COMPLIANCE WITH THE DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998

Research Grants
Peer Review

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Applicant Details

Applicant	Dr Timothy L Mullett	Organisation	University of Warwick

Title of Research Project

The behavioural economics of domestic abuse

Review Information

Response Due Date	25/10/2019	Reviewer Reference:	158241287

Research Council Contact Details

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Application Assessment

Please select a grade to indicate your assessment according to the following criteria. Detailed comments in support of these grades should be provided in the free text overall assessment section. Refer to Help for further guidance.

Originality; potential contribution to knowledge

Outstanding	Excellent	✔ Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor	Unable to Assess

Research design and methods

Outstanding	✔ Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor	Unable to Assess

Value for money

Outstanding	✔ Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor	Unable to Assess

Outputs, dissemination and impact

Outstanding	Excellent	✔ Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some	Poor	Unable to

				Weaknesses		Assess

Overall Assessment

Feedback for Applicant

Please provide detailed comments in support of the grades you have given and on any other aspects of the proposal that you consider relevant. These comments will be passed on, unattributed, to the applicant(s) and also with notification of the outcome of the application, to other external reviewers if applicable. For further guidance please select Help.

Originality, innovation and potential contribution to knowledge:

This is an interesting proposal that will use three sets of existing data (Crime Survey England and Wales, CSEW), police data from one force area, and customer data from Lloyds bank to examine features of domestic abuse. There is no doubt that much greater use can be made of CSEW data, as a national representative data source, to analyse victim predictors and contextual features related to domestic abuse. Police data provides longitudinal and detailed data on those reporting to police, victims as well as perpetrators in one general location, and banking data can add a further layer of consumer information for the same location. The proposal will lead to new knowledge, especially in analysis of the CSEW, and links to banking data. However this knowledge will also need to be situated in the wider understandings of domestic abuse in order to make sense of such a 'complex' topic. As the proposal rightly points out, domestic abuse is a complex topic. There are various definitions, contested measures and lack of actual offences, researched and documented over many years. But the proposal does not engage with these issues, instead lamenting that "there is relatively little academic research focusing on domestic abuse in the context of the UK". This lack of a fuller review of the literature makes it difficult at times to see how the research areas have been identified, what the key questions are and why (although the 'impact section' makes it clearer that the research questions arose from the concerns of the police). Some of the key research using CSEW are not referred to (e.g. Walby and Towers work on measuring domestic abuse, and Myhill's work on coercive control). The proposal includes 'reporting' as an area for investigation, but again without referring to the quite large literature on this aspect, and it is not clear how the proposal moves beyond the existing knowledge on this particular topic. For instance, others have found that reporting domestic abuse to the police may actually increase if victims are provided with support, and the proposal lacks discussion of such possible 'perverse' findings or how the variables that will be used may incorporate such effects. Reports have also previously been found to coincide with events such as Christmas and summer holidays, when victim and perpetrator may be spending more time together, but the proposal suggest that identifying such links would be new. A limitation may be that none of the researchers named on the proposal appear to have wider knowledge or background in researching domestic abuse. The Post-doc appears to have carried out some work on correlations in police data between domestic abuse, football and alcohol, but there are no references to the work of others in this area (indeed again the proposal suggest that there is no such other work). The proposal would thus have been strengthened by a more thorough literature review, and also the addition of an Advisory group involving academics and practitioners from the domestic abuse field who could add expertise and help to shape questions and explain findings.

Research design and methods

The use of logistic regressions and random forest approach will allow some interesting new analyses, and the range of variables to be used will also augment previous research and provide useful new knowledge. The four research areas are laid out quite clearly and the analyses explained. While it is not always clear how the different data sets will be linked, although the use of location creates valid links between the police and banking data. There could be more explanation of how the data will be accessed and 'mined' for the different variables. In particular I am not convinced that the police data will have all the variables listed readily identified. In other studies coding of narrative police data has been necessary to identify the features of domestic abuse and other factors (and this is very time consuming). Also, does the Midland police data really have ethnicity clearly identified as a consistent variable? Others have highlighted that police data tends to lack consistency in recording of demographic features, and especially regarding features such as employment and ethnicity. There is discussion of ethical considerations and compliance with ethical guildelines. But surely there would need to be

written contracts with the police and Lloyds? and how long would that take to put in place? Other researchers have found that it takes anything between 3-9 months to negotiate contracts with the police (even with prior agreement for access), but this aspect is not outlined in detail in the proposal and the timeframe suggests that any arrangements would be in place within the first 2 months, which may be unrealistic.

Potential for capacity-building

The bulk of the research would be carried out by an early career researcher, who has just finished her Phd (the CV suggests that she may not have finished her Phd as yet), and the proposal appears to be building on the Phd work for instance with regard to use of police data. She would be supervised by the PI, who would also carry out data cleaning and other research tasks.   Thus there is specific evidence of substantive involvement by an early career researcher. It is not clear whether this would lead to a longer term post at the University.

Project management and research partnerships

There are two senior academics involved, as PI and CI, who would to different extents liaise with partners, ensure data is ready for analysis, and work on impact. Most of the research would otherwise be carried out by the RA. There are research partnerships with two of the main data providers - Midland police and Lloyds bank - with letters of support. There is mention of ongoing meetings with the police, but not other data providers. As highlighted above, it would probably be useful to have a wider Advisory group of academics and practitioners for the project.

Outputs, dissemination and potential for impact on theory, policy and practice

There are a reasonable set of academic outputs, mainly aimed at behavioural science journals. Impact is mainly discussed in relation to work with the police and the findings will be used to help refine work by the police on domestic abuse, for instance on risk assessment and encouraging of reporting. It is clear that impact considerations have shaped the research areas, and that these have previously been identified as areas of concern by the police. There is obviously a longterm and strong link with the police which makes the take up of the findings a realistic possibility.   There is also mention of giving papers at a number of European and international conferences - but there are no specific conferences mentioned so it is difficult to judge whether these are (appropriate) academic or practitioner (or mixed) conferences.

Value for money

There may have been an under-estimate of the number of hours required for work, especially if compilation of the police data will require coding and anonymising. There may need to be additional RA time allocated. Otherwise the costs appear essential and sufficient.

Overall Grade

Please indicate your overall assessment of the proposal

Outstanding	Excellent	✔ Good	Satisfactory	Fair / Some Weaknesses	Poor