



Dr Colin Richardson, front, with l-r Paul Cummings (Group Manager for Training), Juliet Kele (Northumbria University), Sarah Nattress Director of Emergency Response), Justin Parry (Group Manager of Emergency Response).

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Helping to keep emergency workers safe in the line of duty

A Northumbria University academic is collaborating with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service to investigate attacks on fire service personnel by members of the public.

The research by Dr Colin Richardson, from Northumbria's Newcastle Business School, asks why there is a significant increase of attacks on fire service personnel when attending incidents. Home Office figures show there are

currently around 1,000 attacks a year across the UK – but this is continuing to grow at an alarming rate of approximately 12% a year.

As part of Dr Richardson's research, a conference was held recently with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service discussing emerging insights and to provide attendees with an action plan to take away as an outcome of the findings. Opportunities to develop further research collaboration and knowledge exchange in the areas of strategy, policy and use of technology and dynamic risk management systems development were also explored. In addition, fellow academic Dr Juliet Kele is also investigating potential Equality Diversity Inclusion (EDI) implications, developing alternative research as an outcome of this study.

Dr Richardson said: "This was a very successful mini conference at the Radisson Blu in Durham, looking into attacks on fire service personnel and hostile interactions while attending incidents.

The research aims to understand this peculiar phenomenon in greater detail, working with the emergency services, highlighting opportunities to reduce risk through identifying potential causes of hostility and educate through engagement with local communities. These opportunities include utilising rich data and innovative technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning, to protect front line personnel from hostile encounters while also reducing risks for the public.

"The outcomes of the day will further assist us to build on existing knowledge, helping to establish novel and innovative techniques using technology to drive data-driven decision making and dynamic risk assessment models in real-time. A very big thank you to all that were involved with the day and making it a success."

Professor Robert MacIntosh, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Business and Law at Northumbria, added: "Dr Richardson's collaboration with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service shows the real breadth of the work that the Newcastle Business School does to contribute to communities around the university. Our expertise and our interests go far beyond big business and our approach across the public, private and charitable sectors is to do research which has real impact and acts as a force for good."

As Chair of the Chartered Association of Business Schools, Professor MacIntosh also points to a recent report on [research funding for UK business](#)

[schools](#) and the contribution they make beyond just big business.

For more information on working with Newcastle Business School at Northumbria please visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/nbs.

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