**Call for Papers**

**‘The Vulnerable Accused in the Criminal Justice System’**

10th and 11th September, Cardiff University

*Organisers: Dr Roxanna Dehaghani (Cardiff University), Dr Samantha Fairclough (University of Birmingham), Dr Harriet Pierpoint (University of South Wales)*

With funding from: Cardiff’s Centre for Law and Society, the Society of Legal Scholars, and the ImpleMendez COST Action CA22128

The vulnerability of suspects and defendants in criminal proceedings is a topic that has received increasing and sustained judicial attention in recent years. The *Salduz* judgment and subsequent case law recognises that all suspects are potentially vulnerable. With specific regard to defendants, there is an ever-growing body of case law concerned with the ability of vulnerable defendants to participate effectively in criminal proceedings, as per Article 6(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), including the European Court of Human Rights judgments *of T v United Kingdom* and *SC v United Kingdom*. Whilst such developments are positive (in that they mark official recognition of the potential vulnerabilities of suspects and defendants) several issues remain in ensuring the proper identification/recognition of vulnerability among these groups and the provision of appropriate responses to it.

This conference is the follow up to the inaugural Vulnerable Accused conference at the University of Birmingham in 2023. It is dedicated to a discussion of the many unresolved issues that remain with regard to suspect/defendant vulnerability, with a view to moving the conversation forward. It will bring together a range of contributors, exploring different aspects of the criminal process, to critically interrogate the safeguarding, protection, and participation of vulnerable suspects and defendants across jurisdictions. It is an in-person event, designed to provide invaluable networking opportunities to those working in these areas and to facilitate collaborative thinking and working.

Confirmed speakers:

We are grateful to the Society of Legal Scholars and the ImpleMendez COST Action for funding that has enabled us to secure a fantastic line up of invited speakers.

Key note:

**Professor Layla Skinns (University of Sheffield): Vulnerability, dignity and materiality: Joining up the dots and making an impact on police custody**

Session Speakers:

**Dr Kate Doolin (University of Auckland, New Zealand)**

**Dr Katie Maras and Dr Ralph Bagnall (University of Bath)**

**Dr Brendon O’Mahony (forensic psychologist and registered intermediary)**

**Dr Jon Robbins (University of Brighton and founding editor of The Justice Gap)**

Call for papers: deadline 2 June 2025

We welcome papers from a range of socio-legal, theoretical, doctrinal, empirical, comparative, and interdisciplinary perspectives, from individuals at all career stages (including PGR/ECRs), and from jurisdictions within and outside of the UK. Relevant topics include, but are not limited to:

* The conceptualisation of vulnerability for suspect/defendant populations.
* The identification of vulnerability among these groups.
* Issues relevant to specific stages of the process, for example from first contact with the police (stop and search/voluntary interview/interview under caution/arrest); post-charge (plea/bail decisions); at trial (Youth Court/magistrates’/Crown court trials or equivalent jurisdictional distinctions); and post-verdict (post-acquittal/conviction/sentencing/experience in custody, etc).
* Legal responses to vulnerability and their suitability/use in practice (for example appropriate adults, legal representation, special measures, Ground Rules Hearings, reasonable adjustments).
* Barriers to participation among vulnerable suspects and defendants.
* The experiences of vulnerable suspects/defendants.
* Issues around resources and the provision of adequate support to relevant individuals.

Abstracts should be 250 words long, include a title, and speaker details (name, affiliation, email address). **Please submit to** [VACJSConference@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:VACJSConference@cardiff.ac.uk)

Key dates

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| 15 April 2025 | Call for papers published |
| 2 June 2025 | Deadline for abstract submission |
| 13 June 2025 | Applicants notified of success |
| 13 June 2025 | Registration opens |
| 1 September 2025 | Deadline for submission of extended abstracts (compulsory for all speakers) |
| 1 September 2025 | Registration closes |
| 10 and 11 September 2025 | Conference takes place |

Other information

* Submission of abstracts via: [VACJSConference@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:VACJSConference@cardiff.ac.uk)
* Successful applicants will be required to submit an extended abstract (1000-1500 words ahead of the conference for publication on the conference website and the Defending Vulnerability blog (<https://defendingvulnerability.wordpress.com/>)
* Delegate fee – approx. £120-130 for two-day conference, including lunch, refreshments (exact cost tbc).

*We are offering a small number of PGR/ECR bursaries, worth £200, towards travel and overnight accommodation. If you wish to apply, please indicate your interest, your year of study (PhD)/your length of time in post (ECR), and your dissemination plans for the conference paper.*

* There will be a Conference Dinner for the evening of 10th September. There is an additional fee payable for the conference dinner.
* If there is sufficient interest, we plan to publish a Special Issue following the conference. Please register your interest when submitting your abstract. Full written papers will need to be submitted by April 2026.
* Further detail for ImpleMendez COST Members will be made available on the ImpleMendez webpage.
* Please see joining details for SLS: <https://www.legalscholars.ac.uk/>
* Please see <https://implemendez.eu/> for details about the work of the ImpleMendez COST Action and details on how to join.
* Further information on travel and accommodation will be provided in due course.

We are grateful to our funders for making this conference possible and for subsidising several essential expenses.