# UK backs £4m AI crime-mapping challenge to predict and prevent offences



A government-backed competition will attempt to stitch together fragmented policing data across England and Wales to create an AI-driven, real-time crime map able to detect, track and ultimately predict concentrations of offending.

The Concentrations of Crime Data Challenge, delivered by UK Research and Innovation and funded through the £500 million R&D Missions Accelerator, begins with £4 million to produce prototypes by April 2026. If successful, the system could be operational nationwide by 2030.

Officials say the map would draw on datasets held by police forces, local authorities and social services to highlight where offences such as anti-social behaviour, theft, knife crime and violent assaults are clustering or at risk of spreading. The aim is to help officers direct resources more effectively and to enable preventative interventions.

Science and Technology Secretary Peter Kyle described the initiative as an example of “cutting-edge technology like AI” improving lives by enhancing safety, while Policing Minister Dame Diana Johnson called it “a powerful tool” complementing wider measures. The project builds on existing Home Office work, including hotspot mapping for knife crime and the Safer Streets programme.

The challenge seeks to overcome long-standing obstacles to data-sharing and interoperability between the 43 police forces. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley has argued that the force structure is “not fit for purpose,” while industry figures warn that inconsistent data labelling and incompatible systems still hinder cross-force working.

Civil society organisations have welcomed the initiative but urged safeguards. St Giles chief executive Tracey Burley said technology must not unfairly profile communities and should be paired with proven early-intervention work. Neighbourhood Watch chief executive John Hayward-Cripps said the map could help people feel safer if used to guide local policing, while Rebecca Bryant of Resolve called the challenge “a landmark moment for innovation in community safety.”

Alongside the competition, nine new Policing Academic Centres of Excellence are due to open from October 2025 to boost analytical capacity, and techUK has refreshed its partnership with the Police Digital Service to support procurement and interoperability.

Challenges remain around legal frameworks, data-sharing agreements and evaluation of real-world impact. Policymakers must also decide whether technology can deliver interoperability within the current policing structure or whether deeper reform is needed.

If the prototypes demonstrate value and safeguards are in place, the programme could give police and councils a far clearer, timely picture of where to intervene — preventing victimisation and reinforcing public confidence. Ministers argue that with rigorous governance, independent evaluation and community engagement, the UK can position itself as a leader in responsible AI for public safety.

Created by [Amplify](https://www.hbmadvisory.com/amplify): AI-augmented, human-curated content.

## Bibliography

1. <https://policeprofessional.com/news/new-ai-backed-crime-map-initiative-aims-to-unify-fragmented-policing-data/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2025-document/spending-review-2025-html> - The Spending Review 2025 sets out the government’s multi‑year plan for research and innovation, increasing R&D investment to £22.6 billion a year by 2029–30. It confirms a new R&D Missions Accelerator Programme with £500 million dedicated to accelerate mission‑driven innovation, alongside funding commitments for AI, ARIA expansion and a major supercomputer in Edinburgh. The document outlines capital and departmental allocations, priorities for regional diffusion of R&D benefits, and measures to leverage private investment. It frames the Missions Accelerator as a vehicle to crowd in external funding and deliver targeted solutions to national challenges through co‑ordinated public and private research action.
3. <https://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/articles/ai-powered-crime-mapping-predict-and-prevent-crime-2030> - Public Sector Executive reports the launch of the Concentrations of Crime Data Challenge, an initiative to develop an AI‑driven, real‑time crime map covering England and Wales by 2030. Funded under the new R&D Missions Accelerator framework, the challenge receives an initial £4 million to create prototype systems by April 2026. The technology aims to combine police, council and social‑services datasets to identify crime concentrations, predict likely offence locations and support preventative interventions for issues such as knife crime and anti‑social behaviour. The story quotes Science and Technology Secretary Peter Kyle on using AI to protect victims and support proactive policing.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/live-facial-recognition-technology-to-catch-high-harm-offenders> - The Home Office news release announces a national expansion of live facial recognition (LFR) technology as part of policing measures to catch high‑harm offenders. It states that 10 additional LFR vans will be deployed to seven police forces and that named, contactable neighbourhood officers will be introduced under the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. The release emphasises safeguards: vans will be used only with specific intelligence, data will be handled under strict rules, and deployments are described as targeted tools to identify suspects in serious offences. The announcement frames LFR as one element in a broader package to improve neighbourhood safety overall.
5. <https://news.sky.com/story/met-police-chief-calls-for-mega-forces-in-push-for-major-policing-shake-up-13393111> - Sky News reports Sir Mark Rowley, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, urging a radical overhaul of policing in England and Wales, arguing the existing 43‑force model 'hasn't been fit for purpose for at least two decades'. Rowley proposes consolidating forces into 12–15 regional 'mega‑forces' better able to use modern technology, reduce duplicated governance and address serious, cross‑border threats. He warned that voluntary collaboration has not delivered consistent national capabilities and criticised funding and resourcing pressures. The piece includes Rowley’s concerns about stretched operational capacity, the need for national coordination and the technological barriers that hamper effective crime prevention and reform.
6. <https://www.ukri.org/news/nine-policing-academic-centres-of-excellence-to-launch/> - UK Research and Innovation announced nine Policing Academic Centres of Excellence (P‑ACEs) launching to strengthen links between academia and policing. The programme, backed by £4.5 million from the National Police Chiefs’ Council, will fund centres across the UK to bring scientific expertise to operational policing, improve adoption of evidence and new technologies, and support training and research. UKRI said the P‑ACEs will mobilise academic insight to address policing priorities, encourage collaboration with forces, boosting capability in data science, evaluation and innovation. The centres are expected to open in October 2025 and form part of broader efforts to modernise policing through research.
7. <https://www.techuk.org/resource/pds-techuk-partnership-refresh.html> - techUK published details of a refreshed strategic partnership with the Police Digital Service designed to deepen collaboration between the technology industry and policing. The June 2024 item describes joint work on the National Policing Digital Strategy, market briefings, innovation cohorts and efforts to make procurement and digital services more transparent. techUK highlights its role in facilitating dialogue, supporting police adoption of digital systems and fostering supplier relationships. Matthew Evans, techUK’s Markets Director, is quoted on the value of partnership, emphasising the importance of industry expertise to help policing harness modern technology and deliver improved public outcomes.