

Exploring police roles in mental health crises

Research examining police responses to mental health crises, including psychosis training for officers and interviews on police and public perceptions of mental health-related policing.

Key details

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Lead institution | University of Central Lancashire |
| Principal researcher(s) | Dr Carolina Campodonico ccampodonico@uclan.ac.uk |
| Police region | North West |
| Level of research | Professional/work based |
| Project start date | January 2024 |
| Date due for completion | December 2025 |

Research context

Police officers are increasingly on the frontline of mental health crises, responding to individuals experiencing psychosis and other severe mental health conditions. While managing mental health crises is not an official part of their job role, in reality, these encounters are incredibly frequent and have significant consequences for both officers and the public. Without the appropriate training and resources, these interactions can lead to misunderstandings, crisis escalation and negative outcomes. Given the growing number of mental health-related emergency calls, improving police training and response strategies is essential.

To address this, we developed a psychosis training programme for police officers, designed with feedback from officers, clinicians, and individuals with lived experience. The training was piloted with [Lancashire Constabulary](#) and has since received funding to be delivered to other interested constabularies.

Alongside this, our research explores police and public perceptions of mental health crisis responses. One study examines police officers' views on their role, training, and challenges in responding to individuals in crisis, while the second investigates public perceptions of police involvement in mental health interventions, highlighting concerns, expectations and areas for improvement.

Although mental health crisis response is not a core policing responsibility, it is an unavoidable reality of frontline police work. By combining qualitative research and training implementation, this study seeks to enhance officer preparedness, inter-agency collaboration and public trust in policing responses to mental health crises. Findings will contribute to evidence-based, trauma-informed policing practices that better support both officers and the communities they serve.

Research methodology

This research builds on the psychosis training programme delivered to Lancashire Constabulary, using feedback from officers, clinicians and individuals with lived experience to refine future training sessions. With secured funding, the training is now being expanded to other constabularies.

Additionally, this research employs a qualitative approach, combining insights from police officers and the public to evaluate mental health crisis responses. We are conducting two qualitative studies.

1. Police officer perspectives – Semi-structured interviews explore officer experiences, training needs and crisis response challenges, particularly when interacting with individuals experiencing psychosis.
2. Public perceptions – Semi-structured interviews with community members examine views on police involvement in mental health incidents, including trust, concerns and expectations.

Data will be thematically analysed to identify key themes and training implications.

Research participation

We are looking for constabularies interested in receiving our psychosis training programme for free as part of this research. This training, developed with input from police officers, clinicians and individuals with lived experience, aims to improve officer preparedness and response strategies when engaging with individuals in mental health crises.

Additionally, we are recruiting the following.

- Police officers: Officers with experience responding to mental health-related incidents are invited to share their perspectives on training, challenges and crisis management strategies. Participation involves a confidential, one-on-one interview (45–60 minutes, online or in person).
- Public participants: We are also seeking members of the public who are willing to share their thoughts and experiences on police involvement in mental health crises. The study aims to understand public confidence, concerns, and expectations regarding police-led mental health interventions. Interviews will be confidential and anonymised (approx. 45–60 minutes).

This research is voluntary, and all data will be handled ethically and confidentially. This study has received approval from UCLan's Ethics Committee.

For more information, to participate, or to register interest in receiving the training, please contact the principal investigator at ccampodonico@uclan.ac.uk.