# Cheshire Police launches AI to detect stalking and speed up victim support



Cheshire Police is pioneering a groundbreaking initiative that harnesses artificial intelligence to enhance the identification of stalking behaviours at an early stage. This advancement is supported by a significant investment of £300,000 from the Police STAR Fund, successfully bid by Dan Price, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). His commitment to integrating advanced technology into policing aims to modernise the force and improve the efficacy of crime prevention strategies.

In his vision for the future of policing, Price emphasises the critical need for technology to be embraced as a tool to combat crime effectively. According to him, “If this programme is proven to work here in Cheshire, we’re hoping it will be adopted nationally by other forces, to help victims all over the country, increasing public confidence in the police.” This sentiment reflects an acknowledgment of the evolving nature of crime and the necessity for law enforcement solutions that are equally dynamic.

On average, Cheshire Police records approximately ten stalking offences per day. Traditionally, such cases have been reviewed manually by the Constabulary’s Harm Reduction Unit (HRU), which focuses specifically on addressing stalking and harassment. The introduction of AI aims to streamline this process. The technology will analyse incoming incident reports in real-time, assisting call handlers in identifying patterns of behaviour indicative of stalking, even when the term “stalking” is not explicitly mentioned. This would flag incidents for immediate review by the HRU, fundamentally altering how quickly and effectively the police can respond to these serious cases.

Detective Chief Inspector Danielle Knox, who leads the Stalking unit at Cheshire Constabulary, stated, “Stalking is a hugely impacting crime on victims and their families; our approach to this serious and complex crime needs to be right from the outset where we can identify behaviours at the earliest opportunity.” This proactive stance aims not only to hold perpetrators accountable but also to enhance the support provided to victims, showing a paradigm shift in the police's approach to such sensitive issues.

The broader context of policing in Cheshire includes a response to the national conversation about stalking and the efficacy of police responses, especially following the establishment of a super-complaints system intended to improve accountability. The Independent Office for Police Conduct has actively engaged in assessing police responses to stalking, highlighting the HRU's role in providing not only tactical support but also therapeutic interventions through collaboration with various agencies. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that victims receive comprehensive assistance throughout their ordeal.

Moreover, the National Police Chiefs' Council has acknowledged the growing interest in using AI technologies to enhance how police forces worldwide respond to stalking. They recognise the potential of these innovations to revolutionise incident screening and the overall handling of such complex cases.

While the development of AI-based solutions presents exciting opportunities for modern policing, this shift has not been without criticism. Concerns have been raised regarding privacy and civil liberties, particularly with the growing adoption of surveillance technologies. For instance, advocacy groups like Big Brother Watch have called for increased scrutiny over the use of facial recognition and other intrusive technologies, urging a balance between technological advancement and the safeguarding of individual rights.

Cheshire's innovative approach, outlined in Price's Police and Crime Plan, which spans until 2028, reflects a commitment to not only modernisation but also to listening to public concerns and reducing crime. By integrating AI into its operations, Cheshire Police aims to set a precedent that could inspire other forces across the country to adopt similar technologies, fostering a safer environment for all.

As this AI programme unfolds, it represents a significant step towards effective, technology-driven policing, with the potential to transform how stalking cases are managed and ensuring that victims receive timely and appropriate support.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraph 6
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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