



RECOMMENDATION REPORT

DECISION: 01/2026	DATE: 09/04/2026
TITLE: Cyber Threat Training – Hydra Exercise	
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SPONSOR: Steff Hull, Policy and Partnerships Manager (Serious Violence and Community Safety)	
Executive Summary This recommendation seeks the approval of the Police and Crime Commissioner to allocate £7,200 to the University of Lancashire for the delivery of 10 Hydra inputs to a maximum of 200 representatives from small and medium sized enterprises (SME's). This would be allocated from the POCA fund	
Recommendation The Police and Crime Commissioner is recommended to allocate £7,200 to the University of Lancashire	

PART I

1. Background and Advice

1.1 This proposal, if funded, will enable progress within the Police and Crime Plan 2024-29, around the following:

Priority 2 points:

39.0 - increase investment in education and crime prevention to reduce the risks.

40.0 - work with partners regionally and nationally, to improve the wider response to cybercrime and fraud by all agencies.

1.2 In 2025 the OPCC circulated a crime related survey to gain an understanding from businesses in the county about what they perceived to be their biggest threat and what offers they would like to see to alleviate these threats. The responses varied but amongst them were the threat of cyber-crime and the need for more training. This proposal seeks to address both those points.

1.3 The University of Lancashire (previously known as UCLAN) was approached by the policy and partnership team to discuss the feasibility of the design of a Hydra exercise based on a cyber-attack, for delivery to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME's), throughout Lancashire. A Hydra exercise is an immersive experience where the participant works with others in small groups to manage a realistic, unfolding scenario. This is usually done by law enforcement agencies or emergency services. The university has its own hydra suite, and both designs and delivers hydra scenarios. The university confirmed that it would be very interested in working with the OPCC around the design and delivery and would seek some additional funding. The research that they carried out resulted in them discovering that there was nothing in existence like this in the country.

1.4 The University was successful in securing £18,500 in funding and this has been used on the design and the build of the hydra. It will also be used in some of the advertising and for a pre and post survey as part of the evaluation process. In addition, it has funded the dry run exercise that took place on Thursday 5th March as well as two of the actual delivery sessions. That will mean that the funding request from the OPCC will be to fund 8 out of the 10 deliveries.

1.5 Each Hydra session can cater for 20 individual participants. So as result of this whole programme 200 SME's throughout Lancashire will receive a free training package to better equip them around the risk of a cyber-attack. As well as this the university and the Northwest Cyber Resilience Centre will offer an after-care package should further guidance be sought from any concerned SME.

1.6

Budget breakdown:

People Costs:	Proposed Budget 2026/27:
Cyber Hydra Sessions x 8.	£900
Includes one subject matter expert and one	

facilitator for each session.	
Refreshments and Lunch.	
Hire of Hydra Suite.	
Total Request	£7,200

2. Links to the Police and Crime Plan

It supports the following points from the Commissioner's Plan:

Priority 2 points:

39.0 - increase investment in education and crime prevention to reduce the risks.

40.0 - work with partners regionally and nationally, to improve the wider response to cybercrime and fraud by all agencies.

It will also showcase a real "You Said, We Did" mentality as this is an offer designed as a direct response to issues raised as part of the OPCC Business Crime Survey.

This is also a piece of work that is a direct result of the initiative of the OPCC and shows how we can lead on matters that are salient to our communities.

3. Consultations

The OPCC consulted with constabulary and ROCU (Cyber Resilience Centre) as well as the University of Lancashire around the design and delivery of this package.

4. Implications:

a. Legal

There is nothing of a legal nature for comment on

b. Financial

The budget allocation for this programme, £7,200, will be allocate from the POCA fund

c. Equality Impact Assessment

All assessments will be done by the University

d. Data Protection Impact Assessment

All assessments will be done by the University

5 Risk Management

The OPCC has a Risk Register however there is nothing to add because of this training offer. This has been agreed by the university ethics panel.

6. Background Papers

There has been numerous emails and a survey carried out because of this application that can be produced on request.

7. Public access to information

Information in this form is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and other legislation. Part 1 of this form will be made available on the PCC website within 3 working days of approval. Any facts/advice/recommendations that should not be made available on request should not be included in Part 1 but instead on the separate Part 2 form.

