

Understanding police suicide and self-injurious behaviour

Exploring suicide, suicidal ideation, and self-injurious behaviours among police officers.

Key details

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Level of research	PhD
Project start date	May 2021
Date due for completion	April 2025

Research context

The aims of this research are to:

- understand the context in which suicidal behaviour manifests among police officers, attending to risk and protective factors in particular
- identify the aetiology of suicidal behaviour among police officers, as well as determining the occupational and non-occupational factors associated with increased risk of suicide
- understand the link between self-injurious behaviour and suicide among police officers
- determine the extent to which existing theories account for suicide and self-injury among police officers – a new theory of suicide and self-injurious behaviour pertinent to police officers will be developed that has an international reach

Research methodology

Study 1a

A rapid evidence assessment – attending to the risk and protective factors associated with suicide and self-injurious behaviour among police officers.

Study 1b

An expert Delphi focusing on the nature of suicide and self-injurious behaviour among police officers.

Study 2a

Exploring the narratives of family members of police officers who have engaged in suicidal and self-injurious behaviour.

Study 2b

Focus groups with professionals from the National Police Suicide Prevention Group to obtain their views on the findings of the psychological autopsies.

Focus groups

Study 2a will be supplemented by two focus groups held with members of the National Police Suicide Prevention Group (n=10, two groups of five participants).

This committee consists of professional police officers, academics, clinicians, and police charities dedicated to police suicide prevention in the UK.

The emphasis will be on gaining a greater perspective on the findings of the psychological autopsies conducted with family members as part of the earlier study.

Study 3

Quantitatively examining the risk and protective factors for suicide and self-injurious behaviour identified as relevant in studies 1 and 2 among an international sample of police officers.

Study 3 will quantitatively attend to the findings of the aforementioned studies and verify these among a sample of police professionals from the UK, US and Australia.

Key contacts are already in place to support data collection. It is anticipated that a large sample of 400 police officers will be recruited to complete a battery of questionnaires attending to risk and protective factors identified in the previous studies.

This study will conclude the PhD programme of work. It will assist in finalising the new theoretical model to account for suicide and self-injurious behaviour among police officers that can be applied internationally, and which forms a key original element of this work.

Interim reports or publications

Krishnan N and others. (2022). [‘A Systematic Review of Risk Factors Implicated in the Suicide of Police Officers’](#). Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 37, pp 939-951.