



CENTRE FOR
FORENSIC HOPE

RESEARCH · LIVED EXPERIENCE · RENEWAL

*Improving lives in forensic communities
through the advancement of hope*

Research at the Centre for Forensic Hope

A guide for academics and researchers interested in getting involved

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Centre For Forensic Hope Ltd · A company limited by guarantee · Non-profit making

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"Research driven. Hope focused. Futures changed."

forensichope.org.uk

Welcome

The Centre for Forensic Hope (CFH) is an independent, non-profit making organisation dedicated to improving the lives of people in forensic settings and formerly incarcerated people — through research, education, and lived experience. This guide is for academics and researchers who want to understand our research programme and the ways to formally get involved.

The Centre is new. But the research that underpins it is not. This booklet sets out where our research is starting from, where it is going, and how you can be part of building it.

Building the Evidence Base for Forensic Hope

There is a growing body of evidence on hope in forensic settings and post-release life — from hope theory and desistance research to studies of recovery in secure mental health, probation practice, and reintegration. The Centre draws on and contributes to that evidence base.

Founding research · Doctoral study · Durham University · Ongoing

The lived experience of hope among people released from prison

This qualitative doctoral study examines how hope is experienced, lost, and rebuilt among people released from prison — and what that means for desistance, reintegration, and identity reconstruction. Using an interpretive phenomenological approach, the research centres the voices of people who have been through the criminal justice system, asking what hope means to them and how it operates in the difficult months and years after release.

The research is supervised by Professor Tammi Walker — Professor of Forensic Psychology and Principal of St Cuthbert's Society, Durham, whose work spans prison mental health, women in custody, and forensic psychiatric settings — Assistant Professor Leanne Trick (Durham, Department of Psychology), and Associate Professor Jake Phillips of the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, whose research focuses on hope, probation practice, and desistance.

This research sits within a wider field — including the work of scholars such as Shane Lopez, C.R. Snyder, Shadd Maruna, and Jake Phillips — that establishes hope as a measurable, cultivable force in the lives of people in forensic settings and after release. Its findings will contribute directly to the Centre's training programmes, practice guidance, and policy work.

How We Will Conduct Research

The Centre has not yet published independent research — we are honest about that. But we have clear principles for how we will work when we do.

1. Co-produced from the start

People with lived experience of forensic settings or incarceration will be involved from research design through to dissemination — not consulted at the end. We will not do research about people without doing it with them.

2. Open access always

All Centre research will be published openly and without paywall. Evidence that changes practice must reach practitioners. Evidence that changes policy must reach policymakers. Neither should require an institutional subscription.

3. Designed to change things

We are not interested in producing studies that sit in journals and change nothing. Every project will have a clear theory of change — a pathway from finding to practice. If we cannot articulate that, we will not start the project.

What We Intend to Study

These are the areas where we believe the evidence base is weakest, the need is greatest, and the Centre is best placed to contribute.

- **Hope as a measurable outcome in forensic care.** The evidence that hope matters for recovery is strong. The tools for measuring it in forensic contexts are underdeveloped. We intend to work with NHS England, forensic commissioners, and people with lived experience to develop and validate practical measures that can be embedded in care pathways.
- **Language, risk, and the self.** How professionals describe risk has consequences for how people see themselves. We want to examine the relationship between clinical language, ward culture, and the capacity for hope — and what changes when the language changes.
- **Hope and desistance after release.** Building directly on the Centre's founding doctoral research — what does hope look like in the post-release period? How is it sustained or extinguished? What can probation, reintegration services, and communities do to support it?
- **What works in hope-informed practice.** A systematic review of interventions designed to cultivate hope in forensic and criminal justice settings — examining what works, for whom, under what conditions, and why. Designed to give practitioners evidence they can actually use.

Ways for Academics to Get Involved

There are several routes for academics and researchers to formally affiliate with the Centre, at different levels of commitment and career stage.

1. CFH Fellowship

CFH Fellows are academics, researchers, and practitioners who formally affiliate with the Centre — contributing expertise, collaborating on projects, and helping shape the evidence base for forensic hope. Fellowship is an honorary designation conferred by the Centre Director, recognising a sustained commitment to the Centre's mission.

Tier	Letters	Awarded to	What it involves
Senior Fellow	SFCFH	Established academics or senior practitioners with a significant body of work relevant to hope, forensic mental health, or criminal justice.	Lead or co-lead research projects; contribute to the Centre's academic advisory function.
Associate Fellow	AFCFH	Early- and mid-career researchers, clinicians, or practitioners who collaborate with the Centre on defined projects.	Active contribution to the Centre's research and training work on a regular basis.
Research Fellow	RFCFH	Doctoral researchers and postdoctoral academics whose work directly advances the evidence base for forensic hope.	Centre affiliation, access to the research network, and co-authorship opportunities.

Fellows are entitled to use their post-nominal letters — SFCFH, AFCFH, or RFCFH — after their name in professional and academic contexts, for example Jane Smith SFCFH. Post-nominal letters indicate affiliation with the Centre only and do not confer, imply, or substitute for any statutory qualification, professional registration, chartered status, or regulated credential.

Appointment to a Fellowship (Senior Fellow, Associate Fellow, or Research Fellow) is conditional on Full Membership (MCFH) of the Centre. Anyone appointed to a Fellowship who is not already a Full Member must join as a Full Member on appointment, and must maintain Full Membership for the duration of their Fellowship. Fellowship does not itself carry, replace, or waive the annual Full Membership fee.

Fellowship is conferred by invitation of the Centre Director. If you believe your work aligns with the Centre's mission and would like to explore affiliation, contact the Centre Director (details on the final page).

2. Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides independent expert scrutiny of the Centre's research quality, professional standards, and the FHP qualification. The Centre is looking for people with direct lived experience of forensic settings or incarceration to join alongside academics and practitioners — lived experience is a constitutional requirement of the Advisory Board, not an afterthought. Academics with relevant expertise and standing in the field are also sought as members. Meetings take place up to four times a year, in person or online, and full remuneration is offered for the time of members with lived experience.

3. Organisational Membership for Universities & Research Bodies

Departments of criminology, forensic psychology, clinical psychology, social work, and law — and research institutes and think tanks working at the intersection of justice and mental health — can join as Organisational Members. This signals institutional commitment to hope-focused research and gives staff access to the Centre's network and evidence base, including:

- Research library and publications
- Named members with individual access under the organisation's membership slots
- Priority partnership on joint research and delivery projects

4. Co-Produced Research Partnerships

The Centre is scoping its first independent research project, co-produced from the outset with people who have lived experience, focused on hope as a measurable outcome in forensic and post-release settings. If



your organisation would like to be involved as a research partner — on methodology, funding, or delivery — we would welcome the conversation.

Why Get Involved Now

The Centre is in its founding year. Academics who affiliate now — as Fellows, Advisory Board members, or through Organisational Membership — help shape the research priorities, methodology, and culture of the Centre from the ground up, rather than joining a programme that is already set.

Next Steps

If you would like to explore Fellowship, Advisory Board membership, Organisational Membership, or a research partnership, get in touch with the Centre Director:

- Email: enquiries@forensichope.org.uk
- Website: forensichope.org.uk

This guide reflects the Research page of the Centre's website as at the version date above. Please refer to forensichope.org.uk for the most current information on research priorities, Fellowship, and Advisory Board vacancies.