

## What Should Be the Balance Between ‘Craft Experience’ and ‘Scientific Evidence’

One issue we encountered in the survey was the *balance* between craft/experience and scientific evidence. Our respondents clearly felt that accumulated policing experience should play a greater role in decision-making and was used daily to inform decisions. We consciously connect this to James Willis’ discussion of the tensions between craft and evidence-based policing. Personal experience is of course essential, but in terms of decision-making can be impaired by the numerous types of cognitive bias (Stanovich and West 1998). In broad terms, cognitive biases are ways of thinking that can lead to inaccurate judgements, recalling past events incorrectly or illogical interpretation (e.g. searching for information that confirms one’s preconception or assessing ambiguous information as positive to one’s interests).

We also suggest that reflecting upon this balance is only half the story. Indeed, we wonder whether it is ever feasible for the police to routinely ‘*use*’ scientific evidence throughout their entire decision making process. This raises the risk of testing ones own professional judgement. The authors argue that it is more valuable to explore ‘*where*’ scientific evidence really *ought* to be used, especially in these relatively early stages of evidence-based policing. That is, we suggest an incremental approach to change, instead of speedy whole-scale change running the risk of implementation failure. If this is the case, the real question becomes which topics within policing *need* to use scientific evidence. The authors suggest that an effective starting point to such a discussion would be a risk-based approach. By this, we refer to areas whereby there exists clear risk if police actions fall below an expected standard. For example—issues around how best to understand the intersection of mental health and the police (e.g. restraint and/or police custody) or the investigation of crime involving vulnerable victims are both clear candidates where scientific evidence should be core to the craft.