

NaCTSO and Evidence-based Policing

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Evidence-based policing (EBP) means the best available evidence is used to inform and challenge policing policies, practices and decisions. As the terrorist threat evolves, this important approach ensures that the work NaCTSO undertakes is effective, collaborative and responsive to the problems we face.

At the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) we are passionate about ensuring that the best available evidence supports the work we do to keep the public safe from terrorism.

To support this, we are fully committed to embedding an evidence-based policing approach to ensure that our policies, practices and decisions are guided by evidence of what works best.

Such an approach supports us in our ambition to enhance knowledge, manage resources, and increase effectiveness and efficiency.

What is Evidence-based Policing?

Evidence-based policing (EBP) means that the best available evidence is used to inform and challenge policing policies, practices and decisions. An EBP approach can be used by everyone in policing. It can be supported by collaboration with academics and other partners.

Research to support EBP

The best available evidence will use appropriate research methods and sources for the question being asked. Research can be used to:

- develop a better understanding of an issue – by describing the nature, extent and possible

- causes of a problem or looking at how a change was implemented
- assess the effect of a policing intervention – by testing the impact of a new initiative in a specific context or exploring the possible consequences of a change in policing

Research should be carefully conducted, peer reviewed and transparent about its methods, limitations and how its conclusions were reached. The theoretical basis and context of the research should also be made clear.

Where there is little or no formal research, other evidence may be regarded as the best available, if it is gathered and documented in a careful and transparent way. This could include professional consensus and peer review.

Critical thinking

EBP does not provide definitive answers.

Officers, staff and volunteers should reflect on their practice, consider how the best available evidence applies to their day-to-day work and learn from their successes and failures. This approach encourages everyone to ask questions, challenge accepted practices and innovate in the public interest.

[College of Policing, 2022](#)

Due to the ever-changing nature of terrorism, an EBP approach can improve our ability to proactively manage emerging threats and identify cost-effective and proportionate approaches.

For this reason, EBP has underpinned much of the Protective Security and Preparedness Transformation (PSAPT) programme of work currently being undertaken by NaCTSO.



What is the Protective Security and Preparedness Transformation (PSAPT) programme?

The PSAPT programme encompasses learning from recent attacks, including those in 2017, and reflects a shift away from the current provision of CT protective security and preparedness efforts in 'Crowded Places' (individual sites) to improving the safety and security of the public at all 'Publicly Accessible Locations'. To achieve this, various levers and engagement channels will be explored and reviewed. The end result will be a PALs Policy directed by the government with a PALs delivery model undertaken by Counter Terrorism Policing and our partners.

As a new and ambitious programme, an EBP approach to PALs ensures we can demonstrate that new and future ways of working are effective, and can ultimately save lives.

To date, NaCTSO has commissioned over several research projects to support PALs (including robust evaluations of pilot projects) and has developed strategic partnerships across academia.

Examples of our recent EBP efforts include the research undertaken as part of the [Competent Persons Scheme \(CPS\)](#) and research commissioned to explore the target selection and decision making of terrorists within a UK context.

ProtectUK, Evidence-Based Policing and Academia

We understand that knowledge is best when shared.

To fully support the ambition to embed evidence-based practice, ProtectUK will be utilised as the key platform to share, champion and inspire investment in protect and prepare research and approaches.

Over the coming months, you will see the launch of a newly dedicated research area which will include articles on research commissioned by NaCTSO, insights on EBP and evidence-based guidance and products.

Interested in learning more?

Visit the College of Policing to learn more about EBP and evidence-based practices: <https://www.college.police.uk/research/evidence-based-policing-EBP>

Join the Society of Evidence-based Policing: <https://www.sebp.police.uk/>

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