

Discovering connectedness: An evaluation of the impact of continuous professional development with the
Royal St Helena Police

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Abstract

Following scoping discussions with various police services of the UK Overseas Territories (UKOT) over the past two years, it has become apparent that the College of Policing professionalisation routes have not been extended to these islands, leaving significant gaps in officers' skills and knowledge. One area particularly identified was vulnerability, particularly in domestic abuse and trauma-informed practices. In May 2026, we delivered research-funded Continuous Professional Development (CPD) focused on these areas to the Royal St Helena Police (RSHP) and other frontline agencies. In the subsequent evaluation of its impact, we have unearthed a profound desire for connectedness: officers to have a deeper connection with their multi-agency partners but, more importantly, with their mainland UK peers.

Keywords: *Trauma-Informed Practice; Domestic Abuse; Policing Practice; Continuous Professional Development; Police Education.*

Introduction

Over the past decade, the shifting landscape of police education in England and Wales has transformed from in-house training to selective pathways of evidence-based programmes, in collaboration with the higher education sector. This has evolved into a broad range of professionalisation routes, some of which are accredited by HEIs, others not, though all conform to the same College of Policing curriculum ([Benford et al., 2024](#)). There has been some rhetoric around a two-tier system of recruitment, with some achieving graduate qualifications while others receive no formal qualification ([Derbyshire Police Federation, 2023](#)). This paper proposes a third tier, one that

belongs to UK Overseas Territory police forces. These forces, which operate in liminal spaces, are not afforded access to these higher education routes overseen by the College of Policing.

As an extension of the policing education provision at the University of the West of England (UWE), work has been undertaken with two of these police areas: the Sovereign Base Area Police in Cyprus ([Williams et al., 2026](#)) and the Royal Saint Helena Police (RSHP), the latter of which is the subject of this paper. In May 2026, we, the researchers and authors, delivered a four-day continuous professional development (CPD) package on domestic abuse and trauma-informed practice. Based on pedagogic best practice in higher education and originally designed for the police only, it quickly evolved into a multi-agency package, delivered to police, social services, children and adolescent services, paramedics, probation and other agencies involved with those who are victims of, or commit, domestic abuse and associated trauma.

Our position is that training professionals together makes multi-agency practice more effective. Interprofessional Education (IPE) cultivates better communication and coordination of teamwork across different professions ([Sumera, 2026](#)). [Loveday and Roberts \(2019\)](#) talk about multi-agency working as an essential component of criminal justice practice and how it can empower the practitioner and the client through access to expertise and treatments that provide specialist interventions. However, they make it clear that for continuity in partnership working, particularly around the risks associated with this type of crime and vulnerable groups, it is dependent on inter-agency relationships that are built on trust and consistent representation.

This paper outlines the CPD, its content and delivery methodology, and shares the analysis of the participants' feedback that goes beyond merely being positive about their learning experience. The feedback highlights their continuing need for vulnerability knowledge and skills development in both domestic abuse and trauma-informed practice and a strong desire to feel more connected to each other, other agency professionals and the UK mainland. It has had an immediate and powerful impact, as evidenced in a blog written by an RSHP officer ([St Helena Policing Blog](#)) that has strengthened our resolve to provide further development opportunities to

these and other UK Overseas Territory police areas – areas that have been seemingly overlooked in the College of Policing’s bid to enhance police education and tradecraft.

CPD development

The changing landscape of policing practices requires new approaches to education and training, and CPD is a short input method of fulfilling these critical needs (Kilminster et al., 2012). Following a successful delivery of CPD on domestic abuse in June 2025 to the SBAP, feedback indicated they wanted more input around the area of trauma-informed practice (Williams et al., 2026). This was developed and delivered in January 2026 and formed the basis of the CPD delivered in St Helena, which had also expressed the need for input on domestic abuse and trauma practices.

St Helena is a small island set in the South Atlantic, with a small population of approximately 4,500 comprising mainly British Citizens, known as Saints (St Helena Government, 2026). Its police service is shared with the Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha (RSHP, 2022). Although a self-governing Overseas Territory, the UK has an obligation to provide ‘reasonable assistance’ under Article 73 of the United Nations Charter (2016). This includes financial aid through the Financial Aid Programme but also assistance through the Ministry of Justice, supporting its security services and criminal justice provisions.

In an exploratory meeting, the RSHP indicated a need for a better understanding of vulnerability, particularly in relation to domestic abuse, and the associated trauma impact and, by extension, how to work better with victims who were traumatised using a trauma-informed approach. By developing the CPD delivered to the SBAP, the content was extended and tailored to St Helena’s legislation, policy and practices. We spoke at length and researched the cultural nuances around domestic abuse, keen to ensure our input was relevant and relatable. However, it became apparent very quickly that other agencies on the island, who work with both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse, wanted to join the training – they too felt there was a gap in their skills and knowledge, and all were keen to undertake it together. This resulted in two deliveries to a multi-agency audience.

IPE improves outcomes such as public safety and community support and brings a greater sense of unity, fostering joined-up working towards common goals. Incorporating simulation and experiential engagement with theoretical learning that

aligns with all disciplines is crucial to this approach ([Sumera, 2026](#)). It supports enhanced problem-solving and critical thinking through reflection and practical application. The disciplines learn, in a safe environment, the obstacles to working with, and challenges within, the varied organisations, helping them navigate difficulties in cross-organisational teamworking and fostering a deeper partnership. This CPD was designed with just such challenges in mind. It created opportunities for the shared learning of new knowledge and skills required to better understand and work with domestic abuse and trauma-informed methodologies in a reciprocal framework of knowledge exchange ([Bramford and Eason, 2021](#)). However, it also facilitated a knowledge exchange between us as educators and those professionals, as island experts.

In England and Wales, the effectiveness of structured risk assessments used by the police and many other agencies when responding to domestic abuse has been the subject of much discussion. Concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of the standard Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour-based Violence risk identification model (known as DASH), used by most forces in England and Wales ([Robinson et al., 2016](#)). Coercive control has been identified as a high-risk indicator for domestic homicide (Monckton-Smith, 2019) and researchers found that police officers using DASH were often failing to correctly identify the level of coercive control ([Robinson et al., 2016](#)). In response, the College of Policing worked with academics to develop a new risk assessment, the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA), which was piloted in a small number of police forces ([Wire and Myhill, 2018](#)). While DARA has shown positive improvements in identification of coercive control, this did not always translate to accurate assessment of risk, and researchers concluded that professional curiosity and interpersonal skills were more influential in producing accurate risk assessment, a phenomenon they termed “the officer effect” ([Myhill, Hohl and Johnson, 2023](#)).

In England and Wales, there is currently a mix of DASH and DARA in use by police ([NPCC, 2025](#)), and the rollout of the *Domestic Abuse Matters* change programme for frontline police practitioners ([Safe Lives, 2025](#)) promotes a greater understanding of coercive control and the importance of engaging meaningfully with victims. In the police forces of the UK overseas territories, however, the situation is somewhat different. In St Helena, DASH is the only form of risk assessment used.

Officers have received little education on coercive control and its relationship with risk. Indeed, at the current time St Helena has no equivalent offence of Coercive and Controlling Behaviour as defined in England and Wales by the *Serious Crime Act 2015* (amended by the *Domestic Abuse Act 2021*). The offence has been drafted as part of the *Domestic Abuse Ordinance 2025* but is yet to be enacted into law.

For these reasons, the focus was on the use of professional curiosity to recognise coercive control and manage risk as a major part of our CPD in St Helena. The inclusion of interpersonal skills was the second vitally important element and is encapsulated in trauma-informed practice. Recognition of the impact and prevalence of trauma in policing practices has increased in recent years ([College of Policing, 2018](#); [Quigg et al., 2024](#)), with significant steps made to understand and work more effectively with those individuals and groups who have suffered a traumatic incident. Domestic abuse falls into this category and forms a significant portion of everyday frontline police work, with an estimated callout every 30 seconds to the police ([Refuge, 2017](#)) - each incident complex, risk-laden and demanding on time and compassion. Thus, understanding trauma as a whole-body impact ([van der Kolk, 2014](#)) and how using trauma-informed practice approaches can support policing effectiveness can help longer-term protection of vulnerable victims and reduce officer compassion fatigue ([Eason, 2025b](#); [Quigg et al., 2024](#)). [Quigg et al. \(2024\)](#) found that officers who had engaged in trauma-informed practice training made more empathic and informed decisions, and [Bennett et al. \(2025\)](#) found that victims were more likely to follow through with prosecution. [Quigg et al. \(2024\)](#) work particularly focused on Adverse Childhood Experiences ([Felitti et al., 1998](#)) and their impact on adult behaviour. This was explored in some detail within the CPD in relation to victim vulnerability as well as the perpetration of abuse. In addition, the research explored the influence of practitioner trauma on wellbeing and performance and how, if left unacknowledged or untreated, it can lead to compassion fatigue and burnout.

Methodology

Real-world research, as described by [Robson \(2024\)](#), is applied in small-scale studies where the researcher aims to offer support or solutions to a problem. Universities are frequently involved in these types of studies, particularly in areas such as education and front-facing organisations like social work and local government and

are often carried out by other professionals. This research falls into this category, evaluating a knowledge exchange activity whose objective is to influence practitioners, through CPD, in evidence-based best practice by former practitioners. As social science researchers undertaking an evaluative study in a professional setting, the preferred approach to the gathering of feedback was qualitative, and utilised the model of thematic analysis to identify, organise and interpret any meaningful patterns ([Braun and Clarke, 2021](#)).

As former practitioners, the researchers identify as pracademics ([Posner, 2009](#); [Christopher, 2025](#); [Eason, 2025a](#)) and thus take a liminal (straddling professions) approach to knowledge exchange and the subsequent analysis of feedback across the professions. Adopting this lens arguably influences interactions with participants (a deep-rooted empathy of role challenges in policing domestic abuse and regulating own trauma) and the focus group discussions, but also how the data is analysed; the desire for the CPD to have a positive impact. However, these are mitigated by the critical eye of the ex-practitioner, a.k.a. pracademic of their former profession, a common thread for those transitioning from practice into the academy ([Christopher, 2025](#)). Furthermore, in this research, only one of the researchers is former police officer, the other, former probation, and thus in undertaking the steps of thematic analysis ([Braun and Clarke, 2021](#)) a comprehensive and diverse discussion critically debated interpretation to agree the final categorisation of themes. This reflexive approach sought to dismiss researcher bias.

Ethical approval was sought via the University of the West of England (UWE) [Research Ethics and Governance](#) and approved on 17th March 2026. In addition to the identified risk of researcher bias outlined above, challenges of participant confidentiality were perceived as another high risk. This was due to the small community being researched and the much smaller subculture within it, of police and other public-facing staff. Therefore, the demographic data gathered was limited to gender, length of service and police or non-police role to retain anonymity and any quotes used in the analysis were redacted of information that can directly link to a participant's role.

The participants (those who had attended the CPD) were asked to complete an online questionnaire via Mentimeter ([Mohamed et al., 2022](#)), which provided useful

direction for the focus groups. Each week's CPD group were then split into two smaller groups; the discussions were recorded and transcribed on Microsoft Teams. This method of recording, although appearing the most effective, posed problems in transcription and translation as it did not separate the participants as a transcription service would do, and would often misinterpret what was said due to accent and sound quality. Nevertheless, having to re-read and listen to the recordings simultaneously, to dissect the transcription further, resulted in a thorough looping of the six phases suggested in thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

Findings

Four key themes were established in the analysis of the focus groups, field notes and questionnaire feedback. These are indicative of the application of new knowledge but also some of the cultural nuances that pose significant challenges when working with the victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse and trauma; challenges that are spatial, relational and professionally problematic.

Theme One. Joined-Up Training

The feedback for this theme reinforced our stance on the benefits of multi-agency CPD and the value of IPE. It was clear, anecdotally in classroom interaction, how the different professionals were gaining a better understanding of the mechanics of policing, their limitations and legislative boundaries, and some of the personal challenges officers faced. This is reiterated in the focus group discussions by both police and non-police participants:

I always welcome CPD like this because there are always things that you might have forgotten or this new research comes out. So yes, it has been helpful, yeah, and I think it's always useful to learn other people's experiences, hear about other people's stories and what they, what's worked for them, what hasn't worked for them. Different agencies have got different viewpoints, so I'm learning from you guys, but I'm learning from everyone that's here as well (Police, FG1).

Even though we liaise with each other, we have totally different approaches, which is clear during this training. And I hope they think they'll keep working together, and they had a great idea that we should do this more often, like at least get us together. And, you know, it can then help us understand what you do, what you don't do; you know, it would be good for that, and then also then I get it, you guys do actually work differently (Non-Police, FG1).

The different agency participants found the learning material relatable and relevant to their experiences. This was especially evident in the practical element in case studies and problem-solving exercises, where each is exposed to the specific tasks that must be undertaken by all agencies, such as risk assessment, but in different guises. For example:

We work quite closely with other multi-agencies anyway. That's the same. But, for me, it was nice to see the DASH form and understand it more. We do see it on referral forms sometimes, but we got our own referral form (Non-Police, FG1).

Or building those important relationships across agencies that support partnership working practices that are effective for the victim:

I actually went back to work yesterday, and my manager was like, "How was training? Did you enjoy it?" and I said, "Yeah, it was really good. And just being able to hear, like, we know what the police do, but just being there to hear, like, when they first respond, like, you know, I didn't really know, I think (Non Police, FG4).

We kind of know the right channels to go down, so maybe we can identify who, what other agencies we need to support us or support to look after them or the suspect if it's needed... who we need right now ... how to support the family off of it. It's just getting that confirmation to say, this is the path we need to go down; these are the development agencies that we need to be able to support everyone (Police, FG4).

CPD across the different agencies appeared to have had great benefits to all involved, including us; in that reciprocal learning framework (Bramford and Eason, 2021), they taught us about island life, local cultures and behavioural tolerances, and

the challenges faced in such a small, remote community when working with those affected by domestic abuse and trauma - that prior to our experience, we had never considered.

Theme Two. Breaking down barriers

This theme presented itself as a shared learning experience about trauma impact and how the training had helped them better understand how trauma impacted behavioural responses. They were especially interested in ACEs and how this can manifest in adulthood. For the police, this gave some insight into the presentation of victims at incidents and how trauma might affect their interactions verbally and physically. For example, where previously they may have considered a victim to be “hostile” due to their confrontational presentation, now they recognised that this could be a ‘fight’ response to their trauma experience: *‘I think understanding the presentation [of the victim] will help you to be more aware of how you can actually get further information from them’* (Police, FG2). This part of the CPD really seemed to have a profound impression on them, linking it in the classroom to incidents they had attended or particular victims they had worked with and how they may have had different outcomes if they had approached the situation in a more informed way. They gradually began to unpick their previous assumptions and relate them to other concepts, such as classical conditioning:

I think just the understanding of the fact that they're in this cycle, they don't know how to get out of it. They've been almost conditioned like Pavlov's Dog to just react in that way (Police, FG2).

I think for me, I understood different coping mechanisms better. Like when you're dealing with domestic violence, the victim is, they don't want to share with you. Sometimes they're simply angry; they might be fighting back. Now I understand it's all they're dealing with, what they're going through (Police, FG1)

This implied that they had realised victim behaviour could be a direct result of trauma and that how they interact needed to be adapted.

I think it is about just changing your response and giving them time, because depending on where they are, they've either got to sort of come down

or come up a bit, haven't they? Do you know what I mean? You've got to make a safe enough space to allow them to get to a point where they can share with you (Non-Police, FG1)

I would say it will definitely help me in the way I approach a person, and if I need to support them, because, like previously when it happened with them, we never had this knowledge. And for me, for one, I used to be- I wouldn't say it, but I was thinking to myself, he hit you, and you take three days to do something about it. And then you see how sad she is, you see she got trauma, and think, why are you not acting on it right away? But now, from here, I understand I have to see that she could be going through all the trauma of this stuff. And know how to approach them now (Non-Police, FG4).

And that safe space was not just a spatial but a psychological entity that could be created quickly and effectively using tone, terminology, body language, building rapport and using empathy, in very difficult (and different, e.g. over the phone, in the home) circumstances:

Actually, I've been to incidents where the victim said, "You know, that person on the other end of the phone has made me feel much safer while I waited for you to arrive. Relaxed me, managed to talk me down a bit because I was so upset at the time, and now I've managed to compose myself" (Police, FG1)

Through the focus groups, they were able to articulate how they could implement their new knowledge, create psychologically safe environments and use a more compassionate approach in their practice: asking not "what is wrong with you?" but rather "what has happened to you?". They were able to talk about how this helps the victim feel listened to, valued, that their experience matters and opens the door to empathic and valuable rapport building ([Goleman, 2020](#)). In policing, when dealing with domestic incidents, emotionally intelligent approaches are pivotal in trauma-informed work that can capture better information, especially for risk assessment ([Eason, 2019](#)).

What was also interesting was the shift in acknowledgement that perpetrators of domestic abuse could also be traumatised, and that their behavioural cycle could be

symptomatic of that experience. For example, this officer began to consider how a perpetrator's own trauma experience may be the precursor to their harmful behaviour:

It's like we probably haven't paid enough empathy to the perpetrator himself, and actually obviously you know that people usually do things for a reason. Usually a driver behind it, but actually thinking about the perpetrator in a way that, hey, this could be a trauma response (Police, FG4).

This revelation was indicative of the trauma learning having embedded into thinking far wider than the natural assumption of just the domestic abuse victim as traumatised. It was also related to the case study that threaded throughout the trauma response learning emanating from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) through to adult trauma-related incidents.

Theme Three. Transforming professional curiosity

The feedback for this theme emphasised the importance of using tools or strategies to apply, enhance and transform professional curiosity into a broader, more empathetic, and thus more effective risk assessment skill. This was clearly articulated by one of the participants:

I think policing is quite process focused, isn't it? And it's [the CPD] just a reminder that actually you can lose sight of the bigger picture if you're too focused on getting the processes done [Police, FG3].

Participants valued exercises where professional curiosity was applied to recognising contextual examples and patterns of coercive control, as explored through the Power and Control Wheel ([Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 2025](#)) and exploring digital crime scenes:

Sometimes we can be tunnel-visioned. Especially as police... we have to get the evidence prior to taking them out of the house. So, if you look around, you saw the broken glass, you know, you saw the stuff inside the dustpan and the holes in the wall, although you can't time date it, but you know they are there, actually showing you that something is happening, a pattern (Police FG1).

Having an enhanced understanding of trauma stood out as a factor in helping participants maintain and transform professional curiosity:

The whole idea of trauma-informed practice is interesting just for what it opens up really. It just makes you look at the picture in a much wider way. I think that's what it is. It's that professional curiosity, isn't it? Just making you sort of dig a bit deeper and instead of just looking at things at face value (non-police, FG1).

Another police participant related professional curiosity to the DASH risk assessment form, particularly following an exercise designed to illustrate how the same case can result in significantly different risk assessment outcomes without using professional curiosity and judgement to achieve a more accurate understanding of the victim's lived reality:

We know about the DASH, but it, like it [the DASH exercise] make you realise, even though you do it, it is something you must do properly (Police, FG1).

The multi-agency approach through which this was delivered also appears to have helped participants relate the learning to their own roles and see professional curiosity as something that generated insights that could be shared with other agencies. As one non-police participant dealing with initial disclosures stated:

Now that I've received this training, how I ask questions and how I think with the information that I've received will be very different because that information needs to be passed on to the officers (Non-Police, FG4).

Intersectionality for both victims and offenders, and challenging stereotypes associated with different characteristics, featured strongly in this theme of contextualising, and so transforming, professional curiosity.

I think what I learned, what was taken away, which I didn't know before now, was the intersectionality part of it and the polyvictimisation and just those layers and peeling back each and everybody's environments, taking into consideration different factors (Police FG1).

“It’s like here’s a white, you know, successful man in an ideal world, and you could say, he’s not criminal, you know, because he’s, you know, the ideal supposed-to-be man, you know. But in actual fact, he’s, you know, he’s probably an abuser” (Non-Police, FG4).

Theme Four. Island Challenges

The unique socio-geographic circumstances of St Helena emerged as an influence affecting every aspect of domestic abuse on the island, whether experienced personally or professionally. As in the UK, the ‘everyone knows everyone’ aspect of small communities posed significant barriers for acknowledging and reporting abuse (Barlow et al, 2022), and on St Helena this also led to longer terms consequence for being able to successfully prosecute abuse.

On St Helena, the call might not come through, but we as locals, we often hear people, things, that don’t get reported as such (Non-Police, FG1).

There’s a reason that they [informants, victims or witnesses] don’t want their evidence to be discussed within a small community, and again, it is sort of they don’t want to, like, rock the boat kind of thing. So that’s an insight into how it is that we deal with investigations where we want to keep them in harmony. That sort of affects the integrity of that evidence when it goes out of court (police, FG4).

Participants also identified the additional hurdles if a victim or perpetrator had any degree of community standing. Nonetheless, a positive element was that the small island community also acted as an informal mechanism of support:

Small islands – they can place traps on people with significant status on it. So, and so it also has some of the benefits of being on a small island because sometimes they, us, we know each other. So, as for you and me [indicates colleague], I see she’s in a mood, or how she acted, you know, she’s withdrawn or whatever... (Non-Police, FG4).

The challenges facing professionals working in this context were much discussed. A lack of infrastructure designed to support victims and offenders, such as refuge space, prison space, and access to therapeutic programmes in particular, was a common finding:

From our [police] perspective, from the countless times we invested people for breach of bail in court orders, you would typically expect they'd be remanded into custody as a result of that. However, it doesn't happen (Police, FG2).

There isn't anyone naturally here that is sort of working therapeutically with victims and, you know, the IDVAS be there to support, but they're not offering a therapeutic service. And we haven't really got that here (Police, FG1).

Whether the counselling side, or like a speech and language therapist and an educational psychologist - we don't have them (Non-Police, FG1).

There's been so much trauma on the island, so much, and so many people actually, I think, could desperately, you know, do with some help, and it's limited what we've got, isn't it? Really limited. And people should have choice about where they go, and there isn't much choice now (Non-Police, FG1).

There was an acceptance of, and a creative response to, the lack of island-based support – *"Sometimes, like here, you have to make the best of what you've got"* (Police, FG1). It had also resulted in professionals embracing online solutions to offer support that might be otherwise completely absent, with participants describing some online services as "really helpful" (Non-Police, FG1), but there was also evident concern that the one-step-removed nature inherent in online services might have negative consequences for service users:

The main work is done online, with overseas providers, so really challenging, really, really challenging (Non-Police, FG1).

We did have a speech and language therapist and [redacted] had therapy on the island, which was great. And then we reverted to online. It just feels disconnected (Non-Police, FG1).

A further issue in this theme of island challenges was that overseas services were not necessarily suited to the unique circumstances of those on the island, although there was a strong curiosity about how criminal justice worked in the UK and how this contrasted to St Helena:

So many times [service or training providers] like they're based in the UK and they think it has to be like the same thing (Police, FG4).

So much from the UK is taken on here, I'd like to see just for some of us other than the police, like how the UK do this or how the justice system works (Non-police, FG1).

I would like to have one or two more videos showing how the overseas services work (Police, FG1).

Discussion

As outlined in the methodology, great care was taken to familiarise and embed the content and delivery of the CPD (as much as possible before delivery) in the island's legislation, policy and practices, and the cultural nuances that influence domestic abuse and the way in which trauma experience was understood and approached. Learning materials were aligned to the local context but also carefully crafted for additional new learning to be considered. This was clearly appreciated by the participants and may have contributed to the high level of engagement we experienced.

Upon arrival, relationships were formed with the participants, resulting in more intimate knowledge of the island, its population makeup and perceived disconnection from the mainland. This latter issue is stressed in the *Island Challenges* theme; their strong desire to be more connected and resourced, given the same opportunities as their counterparts in the UK but tailored to the uniqueness of the island, something generally missing at present (e.g. police, FG4).

One of the strengths of the CPD was the inclusivity of other agencies as emphasised in the work of [Loveday and Roberts \(2019\)](#). In Theme One, *Joined-Up Training*, participants across the agencies highlighted the benefits of understanding

the roles and practices of the other and the impact they have on each other. For example, one officer from focus group 1 expressed how they valued others' experiences and how others' learning could help develop their own. This is suggestive of reflective practice but within a multi-disciplinary setting, valuing the experience and viewpoints of other professions towards their own professional development as highlighted by Police FG1. This reciprocity in the learning cycle is very much as outlined in the work of [Bramford and Eason \(2021\)](#) and is evidence of the wider benefits of IPE. The CPD not only facilitated new learning from those delivering it but also across disciplines, as they discussed, applied and critically evaluated how it could be embedded in practice in their real-world environment.

It was also reiterated in the theme of *Transforming Professional Curiosity*, where a non-police participant from focus group 4 felt they now had a more detailed understanding of how the information they provide to the police is used. This can only lead to enhanced partnership working and increased positive outcomes for both victim and offender. Some of the challenges faced by these frontline services in the protection of victims and management of offenders are quite different to those on the mainland. The placement and management of contact between the offender and victim, safe housing or non-contact orders are almost impossible to implement. So, understanding trauma, trauma responses, approaches that are trauma-informed, and the way in which they can elicit much-needed information and interaction compassionately were a key part of the learning. This was especially important given that support services on the island are limited, as described by a non-participant in focus group 1.

As in the work of [Quigg et al. \(2024\)](#), our findings show evidence of a change in thinking to a more empathic and informed way of problem-solving, through approaching the victims and offenders in a way that acknowledges and empathises with their experience. This is especially evident in the DASH exercise we conducted with participants and the case study involving a domestic abuse perpetrator. In the *Transforming Professional Curiosity* theme reference was made to widening the view (non-police, FG1) from the tunnel vision (police, FG1) that often occurs by officers when attending domestic incidents that can lead to missed patterns of abusive behaviour, such as coercive control, particularly when completing risk assessments.

The participants clearly valued the trauma-informed learning, how it related to domestic abuse, their interactions with victims and how they can be more effective holistically working in the broader team. The fact that this has then been applied shortly after delivery, as seen in the blog, is demonstrative of how relevant the CPD has felt to the participants. We interpret this as a real breakthrough. With the new knowledge they had received they realised they could not just assume victim behaviour at face value (being obstructive or aggressive for example) but that it was a mechanism, a coping strategy, a response that might be involuntary or learned, and the acknowledgement of their trauma without judgement of their presentation would support more productive interactions.

Conclusion

The move to professionalisation by the College of Policing, although advantageous and fully supported by the researchers for all officers, is not available to the islanders of St Helena. This situation has inevitably resulted in a chasm of the skills and knowledge of the RSHP, in which domestic abuse, trauma and wider vulnerability were identified. This CPD and subsequent evaluation were funded through the Higher Education Innovation Fund as a knowledge exchange activity. The CPD delivered to the SBAP was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In both cases, the CPD was driven by the researchers with support from each participating force, rather than through any government-funded body.

Despite the lack of UK investment in policing education in the overseas territories, the findings clearly demonstrate an appetite for more in-depth learning and skills development beyond what is currently available. Using tailored knowledge exchange that focuses on common issues on the island, such as domestic abuse and trauma more generally (including childhood trauma), prompted intense and exploratory engagement, thus deeper learning. The value in creating learning materials aligned to the island context was an essential step to ensuring the CPD felt accessible, relevant and realistic to apply to practice. Moreover, the joined-up nature of having all the agencies in the room together provided practitioners within each agency with insight into each other's roles that they were themselves able to translate into small adjustments to their own practice. This shared understanding is leading to

adjustments that could facilitate multi-agency working in a much more knowledgeable and holistic way, a way that promotes professional curiosity and connectedness.

As educators and researchers, connectedness has been a strong element of this CPD experience. We now feel a deep affinity to St Helena, the RSHP and its inhabitants, the Saints, and hope to soon return. But the connectedness extends beyond this island and the islanders. What we have found is that there is a profound desire to have a deeper and more meaningful connection within and between agency colleagues both at home and on the mainland UK. Acting as a conduit to connect the professionalisation of policing in England and Wales to criminal justice-focused CPD in St Helena is one way in which this has been achieved

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