themselves from sexual assault. That's not our message.. We don't talk to women about how to prevent sexual assault, we talk to men about how to not assault women. Our skills come in at that point to say, no, that's not the police message and it is not going to be received well by the public... So the process for that is no one can print anything unless it comes through us, so we'll catch that... and there's a procurement framework in place which means no one is allowed to spend any money on marketing or advertising unless via us and the contract we have with our media buying agency.

Police Scotland communications officer

According with our findings from interviewing strategic communicators in other areas of public policy, much of this oversight work involved saying "no" to campaigns where they were proposed by other stakeholders within the police. This was particularly the case where a proposed campaign would either contradict the strategies or core values currently asserted by Police Scotland (for example, around the appropriateness of responsabilising victims, or of anti-drug messaging); or alternatively where a particular proposed method would have a high likelihood of 'backlash' effects (as with many counter-misinformation 'mythbusting' campaigns).

PS is not the only player in the area of awareness and behavioural communication in Scotland - and other organisations have not followed the same path, or developed the approach of PS, or made the same decisions as to scope or method. While the team did take on an oversight function across Police Scotland, they expressed frustration that an arms-length charity body which operates at a UK level was engaging local divisions in campaigns, which sometimes conflicted with existing campaigns, ran counter to core police strategies, mission and value statements, and generally involved less specialist oversight. In some cases, this related to UK policing priorities that were perceived as of limited relevance or application in Scotland. Bodies like this have access to their own funds and ad accounts, which allow them to run campaigns with local forces (or in Scotland, legacy forces or divisions) and bypass these centralised structures of accountability.

Now in previous times, what would have happened was other organisations, agencies, or partners, and this still does happen a wee bit, come in and say to

a local division, we'll give you money to do a campaign about for example drugs. And then they fund a drug dealing campaign, which maybe isn't on our priorities for the year. Maybe we don't want to be doing something like that. Drugs is a public health issue and health are lead for that issue. So it's a bit dangerous for us when others start to come in and offer money.

Police Scotland communications officer

As we discuss in Section 5, this is very evident in our explorations of the wider UK context - in a given force area, there are often multiple groups running digital prevention campaigns with a 'law enforcement' rationality, including local divisions themselves, criminal justice charities, PCCs, Councils, central government departments, law enforcement agencies, and others.

Of particular interest were the campaigns which the team either decided not to run from the outset, or which they were approached for and argued against. This extended from individual rationales (a refusal to target victims of crime, for example) to entire policy areas (such as drug use), in which the team successfully argued that a behavioural campaign would either not be suitable, have no clear 'levers' that would plausibly work, would pose serious moral, financial, or reputational issues, or would conflict with broader police strategy.

So there are some that we've advised the business area we can't do ... Because we require people to have the capability, as COM-B suggests, right, we require people to have the capability to make their own decisions. So as soon as we got to the C in COM-B, we ask, do they have the capacity to change their behaviour? No. They don't. Because, well, a large proportion of the audience doesn't have the ability to change their behaviour. Not without some serious intervention from mental health, from GPs. So do we have that? No. We don't. Are they motivated to change their behaviour? No. Because they can't understand that their behaviour is wrong. Is it easy for them to change their behaviour? No. Because it's a health issue. So we had to advise our organisation that we can't do anything with this audience. We're not targeting victims asking them to change their behaviour, because that's ridiculous. So our advice, and our guidance at that point is, if you want to do something on this particular crime, then it has to be around how we as an organisation are working with... charities that work with victims. And what we can communicate is the support measures we can put in place for people. But in terms of changing the behaviour of a perpetrator, can't do it. And in terms of changing the behaviour of a victim, won't do it. So that's one of the ones that we've advised against.

Police Scotland communications officer

As in many other areas of policing, the trade-offs between centralised and localised models are fairly clear - sacrificing responsiveness to local issues for greater centralised oversight and accountability. Given the embryonic nature of these methods, the institutional structural features of Scottish policing enable the tacit knowledge and professional expertise of this small team to fulfil a 'load-bearing' accountability and oversight function. This points to one of our key recommendations - that although this is currently providing a fairly agile set of capabilities and permitting experimentation in this embryonic stage, as the use of these campaigns scales up and a desire for more local capacities grows beyond what this unit can themselves sustain, some of this tacit expertise and informal oversight will need to be codified and formalised. This formalisation may then, in future, allow the development of more local capacities.

3.7 The skillset of an 'influence officer'

While the campaigns themselves are of interest, it is also worth exploring the people who are designing and delivering these interventions, and how their practices and professional identities differ from more traditional police communications staff. Although this could be seen as simply a professionalisation of existing communication roles, in fact we argue that this is part of a wider transformation of communications work in policing. We contend that the kinds of practices and skills developed by these communications officers and their relationship to the broader work of policing, constitute the emergence of an embryonic novel role in police work - the 'influence officer'.

These officers have taken a step towards the frontline away from purely 'back office' supportive work - rather than solely supporting operational police interventions being delivered elsewhere, they are attempting to directly contribute to police strategic outcomes, wielding the power and image of the police themselves - albeit in a different way to officers on the ground. Using their access to the digital platforms - through their own skills and their networks of private sector contractors - they are able to carry the force of preventative policing into the novel digital spaces which traditional territorial policing has generally struggled to reach. This is very different to the 'PR' mode of communications work, which involves representing the police and shaping how they are depicted in media accounts. In this section, we discuss the skills, values, and motivations of these potentially new kinds of communication officer.

The communications officers we interviewed saw themselves as having a distinctive skillset. They all had a keen interest in 'behavioural' marketing models - often conceptualised through public health marketing, core government frameworks, and industry best practice. However, they were not pure 'behavioural' marketers transplanted into the police context. As a team they held complementary skills and experiences, with a distinct focus on the practical issues of developing and delivering campaigns, rather than being able to bring comprehensive scientific knowledge of 'behavioural' communications nor expertise in any of the issues they address - for example, there was less focus on the mechanics of bespoke platform targeting (e.g. targeting young people on Snapchat), or quasi-experimental behavioural intervention evaluation. Instead, they drew equally on experiences from more core marketing practices - emphasising creativity, instincts, the ability to manage processes, work with clients and contractors, and to segment and understand the public, and their experience of 'what works' in a traditional campaign.

"So for me, everything we do as a communications department, and about professionalising our communications department, is so closely linked to brand, I feel that the people who have that understanding of branding, and who really understand the public, are marketing people. We're curious,

interested in popular culture, and what's happening, how people behave, and how things are changing. Marketers are naturally curious, they interrogate everything, they want research, and they need to really understand people and their audience. We're so fascinated by how people respond to things. And you don't always see that in somebody who works in a more traditional communications role where their focus is on getting their own story across, and that's it."

Police Scotland communications officer

They saw these 'marketing' skills as distinct from the more PR-based approaches to traditional police communications. This also relied on very different forms of social capital - instead of a 'black book' of media contacts, they prioritised private sector networks and relationships with suppliers, knowledge of commissioning processes, and experience in assessing the quality of offers, and their ability to use all this to leverage the power of the digital platform infrastructure.

"Considering the number of ex-journalists that work in corporate comms you'd think that would be second nature, but it's very easy to get squeezed into the jelly mould that is public sector corporate communications, where the focus is on producing press releases. We're acutely aware of the decline of print journalism and how a lot of online journalism is total smoke and mirrors, and clickbait. So we focus on trying to get people to think wider than traditional media, and start thinking about content, and pushing out some content ourselves that's high quality. And some police services are doing that really well. [English force area]'s head of comms is an ex-journalist and producer, who is embracing this approach, producing a lot of their own content and publishing it. "

Police Scotland communications officer

In addition to the frameworks of behavioural psychology and the skills of the strategic marketer, these officers drew on years of experience of the police communications context. They were acutely aware of the power of the police image - not only as a 'brand' but as exerting a symbolic force in its own right.

"For us in Police Scotland, that role is fundamentally based around the principles of marketing and branding. So, I look at public confidence, we measure most of what we do in policing by how confident the public are in us, and do they have trust in police. Can we continue to police with consent? If we've got the trust of the public then yes we can, if we don't then no we can't. And public confidence to me is the equivalent of any big brand's brand marketing. That's their basis of what they do - this is what people think of you, the first words that come to mind when they talk about you. You say Coca Cola and people instantly know what the brand looks like, what the logo looks

like, what they stand for, what they do, where you are, what part of the market, in terms of the 'four P's' you're in. So for me, public confidence is like our branding."

Police Scotland communications officer

As the team has been developing its practices, it has, in the model of many other specialised areas of policing (with previous examples including Community Support Officers, cybercrime specialists, forensic technicians, and others) needed to promote its work within the police itself - to establish it's work as 'real' frontline police work. Although retaining a strong connection to 'communications' work, the self-conception of the 'influence officer' is closer to that of a forensic specialist than a call handler - these are specialist frontline support officers who see themselves as directly engaged in police work, rather than supportive 'back office' staff⁶. This faces challenges both in asserting 'voice' and 'visibility' of the work that they do - i.e. educating colleagues as to what makes their work distinct from traditional forms of police communication, but additionally problems of success - where resources are mobilised and something seems to work, operational colleagues want to feed in, often in ways which run counter to the flow of a marketing campaign process.

Finally, this 'influence officer' skillset and self-image plays a key role in assessing and managing the potential harms of these campaigns. Much of this remains focused in the 'PR' mode - i.e. assessing potential harms to the core police 'brand' - though this is not unique to the police, and has generally been the forms of harm emphasised in the Government Communications Service frameworks as well. This revolves around fairly traditional ideas of propriety, message alignment, and positioning - e.g. not having the Police brand displayed next to adult content, or ensuring that messages are aligned with the broader values and strategic aims of the force. The phenomenon of 'blowback' - where a communication is seen by someone outside the target audience and negatively received, or where it has the opposite of the intended effect (e.g. a misinformation debunking campaign accidentally spreading misinformation more widely) - is well-established within strategic communications practice. However, the team's efforts to manage this were based largely in their own expertise and experience, rather than formal frameworks, assessment tools, or ongoing monitoring. This suggests a potential direction for future work and development - building in more explicit best practice frameworks, monitoring approaches, and administrative structures to enable this work to be carried out at a wider scale without such a reliance on a core team of 'load bearing' skilled professionals.

⁶ Though, despite the perception of call handling and other supportive work as 'back-line', in fact these support staff spend a great deal of their time dealing directly with the public and 'doing' police work.

3.8 Summary and conclusions

We argue that our empirical work justifies the identification of this as an emerging modality of police communications work and professional practice; what we term *influence policing* and the role of the *influence officer*. While this novel mode of policing is taking shape in forces and centralised agencies across the UK, it is clear from our findings that a distinctively 'Scottish' form is emerging. We now turn to an analysis of four campaigns - three by the Police Scotland team, and one by the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit - to explore how these interventions function in depth.

4. Campaign case studies

In this section, we analyse several campaigns run in the 'influence policing' mode, based on an evaluation of documents and interviews. We detail four case study campaigns, including three conducted by Police Scotland and one additional example from the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, which highlight the leading edge of experimentation with these practices in policing in Scotland and the wider UK. For each example, we set out the background on the particular topic addressed, discuss the research approach taken by Police Scotland and the campaign rationale, then discuss the design and delivery of the campaign itself, how it was evaluated, and give an overview of key issues identified.

4.1 - Case Study 1: Child Sexual Abuse campaign - Stop It Now

4.1.1 Background

The first campaign we consider is a Child Sexual Abuse campaign run by PS over three waves from 2019 to 2021. Online grooming is a key strategic issue for forces across the UK - and one which is seen as particularly intractable to traditional forms of intervention. This set of strategic communications campaigns aimed to both deter potential child abuse offenders from committing grooming offences, and to link them up with supportive resources. This campaign is notable due to its evolution over time - we see the development and refinement of 'behaviour science' and delivery approaches as the team progresses - and its focus on directly 'nudging' perpetrators through the use of a fear message, rather than a traditional 'awareness' communication. We also note the use of criminal justice system data in developing the campaign.

4.1.2 Insights and research

We first discuss the insights research which preceded the development of the Stop It Now campaign. The research conducted included a review of academic and practitioner literature. It additionally drew on a small number of interviews of offenders and a review of court documents. This was conducted for the first year of the campaign and retained for subsequent years:

- 53 reports on convicted offenders
- 4 in-depth interviews with perpetrators
- 3 interviews with SOLO / OMU staff
- 1 interview with Stop It Now case worker

Child Sexual Abuse Campaign Insights report, 2019

The 'insights report' begins by setting out the *modus operandi* of the offence - focusing on particular online platforms and then positing a move from online grooming to offline contact offences. It then proceeds to a profile of the offender, listing a set of general pathologies and characteristics which form 'enabling' or 'risk' factors, along with more specific 'offender types' within the wider cohort, and a set of situational 'triggers' for grooming behaviour. Within these sets of profiles we can observe two distinct modes - one criminal justice, the other psychological. The psychological profiles generally sought to establish a generic set of traits which were seen to characterise likely offenders and those at risk of offending. This was wide in scope; including risk factors within 'precursor' risk groups and the wider population.

- Emotionally inadequate
- Loner or poor social networks

- Difficulty interpreting emotional cues in others
- Depressive
- Impulsiveness and inability to consider consequences
- Lack of empathy
- Naïve Impression management and manipulative behaviour
- Childhood or adult trauma
- Failed relationships
- Promiscuity
- Early sexual experiences
- May identify as a child

Child Sexual Abuse Campaign Insights report, 2019

Conversely, a more traditional 'police' or 'criminal justice' profile focused on typologies of offender and the situations in which the offences occurred:

- Offender types:
- Low-functioning / socially isolated
- High-functioning / socially isolated
- High-functioning / socially integrated
- Aggressive / violent
- Non-aggressive / manipulative

Child Sexual Abuse Campaign Insights report, 2019

This set of criminal and psychological profiles were then developed further into an audience profile:

- All sexually active men in Scotland who are at risk of grooming/contact offending.
- Women do offend but the numbers are very small.
- This group is mostly heterosexual, white Scottish, but does include East European men.
- Online grooming is not as common an MO in BME communities.
- There's some evidence to suggest that the peaks of interfamilial offending age-wise are mirrored in cyber-enabled offending. These are 18-25 (early sexual maturity), young family (20s-40s) and retirement (late 50s-60s).

Child Sexual Abuse Campaign Insights report, 2019

4.13 Theory of Change

This line of development - from police to psychological to audience profile - focused on progression towards a *targeting* scheme that could be used to deliver

the adverts on the relevant platforms, but was additionally accompanied by a progression towards the *content* of the advert and a theory of change - how it would actually have an impact. As the initial psychological profiles of offenders suggested that appeals to empathy would be ineffective, the campaign theory of change focused instead on increasing the perceived personal risk to the offender. This was combined with a signpost to supportive services - the Stop it Now website, which provided links to services for those who want support in stopping grooming behaviours.

“We are going to catch you but we are going to help you at the same time”

Police Scotland strategy document, *Child Sexual Abuse* campaign

Together, these attempted to mobilise both *fear* (of public shaming, losing one's job) and a sense of *relief* that help for cessation was available. As the 'situational' profile suggested that in-the-moment messaging might potentially be ineffective as offenders would be 'in the zone', a decision was taken to complement the digital ads with out-of-home advertising on phone boxes.

4.1.4 *The campaign*

For the first year, the campaign creative involved repurposing emojis - seen as a common feature of the instant messaging spaces in which grooming was thought to take place - to make them part of the ad message, depicting commonly-used emojis which had been altered to imply negative consequences for the offender (see Figure 1). These campaign products focused on increasing perceived risk for those 'at risk' of or already engaging in grooming - addressing a series of different potential consequences of being caught.

Figure 1: CSA Campaign 2019



The audience profile developed in the insights stage maps closely onto the eventual audience targeting grid used by the campaign (which was split into two messages - one traditional 'awareness' message for the general public and one directed at offenders in the behaviour change mode):

- Phone Kiosks – All adults in the central belt
- Digital –
 - Facebook - Newsfeed, Messenger, Right-hand side, Males aged 18+
 - Snapchat - Males aged 18+
 - Twitter – Newsfeed, Males aged 18+ with porn interests
 - Google Display – Reddit , Standard IAB formats , Males aged 18+

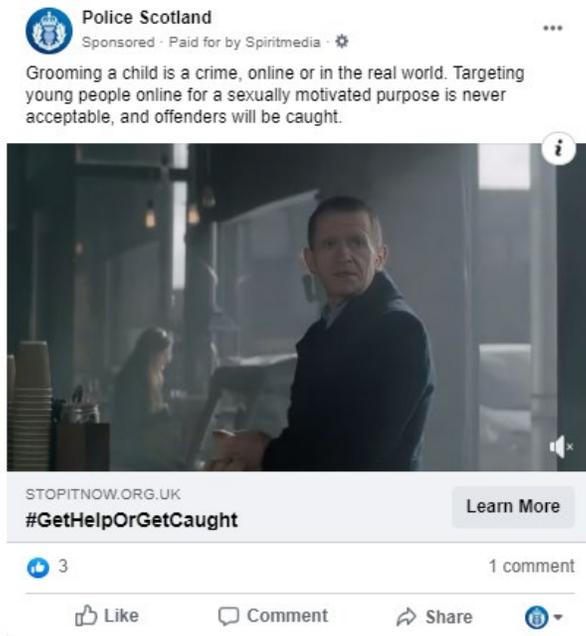
CSA Campaign Strategy, 2019

Initially, this was a hybrid campaign involving both targeted online advertisements and digital ads in 'physical space' displayed on telephone kiosks. While the online campaign was centrally organised as a 'social media' budget, in fact this used a range of different services, including Twitter, Facebook, and Google's Display Network. This spread across multiple channels was common to all the campaigns, and each of these channels provided the police with different forms of targeting; Twitter allows targeting based on interests, for example, while Display Network ads use demographics and keywords searched. An individual user might see the ad through a single channel based on one targeting vector (such as demographics), and see the same ad again on another service based on a different vector (such as interests); or through organic sharing by other users or influencers.

The process of developing this message into campaign content highlighted tensions with established ways of working in the police force, which clashed with the novel practices of the police marketers. While the team wanted to use emotive terminology ('grooming') which they felt would make an impact on their target group, the legal review team insisted on the use only of terms relating to a legally defined offence in the advertising copy (though one that the audience wouldn't necessarily know).

As the campaign progressed through subsequent years, the insights and 'lessons learned' from the previous years were brought forward, rather than beginning the process from scratch. The 'creative' - i.e. the content - for this campaign, however, changed over time. The second year of the campaign shifted the creative strategy, retaining the focus on the risks to the perpetrator, but putting the behaviour in a 'real' social context; showing the offender in a cafe speaking to a child, highlighting the risk of exposure when 'online' behaviours - and criminal justice action - are moved to a physical space.

Figure 2: CSA Campaign 2020



Implicit in this campaign is the idea that the police adverts are asserting the social norms which are seen as missing in online contexts into the online space - with the police as 'carrying' these with their presence and authority. These were similarly targeted to hit the perpetrator 'in the moment' and on the platforms on which they were seen as likely to be engaging in their abuse:

Facebook:

We will run adverts on Facebook Messenger Stories which is a key platform for perpetrators, and using demographic targeting we will narrow down the target audience to only show the video on messenger to males aged 18+. This will allow us to place the message in front of the target audience within the environment where they may be planning on perpetrating the crime, therefore disrupting them.

Snapchat:

This is also a key platform where perpetrators could attempt to contact children, as such we will be running video Snap Ads on this platform. We will also utilise demographic targeting to overlay age and gender to the targeting to target males aged 18+.

Twitter

Targeting those who consume pornography - we typically see a male skew across many Twitter campaigns, so know that it will be a prevalent platform for this campaign. We will target based on followers of pornography accounts and those who engage with or tweet sexually explicit keywords. Some of the offenders will be interested in adult content and this is something we will utilise to target, so we have compiled a list of some user profiles and

keywords which links to adult content, adult images or links to external adult sites hosting content.

Reach PLC:

This in read video format will display the video asset within articles being viewed across the Reach PLC network which includes Daily Record, Sunday Mail, Glasgow Live, Edinburgh Live. Demographic targeting will allow us to serve the content to males aged 18 to 60. Reach PLC's own 1st party data will also be used to target an audience who are heavy users of social media, heavy users of computers and online chat forum users. This allows us to more selectively target those who are more likely to be offenders.

CSA Campaign Strategy 2020

As can be seen, the aim of the targeting is both to ensure that the ad is delivered to those 'more likely' to be offenders or to be at risk of offending, and to do so in the online places and spaces in which they are planning or actively committing offences; i.e. 'in the moment' or at least, in the environment which they themselves associate with their activities. This can also be observed in the creative used - aiming either to repurpose the 'furniture' of online interaction, such as emojis, or to use these as part of the message of 'exposure' (working social media identifiers and logos into design elements of the cafe in order to imply the consequences when these online behaviours are revealed in the 'real world').

The final sweep of the campaign we analysed, in 2021, used a striking image (initially introduced as a component of the 2020 campaign) - of a man staring directly at the camera. Unlike the video content, which requires a level of direct viewer engagement (and can be simply 'scrolled past'), this ad has a 'pop up' quality - directly broadcasting the message in a single image, which uses the accusing glare in the creative content to arrest the viewer mid-action.

Figure 3: CSA Campaign 2021



Of the three adverts, this appears to adopt the most obviously 'nudge'-heavy design, relying the least on viewer interpretation and conscious engagement (whether of text or video). It most directly and immediately attempts to communicate 'fear' or 'surveillance', through the stark graphics and aggressive, accusing face depicted. Finally, it is clearly designed to appear 'in the built environment' as users browse the web normally, interrupting them in the flow of (in this case illegal) activities, and broadcasting the presence of authority. As a classic communications 'nudge' this appears to operate less on narratives and more directly aims to insert signals into the stream of information that the viewer receives at the point at which they are (hypothetically) most receptive.

In addition to the direct reach of the campaign ad itself, Police Scotland supplemented the adverts with additional elements. These included press releases, statements and content produced by charity partners, appearances by police leadership on the news to promote the campaign, editorials and coverage in national newspapers, supplementary content released by Police Scotland accounts on social media, and items released on the Police Scotland staff intranet. This even included scope for very traditional forms of engagement - such as leaflets and videos in GP surgeries (which for some audiences might be more appropriate than digital communications).

4.1.5 Evaluation

The internal evaluation of the campaign was conducted according to the standard AMEC framework, documenting Outputs, Outtakes, and Outcomes (as described in the previous section).

In the first year, the outputs included out-of-home adverts on 166 telephone kiosks, along with paid-for digital advertising across a wide range of channels. General figures for impressions and reach were provided, including some detail around where the ads performed best (for example, the Google Display ads had the most impressions on the anonymous social app Whisper). Further detail was provided on organic social media content and 'earned' media (such as news coverage and partner activity). In later years, earned media proved more challenging to achieve due to the high throughput of competing news stories in the COVID pandemic. For outtakes, the focus shifted to measuring *engagement* with the content across these platforms (through link clicks, reactions, comments, and shares).

Although the campaign was designed based on the characteristics of this nominal core group *and targeted at young men*, Police Scotland's own engagement metrics show that its engagement was higher among women (with 78% of click-through visits to the relevant Police Scotland website being from women in the first year).

PS Scotland website (Advice for perpetrators best performing pages) 32.02% of viewers were in the 35-44 age group and 78.01% were females

Police Scotland CSA Campaign Evaluation, 2019

This highlights the difficulty of achieving and assessing desired results using the opaque and non-deterministic algorithmically-driven technologies of the targeted advertising ecosystem.

The digital delivery features allowed the police to compare the performance of different creative and messages within the same campaign. This is a standard 'selling point' of social media campaign tools - they allow very immediate real-time comparison of engagement across different segments, permitting reactive tailoring and refinement of the campaign. For example, in the first wave, the engagement with the different emojis used could be directly compared - with the finding that the 'kiss' emoji (see Figure 1) performed by far the best of the different options (accounting for 78% of link clicks).

However, these platform metrics are designed for commercial campaigns, where maximisation of reach and engagement across the piece is generally considered the goal. For these police campaigns, which often (as in this case) aim to shape the behaviour of small, non-typical groups of the public, campaigns which 'land' with large numbers of the public may well be experienced very differently by the target group. Similarly, engagement with the ad may itself not be linked to behaviour change - for example, it is possible that exposure to deterrence ads may unintentionally cause those involved in the target behaviour to harden their involvement, or may 'desensitise' them to these narratives through over-exposure. Alternatively, the adverts may provoke rather different unintended effects in other

small atypical groups of the public - for example, causing a negative reaction for Internet users with anxiety disorders or intrusive and obsessive thoughts.

Measuring behaviour change and influence outcomes in *some* members of the target group was possible in this case, namely through numbers of visits to the Stop It Now website. This showed an increase of 8,800% in page views compared to the previous month (68,374 views compared to an average of 765); though clearly, this may simply be more generally a result of advertising the service. Similar results were achieved in subsequent years. Within this, visits to particular parts of the website were monitored, especially the 'Get Help' section, and this was split by visitor location, with, for example, 32% of visitors based in Glasgow. The case studies included in some of the adverts (first person narratives told by offenders) were seen by Police Scotland as particularly important in achieving influence - and resulted in strong engagement metrics. In later years, the content of posts reacting to the campaign content were analysed - these highlight the fast-changing and contingent environment in which any communications are received, including among positive reactions a range of negative reactions, either more generally to the idea of helping 'offenders', comments asserting racist stereotypes associated with grooming, or with reference to specific news stories, such as accusations that a serving MSP had engaged in grooming. Although the campaign target was perpetrators, the metrics provided by the platforms were clearly tailored to measuring influence across the general public.

Behavioural outcomes were measured through self-referrals and third-party referrals to the Stop It Now service - notably, no self-referrals were attributed to the campaign, and call volumes to the Stop It Now helpline *reduced* during the campaign period in the first year (with slight increases in subsequent years). This was interpreted by the police as due to the media attention produced by the campaign and the age profile of likely offenders (who were seen as more likely to engage with online content). We argue that two other explanations are possible - either a displacement effect, in which those who would have called the helpline were instead finding information online via the campaign website due to the advert (or ceasing the behaviour directly) - or a 'blowback' effect in which the perceived scrutiny and fear reaction made offenders less likely to ask for help.

4.1.6 Key engagement and outcome statistics

We provide here a selection of key statistics for engagement and evaluation for the 2019 wave of the campaign, in order to give an example of some of the data used by the team in evaluating these campaigns. As can be seen, the 'reach' is an order of magnitude higher with paid adverts compared to organic posts on social media (i.e. those sent as 'posts' from Police Scotland accounts) - as are the absolute numbers of click throughs to the campaign itself. However, the organic social media posts show higher levels of direct 'conversational' engagement in the form of comments and discussions.

Table 1: Social Media paid adverts 2019

Platform	Impressions	Engagement	Link Clicks	Shares	% clicks
Google Display network	933,513		5,271		0.6%
Facebook	1,051,786	535 post reactions 409 post comments	14,096	161	1.3%
Twitter	564,210	92 replies 50 follows	13,192	404,196	2.3%
Snapchat	186,677	46,224 completed views 13,962 swipe-ups			
AdYouLike	2,229,961		25,033		1.1%

Table 2: Social Media organic posts 2019

Platform	Posts	Impressions	Engagement	Link clicks	Shares	% clicks
Facebook	12	439,408	32,040 engagements 2,490 post reactions 587 comments	3,867	606	0.9%
Twitter	19	504,422	7,474 engagements	2,593		0.5%

Youtube	2	376				2.8%
LinkedIn	1	8,028	119 reactions	132	26 shares	1.6%
Instagram	5	15,948		164	35 shares	1.0%

Later years of the campaign showed generally increasing levels of reach and engagement.

Table 3: Impressions per site per campaign year

Site	2019	2020	2021
Facebook	1,051,786	1,726,404	2,076,677
Snapchat	186,677	3,322,889	1,740,107
Youtube	n/a	1,480,791	1,411,109
Google Display Network	933,513	13,699,921	n/a
Twitter	564,210	990,162	569,075
TikTok	n/a	n/a	2,165,154

4.1.7 Overview

This campaign, especially in its last iteration, typifies a more 'in the moment' or 'nudge' model of influence - aiming to display an advert directly to those involved in or at high risk of involvement in the criminal activity in the exact moment and in the digital space in which they are about to engage in the behaviour. This bears some similarity to another early law enforcement 'nudge' campaign run by the NCA, in which a warning banner was displayed using Google Ads when young people searched using terms for illegal services. It is interesting, therefore, that it does not involve the kind of very detailed (and arguably invasive) microtargeting which we observe for some other police campaigns documented in the following section. However, the broader-spectrum communications approach means that a much wider audience has been exposed to the message. In general, this is a common theme among our case studies - while the 'nudge' design suggests very targeted effects in small risk groups, there is a tension with what the platforms and

institutions are set up to deliver and measure - which is wide-band PR-style awareness campaigns. The campaign ends up slightly caught between a behaviour change campaign and a traditional awareness campaign. Similarly, some of the direct effect on the campaign - i.e. those who see the advert, experience the 'nudge' and change their behaviour without ever clicking on the advert - is not measurable by the platform, and so cannot appear in the evaluation.

We argue that this should be considered further in future campaigns. There are serious potential issues of 'blowback' - for example, if anxious young men who are not at risk of offending are exposed to these ads (given that the existence of microtargeting is widely known), they may perceive that something they have done has led to them being targeted. Equally, repeated exposure to the ad for some within the target group may 'dull' the response, or reinforce that they have not in fact been caught or formally sanctioned despite their continuing in their actions. Police are caught here between two conflicting drives - on the one hand, to minimise the invasiveness of the targeting approach, and on the other, to ensure that ad reception is tightly controlled to maximise their ability to predict and mitigate unintended consequences. This is particularly important given the difficulty of making the targeting work - it is non-deterministic and (especially on platforms like TikTok and Google Display ads) uses a great deal of post-optimisation, making it often hard to see why someone saw a particular ad.

Finally, we note the importance of the accompanying internal communications addressed to police officers - we argue that this plays a crucial role in the intended mechanism of action of the advert, which may not be surprising since one of the main roles of the large PS communication department is internal communication. All of the external Police Scotland campaigns included complementary communications releases aimed at police officers, with the intention of reinforcing these areas as strategic priorities for the force and aligning officers with key messages, values, and constructions of crime problems. This is a crucial part of the 'wraparound' co-ordination element of these campaigns, which we discuss later in this report - the campaigns appear not only seek to influence behaviour directly, but to co-ordinate and mutually align the public with supportive services and other forms of ongoing intervention. This suggests that, in the multi-nodal landscape of contemporary public services, communications practices may be emerging as the 'connective tissue' that links the complex environment of services and interventions together, with a possible further goal of 'pre-emptively aligning' the understandings of the public, providers, and practitioners.

4.2 - Case Study 2: Domestic abuse campaign

4.2.1 Background

The second case study campaign was focused on domestic abuse, and launched in 2021. While domestic and intimate partner violence is now a core concern for the police, this was a particular strategic priority area in 2021, partly due to the increased attention as a result of COVID lockdowns. In contrast to the first case study, this campaign targeted those experiencing abuse and bystanders, attempting to counter specific narratives and perceptions acting as blockers to accessing support schemes, rather than targeting 'perpetrators'. The key difference of this campaign was a focus on reaching and supporting actual or potential members of the public experiencing abuse - and those in their close social networks. We also note the incorporation of ideas from feminist theory directly in the campaign development.

4.2.2. Insights and research

The insights study document began with a discussion of the legal environment - defining the offence in question in law and drawing links to relevant legislation. It then progressed to the strategic context - outlining the reasons for prioritising domestic violence, and specific timely strategic concerns, in particular the context of COVID lockdowns and a concern that those experiencing abuse might be effectively trapped at home in abusive environments, and hence unable to access support.

The document then sets out a series of crime situational typologies - distinguishing between 'heat of the moment' domestic violence (often taking place over years but following an essentially spontaneous and situationally-dependent pattern), versus 'intimate terrorism', which conforms to a model of long-term coercive control, in which violence is only one part.

- Situational Violence
 - Heat of the moment
 - Part of ongoing but sporadic couple conflict
 - Not part of a wider pattern of control
- Intimate Terrorism
 - Systematic use of fear and violence to control
 - Ranges from coercive control and sexual abuse to murder
 - Although rates of female perpetrators are increasing this may be down to Counter allegations
 - In some cases up to 90% of female offenders have been victims of IPV themselves
 - Some IPV is male on male

Domestic abuse campaign insights report, 2021

This 'police science' mode of research is developed further with a range of statistical profiles of offenders and survivors, including age and gender distributions along with location, based on police data. There are additionally various details provided of typical 'situations' in which domestic abuse occurs, including some risk factors.

Moving to more marketing research, the insights report then discusses perceptions of IPV (intimate partner violence) by the public and sets of reporting patterns and circumstances. Various issues of intersectionality are considered, including ethnicity and LGBT status, though these are framed through cultural issues - e.g. mothers-in-law, patriarchal cultures, and narratives - including those which act as a barrier to reporting.

Particularly interesting here is the inclusion at this point of a slide on 'structural issues of IPV':

- Historically unequal power relations between men and women
- Patriarchal attempts to control of women's sexuality
- Cultural ideology: rigid expectations of gender roles
- Doctrines of privacy: believing violence against women is private issue
- Patterns of conflict resolution: violent environments
- Government inaction: tolerance of VAW combined with ingrained social inequality
- All summarised by male entitlement

Domestic abuse campaign insights report, 2021

The use of language and concepts from sociology and feminist theory is particularly interesting. This contrasts with the psychological and criminal justice profiles used, which tend to deploy an individualised account of human action rather than taking into account ideas of conflict and social structure. This may well be due to the marketing background of the officer conducting the insights research; marketers by necessity are mobilise many different kinds of ideas and evidence about social life, and are often not trained to see what they do as 'hard science' (though this can be one component), but as practice - not necessarily strongly committed to a particular framework for understanding the world. This set of ideas (especially the idea of 'male entitlement' as a structural factor) is later taken up in the 'That Guy' campaign against sexual violence (which we discuss below) - and shows clear transfer of knowledge and models between campaigns in different areas.

However, despite the use of 'structural' concepts, the framework of behaviour change which guides the overall process serves to 'funnel' or translate this set of structural ideas into factors shaping individual behaviour - or which individual perceptions can undermine. In the above, this set of historical, structural, and

governmental issues is boiled down into the individual-level issue of 'male entitlement'. The report then continues in this vein, linking the idea of male entitlement to a psychological profile of offenders of different types, a list of external aggravating factors (situational) and risk factors (in offenders), and a longitudinal or 'pathways' perspective at the individual level, called the 'ladder of abuse'.

4.2.3 Theory of change

In comparison with the previous campaign (in 2018) which focused on sending a 'fear' message to perpetrators, this campaign aimed instead to target those experiencing domestic abuse and bystanders with support. The campaign addressed the general public in Scotland, particularly those with concerns about someone else, or about their own partner's behaviour. The core aim was to link them up to the Right to Ask scheme, which allows concerned partners and their friends and relatives to enquire about the history of IPV reports made against a person. In terms of behaviour change, this was summarised as follows:

- Start** finding out more about the right to ask disclosure scheme
- Start** taking a positive step to safeguard someone who may be at risk of abuse by submitting a right to ask disclosure request
- Start** reporting concerns directly to the police or via third party reporting
- Continue** supporting people at risk of abuse.

Domestic abuse campaign insights report, 2021

This additionally sought to neutralise key 'blockers' to using the scheme - both in terms of awareness of its existence, but also narratives and motivations:

What barriers exist to them doing what we want them to do?
(motivation, need, peers, belief etc.)

Bystanders:

Belief – it's none of my business what happens behind closed doors

Motivation – it's not a priority and is probably just a 'rough patch'

Peers – I'll be accused of meddling by others

Knowledge – I've not heard of the scheme and wouldn't know where to start.

Victims:

Motivation: I'm over-reacting, it'll get better

Motivation: I don't want to inflame the situation

Motivation: I'm not ready/able to leave

Knowledge – I've not heard of the scheme and wouldn't know where to start.

Domestic abuse campaign strategy, 2021

Countering the 'it's none of my business' narrative was a particularly clear feature of the campaign creative. While this at its heart contains elements that are similar to traditional 'awareness' campaigns, the behavioural elements - directly linking with support and directly challenging key narratives - are more novel. Despite this 'awareness' aspect, the objectives and rationales are not framed in this way in the initial research or theory of change - instead, they are linked to specific, measurable behaviours (in this case, increased reporting of IPV and increased use of the Right to Ask scheme).

Ethical issues were clearly considered as part of the design - in particular, there was a clear desire to avoid 'victim-blaming' narratives in the content, given the survivor focus of the campaign.

4.2.4 The campaign

The campaign content constituted a series of social media adverts, using a series of circular graphics with voice-over. The content reinforced the harm caused by domestic abuse, and directly countered the key 'blocker' narratives identified in the insights report, finally linking to the Right to Ask scheme.

Figure 4: Domestic Abuse Campaign 2021



The campaign strategy document also specifies details of the 'tone' of the advert:

Tone of voice

We will use a tone of voice for the campaign that will be appropriate for the target audience and most likely to resonate with them. It will be:

Scottish – with the target audience being resident in Scotland, the campaign will aim to be delivered at the level that is seen as helpful and empathetic.

Encouraging and empathetic –this campaign will aim to highlight to people that it's not overstepping the mark or going to spoil their existing relationship with their friend to submit a DSDAS form on behalf of a friend. It will recognise the anguish that a friend could be feeling.

Understanding – the campaign will fundamentally acknowledge that it's a tough decision to make, as you don't want to spoil a good friendship, however it is a good decision as helping a victim could protect them from harm.

Online savvy – being a digitally focused campaign, the language, images and symbols of social media will be employed to connect with the target audience. This will mean being mostly informal and not sticking to the house style guide.

Domestic Abuse Campaign Strategy, 2021

This campaign clearly aimed for wide reach among the general public, at the top level simply targeting an audience of adults in Scotland. This ran initially on Twitter, Snapchat, Google Display, TikTok, and Youtube. A second wave of the campaign, immediately following the first, ran on Facebook and Instagram. Due to concerns around the complex intersectionalities of domestic abuse with, for example, LGBT communities, the content was not explicitly gendered. However, in acknowledgement of the significant over-representation of women as survivors of IPV, the campaign was supplemented by a second segment delivering the same advert, but 'up-weighted' in the targeting to favour an audience of women. This was accompanied by organic content and sharing by third sector partners, along with a variety of 'earned media' spotlights in the news and press. In addition to the main animation, a video of a survivor speaking to camera about their experience was also used as part of the campaign - in this case, 'organically' shared from Police Scotland accounts.

4.2.5 Evaluation

The evaluation, as for the previous case study, focused on outputs delivered, 'reach' and 'engagement' metrics provided by the platforms, and some limited data from

police sources and the supportive service itself. As for the previous study, there was an awareness of the limitations and difficulty of assessing direct effects - police data were not available at a suitable level of granularity or immediacy for direct evaluation, and it was acknowledged that the nature of entrenched social issues like domestic abuse meant that any measurable change was likely to happen over a years-long timescale.

Much of the evaluation was processual - i.e. evaluating the successful production of campaign materials, engagement with stakeholders and delivery partners, and successful launches of content. The reach of the content was recorded through both online paid delivery - reaching millions of views across multiple platforms for a total of 20 million impressions online - and through 'earned' media coverage of the campaign in the legacy press. This can be thought of as effectively mapping the media footprint of the campaign, and hence the potential spread of information and influence achieved. Within this, earned media was additionally evaluated by whether the desired key messages from the campaign were reproduced successfully in the coverage. Again, some analysis of comments on the ad was undertaken, with documentation of any negative reactions.

Beyond metrics of reach and engagement (which were understood as 'influence' effects), the campaign was also evaluated in terms of observed behaviour change. This was far more difficult - the Internet and social media platforms generally do not provide data which can be used for this in a policy context (unlike for commercial uses, where conversions to purchases from an advert can be far more easily tracked). Instead, data were available for people visiting the campaign websites - 116,303 click-throughs on the advert, 682 individuals visiting the campaign page, and 4,182 individuals visiting the Police Scotland domestic abuse information site. Administrative statistics from the supportive services themselves were used as a proxy for behaviour change - namely, reporting of domestic abuse cases to Police Scotland and DSDAS requests made. This found a 14% overall increase in applications compared to the same period the previous year, with a 24% increase in applicants to the Right to Ask scheme specifically. However, this was in the context of an ongoing trend of large increases year-on-year in numbers accessing the (fairly new) service.

4.2.6 Key engagement and outcome statistics

Table 4: Social Media - paid adverts, 2021

Platform	Impressions	Engagements	Link clicks	Shares	% clicks
Facebook	5,138,750	1,477	9,830	534	0.2%

/Instagram Promoted post		reactions 206 comments			
Facebook /Instagram Story post	1,253,563		14,534		1.2%
Twitter	1,834,227	2,665 reactions 24 comments	4,629	302	0.3%
Snapchat	3,366,908		31,970		0.9%
Google Display	4,170,626		15,781		0.4%
Tiktok	3,738,668		35,880		1.0%
Youtube	807,073		3,679		0.5%

Table 5: Social Media - organic posts, 2021

Platform	Audience	Engagement	Shares
Facebook	361,000	49,000 video views 1,029 reactions	430
Twitter		374 likes 42 replies	272

In comparison to the earlier campaign against online grooming (Case Study 1), there has been a clear shift towards paid advertising and away from organic social media reach, and to more recent platforms such as Snapchat and Tiktok.

4.2.7 Overview

This campaign represents a rather different approach from our first case study - instead of perpetrator-focused communications, it instead targets those

experiencing domestic abuse and the people in their peer network. However, despite the lack of a 'perpetrator' focus, this still involves an attempt to implement a behavioural intervention, countering several key narratives which are seen as 'blockers' to the desired behaviour of accessing the Right to Ask service. The wide-band approach, aiming to reach a large proportion of the Scottish population, is itself worth noting - unlike extremely targeted campaigns which we see elsewhere, this clearly aims additionally to be part of a broader public conversation around the issue of domestic violence.

The insights and development approach followed a similar series of steps to the first campaign, proceeding through a range of different 'constructions' of the crime problem. There is a real variety of different forms of knowledge here (some of which it could be argued are formally incommensurable with one another) - law, statistics, feminist theory, psychology, sociology, police data, operational profiles, marketing insights, audience profiles, and evidence from practitioners and partners. As before, the ad itself (its message, behavioural nudge, and creative content) is only one part - it links to another, supplementary service or intervention..

4.3 - Case Study 3: That Guy

4.3.1 Background

Our final Police Scotland case study is Police Scotland's *That Guy* campaign, aimed at preventing sexual violence. This campaign was intended to move away from survivor-focused messaging in order to focus on those at risk of committing sexual violence, countering the widespread 'upstream' cultural narratives and behaviours which were seen by the police communications team as underpinning male sexual violence. This case is particularly distinctive for a number of reasons: (1) it attained extremely wide reach and was perceived as a huge success, (2) it has been influential in shaping practice in the UK and internationally, (3) it made innovative use of digital influencers to spread the campaign message, and (4) it operates in a different mode to the other campaigns, spreading primarily through organic reach and a network of third sector partners, and aiming to work through peer influence and the long-term shaping of wider cultural narratives seen by the police as criminogenic.

4.3.2 Insights and research

In developing the campaign, the insights report drew on academic research, internal police data, and engagement with a range of third sector and academic partners to develop a psychological and behavioural profile of those involved in sexual violence against women. This foregrounded the relative intractability of problematic narratives around consent (especially from authority sources), the persistence of victim-blaming, and the role of male sexual entitlement as a key factor, especially reinforced through lower-level misogynistic cultural narratives found within peer groups.

The report begins by laying out the strategic environment - the long-term increases in reporting of sexual violence, links to particular national strategies, and the context of lockdown (in which some aspects of sexual violence were hypothesized to involve an online component, among other aspects). As with other campaigns, the report then lays out the legal environment and relevant offences, moving on to descriptive police and recorded crime statistics. The report then moves on to a series of profiles of perpetrators and survivors of sexual violence using data from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey:

- 70% of those reporting being victims of rape said the perpetrator was their partner or someone they knew.
- 56% said the perpetrator was their partner.
- 14% said their attacker was not their partner but someone they knew.
- 14% said the person was a stranger.
- 7% said the attacker was someone they went on a date with.

- In 2017-18 there were 100 rapes where the victim met their attacker through social media, internet dating or online chat (Police Scotland figures 2018).

That Guy campaign insights report 2021

The following sections discuss common reasons for not reporting, case outcomes in the criminal justice system and a number of slides on students - focusing on 'laddish' narratives and stereotypes which might enable sexual violence. The report then switches from a police-administrative mode to a series of psychological profiles, drawing on academic handbooks and reports. These hypothecate a typology of three types of rapist - 'anger', 'power', and 'sadistic' types, including profiles of common offence situations in each case. This then leads to a series of common 'internalised narratives' characteristic of those who commit sexual violence:

Internalised narratives

Women as sexual objects

- Women are seen to constantly desire sex and are in a constant state of sexual reception, they are seen to exist to meet the sexual needs of men, even if it is coerced or violent

Male sex drive is uncontrollable

- Men's sexual energy is difficult to control, and women play a key role in the loss of this control by denying reasonable sexual access

Dangerous world

- The world is a dangerous place and it is necessary for the offender to fight back and achieve dominance and control over other people

Women are unknowable/dangerous

- Women are deceptive in communicating their desires and needs to men, and are out to trick or con men

Entitlement

- Men are superior to and more important than women, and have the right to assert their needs above/over them

That Guy campaign insights report, 2021

Following this psychological profile is a discussion of structural issues and social context. This employs feminist theory - namely, gendered stereotypes, patriarchal social structure, and male peer-relations - to frame the issue of sexual violence as one not only dependent on individual psychology, but underpinned by wider social

structure and narratives. The concept of male sexual entitlement is then developed in the report to combine the psychological and wider social factors at play; this leads to a number of slides on the theme of what men can do (both for themselves and for peers) to challenge sexual violence.

The report then reviews previous campaigns by Police Scotland concerning sexual violence. It concludes with a discussion of relevant behavioural science theories - in particular, identifying the limits of 'one-off' mass media campaigns in achieving measurable or lasting change. The report then suggests that a positive, holistic campaign with multiple strands and reaching those at risk of offending through several different vectors and across the life course is more likely to have long-term effects. From this, an initial campaign design is developed with a focus on peer influence and shaping social norms.

4.3.3 Theory of change

The That Guy campaign aimed to promote cultural change among young men in Scotland, making the links between sexual violence and male entitlement clearer. The measurable immediate behavioural objective for this campaign was to encourage young men to view a campaign website with articles, videos, and other resources for those looking to educate themselves and challenge their friends. As the insights research had identified peer norm reinforcement as a key factor, peer influence was seen as a primary target for achieving behaviour change. This additionally additionally led PS to recruit influencers to spread and reinforce the campaign message.

If you're displaying overt male sexual entitlement then you're at higher risk of serious sexual offending

If you're displaying overt male sexual entitlement, although you may not go on to offend sexually, you are contributing to a culture that gives men permission to do so

If you're displaying overt male sexual entitlement, you are contributing to a culture that makes women feel unsafe on a daily basis

You can make a difference by: Reflecting on your own behaviour, challenging the behaviour of other men and educating them

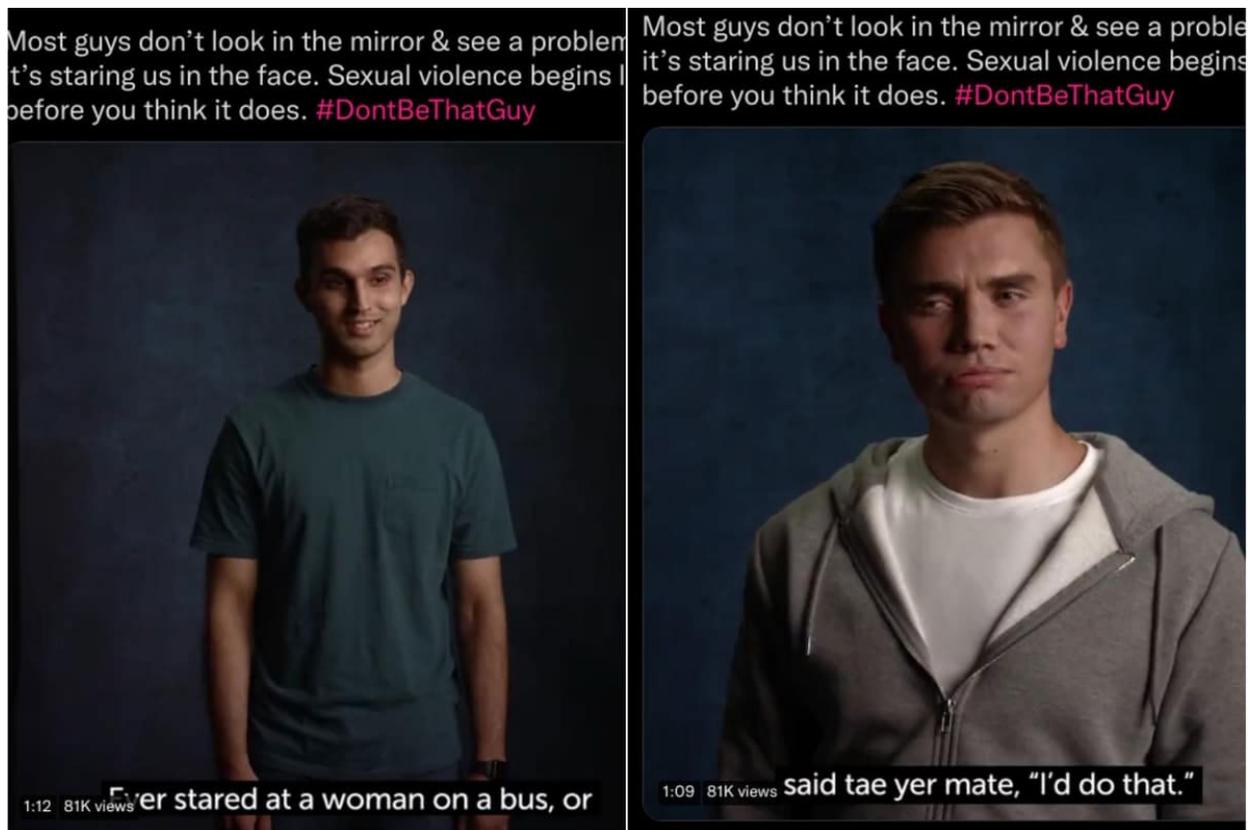
That Guy campaign evaluation, 2021

In contrast to previous campaigns supporting narratives around consent, this campaign instead sought to counter 'upstream', more minor forms of male sexual entitlement and laddish behaviour. In particular, it gave men advice on strategies for calling out their peers and on challenging problematic behaviours towards women. This was seen as a first step in achieving longer-term cultural change. The focus on those at risk of offending, rather than survivors, was seen chiefly as an ethical and value-based question (i.e. to avoid victim-blaming).

4.3.4 The campaign

The eventual campaign involved a combination of communications products aimed at challenging particular narratives and attempting to incite specific behaviour change; pushing men to engage with secondary content that would assist them in challenging those in their peer group directly. The creative strategy involved a 60 second film with young men speaking to camera, listing an escalating series of behaviours and narratives (from trivial sexism to more serious and violent behaviour) in order to communicate how lower-level forms of sexism enable violence against women.

Figure 5: Police Scotland *That Guy* campaign



The targeting focused on young men in Scotland, but did not use detailed interest-based categories:

Facebook / Instagram - Promoted Post running on Facebook and Instagram Feeds and Facebook Messenger targeting all men aged 18 - 35. Geo-targeted to Scotland

Facebook / Instagram Story - Promoted Post running on Facebook and Instagram Stories targeting all men aged 18 - 35. Geo-targeted to Scotland

Twitter - Promoted Tweets running on user feeds targeting all men aged 18 - 34, using keywords indicating a relationship and dating. Geo-targeted to Scotland

Snapchat - Snap Ads within Snapchat Stories targeted to all men aged 18 - 35 Within Scotland.

TrafficJunky - Banner Ads targeted to straight male adults across adult sites targeting Scotland.

Google Display Network -Standard IAB formats targeting men aged 18-34 in a relationship across full network, Geo-targeted to Scotland.

Spotify - 30" advert running on the digital audio platform targeting men aged 18-35, Geo-targeted to Scotland.

Bauer Production - 4 x 30" advert production with Spotify Licence

VOD YouTube - Video hosted on YouTube and served to Men aged 18-34 across all content. Geo-targeted to Scotland.

TikTok - Paid promotion of campaign video advert.

That Guy strategy document, 2021

As peer influence was seen to be an important factor, the campaign not only targeted the friends of people in 'risk groups' for misogynistic violence with adverts, but also included the use of paid influencers within relevant communities to enhance the peer-messaging function. These included footballers, TV presenters, actors, podcasters, games journalists, bloggers, and a fashion influencer. As for above examples, the campaign also incorporated a variety of earned media interviews and was additionally promoted by a large number of campaign partners, who constituted a substantial network promoting the core messages. These partners substantially shaped the reception of the campaign, and conferred significant legitimacy on the message - particularly notable given the extremely negative public and media discussions of the police at this time.

4.3.5 Evaluation

As was common to all the campaigns we studied, the reception of the campaign was steered as much by wider events as any targeting. In the summer of 2020, just before the launch of this campaign, UK news reported that a serving police officer

had abducted and murdered Sarah Everard ([The Guardian, 2021](#)). The immediate response by many English forces, aware of the catastrophic effects on public confidence in the police, was to emphasise victim-focused prevention messages that encouraged self-protective behaviours by women. News articles have captured some of the advice provided in the wake of the murder. [MyLondon \(2021\)](#) quote New Scotland Yard as suggesting:

"Our advice [to women being stopped by police] is to ask some very searching questions of that officer: Where are your colleagues? Where have you come from? Why are you here? Exactly why are you stopping or talking to me...] Ask to hear the voice of the operator, even ask to speak through the radio to the operator to say who you are and for them to verify you are with a genuine officer, acting legitimately"

New Scotland Yard press office

The Met were also criticised for suggesting that women who were suspicious of an officer "shout out or flag down a bus" ([The Independent, 2021](#)). This, along with the police response to a public vigil held in memory of Sarah Everard, was roundly criticised in the press and public reaction. By an accident of timing, the Police Scotland behaviour change campaign, which had been in development throughout the previous year, released in the following weeks (after a 10 day delay intended to avoid seeming opportunistic). The campaign drew a sharp contrast with the 'PR' communications emerging from English forces, targeted at men rather than women and focusing on calling out male sexual entitlement among peer groups. The public response to the campaign was extremely positive (though linked with discussions of the distinctive 'Scottish', and hence purportedly more liberal or progressive, character of Scottish policing).

The campaign was evaluated, as the other case studies were, initially through metrics for reach and impressions. By this standard, the campaign was extremely successful. The paid advertising achieved more than 4 million impressions across a range of social media platforms. However, the media response was enormous - following very high organic uptake on social media, the campaign was featured on a number of high profile media properties, including Loose Women (1m viewers) and BBC 5 Live Breakfast (1.5m+ listeners). There was also significant coverage in wider news media, totalling further millions of views; this included a substantial international uptake of the campaign, which was reported extensively in Japan and India, among other countries. Organic (unpaid) influencers with large numbers of followers also reposted the campaign, including a version with a Japanese translation.

In terms of behaviour change evaluation, the campaign website saw 80,000 unique visitors, for a total of 160,000 page views. Wider outcomes were assessed through 'meaningful engagement' with the campaign content, and seen as achieved due to

large numbers of viewers watching the campaign video in full. Comments from male viewers on social media were used to evaluate whether the message was 'landing' with the target audience:

Some comments from men on social media:

"I've been thinking about this video quite a lot. I'm afraid to say that I have been that guy. Worth a view, and a thought. Have you? The solution to violence against women rests with us men doing better."

"Gents. Copy and paste this into your lads WhatsApp groups."

"Listen to it, every single word of it."

"Men as a whole need to hold themselves and other men around them accountable, woman shouldn't be made to feel scared or even uncomfortable around any man under any circumstances. We need to do better."

"Incredibly powerful video explaining rape culture to men in ways they can't pretend not to understand."

"Tough watch but, blokes need to realise this "lad" behaviour is founded on the discomfort and harassment of others. Long overdue wake up call."

That Guy campaign evaluation, 2021

While direct behaviour change was seen by the team as impossible to measure in the short term, social media reactions and comments were seen as indicators of a successful narrative intervention in the national culture.

Due to the immediate cultural context, the complex dynamics of algorithmic targeting, and substantial sharing by third sector groups and celebrities (including Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon), it spread far wider than the target group, being widely viewed (and praised) by a much larger audience of women than men. As a result, this approach has been more widely adopted in policing VAWG campaigns across the UK, most notably in the Home Office's *Enough* campaign.

"And I think the, the most important thing with the That Guy campaign is the reaction, the viral nature of it, was partly circumstantial and partly because we got the message right... And I think in some situations, the message resonated. I think in Japan, the message absolutely resonated of its own accord. I think in the English-speaking world, um, the kind of, Black Lives Matter, Harvey Weinstein, the, Everybody's Invited, all of these kinds of cultural movements, you know, based around social media, uh, meant that people were looking for an answer. And we didn't come up with the answer. Lots of other people had come up with the answer already. But we were the first *institution* with the authority to present it, and that's why it, it kind of landed so well."

Police Scotland comms officer

Similarly to the anti-CSA campaign, this campaign had significant reach beyond the core demographic targeted. We believe, based on the available evidence, that this is a result of two distinct causes: firstly, due to the organic sharing favouring women (facilitated initially by a strong uptake from influential partners, politicians, and media figures, including then-First Minister Nicola Sturgeon), and secondly because of ad optimisation, in which platforms re-direct content to audiences not specified by the advertiser, based on automated analysis of the content itself and who has historically engaged with similar content.

"And what we had intended on being a very heavily perpetrator-focused campaign, and we'd talk to men, and probably not a lot of people would see it, suddenly went viral because all of the partners, and all of that kind of social justice industry really pushed it forward. And then... I think there's somewhere... around the sort of people who're sharing it, it then gets optimised. So although we're targeting it at twenty-five to thirty year old men, and they were getting it, there was just this real interest in it from other parties, which then blew it all out of the water, and I think, kind of, mucked it up a wee bit. So one of the things we have to... call out in our evaluation of it was that, you know, in terms of targeting our target audience with that message, yeah, we did reach them, and they did, you know, they did engage with the content. But actually, it was engaged with more by women, who were not our target audience."

Police Scotland comms officer

Finally, the campaign had a significant influence on other police forces and criminal justice charities, who approached the Police Scotland team for insights into the campaign design:

After campaign launch, Police Scotland was approached unprompted by a number of policing, public and third sector organisations seeking insight into the campaign's development. These included:

British Transport Police, Cheshire Police, Cleveland Police, Leicestershire Police, Metropolitan Police, Merseyside Police, Norfolk Police, Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Surrey Police, Sussex Police, West Midlands Police, West Yorkshire Police, UK Cabinet Office, Glasgow Clyde College, UK Home Office, London Mayor's Office, NHS Lothian, NHS Wales, UN Women UK, Nottingham University, Rape Crisis Dublin

That Guy evaluation, 2021

This demonstrates further influence of the campaign on policing practices.

4.3.6 Key stats

The campaign saw significant reach through paid advertising:

Table 6: Social Media - paid adverts, 2021

	Impressions	Engagements	Video views	Link clicks	Shares	Click %
Facebook / Instagram Promoted post	658,828	417	404,727	10,260	41	1.6%
Facebook / Instagram Story post	351,587		313,895	1,599		0.5%
Twitter	511,824	13,274	146,893	4,214	55	0.8%
Snapchat	925,892			8,016		0.9%
Stackadap t	1,061,195			1,750		0.2%
TikTok	586,429			5,641		1.0%
Spotify	96,014			153		0.2%
Youtube	600,477		565,273	643		0.1%
Total	4,792,246	13,691	1,430,788	32,276	96	0.7%

Posting the campaign on owned media - through dedicated That Guy campaign accounts and the Police Scotland accounts - led to particularly high reach - more so than the paid targeted advertising. For these tables, we give the *engagement rate* rather than the click-through rate to reflect the intent of these posts to contribute to public narratives and discussion, rather than accessing the campaign site directly.

Table 7: Organic posts, That Guy dedicated accounts

	# of posts	Impressions	Engagement	Video views	Link clicks	Engagement rate
Facebook	20	687,084	170,476	137,788	1,371	24%
Twitter	32	15,647,579	2,273,508	2,177,809	5,065	14%
Instagram grid	13	64,369	5,810	n/a	909	9%
Instagram reels	1	n/a	1,264,062	1,238,026	n/a	n/a
Total	65	16,399,032	2,289,794	3,553,623	7345	13%

Police Scotland owned accounts were less successful in achieving engagement and reach:

Table 8: Organic posts, Police Scotland accounts

	# of posts	Impressions	Engagement	Video views	Link clicks	Engagement rate
Facebook	6	272,490	39,728	37,548	461	14%
Twitter	6	173,644	1,706	595	380	0.9%
Total	12	446,134	41,434	38,053	841	9%

4.3.7 Overview

This campaign was different again to the previous case studies - although it included components of behavioural design, its focus was on shaping culture and narratives to achieve behaviour change in the long term, rather than an immediate behavioural intervention. Although this was developed as a targeted campaign, and the research insights suggested a more focused intervention, the wider media landscape meant that the campaign achieved much further reach than expected, well beyond the target audience. This can be seen through the campaign metrics - with organic sharing achieving far wider reach and engagement than the targeted ads (although these did themselves perform well). This fits with the design of the campaign - for which peer influence and wider cultural change were key mechanisms - however, it means that the effects of the message on the core group

of men at risk of engaging in sexual violence is extremely hard to measure. Crucially, however, the use of *police* voices and accounts in these organic discussions was far less prominent than in the 'influencer' model of police accounts having discussions on social media. Instead, the use of sharing by dedicated campaign accounts, non-police influencers and third sector partners allowed law enforcement to add institutional authority to the discussions without being the main voice heard.

The campaign was widely perceived by domestic and international media as a success - achieving a 'viral' character and contributing to a wider public discussion. Although functioning in a less targeted way, reaching far beyond the core group at whom the narrative and behavioural 'nudge' was aimed, this could be seen as carrying a more democratic character - engaging positively in an ongoing national debate around sexual violence. Conversely, as a prevention campaign intervening in the 'pre-criminal' space of everyday misogynistic attitudes, it also extends the reach of police power well beyond behaviours strictly prohibited by the criminal law. The ad served to co-ordinate a large network of campaign partners, mostly survivor charities and stakeholders in the third sector, who provided the campaign with legitimacy. In contrast with the prominent messages from forces in England and Wales at the time, this could be argued to have successfully re-oriented public discussions of sexual violence away from critiques of misogyny and violence within law enforcement, and towards a conversation in which the police (in partnership with a wide range of charities and community stakeholders) had a clear and legitimate role to play in tackling these issues in wider society.

4.4 - Case Study 4: Scottish Violence Reduction Unit – You Decide Campaign

4.4.1 Background

To complement these case studies of Police Scotland's strategic communications team, we additionally cover a campaign run within a separate part of Police Scotland: the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU). This case is particularly interesting as it shows a different approach to development - based on direct consultation and co-design with the target audience, rather than via a third sector partner - and additionally a far more precise and specific targeting approach for a much smaller audience, including the use of small-area location data.

The SVRU was set up in 2005 by Strathclyde Police. In the context of high rates of serious violence and knife crime in Glasgow at the turn of the 21st Century, the SVRU had an explicit remit to explore ways of tackling violence through a model involving a 'data-based four stage process' as outlined by the WHO's Violence Prevention Alliance - focused on service provision, mentorship, and 'holistic' interventions, including enrolling family members, peers, and wider communities in violence prevention initiatives. The SVRU has an explicit research capacity - aiming to 'understand the underlying causes' of violence and develop preventative solutions. This has grown in the intervening years into a model that is perceived internationally as extremely successful, with a range of VRU services set up in England and Wales (though often focused more on 'hotspots' policing than supportive services) - and a range of services and interventions provided by the SVRU in Scotland. Within this set of interventions is the You Decide Team, which provides a community-based 'navigator'-style service to those who have been victims of serious violence. Based on primary research suggesting that the weeks immediately post violent victimisation are associated with the highest 'risk' of engaging in further violence, the Navigator hospital service (developed by the SVRU but now delivered by Medics Against Violence) involves providing support staff in hospitals who are able to divert people at risk to specialist support services, including for housing, drug rehabilitation, and mental health support. The You Decide Team assists victims of serious violence, but also those affected by addiction, homelessness, and other issues. The SVRU is also a partner in a custody navigator service at police stations, which is delivered by SACRO.

During the pandemic, providing these kinds of in-person support service became impossible; staff were unable to physically enter hospitals and other institutions. However, frontline staff suggested the provision of a digital service, with communications colleagues then developing this into an approach using targeted advertising to replace (and later, potentially complement) the physical navigator. The SVRU designed and ran a series of adverts which replicated some of the informational services provided by the human navigator (targeting those seen as at risk of violence and linking them up with supportive services) - though not the interpersonal contact itself.

This campaign represents another approach to the use of targeted advertising compared to our other case studies - not as a behavioural nudge (though incorporating some 'behaviour science' elements) or a long-term culture change, but as a way of extending the capacities of the police to provide direct support to a vulnerable group in an extremely targeted way.

4.4.2 Insights and research

The 'insight' here did not come from police research processes, but directly from frontline staff. Perspectives were also sought from those who had been repeat victims of serious violence. The SVRU has a clear and long-standing remit for conducting research into the causes of serious violence - this research base underpinned the initial development of the Scottish navigator service itself (along with support from Medics Against Violence and the experiences of the original navigator services in the USA), thus the audience and key behavioural components were already seen as well-understood (as the SVRU is a domain specialist service rather than a generic communications department). For the development of the adverts, a specific evidence base was brought in from the Scottish Government's *Repeat Violent Victimization: Rapid Evidence Review*.

Only publicly available data was used in the campaign, for example information from the SIMD. No personal data from those visiting any of the pages on the SVRU's website was collected or stored and there was no use of cookies. There was no use whatsoever of police data. The evidence base for the campaign was the Scottish Government's Repeat Violent Victimization: Rapid Evidence Review. Standard marketing online/social media techniques were used as provided by The Union/media buying company. The SVRU also relied on its own experience of 'what works' to engage with those on the victim/offender overlap, ensuring that the experience, knowledge and voice of those who have been RVVs was embedded within the campaign.

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

In addition, the SVRU took a 'co-production' approach to developing the campaign through directly involving people with direct experience of repeat violent victimisation and the You Decide team.

4.4.3 Theory of change

Although the campaign was not seen explicitly in the language of 'behaviour change', it was based on an explicit theory of change. Specifically, it was intended to

respond to the strategic challenge posed by the COVID lockdown, and to operate as a 'digital extension' of the work done by the You Decide Team. This incorporated specific design elements based in theoretical understandings of violence and the experiences of frontline staff - namely, the issue of an 'information gap' for those who could benefit from specialist support services, and the importance of personal agency for the target audience.

The concept was to create an online navigator-style service which would provide options and information to those who wished to engage. One benefit seen of this form of service was allowing those engaging to retain a high degree of agency over their choices ie not being told who to contact but choosing based on their preference. We also sought to plug information gaps eg a repeat victim of violence (RVV) on the victim/offender overlap may not see themselves as a victim and therefore be unaware of the specialist support they are able to access, as well as making a range of relevant local support services easy to find and contact for those with limited literacy skills or access to the internet. The campaign was inspired by and designed alongside those with lived experience of being a RVV. Co-production was a core element of the campaign.

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

Although this was less explicitly rationalised as 'behaviour change', it follows much of the same design as the Police Scotland campaigns - linking to supportive services, countering specific narratives, tailoring and targeting, and measurable changes in behaviour as outcomes.

The existing theories of change underpinning the You Decide Team (and a Scottish Government Rapid Evidence Review in to repeat violent victimisation) also played a key role - namely, the importance of contact within a short time window immediately following victimisation and overlaps between those at risk of offending and those at risk of victimisation.

The original aim of the YDT campaign was to specifically engage with RVVs who are on the offender/victim overlap, especially where possible during the first week after an attack when they are more vulnerable to further violence.

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

We also note that the campaign design included particularly explicit consideration of direct blowback effects:

The SVRU has a longstanding position not to utilise knife/weapon imagery in our work. This is due to a concern that such imagery may have unintended consequences eg increase anxiety around knife use. For this reason the marketing company were asked to omit any form of weapon imagery from the campaign.

Another identified risk was offering hope of support to those in need and then not being able to back this up with provision. We mitigated this by targeting the adverts carefully to ensure services were able to cope with any increase in demand and also identifying/highlighting known reliable services that were likely to be able to engage with anyone seeking support.

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

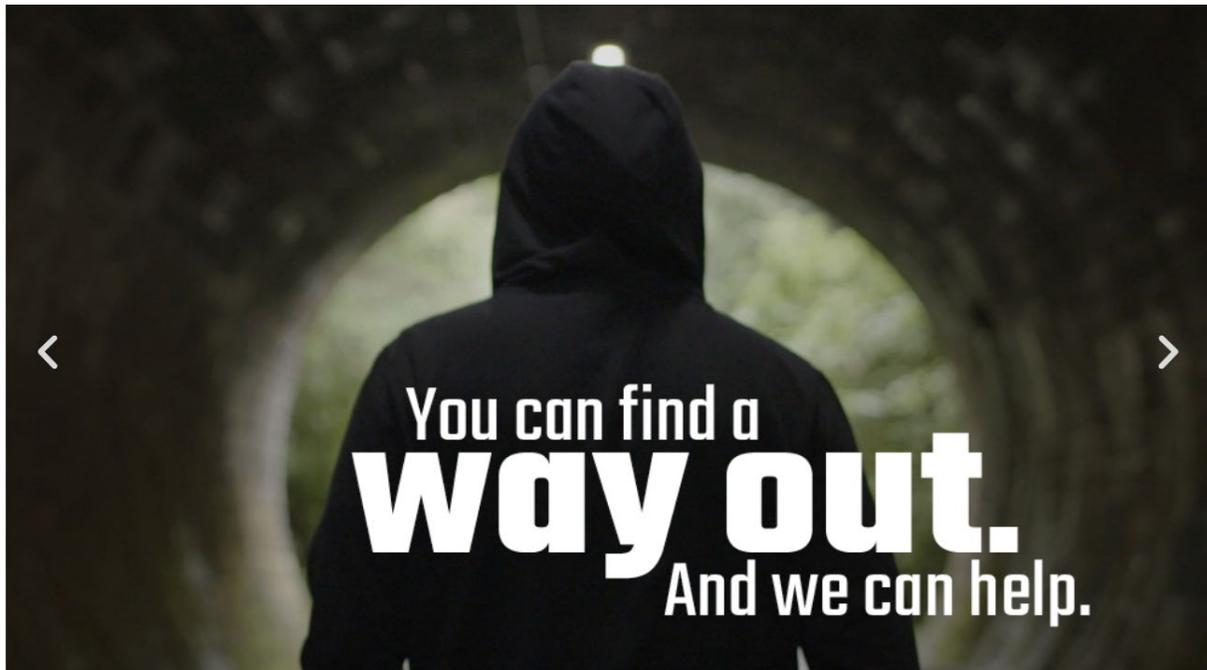
4.4.4 The campaign

The creative comprised a 30 second video with a voiceover, which collated various interviews with people with experience of repeat violent victimisation into a single narrative.

The SVRU believed it was crucial the marketing video was based on the real life experiences of those who had been an RVV, in order for the campaign to connect with those involved in a violent lifestyle and show that it was possible to find a 'way out'... The advert script is an unidentifiable combination of true RVV experiences. The adverts then linked to bespoke online support pages which provided links/contact to relevant local services as well as videos from case studies and support workers

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

Figure 6: You Decide campaign creative



On click-through, the recipient would be taken to the You Decide Team websites (localised for Glasgow and Dundee), which provided access to a range of different supportive services.

The delivery and targeting of this campaign was of particular interest to our study. This campaign used fine-detail locational targeting to attempt to reproduce the human 'navigator'. The campaign used an audience creation consultancy to geo-fence their adverts within a two kilometer radius of particular hospitals.

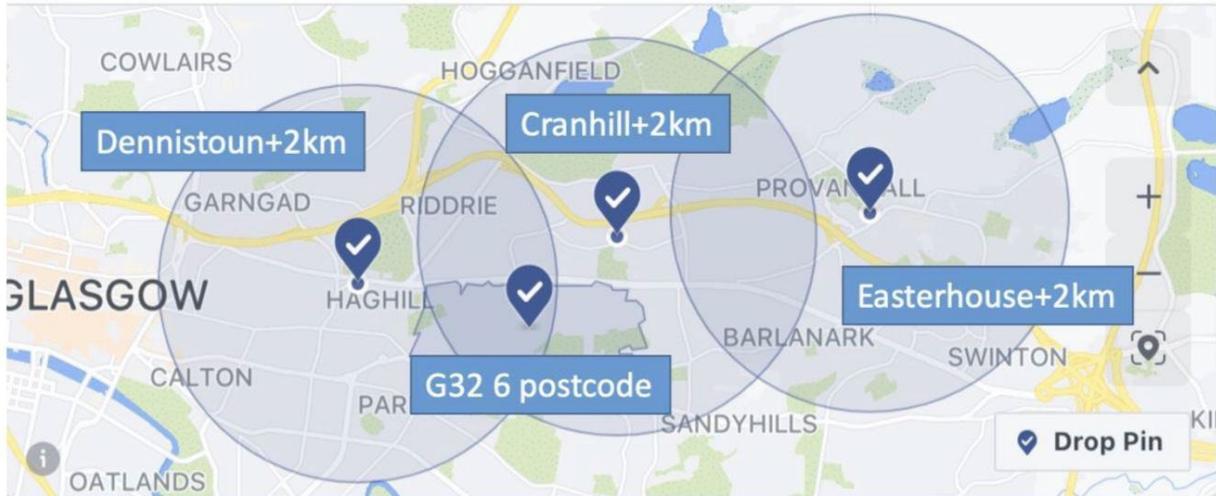
In the first phase of the campaign males aged 18 to 34 were the audience. In the second phase the campaign aimed to connect with those aged 11- 24, with a further refinement to 18-24.

First phase – Areas of Dundee and the north of Glasgow which ranked highly on the SIMD were selected. Hospitals and custody centres in those areas were also included in geo-targeting as areas a RVV might visit following an incident. The aim was to reach RVVs with support information at a time when they may need it.

Second phase – Areas around Easterhouse, Dennistoun, Cranhill were selected based on YDT navigator input.

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

Figure 7: YDT campaign targeting



The content of the adverts themselves was also tailored to align with the targeting: two versions of the voice-over were recorded featuring different accents, which would match the local accent and vocabulary of the area of Scotland in which the advert was being delivered.

4.4.5 Evaluation

As with our other case studies, evaluation involved both platform-native metrics such as impressions and engagement, engagement with the support site itself, as well as direct behaviour change through analysis of administrative data (namely self-referrals to SVRU services). In contrast to the Police Scotland campaigns, the evaluation specifically attests that broad reach was not actively desired (both due to the small population for whom the services were relevant, and to a need to avoid overloading capacity).

This wasn't a campaign which aimed for huge viewing figures or a wide reach – thankfully the message simply isn't relevant to the vast majority of people in Scotland. The aim was to reach the right person, with the right message at the right time and offer online support/information which they retained agency over and respecting their privacy.

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

GDPR and privacy issues with using online metrics were also explicitly mentioned in the evaluation.

As the SVRU were both directly providing the You Decide services, closely linked with the partners offering the other supportive services, and running the ad campaign themselves, there was a greater capacity for the evaluation of direct behaviour change. In particular, they managed to directly attribute a number of contacts to people who had seen the advert.

There were a number of contacts to the YDT navigators traceable to the campaign, especially from the launch. For example one young man said his life was being affected by drugs and violence and he wanted to get back on track. The YDT met with this individual and he was referred to Men Matter and We Are With You.

Another lady got in touch looking for support on behalf of her brother. She said he wanted to escape that life but didn't know where to go to receive help. She was passed onto the relevant support organisations in her area.

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

Finally, the evaluation explicitly linked the behaviour change achieved to a 'value for money' analysis, arguing that the campaign spend (low tens of thousands of pounds) was justified given the £3m cost of a single homicide.

If even a small proportion of those 425 link clicks goes on to seek support from those organisations, then there is the potential to significantly improve that individual's safety, health and wellbeing. Given the costs of violence related injuries/crime this could lead to a significant saving for public services like the NHS and the justice system. [For example just one homicide prevented could save the country £3million.](#)

You Decide Team marketing campaign report

4.4.7 Key statistics

We provide some basic statistics for reach used in the evaluation:

Instagram performed well at giving the campaign strong reach. However, there was very good engagement with the advert on Snapchat with strong ThruPlay rates.

Due to significantly less engagement from 13 – 17-year-olds in the second phase of the campaign the age range was tightened to 18 – 24. Following this adjustment, the ads performed significantly better. This may be because the advert was originally designed more for that age group.

The in-app/website marketing campaign saw 503,160 impressions and a view through rate of 267,500 and total link clicks of 1,089

The social media advert saw a total of 46,282 ThruPlays* with 2,595 link clicks and 546,000 impressions (for the second phase of the social media campaign)

There were 1,976 visitors to the Glasgow and Dundee support pages on the SVRU website with 189 people going on to visit the YDT main page, 140 moving on to Victim Support Scotland's website, 49 to SISCO and 47 to the Simon Community

SVRU campaign evaluation

These statistics show the use a particularly powerful capacity of digital platforms - the ability to refine communications in a multi-phase campaign. In this mode, insights from the platforms concerning previous phases about how content is performing, often provided in near real-time, are used to develop new targeting approaches for subsequent waves.

4.4.8 Overview

We consider this final campaign to be particularly interesting for a number of reasons. First, it was conducted not by Police Scotland, but by the SVRU, an arms-length body. Although the campaign is clearly within the remit of law enforcement communications, this gives it a distinctive character - SVRU explicitly aims to have a different relationship with its partners and with the public than Police Scotland does. The campaign was conducted at a much smaller and more targeted scale - involving more detailed targeting profiles and more intensive use of advanced features of the digital targeting infrastructure, beyond simple demographic and interest categories. Similarly to some of the other case studies, this campaign sought to link its audience up with key supportive services - however, instead of an individual service, this allowed them a menu of possible options, with some guidance, seeking to replace a physical 'navigator' service. This itself is a reflection of the often-confusing nature of the multi-stakeholder, polycentric UK public sector - the service seeks to help its audience navigate this landscape and find the right services for them. The co-produced nature of the campaign, with the design being led and informed by service users and practitioners with experience of serious violence in the design, is also commendable.

4.5 Discussion and conclusions from the case studies

We conclude this section with a brief reflection on cross-cutting themes from the case studies considered. We are particularly struck by the diversity of the campaigns run by Police Scotland, in terms of the core theories used, intended mechanisms of action, and the different uses of the digital targeting infrastructure. Although these case studies all use the same underlying methods, the same marketing practices, and the same behavioural advertising infrastructures and companies, each of them is based on a rather different implementation of 'behavioural insights'.

The campaign development - showcased in the different insight reports - shows that rather than using a behavioural insights framework from first principles, instead, a wide variety of different forms of knowledge and evidence inform design. These often follow a similar pattern - moving from legal and strategic background, through 'police' knowledge in the form of statistics and analysis of police data, onto psychological profiles, and then into more marketing-based forms of knowledge. Throughout this process, as models and theories of the crime are being explained, evidence and concepts from other places are also incorporated - particularly from partner organisations and academic or practitioner experts. These are often the source of more structural and wider social views on the issue - for example, contributing insights from feminist theory. Once a 'nudge' is found, the COM-B framework is then used to translate these distinctive forms of knowledge into insights informing different aspects of the campaign design, targeting, and content. In comparison, although not explicitly a behavioural intervention, the SVRU campaign incorporated both academic and practitioner expertise with insights from the targeted community themselves. Although starting from a nominally different framework of practice, the insights used appear not dissimilar to those informing the Police Scotland campaigns - mobilising mid-level theoretical concepts relating to criminogenic situations or enabling narratives to inform campaign targeting and content.

The use of stakeholder engagement can be seen in all of the campaigns, however this emerges differently in different cases. In particular, the SVRU conceptualised these as a process of co-production, through involvement of those with lived experience of violence and frontline practitioners, while Police Scotland appears to incorporate this more through the inclusion of partner agencies and charities in the design and delivery process. Both of these have strengths and limitations - which we discuss further in our Discussion section.

There were some tensions within campaigns and difficulties achieving the right targeting. In particular, campaigns which were originally scoped for a narrow, targeted intervention were sometimes pulled towards wider-reaching 'PR'-style communications over the process of development, or by the technologies and social dynamics of the platforms themselves. In general, we did not see the kinds of

problematic micro-targeting that we observed in other areas - targeting options where used were employed for clear and justifiable reasons based on the research conducted, were minimally invasive, and generally actively considered privacy as an issue.

In all cases, the standard metrics provided by the platforms and media agencies were insufficient for a full evaluation of the effects of the campaign - these concerned reach and engagement, rather than behaviour change. Evaluation is therefore a key area for improvement to facilitate the wider use of these methods. Different forms of evaluation need to be tailored to the intended mechanism of action of the campaign. For campaigns that seek to spread narratives, simply viewing the ad may have an effect - similarly, adverts which aim to stop or start behaviour 'in the moment' may well have their primary effect simply through viewing the ad, whether the viewer clicks it or not. Engagement - in the form of comments, shares, and other metrics - can be an indication of both intended and unintended effects, however these are more relevant to effects on the 'public conversation' around the issue. Digital metrics provided by the platforms are clearly insufficient for measuring the 'real' effects of these campaigns - we would argue that to properly dig into the short- and long-term effects, resource needs to be dedicated to wider 'social listening' efforts such as those employed by commercial advertisers - incorporating questions into national surveys, conducting ongoing focus groups with key communities, and detailed longitudinal collection of statistical data. Finally, clicking through to dedicated sites and services is likely to be a far more useful metric of behaviour change (if accessing the service is the desired result) when coupled with methods of evaluation arranged beforehand for data capture with the relevant service. Where administrative data was available from police and partners, this was generally available at insufficient speed and granularity for ongoing assessment of the campaign.

Finally, we note that the campaigns we studied, despite the lack of mechanisms for evaluation, were generally perceived as successful. As experimental and innovative campaigns, they have clearly contributed to the ongoing development of these capacities within Scottish law enforcement, and we observe clear attempts to refine and develop these approaches over time. In alignment with the wider attempts to professionalise communications work in Police Scotland and incorporate 'strategic' approaches, we note the substantial incorporation of research and behavioural science components into these campaigns. However, we additionally highlight that *influence officers* are not solely behavioural scientists - and we argue that the evidence of these case studies suggests that they should not be. Behavioural science is incorporated into these campaigns as one element among many - including wider cultural knowledge, support, expertise, and buy-in from partners, other forms of scientific, psychological, and sociological evidence, core marketing practice, and the tacit knowledge and experience of the team as a group of marketing professionals. In addition, the role of *police* knowledge and an understanding of the police communications and media environment clearly plays a

key role in understanding what is likely to work, and what is likely to be acceptable to the public. As with any media campaign wider cultural and news context is a huge factor in how the campaigns are received - in several of our case studies, there is clear evidence that these wider factors (which are not easily predictable or able to be accounted for in behavioural scientific methods of design) are of crucial importance in steering how a campaign proceeds and its effects.

5. Empirical Report 3 - the wider landscape of 'influence policing' in the UK

5.1 Introduction

For this final findings section, we widen the scope to give an overview of the use of digital targeted advertising for preventative policing in the wider UK. Although we have in-depth interviews and documentary analysis for Police Scotland, we make the case in this report that 'influence policing' represents a wider institutional development across UK policing, although in an early stage of experimentation and more present in some areas than others. We discuss the evidence for this proposition in this section and give an overview of current practices.

It's important first to note that criminal justice in the UK is delivered by a very wide and heterogeneous range of different actors, institutions, and services. There are 43 police forces in England and Wales, while Scotland and Northern Ireland both have single national forces. Central government departments also have responsibility for criminal justice policy - the Ministry for Justice in England and analogous bodies in the Scottish devolved administration, but additionally the Home Office, which deals with national security and serious and organised crime. A range of centralised law enforcement agencies take responsibility for different specialist areas of criminal justice, including the British Transport Police and Civil Nuclear Constabulary, the National Crime Agency, security services like GCHQ and the Secret Intelligence Service, and financial enforcement bodies such as the Financial Conduct Authority. Other public sector bodies take arms-length responsibility for bespoke aspects of preventative justice responses, including the Violence Reduction Units. Finally, and of particular importance for preventative policing, a range of criminal justice charities and third sector bodies are heavily involved as partners in police and law enforcement work, often engaging in preventative interventions of their own with police support or themselves supporting police interventions. Accordingly, our explorations of the Meta Ad library do not only focus on local police forces, but a wide range of government and non-government bodies who are running 'behaviour change' campaigns.

In this section, we use our analysis of the Meta Ad library to give an indication of the current spread of these methods throughout the UK. We attempt where possible to distinguish between the use of social media ads for fairly traditional police awareness or PR campaigns and those campaigns which show evidence of more fine-detail targeting or a clear behaviour change or culture shaping objective.

It is important to note that it is extremely difficult to assess the completeness of this landscape report - it is by necessity an exploratory study aiming to show a small snapshot of what is currently 'out there'. Different platforms provide more or less, and different kinds of data on campaigns. Some campaigns are bought directly by

agencies, some are 'unbranded', some paid for by police but delivered by partners, and some are entirely clandestine and disavowed. What we present here is the current scope of what we know - the 'minimum' snapshot picture of what is happening. We have grouped these based on the Meta platform account used to run the campaign - however, for some 'aggregate' accounts such as the generic UK government campaign, responsibility may in fact lie with, for example, the Home Office as the ultimate commissioner of the intervention.

We analysed a dataset of 12,330 different campaign segments, relating to several hundred campaigns. This was repeatedly sampled between 20th Jan 2023 and 11th July 2023. We also provide an accompanying dataset of targeting profiles and campaign content used by different law enforcement advertising campaigns. The Meta Ads library data only records campaigns bought using the force's own account - not partners or campaign pages. While some forces appear to have hundreds of campaigns, in fact, this is due to the process of rapidly changing creative content and targeting over the period of the campaign on Meta's Ad library, in which a single campaign can have multiple forms of creative, targeting regimes, and other aspects.

5.2 UK Local Forces

5.2.1 Overview

Our focus group of police communications officers included representatives from 12 forces. It was clear from this session that, while there was an interest in the use of digital behavioural 'nudge' communications throughout UK policing, in many force areas this was either nascent or non-existent, with innovation concentrated around a number of large forces with the resources and skills to develop these campaigns. We do not include PSNI in this dataset as they had no ads listed on Meta.

This is backed up by the indicative data provided by Meta's Ad Library, which show very different numbers of campaigns and distinctive topics between different forces. Some forces appeared to be doing nothing or almost nothing (at least on Facebook and Instagram), some seemed to be running a few campaigns mostly around traditional recruitment and PR topics, and a small number of forces clearly spent large amounts on behavioural campaigns.

Table 9: Meta Ad Library adverts run by Local Police and Police and Crime Commissioners

Police body	Number of ad segments	Local PCC (if applicable)	Number of PCC ad segments
		Avon & Somerset PCC	2
Bedfordshire Police	1	Bedfordshire PCC	1
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	14		
Cheshire Police	13	Cheshire PCC	1
Cumbria Police	1		
		Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner	57
Devon & Cornwall Police	2	Devon and Cornwall PCC	2
Essex Police	16	Essex PCC	78
Gloucestershire Constabulary	24	Gloucestershire PCC	13
		Gwent PCC	1

Greater Manchester Police	53		
		Hampshire PCC	6
		Hampshire & Isle of Wight PCC	10
		Hertfordshire PCC	3
		Humber PCC	10
		Kent PCC	1
		Lancashire PCC	69
Leicestershire Police	288	Leicestershire PCC	2
Lincolnshire Police	3		
Metropolitan Police Service	472		
Norfolk Constabulary	4		
Northamptonshire Police	6		
		North Yorkshire PCC	39
		Nottinghamshire PCC	2
South Wales Police Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	1		
Staffordshire Police	10		
Surrey Police	2	Surrey PCC	3
		Sussex PCC	24
		Thames Valley PCC	2
West Midlands Police	191	West Midlands PCC	9
Wiltshire Police	2	Wiltshire and Swindon PCC	7

Particular areas of concentration were Gloucestershire, Manchester, Leicestershire, London, and West Midlands - mostly larger, urban, well-resourced forces with a

history of concentrated counter-terror and Prevent funding. We spotlight here the two territorial forces in England are engaged in significant Meta advertising, then discuss the use of these approaches by other forces.

5.2.2 London Metropolitan Police

The Metropolitan Police (often referred to as 'the Met') were an early adopter of 'behaviour change' advertising techniques among UK police forces, with particular concentrations of activity around the Travel to Syria campaign (attempting to dissuade 'foreign fighters' from joining the war in Syria), counter-radicalisation communications, public transport reassurance and deterrence campaigns following the 7/7 attacks and other 'security' focused campaigns. The interventions considered, proposed or carried out by the Met within this 'strategic communications' programme include an enormously varied set of approaches, from adverts on the Tube, through to digital advertising campaigns, to a proposal to develop a videogame called 'Jihadi Simulator'⁷. As a particularly large and well-resourced force, the Met has long had a substantial budget for communications; it is also undoubtedly the 'highest profile' force in UK policing, having been hit by successive scandals over decades and with arguably the strongest links to security services. The Met's communications budget, resources, and skills are all therefore particularly well-developed compared to other forces. Today, the Met are a major purchaser of digitally targeted adverts on Meta, ranging from traditional missing persons campaigns or appeals to the public for evidence, through to more marketing-focused behaviour change campaigns aimed at tackling particular crime issues.

In terms of behavioural and interest targeting, the Met were generally not making use of the extensive interest-based 'patchwork profiles' which we observed for some other forces, or those used by the Home Office. Instead, targeting mirrored the campaigns run by Counter Terror Police (which we discuss subsequently), focusing on fine-detail location-based targeting. This may reflect the close institutional links between the Met and Counter Terror Police, or may rather be an artefact of the complex geographies of London policing. Alternatively, this may be down to supplier relationships and the particular methods of contracted ad buying agencies. A minority of the campaigns by the Met used 'lookalike' audiences for targeting. Most campaigns did not use interest- or behaviour-based targeting at all - of the Met's 472 campaign segments in the Meta Ad Library, only 94 used these approaches. Of these, the interest profiles used were generally fairly simple - 7 different profiles were used. Four of the profiles involved different ways to target parents (mostly for campaigns such as 'Hard Calls Save Lives', which exhort parents with concerns about their own children or young people in their community becoming involved in knife crime to report them to the police), e.g.:

⁷ One of the options considered, alongside a travelling play and a movie, for the 2014/15 'Prevent Tragedies' campaign

Campaign text: Calling with information about knife crime may feel hard, but there are harder calls. Like the call Yvonne had to make when her son Godwin was murdered. You can help save a life by calling to report information. Even tiny details can help stop knife crime and keep your community safe. Call Crimestoppers, 100% anonymously. Hard Calls Save Lives. Find out more about the #HardCallsSaveLives campaign here. www.hardcallssavelives.co.uk

Interests: Fatherhood, Motherhood, Parenting

Parenting status: Parents with adult children (18-26 years), Parents with teenagers (13-17 years)

Location: London Borough of Hackney, London Borough of Islington, London Borough of Lewisham, Thornton Heath, Bromley

Another segment was targeted at those interested in true crime, across a number of campaigns which served to highlight particular policing operations and responses to London-wide crime issues:

Campaign text: A man was gunned down on his doorstep in front of his wife and child in a cold and calculated gang hit. The masked assassin was now on the run, concealing evidence and fleeing the country. Met Detectives' expertise and global reach brought the shooter and his criminal network to justice. This, is how we solved it

Segment 1

Interests: Documentary movies, true crime

Location: London

Segment 2

Gender: Women

Age: 25-45

Location: London

This reflects a far more classic 'PR' mode of police communications, aiming to reassure the public and bolster the image of the police as effective, while attempting to appeal through both the targeting and the language used to a 'true crime' demographic.

A further segment targeted those interested in major events, again in a traditional communications mode - seeking information:

Campaign text: #WANTED Do you recognise this man? We need to speak to him about the murder of [], who was stabbed to death at Notting Hill Carnival in west London on []. To report any information you have anonymously, call the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

Age: 18-30

Interests: Football, Music festivals

Location: Bristol, Horfield, London

And a final segment - using more involved targeting - targeted the Latin American community in London with a request for information about the murder of an Ecuadoran man at a restaurant in London where he worked:

Campaign text: We are appealing for witnesses and information into the murder of [] in the Elephant & Castle area of South London. []'s family are from Ecuador and he worked at the [] restaurant off [] Street, SE1. At around [] on [], Ian was fatally stabbed at the restaurant. If you have information please call the police on 101, ref [], or contact <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/> anonymously. You can also upload images to: [] Further information can be found at [].

Interests: Argentina, Argentine cuisine, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Ecuador national football team, Latin American cuisine, Peru, Peruvian cuisine, Portuguese language, Spanish cuisine, Spanish language, Venezuela, Venezuelan cuisine

Behaviours: Family of those who live abroad, Friends of those who live abroad

Formerly lived in: Chile, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela

This combined both demographic and behavioural categories with cultural ones - including food, language, and sport.

These were all combined with age range, gender, and - crucially - location categories. The Metropolitan police's ad buying (and their more behavioural campaigns) focused far more on location (often very detailed down to postcode areas) than on other approaches to targeting. While 99 of the campaigns simply targeted London (although with varying degrees of precision, ranging from exact boundaries, to 1km radius, to 40km radius), many used very detailed postcode targeting, or targeted a range of towns and cities outside the capital. Some involved combining dozens of postcodes into bespoke areas, while others were targeted at small individual areas.

One example involved very low-level postcode data across a range of different campaign segments aiming to show police presence in particular areas (through location-specific text and graphics depicting police patrol in that area):

Campaign text: Your local officers in Poplar and Isle of Dogs are patrolling areas residents had raised concerns about anti-social behaviour [sic].

Location (living in): London (E14 0), London (E14 2), London (E14 3), London (E14 4), London (E14 5), London (E14 6), London (E14 8), London (E14 9)

These campaigns aim for a dual effect - to produce public confidence in the police for one group, and to project police power and deter for another.

We should also note here that in addition to broadcasting influence, the Metropolitan police complements this by actively censoring counter-messages in the media and information environment. The Met's controversial Social Media Monitoring unit (Project Alpha) has officers dedicated to scanning social media and making requests to platforms to take down videos - with a particular focus on Drill music videos. This is of particular interest, as suggest a more comprehensive set of powers and practices being deployed in shaping the information environment (as is also the case in the government's campaigns around misinformation).

5.2.3 Greater Manchester Police

Greater Manchester police accounted for 53 segments in our dataset, with campaigns across a range of issues. Many of the campaigns were targeted by location, often to simply 'Manchester' but occasionally to lower-level geographies. A number of campaigns related to advertising offline outreach events, particularly for domestic violence. Several in a more explicitly 'behaviour change' mode related to a shift encouraging online reporting for some crimes rather than dialing 999.

Compared to other territorial forces, GMP made more use of detailed interest-based targeting beyond simple demographic proxies such as parental status. These 'patchwork profiles' (which we discuss in detail in a forthcoming research paper) were used to approximate social groups not easily targeted by individual categories - particularly for protected categories such as ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Some of these, similarly to the Met, involved traditional appeals for information, localised to particular communities:

Campaign text: I could never imagine myself in this position, asking the public to help find my husband's murderer." "I am asking the community to help bring the person or people responsible for []'s murder to justice." - [], []'s wife. Click 'contact us' below to share any information you may have.

Age: 18-35

Interests: BBC Radio 1Xtra, Drake (rapper), Freestyle rap, Grime (music), Hip Hop & Rap Music, Kim Kardashian, Kim Kardashian, Love Island, MTV, MTV (UK and Ireland), McDonald's, Rapping, Rihanna, Urban Music Awards, Usain Bolt, YouTube, YouTube Music, urban

Location: Manchester, Stretford (M16 0), Stretford (M32 0)

This combined both fine-detail location information with specific cultural interests and age.

A domestic abuse campaign had the most detailed and lengthy profile, taking a quite different approach to the limited interest-based profiling of the Metropolitan Police.

Campaign text: We are pleased to be partnering with CAHN, Olive Pathway, Endeavour Project and Gtr Manchester Victims' Services for our next Domestic Abuse Q&A session, which will take place on Thursday 22 October. We know that domestic abuse often goes unreported within our BAME community and we are keen to ensure that everyone across Greater Manchester is supported. We want to help raise awareness of the risks, encourage people to reach out for support, and eliminate inequality in accessing services. You can submit any questions on the link below beforehand, or you can join us on Thursday, between 6-8pm using the same link

Interests: AARP Black Community, Activism, Africa, African culture, Asian culture, Asian Food Channel, Asian TV, Asian cuisine, Asianet, BBC Asian Network, BBC Radio 1Xtra, Black History Month, Black Lives Matter, Black history, Bullying UK, Bullying awareness, Caribbean, Community issues, Crime prevention, Cultural heritage, Cultural identity, English as a second or foreign language, Ethnic groups, Ethnic studies, Fight For Equality, Gender equality, Greater Manchester, Indian religions, Injustice, International Women's Day, Man, Manchester, Minority rights, Mumbai indian culture, NDTV, National Domestic Violence Hotline, National Network to End Domestic Violence, Nationality, Pakistan, Racial equality, Racial integration, Women Against Abuse, Women's Rights News, Women's rights

Relationship status: Civil union, Complicated, Divorced, Domestic partnership, Engaged, In a relationship, Married, Open Relationship, Separated, Single, Unspecified

Behaviours: Community and club page administrator

School: Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, Manchester Metropolitan University, The Manchester College, The University of Manchester

Employers: Manchester Metropolitan University, The Manchester College

Living in: Greater Manchester

Contrasting the previous campaign, this attempts to construct a more generic 'BAME' identity, though with a focus on providing supportive services.

Subsequent campaigns focused on recruitment - both internally and externally, particularly using 'counter-terrorism awareness' and 'community issues' as relevant interests.

Campaign text: Are you a police officer looking to re-join or transfer to Greater Manchester Police? We are inviting applications from high performing, resilient and suitably experienced officers, who are confirmed in the rank of Police Constable, to drive forward our ambitious plans to transform GMP.

Interests: Community issues, Counter-terrorism awareness, Crime and Punishment, Crime prevention, Detective, Emergency, Law, Law enforcement

Job title: Patrol Officer, Patrol Sergeant, Police Patrol Officer

Finally, a campaign advertising an outreach Q+A for the LGBT community in Manchester used an extensive list of LGBT interests to target the relevant community.

Campaign text: On Thursday 26 August, we will be holding a Q&A on domestic abuse to help raise awareness, and offer support to the LGBTQ+ community ahead of the Manchester Pride celebrations taking place over Bank Holiday weekend. Between 6-8pm, we will be live with the LGBT Foundation and Gtr Manchester Victims' Services to answer any questions and offer an alternative way to access help and support. You can submit any questions on the link below beforehand, or you can join us on Thursday, using the same link. All questions submitted can be done anonymously.

Interests: Bisexual community, Bisexual pride flag, Canal Street (Manchester), Gay Life, Gay News, Gay Times, Gay pride, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Straight Alliance, Gay-friendly, Gaydio, Homosexuality, LGBT community, LGBT culture, LGBT history, LGBT social movements, LGBTQ Nation, Lesbian Pride, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, Manchester Pride, Pink News, Pride, The Homosexuals, Transgender Day of Remembrance

Relationship status: Civil Union

Location: Manchester

We highlight these campaigns to show some of the ways in which police communicators are attempting to target communities of interest, often with quite traditional 'PR' or 'outreach' content, but using the capacities of social media platforms to address very specific segments of the population.

5.2.4 West Midlands

West Midlands had 191 ads in the Meta Ad Library, of which 42 were targeted based on interests. Many of these appeared to fit a more explicitly 'behaviour change' design, incorporating behaviour science elements and measurable behavioural goals. Some of these involved directly countering narratives around domestic violence and knife crime reporting (for example acknowledging that some would not report to police, so providing alternative services to whom to report). Others, in the vein of some of the Police Scotland campaigns, addressed key target audiences with messages linking to supportive services:

Campaign text: Your new mates seemed great at first, buying you new trainers and taking you out in their cars. But - has the friendship changed? Are they getting you to do things you're scared or uncomfortable with? It's not your fault. There are people that want to help you. Tap the link to get help.

Gender: Men

Age: 13-18

Location: West Midlands

A further campaign similarly used a link to a supportive service, along with a video:

Campaign text: 😞 Are you worried about someone you know being forced into marriage? You know it's not what they want? You can help by calling the West Midlands forced marriage 24/7 helpline on 0800 953 9777

Gender: Women

Age: 16-24

Location: Birmingham (B10 0) (B11 1)(B12 0)(B12 8)(B12 9)(B13 9)(B19 1)(B20 2)(B20 3)(B21 0)(B21 9)(B28 0)(B6 6); Coventry (CV1 1)(CV6 5)(CV6 6); Sandwell (B21 8); Smethwick (B66 2)(B67 7); Walsall (WS1 1)(WS1 2)(WS2 0); West Bromwich (B70 0)(B70 9)

The content for this campaign was aimed at minority ethnic women and it is clear from the targeting that postcode area has been used as a proxy to create this category rather than interests or behaviour.

Finally, from outwith the Meta Ad library, we highlight here a recent effort from 2022 in West Midlands to incorporate influencers as part of behaviour change campaigns, in this case, focused on improving police confidence.

#LetsTalkAboutPolicing

A deep-dive into how West Midlands Police have begun to integrate themselves into black communities through the use of social media influencers and in-depth sentiment research. We will discuss some of the research findings and share some of the best-performing content
Mils Banji, CEO, TapIn

Dereck Maruma, Client Services Director, TapIn

"Social Media Influencers: WMP have just commenced an innovative campaign with 'Tap In' to deliver a new social media campaign, based on authentic conversation with a view to deliver a new social media campaign, based on authentic conversation with a Black Generation Z audience – a core demographic in delivery of our Uplift ambition. The campaign will activate the WMP vision by fostering real conversations about Policing with Black Communities - an extension of our work over the years, but communicated to a new audience. This will be delivered through a unique three-phased campaign, which will be more nuanced and designed to reach a Black Gen Z audience that may not have seen, engaged or even be aware of our work. The campaign will form its core basis upon partnering with strategic UK and Midland-based influencers. These influencers will provide WMP the opportunity to create awareness and generate positive sentiment around policing, as well as take advantage of advocacy/positive engagement with people in positions of influence."

<https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SPCB-26.04.22-Agenda-Item-5-Supporting-the-Workforce-Organisational-Change-and-New-Technology.pdf>

5.2.5 Others

In addition to behavioural and strategic marketing campaigns run by Police Forces themselves, a range of other criminal justice actors in particular localities run their own campaigns as well. We briefly mention here the apparently large role played by Police and Crime Commissioners in 'doing' crime messaging on Met. From our analysis of the Meta data alone, we have evidence for substantial use of targeted digital advertising by PCCs, particularly in localities without high levels of police Meta advertising. While many of these campaigns fulfil either a direct PR role, or 'informational' messaging (often advertising local surgeries or surveys) some of the campaigns have a clear behaviour change goal - aiming to shape public behaviour around core local policing priorities (though generally separately and targeting different topics from any ongoing Police campaigns in that area at the time.

For example, an advert by Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner promoted a domestic violence service, but targeted this in a fairly small set of postcode areas:

Campaign text: Services in your area are ready to help anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

Age: 18-65+

Location: Kingston upon Hull (HU7 4)(HU8 8)(HU9 4)

A further Humberside PCC campaign was far more widely targeted:

Campaign text: StreetSafe is a pilot service for anyone to anonymously tell the authorities about public places where you have felt or feel unsafe, because of environmental issues, e.g. street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism and/or because of some behaviours, e.g. being followed or verbally abused. It's part of the Home Office strategy to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls but can be used by anyone. You can report locations by address or pinpointing on a map. Visit <https://www.police.uk/streetsafe> and let's make our streets safer for everyone.

Age: 18-65+

Gender: Women

Location: East Riding of Yorkshire, Kingston upon Hull, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire

Other campaigns similarly incorporated behaviour change goals, but often sought to attach the relevant PCC to work ongoing by local police - and PCC adverts generally incorporated a more explicit 'party political' character, reflecting the distinctive political role of the PCCs in England and Wales.

Finally, to conclude our section on local policing, we acknowledge the work in this space being conducted by other local bodies, including Violence Reduction Units (with Manchester running online Navigator campaigns on Meta) and local Restorative Justice Partnerships, among others.

5.3 Centralised Law Enforcement Agencies

5.3.1 Overview

Table 10: Centralised law enforcement agency campaigns

Police body	Number of ad segments
Counter Terrorism Police UK	181
British Transport Police - Wales	1
National Crime Agency	80

Britain's centralised law enforcement agencies have responsibility for a range of specialised areas of law enforcement such as counter-terror work or serious and organised crime. Their role is often to directly engage in enforcement and disruption activity, or co-ordinate intelligence-gathering, surveillance, and investigation where specialist capacities are needed (especially where a crime type has a national or international dimension). In this section, we discuss case studies of ads run by Counter Terrorism Police and the National Crime agency.

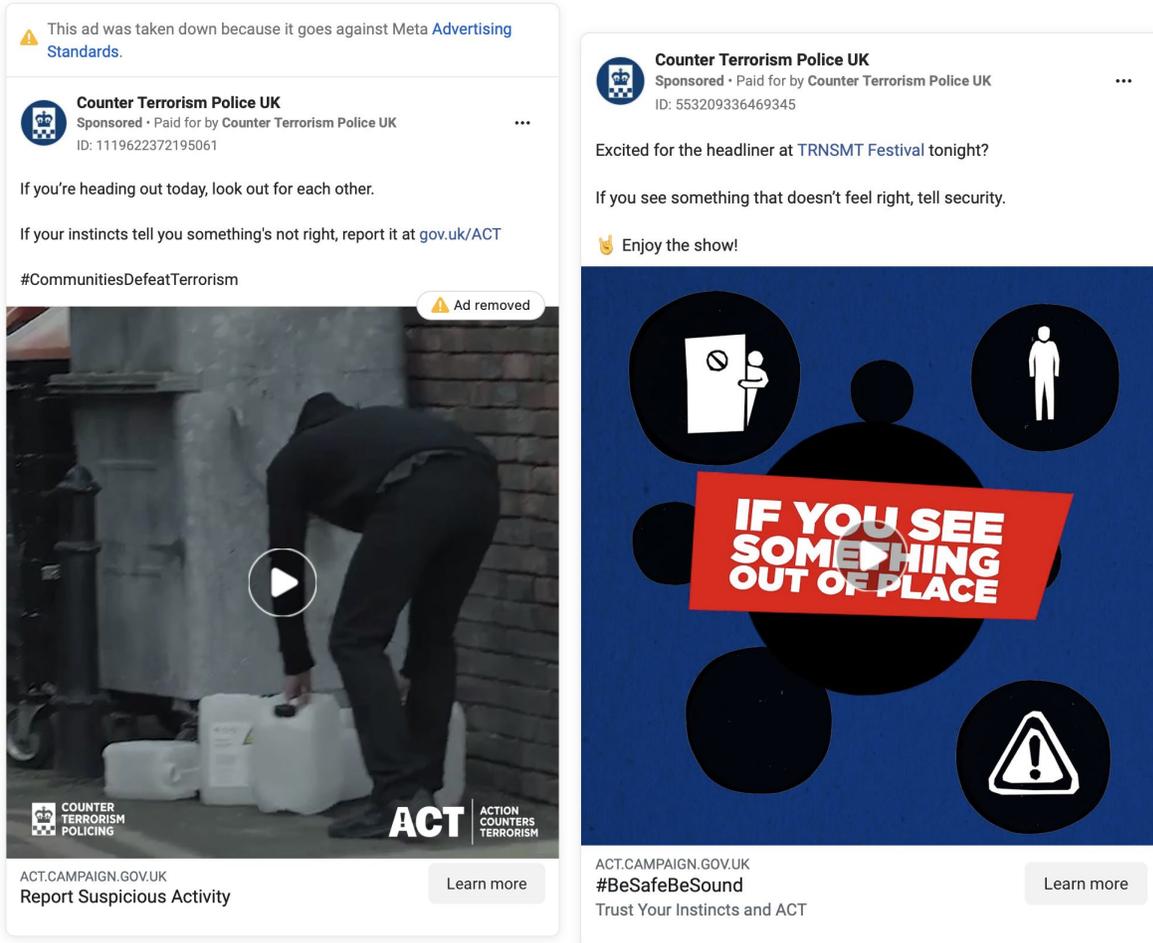
5.3.2 Counter Terrorism Police UK

Counter-terror actions in the UK are co-ordinated between a number of bodies, including security services and law enforcement. The police role in counter-terror in the UK is carried out by SO15 (Counter Terrorism Command), which was formed in 2006 with the merging of the Anti-Terror Branch and Special Branch. The police's contribution to counter-terror activities includes work under Project Servator - a project involving preventative interventions in public spaces and major events. This includes encouraging the public to provide intelligence to the police (i.e. 'if you see something suspicious...'), encouraging 'vigilance' on public transport and busy public spaces, visible 'reassurance' policing coupled with intelligence-gathering, and the use of other forms of surveillance in advance of major public events.

This additionally includes an online, active component. An example of this from the Meta Ad Library is a campaign delivered by Counter Terror Police under Project Servator (Figure 2), which targets different *physical* spaces in the UK using *digital* location targeting. Using fine-grain targeting around specific postcodes in which high-security government buildings (or crowded public areas) are located, this allows the deployment of an advertising 'nudge' to phones located in these areas, often presenting a visual image of police along with a warning. For example, one segment of this campaign was targeted at high security government buildings by postcode:

Location (Postcode): (CR9 1),(L69 3),(S1 1),(CB1 0),(EH99 1),(EX1 9),(M60 7),(MK10 1),(SW1A 0),(YO1 0),(GL50 9),(W1A 1)

Figure 8 - UK Counter-terror 'nudge' adverts



Other campaigns under Servator include ads targeted to the phones of people attending particular festivals, with messaging tailored to the particular location ('Enjoying Download Festival?'). We observed several campaigns operating in this 'hypodermic' mode to deliver a direct nudge to the observer. More obvious and fine-detail targeting is also in evidence in these counter-terror adverts, with several being location-targeted to the attendees of particular music festivals.

5.3.3 National Crime Agency

Previous scholarship by the authors of this report has focused on the National Crime Agency, who were another early innovator in this space with a counter-cybercrime campaign in 2018 and subsequent campaigns that apply 'Prevent' methods to online

offending.. The NCA has a focus on Google Display and Youtube Ads, namely the use of ads to intermediate directly in searches for illegal services with a warning message. Thus, these campaigns largely do not feature in the Meta dataset.

However, a campaign targeting Chinese students in the UK, exhorting them to be careful of those seeking to exploit them as 'money mules' could be found, with 80 segments, an example of which can be found here:

Age: 18-30
Gender: All
Location: UK
Language: Simplified Chinese
Job title: Chinese Teacher
Interests: Chinese Television System, Chinese Language, Mainland China
Employers: Chinese language
Field of Study: Chinese language, Chinese Literature, Mandarin Chinese
School: Chinese language
Behaviours: Lived in China

Figure 9: National Crime Agency advert



Although we have organised this chapter by the advertiser name (as provided in the Meta Ad Library), broader 'security' messaging of this kind is not only carried out by security services and centralised law enforcement. Local police, government

departments, and other bodies can all be seen running campaigns in this mode - including in the Meta dataset. For example, the UK government Meta account has a number of counter-misinformation campaigns active at the time of writing.

5.4 National Governments

5.4.1 Overview

Although the focus of this section is on campaigns run by law enforcement, some relevant campaigns which involved police forces were delivered on Meta through core government ad buying accounts administered by the UK government and the devolved administrations. We provide in the dataset ads delivered by other government departments for comparison.

Table 11: National governments and government departments

Government or department	Number of ad segments
The Scottish Government	2222
UK government	1032
UK Government Scotland	156
UK Government Wales / Llywodraeth DU Cymru.	35
Welsh Government	2579
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	162
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	6
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	2
Department for Education	1
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	1
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	207
Department for Science, Innovation	41

and Technology	
Department for Transport	1
Department for Work and Pensions - DWP	281
Home Office	642
HMRC	46

5.4.2 Devolved administrations

The Scottish Government had a large number of adverts in the dataset, many of which involved detailed interest-based targeting. Some of these campaigns did touch on law enforcement, prevention, or crime support themes - for example, a campaign linking survivors of sexual violence to the SARCS service.

The Welsh government had a similarly large number of campaigns, and were also users of interest-based targeting. Several Welsh Government campaigns involved law enforcement themes, especially based around communicating changes to the law. An example of this was an extensive campaign informing the public of a change to the law on smacking.

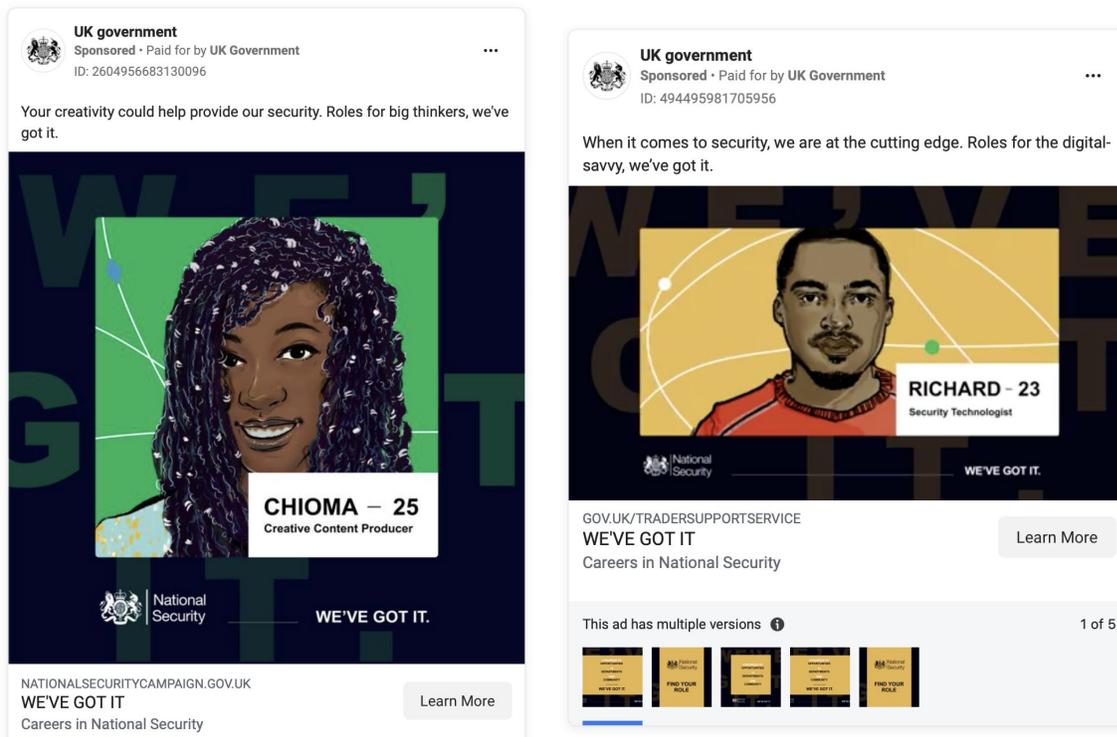
The Northern Ireland Executive did not have any campaigns in the dataset; neither did PSNI. However, PSNI has a significant annual budget of for strategic communications, including 62 dedicated strategic communications officers, so it may simply be that Meta platforms are not a focus for this activity.

5.4.3 UK Government

A range of crime prevention adverts were delivered by the core UK Government Facebook account. This account acts as an aggregator for campaigns delivered across a range of government departments and initiatives. Many of the relevant law enforcement ad segments in our dataset run by the UK government were on the topic of Violence Against Women and Girls, commissioned initially by the Home Office. This campaign - called the Enough Campaign - was directly inspired by the Police Scotland That Guy campaign, and targets behaviour change communications around a range of VAWG issues and at a variety of different audiences.

Another example was a series of recruitment ads for the security services, which used both location targeting and targeting based on the university at which the audience was registered:

Figure 9: Intelligence services recruitment campaign



Campaign text: When it comes to security, we are at the cutting edge. Roles for the digital-savvy, we've got it.

Age: 22-54

School: Aston University, Birmingham City University, City University London, Coventry University, De Montfort University Leicester (DMU), King's College London, Lancaster University, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds Trinity University, London Metropolitan University, Loughborough University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Newcastle University, Queen Mary University of London, SOAS University of London, The University of Manchester, The University of Sheffield, University of Bradford, University of East London, University of Hull, University of Leeds, University of Leicester, University of Lincoln, University of Liverpool, University of Nottingham

Location: Barking (IG11 0)(IG11 7), Birmingham (B18 5)(B18 7)(B19 2)(B19 3)(B4 7)(B6 5)(B7 5), Bristol (BS2 9)(BS5 0), Croydon (CR0 2), Erith, Greenwich (DA18 4), Leicester (LE1 2), Liverpool (L8 2), London (E16 3)(E16 4)(E5 8)(E9 5)(E9 6)(N15 4)(N15 5)(N17 0)(N17 6)(N17 8)(N18 2)(N7 9)(N9 0)(N9 7)(N9 8)(NW10 0)(NW10 4)(NW10 8)(NW10 9)(NW6 5)(SE1 6)(SE13 6)(SE14 5)(SE14 6)(SE15 1)(SE15 2)(SE15 3)(SE15 4)(SE15 5)(SE15 6)(SE17 1)(SE17 2)(SE17 3)(SE18 5)(SE2

9)(SE25 4)(SE25 5)(SE25 6)(SE28 0)(SE28 8)(SE4 2)(SE5 0)(SE5 7)(SE5 9)(SE6 1)(SE6 2)(SE6 4)(SE8 3)(SE8 4)(SE8 5)(SW2 1)(SW9 8), Manchester (M14 4)(M16 7), Mitcham, Bromley (CR4 1), Sutton in Ashfield (NG17 6), Thornton Heath, Bromley (CR7 6)(CR7 7)(CR7 8)

The adverts (which ran for a single day - 23rd March, 2021) featured predominantly young Black British people in the creative content, and as can be seen from the postcode areas used, these adverts were clearly targeted at areas of cities with a large Black community. This shows that these adverts have the capacity for (and are being used for) targeting based on ethnicity via postcode alone (two postcode areas having been combined here to overlap the entirety of the Moss Side area of Manchester).

Figure 10: Manchester postcode districts M14 4 and M16 7 overlaid on Census ethnicity statistics from 2021:

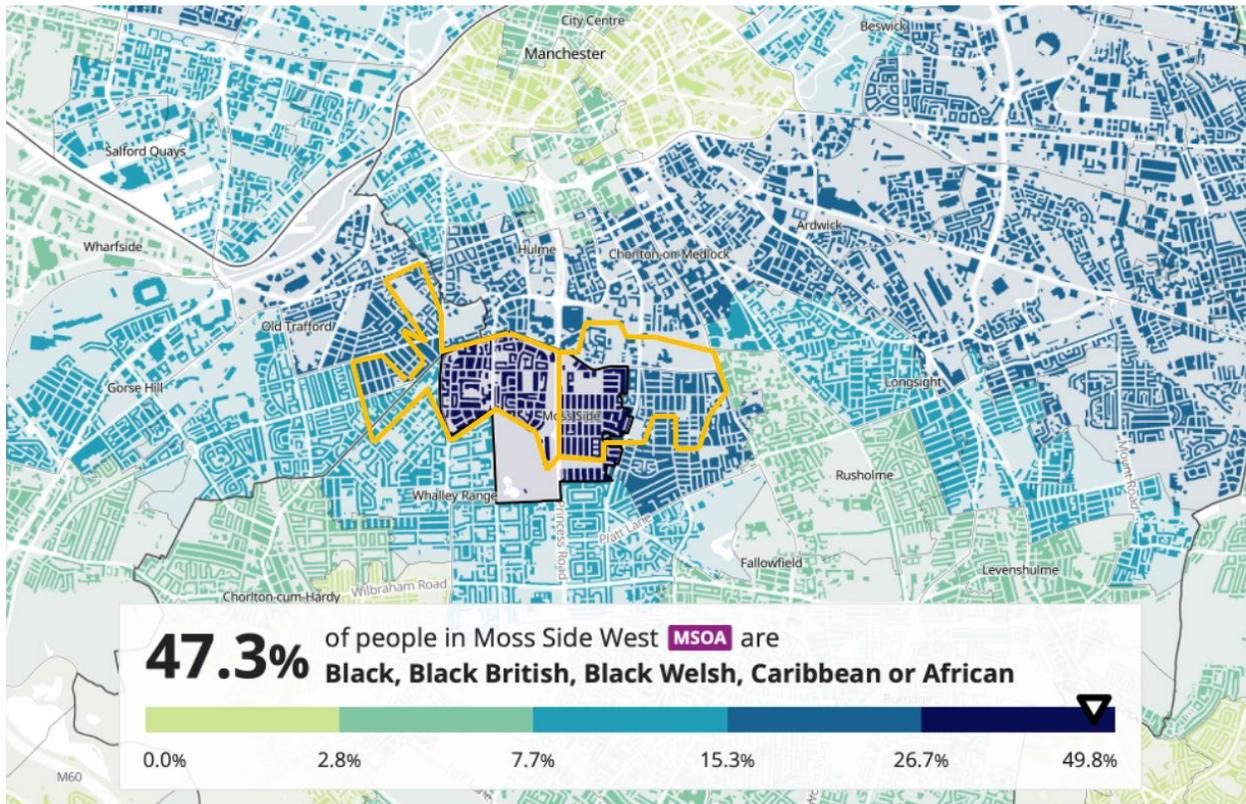
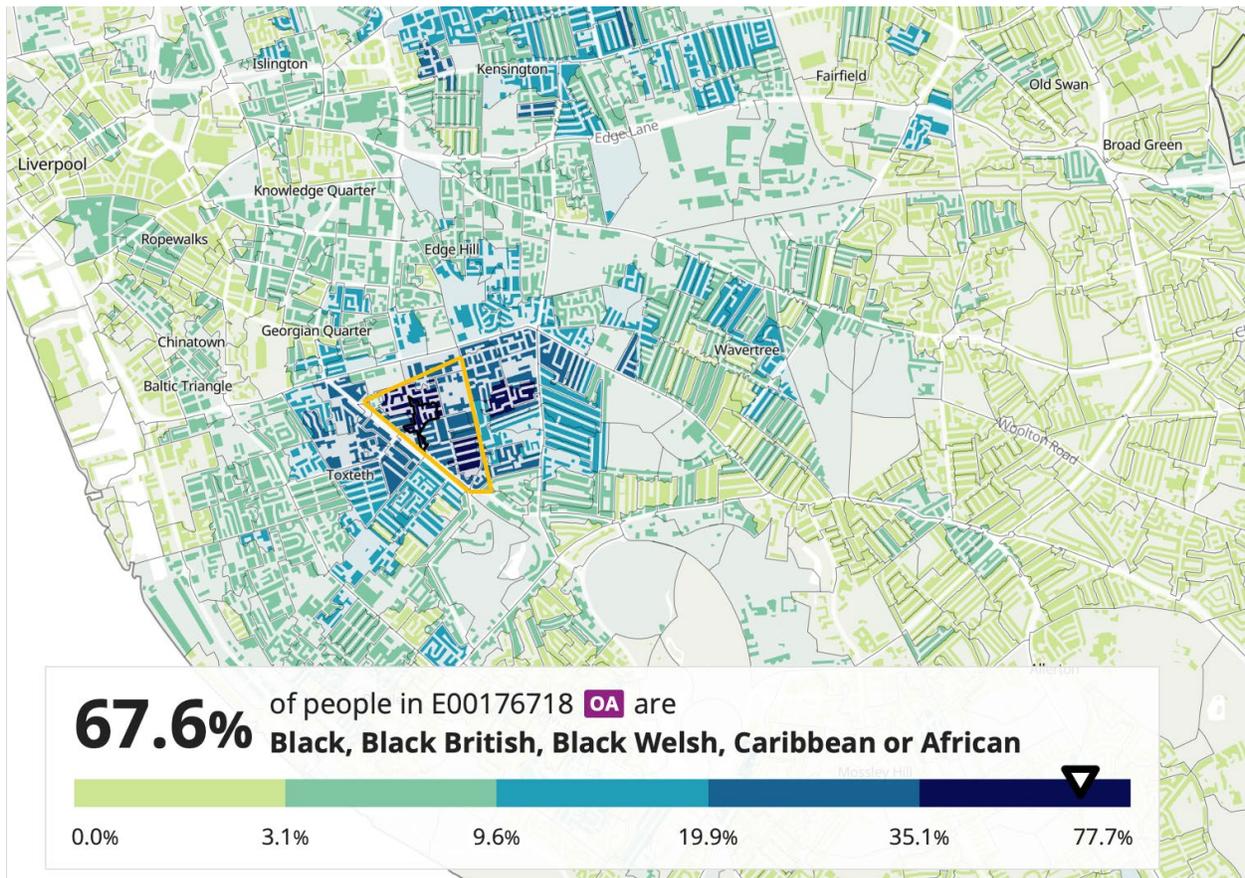


Figure 11: Liverpool postcode district L8 2 overlaid on Census ethnicity statistics from 2021:



Concretely, if you are a person aged between 22 and 54, attending one of the listed universities, and within these location boundaries, you will be targeted with the recruitment advert. While this kind of targeting does pose clear issues, the rationale for this particular campaign is likely to be to improve the diversity of recruitment and hiring within intelligence services.

We also see interest-based categories used as ethnic and religious identity proxies by the UK Government account - such as the following, for a job support scheme:

Age: 18 - 24

Location: United Kingdom

Exclude location: Northern Ireland

Interests: Afro-textured hair, Bangladesh Cricket, Boonaa Mohammed, Eid al-Fitr, Evangelicalism, Glossary of Islam, God in Islam, Hinduism, India national cricket team, Jumia, Muslimah Sholehah, Pakistan national cricket team, Pentecostalism, Popcaan, Ramadan (calendar month), SB.TV, Safaricom, Sizzla, West Indies cricket team, Wizkid (musician), Yasmin Mogahed

Behaviours (lived in): Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe

This is a telling example of an extremely heterogenous profile that aims at a set of (arguably stereotyped) 'BAME' segments.

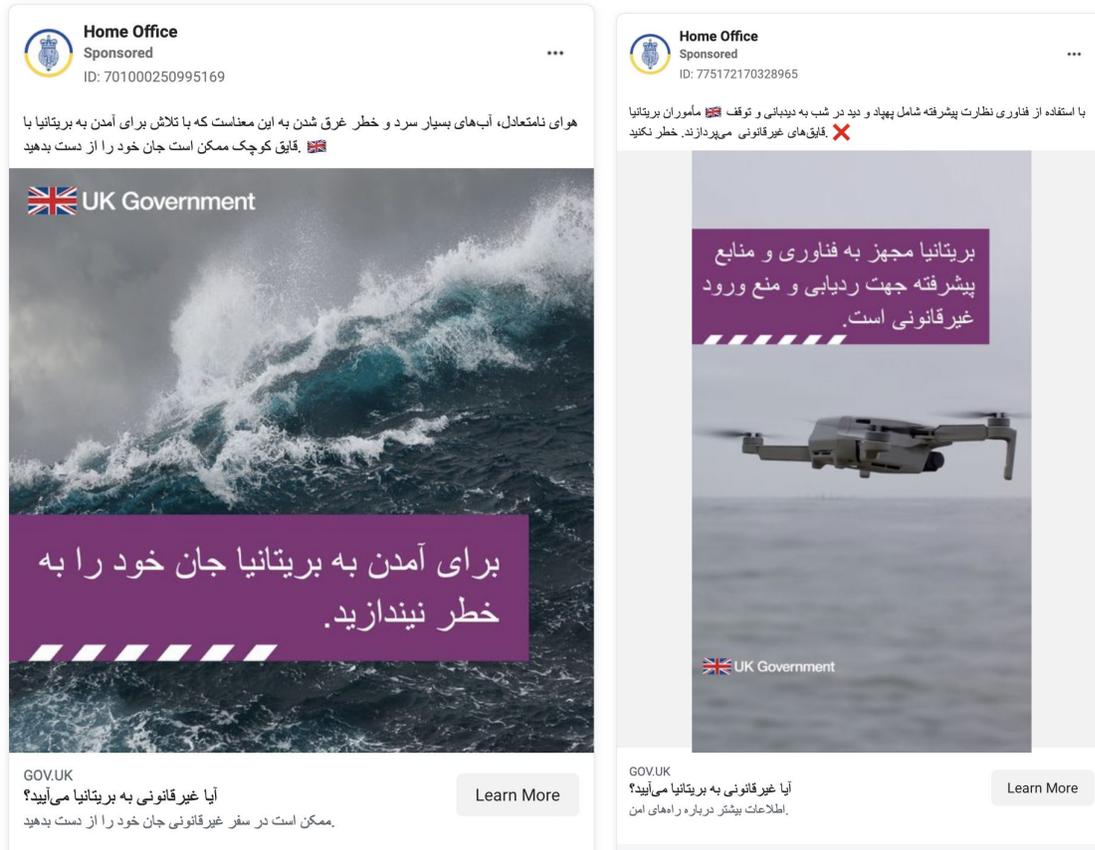
5.4.4 Government departments - UK Home Office

Although some other government departments run adverts relevant to criminal justice (for example, HMRC runs a series of anti-fraud adverts), we restrict ourselves in this section to a case study of the Home Office. The Home Office has a long history of strategic communications campaigns, particularly focusing on national security. Under the PREVENT duty, the Home Office set up an internal agency devoted to researching, carrying out, and evaluating influence campaigns (often seeking to counter extremist narratives or radicalisation) within the UK, called the Research, Information, and Communications Unit (RICU). A linked body, RICU-International, carried out similar campaigns abroad. Although the activities of this unit are carried out in secret, some media reporting has highlighted problematic practices, including the clandestine use of 'cut-out' community groups to spread narratives and carry out surveillance, particularly within Muslim communities, and a lack of transparency and evaluation. With the recent launch of the new CONTEST strategy for 2023, strategic communications remains a core part of government counter-terror and counter-radicalisation practice.

In addition to this clandestine work, the Home Office has engaged in more open use of 'influence policing' strategies in recent years. The UK Home Office has hundreds of campaign segments archived in the Meta Ad Library. These campaigns were generally highly segmented - although 19 Ads on Meta Ad Library targeted the UK and 640 segments targeted other countries, within these we find only six discrete 'campaigns'. These included a campaign explaining the UK government's controversial 'Rwanda' refugee deportation policy (adverts which clearly straddled the boundary between public service and party political advertising, despite their public sector funding); a campaign targeting individual small towns in England with messages in advance of asylum seekers being housed in local hotels, and further campaigns, almost entirely around border enforcement and immigration.

We draw attention to one of these campaigns as particularly problematic, and demonstrating several serious ethical issues of harm. Of all the campaigns that we consider in this report, this is the most obviously harmful, arguably the most invasively targeted, and with the clearest evidence of immediate 'blowback'. This campaign - called Migrants on the Move - was run in collaboration with a 'migration behaviour change' agency called Seefar. Written in Arabic, Pashto, Vietnamese, the adverts are designed to target people in Northern France and Belgium who are seeking asylum in the UK, aiming to 'nudge' them away from attempting a crossing of the Channel in a small boat.

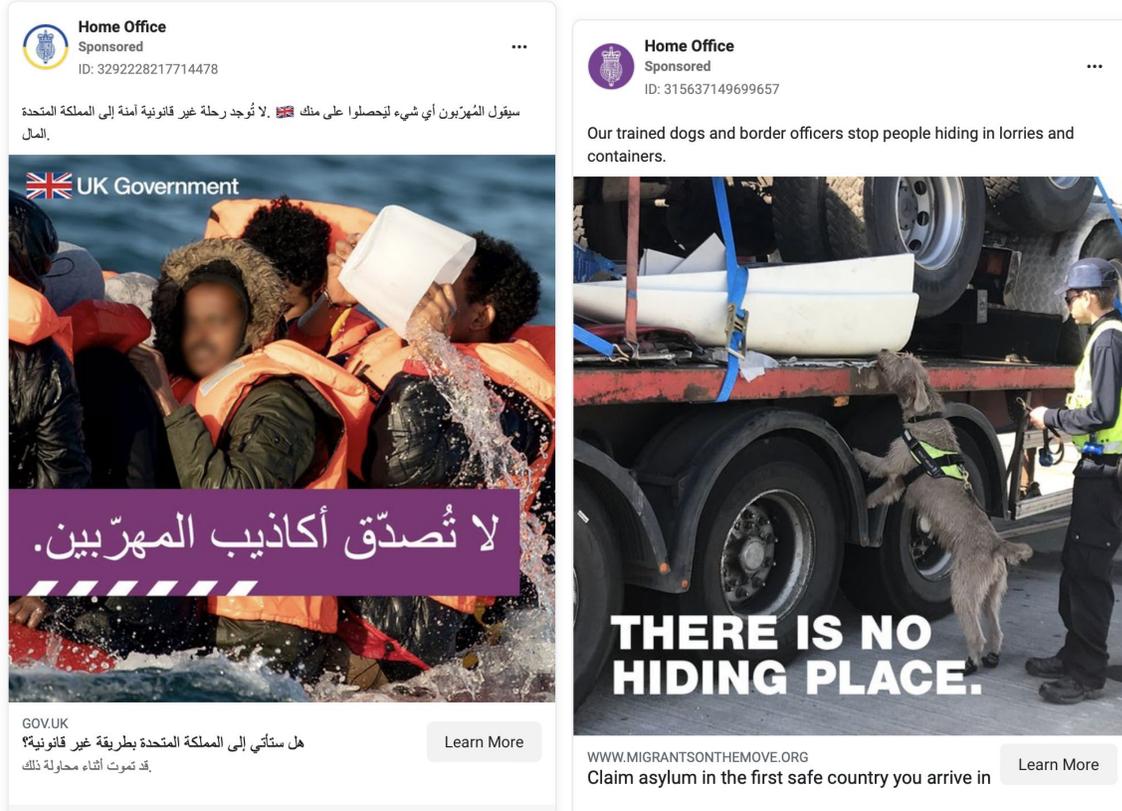
Figure 12: Home Office refugee campaign



Campaign text: "There are large ships in the ocean, which can be deadly for small ships. Do not take this risk."

The adverts explicitly use a fear-based approach, including graphic depictions of boats sinking at sea, dogs searching trucks, and military-style drones, with text which addresses a 'fear' based narrative to many aspects of crossing. This includes asserting that they will be considered a people smuggler and imprisoned if they help steer the boat, that they will be betrayed by people smugglers, that they are likely to die in the Channel, and that drones and dogs will be used to find them.

Figure 13: Home Office refugee campaign (part 2)



The targeting used for this campaign is extremely invasive. The campaign ran in 550 different segments. Most of the adverts had very small audiences - of around 100 to 1000 people, though some had much wider reach of up to 100k people. Some ads targeted segments of under a thousand people (Kurdish speakers currently staying in Brussels; Vietnamese people travelling away from family in Brussels or Calais, or Arabic speakers who had just left Brussels with interests in a range of Afghan sporting pages), while others had huge audiences - one ad targeted all Arabic speakers over 18 who had recently been in Brussels (between 50k and 100k people). The ads were removed by Meta because they didn't run with the disclaimer - and hence would not have been included in this public library for transparency, had Meta not detected that this was a public policy ad. Looking at the impressions data for the adverts, we can observe that the highly targeted segments were largely seen by small numbers of people in Belgium and France (though often with age and gender distributions which suggest that they have simply been seen by residents of those areas); however wider targeted segments were seen as far away as Mexico and Jordan - clearly hitting an unintended audience of holidaymakers or business travellers.

These ads targeted people who had recently been in or were travelling through Brussels and Calais (in addition to a range of small towns), additionally targeting

based on language (Kurdish, Arabic, Pashto, and Albanian), and a 'patchwork profile' of interests, including Afghan football. Some of these are more widely used - for example, the Afghan Premier League is used as a Meta target interest category by some refugee agencies more generally (and to target Afghans to donate money to aid agencies). However, at the time of our analysis, more than half of the ads targeting these categories were from the Home Office. They also targeted people flagged by the platform as 'travelling away from family' or 'away from hometown'.

Age: 18-65+

Gender: All

Language: Arabic

Interests: Afghan Premier League, Afghan Star, Afghan Wireless, Afghanistan, Afghanistan national cricket team, Afghanistan national football team, Aleppo, Baghdad, Cinema of Iran, Damascus, Eritrea, Football in Iraq, Homs, Iran, Iran national football team, Iraq, Iraq Football Association, Iraq national football team, Iraqi Kurdistan, Iraqi Premier League, Iraqi cuisine, Kabul, Kurdistan, Lebanon, MTN Syria, Music of Afghanistan, Music of Iran, South Sudan, South Sudan national football team, Sudan, Syria, Syria (region), Syria TV, Syria national football team, Syrian cuisine, Syrianska FC, The Voice of Vietnam, Vietnam national football team, Vietnamese language, mtn afghanistan

Location: TRAVELLING THROUGH: Blankenberge, Nazareth, Comines, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Dunkirk, Grande-Synthe, Gravelines, Monchy-Breton, Saint-Martin-Boulogne, Picardie, Bourseville, Fontaine-sur-Somme, Saint-Quentin-en-Tourmont

This case combines a number of serious ethical and practical issues in a particularly stark form. The content of the adverts is clearly designed to cause fear in the viewer - this is itself an issue of harm (and as the ads are delivered by an automated algorithmic system, calls the legality of this approach into question). The intended recipients of the adverts are already extremely vulnerable - having made their way across Europe, it is unlikely that an ad campaign will genuinely deter them from making a Channel crossing, however these ads will cause additional harm. They may also directly produce the opposite to the intended result - instead of dissuading a crossing, they may cause the viewer to further lose trust in the ability of authorities to help them, hence cutting them off from potential lines of support. The targeting used is extremely invasive, combining low-level interest and location data which clearly constitutes 'microtargeting' and has serious privacy implications. In the wider reach of the advert, there is clear evidence that it has been seen by Arabic, Pashto, Vietnamese, and Albanian speakers in a number of locations who are extremely unlikely to be seeking asylum. This means that, for example, in Brussels, there are Arabic-speaking residents who will be targeted by this advert, when their

French-speaking neighbours will not see it. This effectively constitutes a digital version of the Home Office's infamous 'Go Home' vans, but one which can only be seen by, for example, Arabic-speakers. We argue that this campaign is a central example of the potential for abuse of these methods, and the need for regulation.

5.5 Third Sector and other Partners

5.5.1 Overview

We finally briefly cover the role of third sector and other 'arms length' partners in 'influence' advertising campaigns on law enforcement issues. While the potential scope of this is enormous given the range of police partners in the UK, we focus on three examples of particular interest, discussing two in this section.

Table 12: Third sector partner campaigns

Agency	Number of ad segments
Police.uk	172
Crimestoppers	2638
[deradicalisation charity]	85

5.5.2 Crimestoppers

Crimestoppers, a charity that works with the police to promote public crime prevention activities and awareness campaigns were extremely active in the use of digital 'influence policing' prevention campaigns. There were more than 2,000 campaign segments from Crimestoppers in our Meta dataset across an enormous range of issues - from nudge campaigns targeting people carrying knives, to campaigns against fraudulent voting, to warnings about fake cosmetics or 'county lines' drug trafficking. Targeting largely used basic demographics combined with very low-level location targeting (sometimes down to individual small villages or areas of cities).

Crimestoppers used some limited interest targeting - mostly around occupation. Some adverts targeted e.g. Arabic-speakers (and were written in Arabic). However a small number of campaigns did use more detailed interest-based microtargeting. For example, a campaign aiming to prevent people smuggling was targeted at long-haul truck drivers in particular ports:

Text: Criminals are making money from desperate people wanting to enter the UK. People smuggling can be deadly, with smugglers often forcing people into modern slavery to pay for the journey. Suspect illegal activity? Help stop future suffering. Tell our charity what you know, 100% anonymously, on 0800 555 111 or by filling in our online form.

Job title: Delivery Truck Driver, Food Service Worker, Logistics Operations Manager, Logistics Supervisor, Long Haul Driver, Long Haul Truck Driver, Operator and Truck Driver, Supply Chain Director, Supply Chain Manager,

Transport Truck Driver, Transportation Driver, Transportation Manager, Truck Driver/Operator, Truck Operator, Truck driver, Warehouse & Logistics Manager, Warehouse Operations Manager

Employer: Truck driver

Industry: Transportation and Moving

Interests: Haulage, Logistics, Supply chain, Supply chain management, Transport, Truck driver

Location: Bishops Stortford, Gravesend (Kent), Grays (RM16 3), Harwich, Purfleet, Stanford le Hope

In addition, we found that Crimestoppers were particularly heavy users of 'lookalike' audiences - with 10% of their campaigns including lookalike targeting.

5.5.3 Deradicalisation

We found a range of other adverts involved in deradicalisation work, often delivered by charities receiving substantial government funding. These were some of the most highly targeted in our sample. We include a single example in our dataset - a charity whose goal is to support the deradicalisation of those in the far right⁸. This campaign was particularly notable as it involved targeting different adverts at different people within the same campaign. Adverts were targeted at those in the far right, at their mothers and fathers, and at social workers in their area separately, with tailored messages. Of special interest here is the use of both exclusion and inclusion characteristics for interests. For example, one ad carried the message "You can leave the far right. It's not easy but we're here to help you every step of the way." with 1000 to 2000 impressions per segment, targeted at young people:

"You can leave the far right"

Gender: All

Age: 16-30

Location: Bedford, Birmingham, Blackpool (etc.)

Interest (include): Online gambling, first person shooters, Paddy Power, soccer fans (etc.)

Interest (exclude): Daily Mirror, feminism, equal rights, charities, gender (etc.)

This used inclusion interests to target an audience of young people with online content and sporting interests, but combined this with exclusion interests to target the ad away from those with left wing or progressive beliefs. Similar approaches, in

⁸ Which we are choosing not to name as we don't want them to be targeted

this case refined around both perceived social class and political affiliation, were used for targeting parents:

"Ashley's son got involved in far right extremism. She spoke to us."

Gender: Women

Age: 28-65

Location: Wiltshire

Interest (include): Hollyoaks, Eastenders, Parent with teenagers, Asda, gardening

"We all support remembrance day. But some use it to exploit and divide. Are you worried about your son?"

Gender: Men

Age: 28-64

Location: Abbey, Sandwell; Acklam, Middlesborough; Albrighton, Wolverhampton (etc.)

Interest (include): Daily Express, Jason Manford, Britain's Got Talent

Interest (exclude): Ben Shapiro, Katie Hopkins, NRA

The targeting for fathers here is particularly interesting - clearly aiming for a socially conservative audience, but one without an interest in US far-right content.

The location targeting on these adverts is complex. Some of the adverts were targeted at a list of several dozen very small villages - many around Knowlsely (the site of a far right riot six months after the campaign ran), and some small towns next to army bases or caravan sites. Although we can speculate as to why these particular villages and suburbs were targeted, analysis of the list suggests that they are driven by the collection of primary intelligence around far right recruiting rather than from external marketing datasets⁹ - possibly gathered by the charity and possibly from government data.

⁹ For example, they are not targeted through MOSAIC (MOSAIC Facebook ads tend to read as a long list of postcode areas).

6. Discussion

6.1 Making sense of Influence Policing

In this report, we have explored 'influence policing' as an emerging mode of police practice in the UK. Across the UK, as police corporate communications departments are integrating specialist skills, conducting programmes of professionalization, and incorporating industry standard digital tools into their work, we can observe this new mode of policing communications taking shape. This has several core features which appear to be common across different forces, agencies, and cases. Firstly, this involves dedicated communications officers whose skillsets and practices are drawn from *marketing* rather than public relations. Secondly, these officers are reorienting their communications practices and goals around *strategic* approaches which aim to directly achieve police priorities through campaigns rather than simply change perceptions of police work. Thirdly, these campaigns focus on achieving measurable changes to the behaviour of the public and of police officers, drawing on 'behaviour change' psychological models and toolkits. Fourthly, they involve the use of the targeting and delivery capabilities of digital social media platforms to deliver these 'nudges'. Finally, they rely on an extensive and maturing ecosystem of assistive contractors and evaluation companies in the private sector; as well as partnerships with charities and other non-police agencies. This is done within the context of the UK Government Communication Service's work to transform public sector communications, developing frameworks, training, and support drawn from public health, Prevent, the Behavioural Insights Team, and the broader changing practice of marketing, public relations and evaluation.

6.2 Distinctive approaches - mapping the UK's landscape of 'influence policing'

6.2.1 Overview

Although the central components are the same - police strategic marketers, behaviour change theories, and advanced digital targeting - these elements are being combined in very different ways to achieve different aims by different forces and in different campaigns. The influence infrastructures created by the social media platforms and the mature ecosystem of supportive services and contractors which has grown up around them appear in practice to be very plastic and reconfigurable - and law enforcement are finding many different ways to appropriate them to build new practices and tools for policing.

In the empirical sections of this report, we have documented the development over time of a set of novel communications practices - rather than simply transferring a model from elsewhere, the police are building up ways to use these technologies and categories, rationales and theories, professional identities, relationships and ways of working. In this way, they are tailoring a set of practices and heterogenous

tools that originally evolved for commercial advertising into a framework that fits the rather different aims of the police.

This is reflected in the insights approach through which the campaigns are developed. In the Police Scotland examples, the 'behaviour change' framework is in fact used not solely as a systematic method in its own right - instead, it is used as an over-arching frame through which the officers can translate insights, ideas, and evidence from a heterogeneous range of sources - third sector partners, crime data, psychology, feminist theory, market research - into a single common language that renders these useful for crafting a campaign and a targeting schema. In each of the campaigns there is an attempt to take the step from a wider range of models to an actionable idea that a coalition and campaign can be built on.

There are a number of factors which distinguish the different campaigns we have studied. The most apparent is the campaign theme or issue; we note particular concentrations of campaigns around knife crime, street violence, gender-based violence, online harms, county lines drug trafficking, extremism/radicalisation, and security. Beyond theme, we find three further ways in which campaigns can be usefully compared. The first of these involves different models or 'goals' of communication - from traditional awareness campaigns and PR policing to culture and behaviour change. The second dimension involves different types of targeting used - from very broad to extremely specific. Finally, the third dimension of these campaigns involves different core theories of change or 'rationalities' driving the campaign - these might well be understood as different 'clusters' of practices and ideas which come together to form a distinctive set of emerging models of doing this kind of police work. We now consider these different dimensions in turn.

6.2.2 Communication models

In our dataset of campaigns, we find several different communications goals for police using digital platforms for targeted communications. Rather than solely being characterised by 'behaviour change' communications, in fact these algorithmic targeting infrastructures are being used for a wide variety of different kinds of communications - many of which are rather traditional. From the various campaigns we studied, four communication *goals* appeared to be prevalent:

- Traditional population-wide PR
 - These are classic public awareness campaigns which focus on community relations
 - These largely serve to advertise existing work and initiatives being conducted by the police. In general, these are focused on providing basic information to the public about what the police are doing, and aiming to improve perceptions of the police

- These generally use very little targeting other than to focus the campaign within the relevant force area
 - The focus of these campaigns is on maintaining and developing authority and legitimacy of the police - its 'brand'.
- Short-term awareness and call to action
 - These campaigns do attempt to encourage a particular behaviour, but rely on simple methods of authority-based delivery. These are easily-recognisable traditional police awareness campaigns, either relying on the authority of the police to promote awareness of a social issue, to exhort the public to adopt a behaviour (such as wearing a seatbelt), to attend a Q and A event, or help find a suspect.
 - Some targeting is generally evident, but this is mostly based on simple demographics and high-level location. However, in some cases, extremely detailed targeting appears to be used, especially where engagement by a particular social group is desired, or communicating about a crime in a very local area.
 - While this does involve promoting a desired behaviour (e.g. to report a missing person or attend an event), aside from the use of digital methods, these campaigns are little different from poster and newspaper advertising of 100 years ago
- Culture-shaping campaigns
 - Where campaigns adopt a more sophisticated design, some of these aim not at 'in-the-moment' behaviour change, instead attempt to engage with and shape culture at a national or local level - especially where cultural narratives are seen as directly contributing to a particular crime problem
 - These involve substantial research - concerning both the role of facilitating narratives in a particular crime type, and more 'marketing' style research on the culture and online behaviours of particular relevant communities,
 - The goal of these campaigns is to neutralise particular 'criminogenic' narratives, engage in peer influence, and promote 'protective' social norms and narratives, while aligning the creative strategy with aesthetic components of the target culture
 - There is an awareness that these campaigns have a far longer intended horizon for their effects, and require substantial support from partners where the police brand is seen as not trusted by the target community
 - Effects of these campaigns are diffuse and extremely hard to measure - although some campaigns, such as 'That Guy' clearly do successfully 'punch through' to shape the national conversation

- Behaviour change
 - Our final type of campaign is a true 'behaviour change' design - involving significant research and resources, and developed across a longer period
 - In general, these campaigns aim to affect behaviour 'in the moment', and involve more specific targeting in order to reach the right people
 - While they can look very similar to other forms of campaign, the content design explicitly serves to counter audience perceptions which are seen as barriers to the desired action, and the campaign is linked to a specific behaviour
 - They are generally focused on a single behavioural aspect - we observe two distinct types of behaviour change campaign:
 - (1) Some of these campaigns aim to directly provoke (or prevent) a relevant behaviour on seeing the ad, such as calling out a friend or deciding not to commit an offence. This is not directly measurable through digital metrics
 - (2) For others, the behaviour is primarily engaging with further campaign content or an online service where support can be provided to prevent or facilitate desistance. This is directly measurable through digital metrics.
 - These campaigns are generally not intended to be seen beyond the target audience

Campaigns are not restricted to a single mode - in fact, while one tends to predominate, our case studies show that they often fulfil multiple goals. For example, the That Guy campaign aimed to produce a wider cultural change in young men by raising awareness and introducing a novel narrative into the public 'conversation', but also focused on encouraging behaviour change among a specific population (accessing the That Guy website for help and calling out peers). This also included an ancillary motive to shape perceptions of the Police Scotland brand, which almost by chance became a major outcome.

6.2.3 Targeting

The Police Scotland cases appear to be largely 'strategic', though many of the campaigns could have been run on older media - the use of digital platforms and targeted marketing is incorporated as it is a standardised part of modern marketing that reaches people through the media they use. It doesn't, at least initially, take advantage of some of the key new affordances of targeted online advertising. However we also see a more opportunistic use of targeted advertising where particular opportunities to exploit these affordances in particular contexts present themselves. This could be seen as exploring a novel form of situational crime prevention. For example, the VRU example shows a fast shift to narrow geo-targeting ads as an opportunity to replace an established on-the-ground operation.

The decision by counter-terror police to target festivals and large events, or local parks at short notice also seems to follow that pattern. The rise of interest based-targeting is also being seized upon in attempts to try to reach particular groups. However as these opportunities are exploited we would expect to see them move into the more strategic arsenal of approaches, especially as evaluations of impact and cost-effectiveness show their value.

The campaigns use the full range of technical targeting afforded by the platforms and used in marketing. Broadly, these include:

- Very broad socio-demographics e.g. all men in Scotland
- Location-based targeting, both wide-range (city) and low-level (postcode)
- Targeting populations that use particular platforms (Snapchat, Instagram, etc)
- Basic interest-based and demographic segmentation (e.g. Parents of small children)
- 'Patchwork profiles' which combine large numbers of interest, demographic, location, and behavioural categories into bespoke segments (especially where direct sensitive category targeting is now disallowed - health, race and ethnicity, political affiliation, religion and sexual orientation etc)
- Some limited use of 'lookalike' audiences and friend connections

We see a small number of campaigns using 'lookalike' audiences - beyond the use of algorithmically generated categories, these allow advertisers to upload pre-made lists of real individuals, from which Meta then creates a larger audience of individuals with similar behavioural and interest characteristics. There have been some recent press controversies¹⁰ around the use of 'Meta Pixels' (and other trackers) on NHS and police web pages, where it seems whole website were configure to collect data for recruitment for example, ignoring the risks and blowback from automatically creating advertising audiences from people reporting sexual abuse or searching for health information.

Table 13: Use of lookalike audiences for targeting

Advertiser	Lookalike segments	Total segments
Crimestoppers	202	2,638
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	1	162

¹⁰ E.g. Das S (2023) Revealed: Metropolitan police shared sensitive data about crime victims with Facebook. The Observer, 15 July. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jul/15/revealed-metropolitan-police-shared-sensitive-data-about-victims-with-facebook> (accessed 19 July 2023).

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	3	207
Department for Work and Pensions - DWP	6	281
Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner	4	57
Deradicalisation Charity	6	85
Gloucestershire Constabulary	2	24
Greater Manchester Police	4	53
Home Office	20	642
The Scottish Government	10	2222

Table 14: Use of friend connections for targeting

Advertiser	Segments using friend connections	Total segments
Metropolitan Police Service	2	472
Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner	1	1
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex	11	16
West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner	1	9

6.2.4 Mapping different models of influence policing in UK law enforcement

While there are some very common use cases in UK police services, such as drink drive and anti-domestic abuse campaigns, which seem to be copied from one service to another, there are also significant differences. Even within the 'behavioural' campaigns, we observe major differences in strategy, tone, theory and understandings of the core purposes of communications. Target online advertising is not a set of stable practices - targeting on characteristics like religion have recently been banned by Meta, the user interfaces and categories available evolve week-to-week, and good practice in the industry has changed over time. It is not surprising then that given the variety of challenges, cultures and skills in each police service, we are seeing quite different approaches, and even within teams like Police Scotland, there is fairly rapid change in practice.

Within the set of campaigns which we see making the full use of the digital tools and behavioural techniques available, we identify five distinctive 'rationalities' - core orienting ideas or models of change - used in the forms of influence policing developing in the UK today. These can be understood as clusters of practice - different versions and visions of the future of police communications. These are conceived respectively around *choice*, *risk*, *co-ordination*, *community*, *opportunity*, and *territory* as the core theories of change at the heart of their practice.

1. Choice

The model we observe taking shape in Police Scotland is a distinctive one, though also evident in some campaigns by English forces. This model conceives of crime and police communications through the lens of consumer choice and identity - a form of rational citizen choice, but one that is also underpinned by cultural narratives, habitual individual and collective behaviours, and individual group psychology. In acting within this landscape, police communications use industry-leading marketing techniques to promote specific behaviours, but also core values of citizenship and democracy. Anchored in 'marketing' careers and practices, the police communications officers are able to work on multiple levels at once - drawing in insights from behavioural science but also the wider skills of a professional marketer, such as engagement with popular culture.

These communications campaigns are targeted, but also exist as part of a wider 'national conversation' about the issue. While the adverts often seek to directly shape behaviour, the measurable element of these campaigns are generally linked to supportive services that can be accessed on demand, with the underlying 'force' of the police providing authority, legitimacy, and in some cases, a fear-based reinforcement. Each campaign must therefore support and develop the police's legitimacy and authority, conceived of as a core police 'brand' that underpins these interventions. Any nudge elements are generally softer and narrative-based, with the police communicating 'strategically' in the manner of a large-scale commercial brand; working on developing the relationship the audience has with the police in the manner of a consumer self-identity. Befitting this approach, a 'national', place-

based character or tone-of-voice (generally 'Scottishness' in the Police Scotland examples), is a key aesthetic part of the campaigns. There is also a strong focus on partnership - with third sector partners playing a key role in the development and delivery process.

2. Risk

The second model we observe uses a strictly-delimited 'public health' rationality, focused around risk categories. In this mode, individuals and communities are seen as belonging to risk groups, with particular characteristics increasing or decreasing the risk of offending or being victimised. In the 'epidemiological' model this shares with Prevent (see Heath-Kelly, 2020), this involves the scientific identification of risk factors in the public, followed by surveillance and pro-active 'treatment' of different groups preventatively. In aiming to intervene in the 'criminogenic' factors that surround a particular crime type, this involves a far more top-down, invasive use of data. These nudges are harder, more likely to use fear or to work 'in the moment', and more focused directly on behaviour or the injection of specific narratives. Ultimately, there is far less reliance on a wider 'brand' relationship or public debate - these interventions are seen as an inoculation or treatment within the information environment, and are often clandestine, seen only by the target population or using an intermediary brand to hide the originator. This also involves a greater deal of specialisation of nudges, with different 'treatments' being applied to different risk groups. Central examples of this include the communications aspects of the counter-terror Prevent strategy, or the use of counter-refugee ads by the Home Office.

3. Co-ordination

The third model retains the public health view of the 'risk' model but focuses instead on wraparound support and the co-ordination of service provision, pointing people to support services in a digital multi-service environment. These campaigns are targeted, rather than part of a wider conversation, but are designed bottom-up, often engaged directly with communities, and fully 'supportive' in design (rather than deterrent or fear-based). This reflects a more 'welfarist' view of public health. Rather than mobilising the police image and its symbolic power, these instead often seek to neutralise it; criminal justice bodies function here a co-ordinating entity existing as the 'glue' between a matrix of different agencies. Here, the campaign itself doesn't directly produce the desired outcome, instead, it links up and aligns its audience with the wider supportive services available. A core example of this is the SVRU Navigators campaign.

4. Opportunity

A fourth model typifies 'hotspots' or 'predictive' policing - where 'smart cop' systems, analysis, and algorithmic technologies come together. This model aims to

work in the mode of Situational Crime Prevention approaches, based in a Routine Activities Theory understanding of crime. Instead of focusing on the epidemiology of risk factors associated with individuals and communities, this model focuses on the wider landscape of opportunities for crime. Crime here is seen as ecological, with the public constructed as economically rational actors whose offending behaviour is shaped by the distribution of criminogenic opportunities and, on the other side, guardianship factors preventing crime. Digital ads are seen here as form of direct intervention in the situations in which crime occurs, shifting people's perceptions of opportunity and risk much in the same way as a heavy lock, a security camera, or a barbed-wire fence. This mode is top-down and centralised, with little community involvement, and generally uses much more invasive forms of interest-based targeting in order to deliver the nudge to exactly the right group at the time when their behaviour is most susceptible to being changed. An example of this is the NCA campaign which showed an advert at the moment someone searched for an illegal online service telling the viewer that the service they searched for was a criminal one. Targeting of these is very specific and aims for minimal 'splash' - a hypodermic nudge aiming to hit 'just the right place' with the minimum force to shape behaviour.

5. Community

A fifth rationale behind campaigns does not rely directly on ad buying and targeting, but instead represents an evolution of police uses of organic social media to be part of a 'conversation'. This seeks to cultivate reach, community, and peer-influence, but not directly using main 'police' accounts. This mode instead involves the creation of dedicated accounts for campaigns where police branding is not prominent, then enrolling partners, getting celebrities and media to pick up the campaign, and hence being part of and *shaping* an organic conversation. For these campaigns, partners provide a level of legitimacy, while police involvement serves to bring the campaign together, and ultimately to underpin it with institutional authority.

6. Territory

A final model works in a similar way to the 'hotspots' or opportunity-based model, but aimed at a broader area (such as the 'digital space' of a borough of London) or platform (like Tiktok, or cyberspace more generally) where where normative force and power have not previously been exhibited. This is however less concerned with opportunity and practical guardianship; instead it is about claiming and projecting symbolic territory on behalf of the state and law enforcement. The ads often have a dual narrative composition - likely perpetrators get a fear message (the normative power of the state operates here), while likely victims get a 'reassurance' message (the protective power of the state operates here). These may aim to directly nudge behaviour, but have a primary function of claiming territory and exerting a symbolic presence, often in (digital or physical) areas where this is contested or non-existent. Evaluation of these campaigns is a secondary concern - the point is instead to show

'we are here' and to assert a normative force. An example of this would be the Metropolitan Police's location-based patrol campaigns.

These modes are intended as tentative 'ideal types' that we see underpinning campaigns - in practice, a given campaign might employ one, or several, of these approaches. There are some patterns in terms of how the different approaches are distributed. The Police Scotland campaigns focus largely on 'choice', 'co-ordination', and 'community' models, though these modes are also evidently being used by some English forces as well. Police Scotland's campaigns were distinctive in not using the low-level and invasive targeting approaches seen by several English forces, and by national governments. However, this also means that PS's campaigns were generally conducted at the national level, and less strategic engagement at the *local* level was evident. We note that due to Meta's removal of some sensitive self-declared characteristics, English forces' attempts to engage with particular local communities (even in a more positive 'co-ordination' mode) often required the use of fairly invasive 'patchwork profiles' of interests and location. Campaigns in the 'security', 'counter-terror', 'borders' and 'violence prevention' themes tended to employ intensive targeting, combining a focus on 'risk' and 'opportunity' modes. The exception to this was the SVRU, which was firmly in the 'co-ordination' mode, though used very low-level targeting to avoid blowback effects.

6.3 Ethical issues

6.3.1 Overview

We outline here a number of ethical issues which we believe are already emerging in the use of these practices, and which we argue will be central concerns for any future incorporation of them into democratic policing in the UK. It is important to note that police communications is not new, and neither is the existence of audience segmentation or targeting. Communications have been a core part of policing practice, both in their 'PR' mode and wider 'awareness' campaigns for many decades. However, these new forms of campaign explicitly go beyond the provision of information to the public, seeking to directly shape their behaviour.

The obvious starting point for ethical discussion are the debates around and behavioural policy interventions, particularly consent and manipulation. However, the ethics of behavioural interventions is not the only area of ethics at play in our case. Advertising itself is an ethically fraught domain, particularly when ads are targeted at the more vulnerable, especially children. More particularly there are debates on the design, regulation and use of targeted advertising systems that depend on very large scale collection of information about individuals, and the use of that direct targeted messages in a way that is hidden from all those who are not exposed to it.

Our main concern in doing this research was to identify how various ethical issues are managed within campaigns and services - what processes are in place, what training is provided, where responsibility lies, and what red lines exist. Because these are innovative practices, we expected to find a range of places and moments where participants are not aware of ethical issues, where ethical responsibility is concentrated in an individual (and thus not in the 'system'), where ethical dilemmas present themselves in ways that leave room for discretion, and examples of problematic decisions and practice that are only appreciated after campaigns were run, or not at all.

6.3.2 Behavioural policy - manipulation

The development of policy interventions using behavioural influence approaches, including 'nudge' has been the subject of considerable ethical debate during the 2010s especially in fields such as "behavioural economics" and "behavioural law" and political philosophy (see for example Sunstein 2016, LePenies and Matecka, 2018; Schmidt and Engelen, 2020; White 2016). These type of interventions are seen as taking a middle road between merely providing information and outright coercion, while remaining cost-effective. Nudges are meant to work via cognitive biases in the so-called 'System 2' thinking (Kahneman 2002), rather than stimulating considered reflection and choice. 'Boosts' on the other hand seek to give a quick skill 'upgrade' to boost more reflective agency (Hertwig, 2017). A great many of the public policy interventions discussed in this literature involve much more direct

manipulation of the citizen environment or 'choice architecture' than the messaging we see in these cases - such as changing tax levels, or urban planning - but other equally controversial initiatives include various sorts of food labelling and warnings. Ethical arguments are made for both intervening and not intervening, around hidden manipulation, over whether the state can identify the best interest of citizens (paternalism), and the obligation of the state to enter and rebalance the choice environment already heavily manipulated by commercial and other political interests etc. Others would argue that all policy interventions involve changing the 'choice architecture', often in disorganised and problematic ways - and it is better that this be well-designed, 'scientific', and transparent. It is the transparency of intention, means and origin, for democracy scrutiny and accountability that would seem more relevant here.

6.3.3 Behavioural policy - consent to receive messages from data-driven targeting

When we receive an online ad, we know it has been targeted at us because of who we are, or something we have done, and generally have no way either to avoid the message, or understand why we have received it. First, we receive these messages without giving our explicit consent, but is that a problem? We expect to receive messages from the government, just as from non-government organisations - and maybe it is our responsibility to do so in order to live as a responsible citizen who takes part in democratic processes. However, do we, and can we, consent to those that attempt to *manipulate* our behaviour? The literature on Public relations and strategic communications, propaganda, and behavioural nudging (e.g. Bakir et al 2019; Sunstein, 2016a) explores what 'true' consent is, what might be considered manipulation (Sunstein, 2016b), the information and social environment in to which governments are trying to bring influence, and the special case of government, compared to non-state actors, including commercial, civil society and political parties¹¹. This is all within the context of contemporary information environments, where deliberate of mis- and dis-information campaigns through the internet are more sophisticated and diverse, as well as facilitating all manner of peer-to-peer cultures and mis-information flow.. While the ideal of interactive, two way consensual communication is still persuasive in some situations, the cases in which we are looking at predominantly one-way (police -> individual citizen on their personal screen). However they do not reach the other end of the spectrum identified by (Bakir et al 2019; Moloney (2006: xiii)) - that of outright coercion.

¹¹ In 2022-23 the overall legal basis for receiving behaviourally targeted ads is currently shifting, with a number of judgments against Meta in particular pushing towards explicitly opt-in consent being the only basis for receiving ads, including Norway banning these sorts of ads entirely. . e.g. NOYB (2023) *Norway temporary ban behavioral ads Facebook Instagram*. Available at: <https://noyb.eu/en/norway-temporary-ban-behavioral-ads-facebook-instagram> (accessed 19 July 2023).

The campaigns we see are not obviously trying to incentivise via specific threat of force, nor via other mechanisms such as individual rewards, although a more general threat of force is clearly behind all messages from the police - it is the police that will catch up with you, not cancer or your failure to save for old age. They are not manipulative by using untruths, or deceptive messages, indeed great efforts generally go towards ensuring this, but in some cases there is deception, when it is not clear who is behind the advert (such as Home Office funding of campaigns by charities), and perhaps more importantly, it is not made clear *why* someone has received a message. However some adverts do imply threat (for example, the anti-grooming campaign) both in the messaging that if you don't get help we will find you, and the fact that the message has arrived through a known targeting mechanism - which might imply that the receiver of the message thinks they have personally been identified and targeted because of actual suspicions - and therefore open to actual State threat.

There is an open debate as to whether the sorts of targeting deployed in online advertising are ethical - do they respect the dignity and privacy of those who receive these messages. Data Protection Law outlaws direct personal messaging without consent (using collected targeted information like address). The current configuration of targeted advertising, which allows quite narrow targeting of people as part of groups is hotly debated in policy and law. One reason is the lack of transparency in how and why an individual is addressed, or how an audience is constructed in the online platform. (It could technically be set up to allow you to see at least how you were targeted, the current configuration is a commercial choice). Lack of messages such as - 'you have seen this ad because you have liked the following things' is removing the ability to rationally consent to receiving the message. Not having a message that makes it clear an individual was not individually targeted could be deceptive, and similarly a message that clicking on a link will not identify to the advertiser or platform would be important.

A second case aspect of informed consent is knowing who the messages come from. Most of the adverts in these cases are clearly branded, not only in the use of text and logos, but also in the whole look and feel of the creative content. This was largely seen as the default, and in some cases imperative approach. However there are some examples when 'unbranded' content was used. Under political advertising rules the closed platforms have tried to suppress unbranded content, and will remove it if no disclaimer and original label is made on the ad, or an unverified account is used. However on the open web we have at least one case where the decision not to brand (and thus to deceive). Again, this balance of public interest and 'acceptable' deception was debated, but clearly needs stronger guidance and transparent process about when it is an acceptable approach and what extra layers of oversight might be needed..

Overall the use of targeted online advertising could be considered deceptive at a societal level, since some of the campaigns are not visible to the public - there is a

lack of transparency that they are occurring, since only a narrow group of people ever knows about them. However for the PS situation there appears to be no systematic attempts to hide campaigns; indeed they are prompted as success stories, and their integration with mass media campaigns mean they are visible. Other forces however are clearly operating below the radar - and may argue that this is the same for many police activities - operations become visible on request, even if all the evaluations and details are not.

In summary, there are risks of a degree of deception by omission; of coercion by omission; and coercion and deception via targeting. The sorts of disclaimer strings (Edelston et al) that are imposed by Meta, for example, and more comprehensive cross-platform ad libraries should be used to increase transparency as to why someone has been shown an ad.

6.3.4 Democracy and the Police

Policing has a democratic function that makes them very different from other advertisers. Exercise of police power not just about effectiveness and propriety but procedural and democratic justice and inclusion. There are also concerns about whether the police should be using these approaches at all, especially where they involve shaping 'pre-criminal' cultural narratives - it may be acceptable in public health, or the design of tax forms, but the police have very particular set of powers (including a monopoly on the legitimate use of lethal force) and a delicate position in society, especially in relation to structurally disadvantaged groups. This raises harms to do with the wider use of control mechanisms on the public, and harms to do with the ability to participate in democratic processes fairly.

From within a democratic policing framework, there are clear justifications that can be used to make the case for police targeting particular communities in their delivery of communications. The duty for police to be responsive to local issues lends weight to the argument e.g. outreach to LGBT, BAME communities in their area. Arguably, it is also the duty of democratic policing to communicate *information* to the public about what they are doing about crime. While in theory these sorts of interventions may be considered ethical, in practice they may end up consistently targeting a narrow part of the population with overlapping campaigns. This could be particularly problematic if the campaigns are not developed with local voices, in strategic insight, creative, targeting (in line with GCS recommendations¹²). Additionally, as platforms refine or in some cases remove the ability to target people by ethnicity and religion directly, paradoxically, this appears to have caused many law enforcement actors to adapt by adopting extremely invasive targeting via

¹² GCS (2022) Five principles to make your campaigns more inclusive. Available at: <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/marketing/delivering-government-campaigns/five-principles-to-make-your-campaigns-more-inclusive/> (accessed 19 July 2023).

proxies for these characteristics, such as low-level postcode location data or microtargeting via interests and behaviours.

Some specific issues related to messaging about illegal activities where direct force is not an option include:

1. The state goes into an area where fundamental 'moral values' of the country are perceived to have broken down, and the state itself needs to intervene - but where hard force is not enough, since we are talking about potential harms, or harms from extremely widespread behaviours, and force cannot be exerted
2. There is an environment where other actors are activity promoting problematic, and illegal behaviours - the state has to 'balance the playing field' - or the decision environment
3. Issues arise where behavioural messaging isn't behavioural at all, but just raising awareness that hard power is also at work - the communication is not coercive in itself, but refers to other coercive powers.
4. The state has a duty to provide support to vulnerable members of society, but these communities are hard to reach or access through traditional means and the landscape of distributed multi-nodal provision requires the state to come in as a co-ordinating force

6.3.5 Data Protection and Privacy, and the ethics of data-driven targeting

As noted above, the mere fact that we know we have been shown ads by a system that has targeted us somehow raises issues of concern, in particular related to a number of conceptions of privacy. Contemporary debates on privacy often focus on access to, processing of, and flows of *personal data*. In this case, user socio-demographic and behavioural the data about individuals are retained by the platforms and not visible to police, and the categories or labels used for targeting are aggregates, and do not reveal individuals, this framing of privacy appears ill-suited to discuss the potential issues with digital ad targeting. but privacy is not just about observation, it is also about influence: a key idea in privacy is the *right to be let alone*, and in particular, the limits of the state to intrude into a person's private life. Here the targeted advertising, as it gets narrowed and conducted precisely for influence, could be considered a type of privacy violation.

Platforms are making these very intimate aspects of identity and behaviour available - at one remove - for the State to use to shape people's behaviour. An individual who feels they are continually receiving very specific advertisements, in the privacy of their home, and that appear to be closely based on their behaviour might well be considered at risk from an ethical, if not legal privacy violation.

A key feature of contemporary targeted advertising is the use of automatically generated look-alike audiences from existing lists of identified people - for example, the Home Office will have personal details of those who pass through justice and border systems, the DWP, of benefit claimants, and both will have certain information from interactions with websites. They can upload encrypted versions of this information to a firm like Meta which will anonymously match these to its users, and use social network interests and demographic data to enable ads to be targeted to 'similar' people. This is a contested domain but currently seems to comply with Data Protection laws¹³, depending on legal basis for processing; however, it certainly raises ethical issues, especially when the state uses it.

6.3.6 Influencers

The use of influencers in these campaigns was not the focus of our research, though it is notable, given the move towards more 'programmatically' forms of influencer engagement and contracting. More generally, this needs to be very carefully considered when combined with digital ad targeting. While this mode of advertising does give the police access to 'legitimacy' and 'peer influence', issues of propriety need to be considered. It is manifestly more appropriate for peer influencers to be used to amplify awareness or 'issue' campaigns than it is for influencers and microcelebrities to be paid to champion the police more generally, or to engage in campaigns which might be seen as counter to the interests of particular groups. More broadly, there are concerns about the longer-term effects of this work on the creative economy. If the police are seen as a lucrative source of influencer work, this has the potential itself to exert an economic force on culture and public debate - with creators who are more critical of police or government becoming less prominent, having less resources, and being deprioritised in the wider influencer economy compared to those who are able to lock in profile and money through police sponsorship and concomitant access to media agencies.

6.3.7 Blowback and unintended consequences

A wider *practical* issue of these behaviourally targeted strategic marketing campaigns that do not have directly measurable goals, is that they are notoriously hard to evaluate and their effects are difficult to predict. Often, as seen in wider marketing scholarship, very similar campaigns run on similar target groups 'land' entirely differently - either due to unpredictable changes in the macro or microscale media and cultural environment, where apparently unimportant differences turn out to be significant, or in the technical operation of the market.

¹³ See for example *Direct marketing code of practice Draft code for consultation* (2020) ICO. Available at: <https://ico.org.uk/media/about-the-ico/consultations/2616882/direct-marketing-code-draft-guidance.pdf>. Guidance for the use of personal data in political campaigning (2019) ICO. <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/direct-marketing-and-privacy-and-electronic-communications/guidance-for-the-use-of-personal-data-in-political-campaigning-1/> (accessed 19 July 2023).

The result of this can be a range of consequences, from just not getting a message through to those that are targeted, to having the opposite effect (hardening of attitudes such as anti-vax, misogynistic behaviour). The harms may be that crime or harmful behaviour continues, or worsens, or that there is a more public backlash against the advertising - "blowback". For the Police this may undermine both authority and legitimacy, both important for local operations, and for society more generally. While for seasoned behavioural marketers many of these issues will be very well-understood (such as the use of knife images in anti-violence adverts unintentionally increasing rates of knife-carrying among viewers, or misinformation 'debunking' campaigns actually spreading and reinforcing false narratives), the wider use of these methods by those not fully trained, or pressure from policymakers, ministers, and stakeholders may cause these kinds of campaigns to 'get through the net' in the absence of formal administrative review and oversight.

A tentative set of reasons for unintended consequences related to the targeting approach can be drawn from the case studies, and more general literature, and will require further research:

Targeting outside the core group	
	Ad interpreted differently outside core Stigma around topic outside core Harm diffuses more widely than anticipated 'Contagion' - spreading the thing you are trying to counter Services don't exist in that area so citizens feel 'let down' when they cannot access them.
Over-targeting within the core group	
	Ad displays too often; within a platform, or across media Groups often not highly desirable for advertisers (therefore cheap) so Police win ad auctions causing overdisplay
Unintended effects of achieved targeting	
	Causes resentment to/mistrust of authority, hence lessening uptake of support
	Dulling effect 'innoculates' against the message
	Existence of campaign confirms that they aren't being caught
	Sub-categories - i.e. your ad might successfully divert those in the outer rings of the risk circles, but have the opposite 'hardening' effect on those at the centre
	Awareness of targeting leads to privacy/stereotyping concerns
Not reaching the people you should	

	Missing lots of people who don't look culturally typical for your targeted group
	They then miss out on core services and information
	Problem with using cultural proxies for e.g. ethnicity
The platform itself retargeting	
	Ad delivery is non-deterministic – police do not actually know why the ads were shown to (e.g. with “lookalike” audiences and more recent “AI” audiences)

Within the case studies we discuss, a wider narrative underlies many of these campaigns - of a 'risk escalator', familiar from Prevent, in which people progress from smaller, low level offending to gradually more serious offending. This is itself potentially problematic - it may well be that the vast majority of those identified as risks would never have offended. Indeed, it may be that campaigns are be effective in deterring those with a low likelihood of engaging, but not effective (or even producing completely opposite effects) in those who have a high risk or are already involved. It cannot be assumed that effects vary linearly between different groups (i.e. in terms of degree) - there may be important qualitative differences in the effect produced based on personal characteristics of the viewer, or differences in the media environment experienced by different groups. For example, a police advert that appears once amongst adverts for consumer products and holidays may be read very differently to one which appears repeatedly, and alongside mostly malicious or fraudulent adverts.

From our studies of Police Scotland and campaigns from the wider UK, blowback appears to be particularly well-mitigated by a number of factors. Firstly, some campaigns explicitly consider blowback effects in their design phase, allowing for 'stress testing' of the campaign. At its best, this also includes consideration of issues involving targeting, not only content. Secondly, we argue that greater oversight increases the chances of well-known avenues of blowback being detected and mitigated - in the case of Police Scotland, through its centralisation of budget and development in a single expert team, and in other bodies, such as the NCA, through extensive legal and administrative review. Thirdly, the involvement of targeted communities directly in the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of campaigns (whether through a full 'co-production' approach or through partner engagement) additionally appears to be important in anticipating and mitigating potentially unintended effects. Finally, the use of direct fear messaging itself appears to carry a major risk of blowback, and, we argue, should generally be avoided.

6.4 Governance: Organisation and accountability

6.4.1 Current ethical practice in digital police communications

There are additionally administrative transparency and accountability processes which might usefully be implemented by the law enforcement organisations. We outline these in our recommendations section, however, they include codes of conduct, duties of public consultation, public sector ad targeting registries, and procedures for administrative review (such as oversight boards and impact assessments). In our case studies and wider empirical research, we note a number of ethical practices already engaged in the development and delivery of these campaigns. In terms of concrete practices, these include:

Examples where we see positive action in our cases:

1. Recognising and resisting campaigns that produce counter effects and blowback (PS)
2. Deciding not to use unbranded campaigns - these were almost completely resisted - but not clearly regulated
3. Ensuring messages are backed up by legal and police force, or complementary services
4. Detailed exploration of theories of change
5. Direct engagement of communities or partners representing communities at the design and delivery stage

Examples where we don't see action:

1. Public databases of ads - their motivation, spend and targeting etc (only available via Meta)
2. Campaigns using outsourced services with no declaration of law enforcement involvement
3. A lack of public evaluations of campaigns that may have led to counter-effects
4. Coordination of national ethical practice

At present, while some of the novel capacities and risks of these campaigns are recognised by practitioners, they are not necessarily well-understood within the wider structures of policing and law enforcement. While the more general frameworks of ethics in public life are applied, and the emerging ethics of the GSC, we see that currently there is no specific ethical framework around targeted advertising for the police, and only a local emerging sense of best practice and likely dilemmas. We argue that these campaigns need to be understood not through the practice frameworks of traditional police communications, but as a form of operational policing and a set of preventative and disruptive interventions in their own right. There is a need for co-ordinated ethical, operational, and legal review to

support their delivery, especially where there is a risk of unintended consequences or the campaigns target particularly vulnerable communities.

More widely, we argue that the use of these campaigns by the police is meaningfully different from their use by wider public bodies. The police have a unique relationship to democratic institutions and to the public - in the final case, all interventions by the police are underpinned by their monopoly on the legitimate exercise of lethal force. Law enforcement strategic communications requires accountability structures, best practices, and ways of working that fit within the wider institutions of policing - not simply transferred from central government.

6.4.2 Transparency

Transparency - particularly around how these campaigns are targeted - is a crucial part of ensuring their legitimacy as a policing tactic. At present, although campaign content is generally seen by the public, there is very little information on how campaigns have been targeted, and many of the more invasive campaigns are not seen outside their core audience. Although this is less problematic for the broad demographic and interest campaigns run by Police Scotland at the national level, other bodies have used invasive forms of targeting that are far more controversial.

Additionally, in the wider 'public issue' advertising environment, it is often difficult for law enforcement and public bodies to know what else is being run in the same geographical area, shown to the same communities, or covering the same issues as the campaigns they are planning. This also links to the new 2023 Government Communication Service strategy, which argues for greater data sharing around audiences for government campaigns. Finally, we note that the Meta Ad library, while a clear resource for promoting transparency, is not perfect - it only contains a fragmentary selection of relevant campaigns. Further, it contains potentially sensitive information - especially fine-detail location - that we assume may never have been intended by counter-terror agencies, law enforcement, and intelligence services to be publicly available.

6.4.3 Organisational frameworks

The Police Scotland team has in our view generally achieved a strong balance between ethical oversight, consideration of risks, and accountable process in its approach to developing these campaigns and integrating these novel capabilities into police communications. This is partly due to the particular strategic issues chosen for campaigns, the specific skills and goals of the team, and the 'national' focus of the campaigns - which all aim to be part of wider democratic and cultural conversations about the issues covered. We particularly welcome PS' active decision to entirely avoid 'victim-blaming' communications, though note that perpetrator-focused campaigns are not without their own risks and issues. In

particular, the 'hypodermic' communications we observe from other bodies in the Meta Ad library, that aim to directly and covertly shape the behaviour of a very small group in-the-moment, present serious issues.

The creation of best practice ethical frameworks in this context is challenging in the extreme. Intervention effects are extremely difficult to measure - both positive and negative. Categories available and interfaces are changing all the time, making it very hard to manage accountability and best practice. However, we argue from the many examples of good practice that we have observed that much could be achieved through strengthening institutional frameworks - namely, promoting transparency around campaigns and targeting, the development of formal institutional review, a duty to engage targeting communities directly, and a wider public debate about the use of these novel methods.

While we have seen significant ethical issues in campaigns by other bodies, including the Home Office, none of the Police Scotland campaigns displayed these acute forms of unethical practice. Although Police Scotland have generally managed to ensure ethical oversight and alignment through their central position - which allows them to veto local campaigns - we argue that a more formal accountability framework is needed for safe growth beyond the current 4 or 5 campaigns per year, or for expansion into more locally-focused strategic campaigns below the national level (as we see in other force areas). This will require more formal internal and external regulatory structures for oversight and best practice. This also recalls many of the central-versus-local dilemmas of the wider policing literature - namely, the ability for police action to respond to local issues, and its tension with the need for centralised forms of accountability. If the use of these campaigns is to become more widespread and localised in Scotland, we argue that further formalisation of this review framework - possibly through the creation of a separate formal review panel for strategic campaigns - would be welcome. By comparison, the local structure of policing in England and Wales has led to a great deal of variability in practices and delivery, and we advise the creation of a more co-ordinated accountability structure within and across forces.

At present, as these communications tactics are still largely understood as part of 'PR communications' at the institutional level, the consideration of their novel (and potentially riskier) aspects is reliant on a small number of 'load-bearing' expert practitioners. This formalisation would allow for better ongoing evaluation and systematic tracking of what is being done, what issues were considered, and what issues arose in practice. We recognise that due to the fast-changing nature of these tools, best practice and ethical guidelines - especially concerning targeting and unintended consequences - will need to be carefully developed with a view to enabling the assessment of novel (or situationally-specific) capacities and risks as they arise. Concretely, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not be sufficient - there is a need for campaign-by-campaign review, as issues of ethics and potential harms will

be very dependent on campaign topic, strategy, audience, technologies used, and hard-to-predict trends and events occurring in the wider cultural context.

More widely, we argue that strategic communications presents very different capacities and risks compared to traditional 'PR' or 'awareness-raising' forms of police communications. In many ways, as we document in this report, these are more akin to operational policing interventions which aim to produce a direct 'effect' on the public.

As such, consideration should be given to whether these need to be considered and regulated along with other operational uses of police prevention powers. This might involve the formalisation of strategic communications as a policing sub-profession with its own full professional framework - though remaining in 'comms' departments. Buying and targeting the adverts themselves is extremely cheap and there are very few technical barriers to the use of very invasive targeting options, so there is a real need to make sure that non-experts, particularly within more local contexts, do not attempt to run digital behaviour change campaigns without proper centralised oversight. Many of the risks are most stark where those in law enforcement or contracting agencies develop interventions without an expert knowledge of strategic marketing and its risks, or without a full understanding of the policing environment. Responsibility for 'ownership' and expert review of ethical and legal risks needs to be clear - and needs to lie ultimately with the law enforcement rather than private sector delivery contractors.

6.5 Technology: The role of the platforms and algorithmic technologies

6.5.1 How platforms shape the intervention environment

The initial motivation for this project was to explore the intersection of the online targeted market infrastructures and industrial ecology, and contemporary government, in particular the police. At the heart of the internet, and the targeted advertising systems that fund much of it are sets of interfaces, algorithms, and auction-based market mechanisms. The major ad platforms constantly explore ways to convert information traces left by users (liking things on Facebook, searching on Google, buying online or in shops, etc.) into evidence to inform paying markets, and to direct the algorithms to show advertisements to selected groups.

While a few major firms lead the market, they rely for their operation on a vast network of data collectors, brokers, consultants, service companies and marketing management tools. Platforms have made mass communication cheap and pervasive, which has opened up sophisticated advertising and marketing to every size of business, and also to every political, social and cultural organisation. This industry has come under intense scrutiny as harms become apparent: harms to democracy (e.g. misinformation), markets (competition), discrimination (targeting), and privacy (in the use of personal data and intrusive messaging), and more generally the manipulative techniques (e.g. dark patterns), and the push to get people to spend ever more time interacting with online service in order to generate more data (attention economy), and to provide more opportunities to place paid messages. The industry itself has been subject to huge levels of manipulation by other business, and political actors - figures of 25% 'fake' accounts are often quoted, which significantly distorts the ability to reach real people, and understand real influence.

This industry has created a huge number of challenges for government to tackle, and raised questions as to how government bodies should participate. Much of this has been around putting pressure on major platforms to take more responsibility, legally for their actions and impacts, which is starting to come though in deeply politically contentious legislation. On advertisements in particular most of the focus has been on election manipulation, especially in the US. On issues of data protection protection the EU has led. Specific rules have been introduced in sectors such as advertising financial products, around housing, public health (controversially in the case of COVID). In general the advertising platforms have resisted regulation, but have slowly responded to activism and political pressure to introduce limits of certain ways of targeting and certain classes of adverts.

As outlined above, the rules on political advertising have mostly been about ensuring transparency to scrutiny. In response the major ad platforms have started to introduce "Ad Libraries". In most countries these relate to election laws, and this is the minimum that firms like Tiktok or Snap seem willing to do. Meta on the other

hand has taken a maximalist view and tried to increase a wide range of advertisers in its Ad Library, thus making all Government ad campaigns in the UK open to the public and researchers.

However there are deeper issues in practice related to how the ad infrastructures shape how advertising based influence works, that directly impact on the way that government advertising may reach those they are trying to target.

1. The real-time auction systems used to show ads favour the deepest pockets - in simple terms, those advertisers that bid the most for a particular targeted audience (based on search terms, interests, website content etc) will have their ads shown. Expertise is required to work out how to ensure ads are actually shown when targeting is very broad on highly commercially valuable targeting terms.
2. The targeting mechanisms - where advertising buyers select demographic, location, behavioural and interest based factors, or target particular websites as categories appears straightforward, but is not, there are huge numbers of data sources that are used to algorithmically shape the weights given to these choices - and the algorithms (or 'AI') that does this are secret, and are constantly changing. These categories are not only automatically generated, they are created through negotiation with major customers, with human intervention in shaping the important and valuable commercial advertising categories. For non-commercial advertisers this could significantly impact the sorts of citizen groups they can reach.
3. In particular, automatic targeting algorithms change the expected targeting of adverts (optimising). The ad industry, especially the major platforms, have tools such as "lookalike" audiences that build target audiences with 'similar' characteristics to those originally selected (such as using a list of existing customers), or recommend targeting based on the success of adverts by other advertisers. However what is 'similar' is opaque to buyers. Ads are also retargeted based on dynamic response to the content (e.g. image analysis) view time and interaction, and may end up being show to people very different to the original intended audience. This is particularly notable in the fastest growing sector, social video. Most commercial advertisers are happy if this leads to more sales, but for government advertisers (and brand managers), this may involve spending on reaching people that a message was never intended for.
4. The measurement of outcomes is far from transparent too: few major advertisers trust the data provided by the ad platforms as to their reach to real people - there is an extensive industry of secondary measurement that is employed to balance this.

5. The filtering of 'problematic' adverts and advertising has come a long way in the last 5-7 years in terms of positive responses to pressure and a desire to be a 'good' citizen. Google and Meta continually introduce modifications, such as removing targeting categories, limiting the sorts of optimisation techniques for certain categories of ads (esp political). However, this is not particularly transparent (they don't always want to reveal what they are doing so it can be bypassed), but also means advertisers are constantly having to adapt.
6. Advertisements do not only just appear as targeted, there is a 'secondary' market as they are liked, commented on and reposted which can drive visibility to other audiences, or attract visits to advertised websites from those not targeted. The examples of the That Guy campaign that 'went viral' is an example.
7. Platforms like Meta are exercising substantial power to 'vet' adverts - and there is substantial evidence from the Ad Library that they are happy to use this to take down government ads where they do not meet Meta standards. This raises complex issues around the correct balance between government and the private sector in regulating the delivery of communications.
8. The whole legal basis for targeting adverts using personal data is under scrutiny in the EU. It remains to be seen how UK Regulation addresses this issue, and the potential impact of user opt-out.

Ad platforms have enormous power to shape how advertising is delivered. Some are increasingly proactive, though responding to legislative pressure such as the EU Digital Services Act, and similar UK legislation that is obliging them to open up their algorithmic processes to greater scrutiny. Others seem to do the minimum they can. This is notably the case with the Ad Libraries - Meta has included all the government advertising, making it much easier to ensure transparency and accountability, but this is not the case for the other platforms. As advertisements are increasingly placed on the new popular platforms, especially Tiktok, we lose public visibility and the mechanisms by which ads reach an audience become ever more opaque.

In the world of influence, where governments are trying to promote pro-social messages and shape behaviour, or to communicate with citizens within a legitimate democratic society, the information and media environment is constantly changing, and being changed by the major platforms as they attempt to maintain audience in a competitive environment and maximise advertising revenue. Governments that are attempting to counter misinformation, or reach hard to reach sections of the population will have to work harder, and may find it more difficult to 'compete'. They may indeed demand greater access and cooperation, but out to be far more transparent and accountable in the process.

6.5.2 *The future practices and technologies of behavioural influence*

Finally, we discuss the potential forms which 'influence policing' and wider 'influence government' might take as we move into the future of digital behavioural advertising. As we have seen, law enforcement are in the process of trying to improve their approaches and develop new ways of working using these digital infrastructures. However, even the core targeting interface and the categories available to them are changing week-by-week. In addition, these technologies are currently in the process of a series of step-changes in how they work - seeking to navigate the technological transitions associated with novel 'AI' innovations on the one hand, and increasingly muscular regulation by governments on the other. In terms of developing ethical frameworks for police practice, digital advertising presents a rather fast-moving target. We argue that two broad near-future and uncertain trajectories need to be considered:

1. First is the continual development in the use of 'AI' - a set of increasingly sophisticated modelling techniques based on training using existing data, and then optimising these computations models for particular applications. However, all types of computational communication are made increasingly viable by increased computing power. This would represent a further move towards 'cybernetic' models of communication - mechanisms for steering the flow of online information which are reactive, semi-automated, and tailored. The sorts of uses include improving targeting, new algorithmic delivery, highly customised dynamic creative content, and embedded interactions with chatbots (including 'ai influencers'). Currently the marketing industry is exploring the possibilities of 'generative ai' such as Large Language Models (LLMs) in particular. Debates include the balance of risks and benefits over using automatically generated creative content - big, well-resourced advertisers, who generally want to craft their own content and keep control of their brand may prefer to use this in development stages, but for advertisers (commercial and political) with less of a brand to protect, live real-time content generation and targeting is likely to be big business. The Government and police, which have the resources to be in charge of the messaging are likely to be in the first category. However, the information and media environment will certainly be changed by AI, and government regulators and communicators will have to respond to new types of misinformation and malicious campaigns
2. The second is the trend away from the current mix of targeted advertising in response to changes in supply (the rise of Tiktok, the fall of Twitter, entry of Amazon), the development and maturation of influencer marketing, including large scale programmatic influencer markets, and the regulatory pressure to undermine the legal basis for behavioural advertising. The industry continues to produce ever more sophisticated ways to integrate, monitor and coordinate cross platform campaigns, and work around and with data

protection laws, advertising laws, which should result in better governance and accountability, new opportunities for more transparent communications practice, but will introduce new jeopardies for government advertisers.

Even if targeted advertising as we know it radically changes, it is unlikely to go away - a large number of mass market everyday internet services are funded by advertising, and support millions of small businesses too. Government and law enforcement are now committed in the modern online information environment to developing mechanisms of information regulation, and will have to rely on the same professionals and ecosystems of companies, practices that are currently in place.

7. Recommendations and conclusions

In this report for the Scottish Institute of Policing Research, we have outlined what we believe is a novel and under-examined phenomenon in Scottish and UK policing. We now provide our five core sets of recommendations for next steps. These focus on Police Scotland, though where appropriate we attempt to make some recommendations from the data we have relating to other bodies - including UK forces, centralised law enforcement, and platforms.

Recommendation 1: Transparency

1. We recommend that all marketing campaigns funded by the public sector in the UK should be recorded on a public register with full details of the content and the targeting approach taken. This would allow the public to see how government and police campaigns are being delivered, help public bodies to plan and evaluate their campaigns better to avoid 'cross-talk' or other issues, and more generally follow expectations of democratic and procedurally just policing.
2. Additionally, we recommend that the use of 'unbranding', where campaigns do not acknowledge public sector or police funding, has the capacity to erode trust in the use of these approaches, and so should be strongly discouraged. However, we acknowledge that sometimes this approach may serve a legitimate or justifiable purpose. If unbranded campaigns are used, this needs to be supported by a high level of administrative scrutiny and ethical oversight.
3. Finally, the platforms themselves have a legal and ethical duty of transparency and accountability. The Meta Ad Library, despite its limitations, has proven a crucial resource in conducting this study. However, targeting approaches for Google, Tiktok (who are in the process of releasing an ad library API), Twitter, and other platforms have so far lagged far behind.
4. We also recommend that given the publicly-accessible nature of ad targeting data in the Ad Libraries, sensitive police and counter-terror operational data should not be used in generating location or interest categories
5. Build partnerships with the regulators of online advertising (ASA, Ofcom etc) to demand clearer information on the the algorithmic targeting systems of ad providers, and the impact of real-time bidding on how adverts reach audiences, and how their audiences are constituted

Recommendation 2: Formalising regulation and oversight

6. Strategic communications campaigns are acknowledged in the Police Scotland draft 2023/24 annual strategic plan as a core KPI, however this is still largely framed through traditional activities around 'awareness' and public confidence. We recommend that the strategic planning around communications reflect the emerging capabilities and organisation role played by strategic campaigns.
7. In concert with partner organisation, other forces, external experts, bodies such as APCOM, and key internal business areas, Police Scotland should work towards developing a framework of professional best practice for the use of digital strategic communications in the unique environment of policing. This could form the basis of developing more local capacity - through training, ethical awareness, and formal structures.
8. Reflecting the early stages of experimentation with these approaches, Police Scotland have focused on developing expertise and practice in a subsection of the ways that online targeted market can support strategic goals. We recommend developing expertise on the whole range of approaches, such as more local deployment. and guidelines on appropriate use of each.
9. Within Police Scotland (and other forces), we recommend that these campaigns be supported by a process of centralised ethical review, covering data sources and evidence used to build profiles, targeting options considered, content, and potential risks
10. In addition, the ICO should conduct a full review of the profiles, data and targeting used in law enforcement and government strategic communications periodically
11. A full 'risk analysis' of unintended consequences and blowback should be a required component of campaign design and subsequent evaluation
12. We recommend that strategic communication needs to be recognised as fulfilling a fundamentally different role within policing than traditional PR-focused communications - institutionally it should be considered as part of the toolkit of operational policing interventions
13. We recommend additionally that, despite the drive for 'innovation', serious caution and review needs to be taken in adopting novel technologies and capacities, particularly the novel AI-assisted tools which are currently trying to disrupt the advertising industry. A shared programme of R&D and careful testing should inform the broader policing community - in collaboration with partners and the public.

14. Further, although potentially a legitimate and powerful approach to community engagement, the use of influencers needs to be treated very carefully as part of an ongoing and transparent conversation with relevant communities

Recommendation 3: Improving monitoring and evaluation

15. Although behavioural theory is used as a component of many of these campaigns at the design stage, many of these campaigns are missing the characteristic behavioural testing and monitoring stages which would be expected within the behavioural communications model. To continue to develop the robustness of the behavioural components of these campaigns, we recommend the inclusion of a formal testing and experimental stage as part of the development process.
16. We recommend that substantially more resources are made available for evaluation of the reception and effects of these communications campaigns.
17. Significant investment is needed in improving the responsiveness and scope of administrative data to evaluate effects on services and outcomes, along with panel surveys, focus groups, and wider engagement of targeted communities and the general public. There is potential for strategic communications work to link up further with the infrastructures and practices of responsive and community policing, though this would require careful handling.
18. Evaluations should explore not only potential positive impacts according to the theory of change used, but also unintended consequences and blowback. This should include linked-up evaluation across campaigns that assess the impact on multiple goals and duties, for example, using citizen panels and collection of independent citizen-side ad reception data, especially in communities that are highly targeted.
19. The evaluation of communications interventions should be linked with that of other interventions around the same issue, in order to share resources and understand the form of paid advertising as part of more complex interventions.
20. Crucially, it is clear that what works in a particular campaign may not easily 'transfer' to another - we recommend a full design review and evaluation each time, even where campaigns may appear to be very similar.
21. This would be further facilitated by more systematic engagement with relevant external expertise, potentially through a dedicated committee or list

of relevant subject-matter experts. The Scottish Institute for Policing Research could play a key role in coordinating this.

Recommendation 4: Co-production and consent

22. While we recognise consultation and co-production with partners is a key strength of PS campaigns, in accordance with values of democratic policing and 'policing by consent', targeted communities should be brought in throughout the process of design, delivery, and evaluation, either directly through co-production approaches, or indirectly through partners. This could also open up new avenues for evaluation.
23. This could include, with careful planning, citizen and community involvement in setting some of the strategic priority areas and topics selected for campaigns. Deliberative and participative approaches such as 'mini-publics' may usefully contribute to shaping the future use of these campaigns. This would play on the strengths of the Scottish approach, moving further away from top-down 'nudges' and instead making these campaigns a part of democratic conversations around important social issues.
24. Although these are powerful tools for projecting the image and power of the police, we advise caution around their use purely for 'visibility' where policing resources are otherwise being withdrawn.
25. We recommend that campaigns where the primary mode of operation is based in fear or deterrence, especially where the campaign is designed to be clandestine or only seen by a very small audience, be considered as outwith the bounds of ethical law enforcement practice
26. While recognising the legitimate reasons why public bodies might want to target communications at communities based on ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or other protected characteristics, we recommend that the highly invasive 'patchwork profiles' based on fine-detail location or platform-detected interests and behaviours not be used by law enforcement unless a clear justification can be made for each component category chosen. For example, the SVRU use of location data in their campaign has a clear justification for credibly reaching a hard-to-reach target audience, while the use of proxies like 'afro-textured hair' does not.

Recommendation 5: Public awareness and engagement with political actors/civil society

27. There is still very little acknowledgement outside the marketing profession and government comms specialists that the use of targeted digital behaviour change campaigns for achieving public policy objectives is widespread in the UK; let alone the use of these approaches by law enforcement. These

campaigns are still seen as 'just comms', rather than as a core aspect of how the UK does preventative social policy. We recommend a wider engagement with the public around the use of these campaigns and targeting methods as a mode of government practice - including *whether* they should be used at all, and in what circumstances their use might be appropriate.

28. Despite the central role played by 'active' strategic communications tactics in countering online and 'emerging' harms, there is next to no mention of these in legislation, for example, the Online Harms Bill. The regulation of these new approaches in law enforcement is currently under generic 'communications' frameworks - we recommend a more systematic legal and political appraisal of their use. There is a potential case to be made for platforms to engage more directly with governments around these public issue adverts as a 'two speed' model, with different capacities and oversight compared to commercial advertisers. This is already the case in two policy areas where international collaboration occurs between the platforms, private agencies, and governments: counter-child abuse and counter-radicalisation strategic communications.
29. Police Scotland has developed considerable expertise in its inhouse team and network of partners. We recommend that Police Scotland explore becoming a hub of expertise within the Scottish public sector, and in the UK police. The UK appears to be significantly ahead of other countries in using these techniques, and there is scope for the exploration of possibilities for leadership and learning, both on practice and ethics.
30. We recommend the development of processes that ensure that the police do not taken on campaigns just because they have resources and expertise, when it might be better handled by another agency (e.g. targeting drug users).
31. We recommend that law enforcement and partners coordinate further on campaigns to avoid over targeting or oversaturating audiences with ads. This is especially important for vulnerable audiences who are not common targets for commercial advertisers (so likely to get a higher proportion of government ads) and additionally are more likely to be targeted by predatory or malicious adverts.
32. Policymakers need to reckon with the new technologies that are moving into this space - this will be a key use case for LLMs and GANs ("AI"). This will include the value in supporting the development of multiple versions of creative content (in partnership with targeted communities) and the development of new interactive channels through ads - chatbots etc, and understanding the inherent risks of of current automatic content generation technologies

8. Future Research Topics

1. Some campaigns delivered by public bodies clearly straddle the line between delivering policy and more political objectives of increasing support for the governing party and their policy agenda in arguably inappropriate ways. This is a more complex issue for the police, who have a clear remit to increase public confidence. There are clear potential risks where law enforcement use heavily targeted digital adverts and influencer messaging solely for changing perceptions of the police in vulnerable communities. This requires further research into the potential unintended consequences and harms of these approaches.
2. Research into how the material affordances of the platforms built for commercial marketing based on multiple data sources shapes the ability to target particular communities and individual groups. This would include ways to avoid highly invasive 'patchwork profiles', and better insights into way that targeting algorithms and the creation of targeting categories impacts on the ability to reach particular groups in society, and introduce biases.
3. There is very little evidence as to how online targeted advertising for tactical and strategic policing is being integrated into policing, policy work and practice. There is an additional need to understand how best practice is developing and being spread around the country and internationally.
4. There is a need for additional research on the emerging role by the mature existing market of commercial companies, private marketing consultancies and other private sector bodies in delivering and shaping these interventions. There is also a need for research into how platforms themselves are adapting to these novel use cases, developing expertise and business units, and selling these services to government,
5. We know very little about the reception of government and police advertising online. We recommend a programme of research focused on particular targeted communities and how they experience law enforcement and government influence campaigns. Rather than focus on individual campaigns, this should take their experiences holistically, encompassing their wider and complex media and information environment. This would involve exploring the wider media and cultural environment within which these communities exist; combining ethnographic and interview research with digital collections and 'big data' approaches.
6. There is a clear need for better methods of evaluation which are tailored to government campaigns. This needs to acknowledge that government and law enforcement have a unique relationship with the public compared to other advertisers.

7. Finally, the legal environment (both in terms of data protection and the use of algorithmic technologies for targeting and delivery) in which these campaigns operate is not straightforward; and is liable to change.

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