



**Prison Staff perceptions of methods used to deal
with suicide and self-harm across male and fe-
male establishments in England and Wales.**

A Dissertation submitted for the
Criminal Justice and Policing (MA) 2021

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Declaration/Statements page

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Abstract

The purpose of this research topic is to discover the extent of suicide and self-harm across male and female establishments although, the aim was to focus on establishments in England and Wales.

Also, to discover what techniques and procedures individual establishments use to combat issues surrounding suicide and self-harm. A mixed-methods approach will be used by collating data from staff members working in prisons and literature which is readily available as well as reviewing the researcher's diary which provides examples of real-life situations.

Suicide and self-harm in prisons have been widely studied previously but on the other hand, most studies are solely based on statistics compared to this research where it has focused on the personal experiences of officers and prison staff. Overall, the findings have shown that self-harm is much higher in female establishments, but suicide is higher in male establishments. Prisons are currently doing all they can to support individuals at risk of suicide and self-harm nevertheless, it remains a complex issue.

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Chapter 1 Introduction-

Prisons in England and Wales serve the purpose of detaining offenders that have broken the law. Although this is correct, prisons also have other purposes. Justice Secretary David Gauke explained that prisons have 3 purposes which are;

1. To protect the public from the most dangerous individuals in society.
2. Punishment through depriving offenders of the right to freedom.
3. Another being rehabilitation which provides offenders the opportunity to reflect on their action and take responsibility for their wrongdoings as well as providing the support to assist them in living law-abiding lives on their release from prison.

The purpose of prisons is maintained across all establishments whether that is in a female establishment, male establishment, or young offenders' institutes (Home Office, 2020).

In total there are 117 prisons across England and Wales, of which 104 are run by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), and the others are run by private companies such as; G4S, Sodexo, and Serco (The Institute for Government, 2020).

The current prison population across England and Wales stands at 82,710 and the population difference is 74,010 (Women in Prison, 2020). Clarke, (2020) stated that between 2011 and 2020 there were approximately 77,420 men and 3,410 women in prison and as it stands there are currently 79,540 offenders in prison across England and Wales however the figures released are updated weekly (The Howard League of Legal Reform, (2020).

The complexity of issues that are dealt with across prison establishments is extensive and very wide-ranged. Garside, (2018) stated in one of his reports that the prison crisis revolves around violence, self-harm, and unsafe conditions. Self-harm covers a wide range of factors and varies depending on the individual that self-harms however,

HMPPS has described self-harm as 'any act where a prisoner deliberately harms themselves irrespective of the method, intent or severity of any injury' (Pope, 2018).

Whereas, the NHSN, (2020) has defined self-harm as 'the act of deliberately causing harm to oneself either by causing a physical injury, by putting oneself in dangerous situations and/or self-neglect'.

When analysing both definitions it is clear to see that any individual who self-harms has to have the intention of hurting themselves for it be defined as self-harm. There are several reasons as to why individuals self-harm, the NHS, (2020) has stated the reason why individuals self-harm are; trying to feel in control, expressing or coping with emotional distress, a way of punishing themselves, relieving unbearable tension, a cry for help and response to intrusive thoughts. Although these reasons have been identified they are not the only contributing factors why prisoners self-harm and they can change depending on the current circumstances.

Furthermore, self-harm can be linked to bad experiences from the past or that are happening now however, it becomes extremely complex when the reasoning for a prisoner self-harming is unknown because it becomes difficult to support the individual and to help them find better coping mechanisms.

There are many forms of self-harm within a custodial environment such as; cutting, self-strangulation, headbanging, swallowing/inserting objects, wound aggravation, starving, fire setting, suffocation, self-poisoning, and restricting diet (Liebling, 1995).

Although prisoners can find other ways to intentionally harm themselves though, in modern society the most common self-harm methods used are cutting or self-strangulation which is also known as ligaturing (Liebling, 2002).

Throughout early research, in the 1990s self-harm was recognised as being in the same category as suicide and it was believed to have been an indication that an individual is in distress before attempting suicide (Liebling, 1999). Nevertheless, as research has developed there is a strong argument that suggests that suicide and self-harm are not in the same category and are different forms of punishing themselves because of the distinct behaviours between them. For example, not every prisoner that self-harms will later attempt suicide, there is only a minority of prisoners that follow through with this. Similarly, when prisoners self-harm it is not always intending to kill themselves, many prisoners self-harm as a coping mechanism and use it to release the stress and tension they have built up within them, especially when dealing with flashbacks from their previous trauma (Lohner and Konrad, 2006).

Many prisoners will suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from past trauma in their lives and the list is extensive. Likewise, prisoners use self-harm as a coping mechanism when they are angry which results in them self-harming because it releases the anger within and prevents them from taking their anger out on staff or other prisoners. In contrast to this Garin et al, (2003) argued that multiple self-harm attempts are related to lead up of suicide especially if it involves hanging, self-strangulation or suffocation because prisoners are more likely to die using these methods compared to others. Despite this, these methods can result in a higher risk of accidental deaths because prisoners may use this method as a cry for help and unfortunately could result in death if the staff has not been alerted to the prisoner that has used one of the methods.

Mental Health

Mental health issues contribute towards a lot of self-harm that takes place in the custodial environment because many prisoners are not diagnosed with a mental health

disorder up until their arrival into prison due to them not being able to seek the correct support in the community.

Mental health in itself is a very complex subject but, when prisoners suffer from major mental health and are secured in their rooms for a long period it can have a detrimental effect on prisoner's mental health because it intensifies the severity of their mental health. Several mental health issues are present in prisons that contribute to prisoners attempting suicide and carrying out acts of self-harm, they are; schizophrenia, personality disorder (PD), and substance misuse disorder (House of Commons, 2017). Mental health issues can cause prisoners to relive their past traumas which will trigger Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Bennett, (2012) identified the most common traumas are; childhood abuse, adverse childhood experiences, rape, assault, domestic violence, terminal illness, or bereavement. Also, hallucinations may occur which leads to them reliving their past traumas which becomes a struggle and prisoners resort to self-harm to cope with their feelings. Reliving their experiences can cause major outbursts in anger, chronic depression, emotional breakdowns, and even suicidal thoughts which emphasises how prisoners suffer from multiple mental health issues and one mental health issue can trigger many others which they are not aware of (Haney, 2003). It is argued by Palmer et al, (2010) that women suffer more from mental health compared to men however, this could be argued that evidence shows more women suffer because they are more likely to seek help and receive a diagnosis compared to men. The Prison Reform Trust, (2020) released figures which show that 26% of women and 16% of men received treatment for mental health issues in the year before entering prison. Also, self-inflicted deaths are 8.6 times more likely within a prison environment compared to the general population.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of carrying out research into this topic was to enable others in this particular field of work as well as, the general public who have an interest in the topic to gain more knowledge surrounding suicide and self-harm and how frequently self-harm takes place in a custodial environment. Alongside, showing what support is available to prisoners compared to in the community and the procedures that are in place to allow prisons to provide relevant and effective support to each individual in crisis. Although there is an extensive amount of literature available relating to suicide and self-harm in prisons, especially statistical data, this research will provide an insight into the challenges faced daily for both prisoners and prison staff and gain information on the crisis the prison service is currently facing. This will be accessible because of the researcher's access to the prison service.

The primary research gathered will enable the researcher to identify issues first-hand because the respondents work in the custodial environment every day which gives valuable information.

As well as providing real-life examples of the issues prison staff face daily compared to the statistical data outlining the current crisis. The researcher has a hypothesis that 'suicide and self-harm are worse in the female estate compared to the male estate'. The research carried out will either confirm or deny this statement.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The literature review will cover topics such as gender differences in self-harm, mental health issues in the custodial environment, the Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) document, and how the prison crisis negatively impacts prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm. The literature review will cover existing research surrounding suicide and self-harm, identifying the common issues which provide a springboard for the researcher to carry out primary research, which will provide more clarity on suicide and self-harm in a custodial environment. There is also a large amount of literature available regarding suicide and self-harm which focuses on the policies used to provide guidance when dealing with suicide and self-harm.

Gender Difference in Self-Harm

There is an extensive amount of literature available which shows the difference in self-harm between genders over the past few decades, the rate of suicide and self-harm have plummeted within Her Majesty's Prison establishments across England and Wales nonetheless, suicide and self-harm is an extremely complex issue within prisons because the contributing factors and reasoning for self-harm/suicide attempts are widespread (Perry and Olason, 2009). Evidence demonstrates the issues prisons are facing and that there is a direct correlation between the suicide and self-harm rates increasing and the prison crisis becoming much more difficult. Self-harm in prison settings is much higher compared to within the community. Garbutt and Casey, (2015) have released figures which supports this statement and shows that between 2.7 and 4% of individuals have engaged in self-harm in the community compared to 7 and 17% of males in male establishments and between 10 and 30% of females within female establishments which indicates prisoners are much more likely to engage in self-harm

for numerous reasons and the statistics indicate that self-harm is much more prevalent in females compared to males in prison.

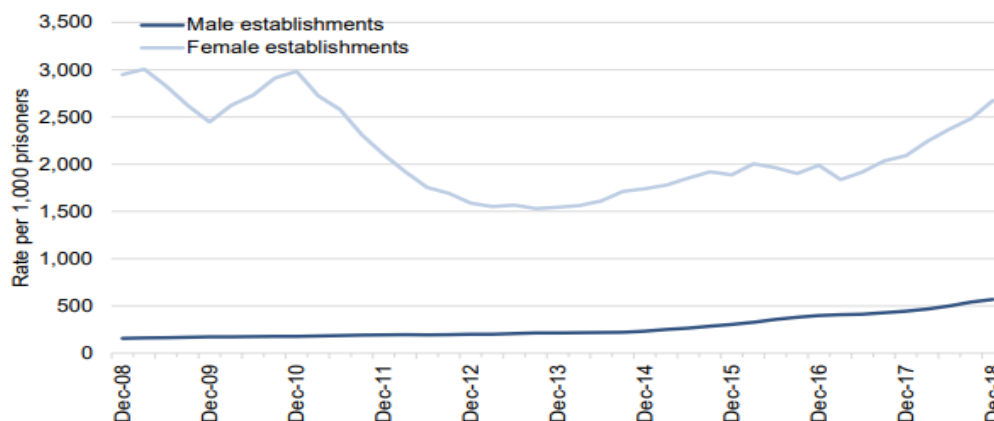


FIGURE 1 SELF-HARM RATES PER 1,000 PRISONERS BY GENDER OF ESTABLISHMENTS BY MINISTRY OF JUSTICE,(2019)

As shown in figure 1, self-harm incidents in both male and female prisoners have amplified over the years especially from December 2012 to December 2018 and it is clear to see that self-harm trends differ considerably by gender, and female incidents involving self-harm are extremely higher compared to males. In December 2012, the rate of self-harm in males was 250 per 1,000 prisoners compared to 600 per 1,000 prisoners in December 2018 which shows an increase of 350 per 1,000 prisoners within 6 years. Whereas, in December 2012 the rate of self-harm in females was 1,550 per 1000 prisoners compared to 2,600 per 1,000 prisoners in 2018 indicating an astonishing increase of 1,050 within 6 years. The statistics show that self-harm incidents are considerably higher in females and the figures suggest that self-harm in women happens much more frequently due to the statistics per 1000 women which suggests that many females self-harm on more than one instance within these periods for the figures to reach the level they are at (Ministry of Justice, 2019). Although there are fewer women in prison compared to men, women account for the largest proportion of self-harm yearly even though there is a considerable difference in the number of men and women currently in prison. There are currently 79,563 individuals in prison across

England and Wales and of this figure, there are 76,328 men and 3,235 women imprisoned which emphasises the difference between men and women in custody. Although women account for a small proportion of this number the self-harm instances surge compared to men which indicate that women in custody struggle and need a lot of support if the figures are to reduce in the future (The Howard League for Penal Reform, 2020). When looking at the year when self-harm began to increase in 2012 which was when the prison officer numbers reduced dramatically, and the prison crisis amplified. December 2015 shows a large spike in self-harm incidents which emphasises the severity of the prison crisis and it shows that prison officers reached the lowest number they have ever had which was 18.2 thousand because of austerity measures pursued by the government (Clark, 2020).

Suicides in Prison

Suicide whilst in custody is extremely concerning and figures continue to increase year on year which raises further concerns because it indicates that there is a need for improvement on how prisoners are supported which will reduce the numbers of suicide in prisons. The rate of suicide in prisons is four times more than in the general population which indicates being detained has a detrimental effect on prisoner's mental health (Dooley, 1990). The most common method used for suicide in prisons is hanging and it usually carried out at night because there is less interaction with staff and the prisoners are unlikely to be discovered.

However, there are several other strategies used to commit suicide in prison such as; hanging, cutting neck, other cutting, drug overdose, and in extreme circumstances burning (Home Office, 1984). Between 1972 and 1987 suicide rates were monitored in three yearly sections. In every three years between these periods, suicide rates increased dramatically and increased by 121%. This indicates that suicides in prisons

have always been prevalent and an issue that needs addressing by individual establishments because there is still a long way to improve support networks for prisoners which will prevent them from wanting to commit suicide (McClure, 1987). Current figures show that suicides in prison are still an ongoing issue that prevailed in the 1970s up until now. The Howard League of Legal Reform, (2020) released figures which have shown in 2013 there were 76 suicides across England and Wales and in 2016 there were 119 suicides which indicate over decades the suicide rates across England and Wales are continuously increasing which shows that although prisons are making adjustments they are not pursuing their goals because there is no proof of suicide rates decreasing. Due to higher rates of suicide within prisons, it has resulted in several inquiries that investigate each death which provides individual establishments with the opportunity to improve their procedures in dealing with suicide or attempted suicide. The inquiries are not to criticise the establishment but to provide them with constructive criticism for them to identify areas that need to be improved or where they reacted in the correct manner (Hankoff, 1980).

The ACCT Document

The Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) document is extremely important, and a key feature used when monitoring offenders who are most at risk of suicide and self-harm. An ACCT document is in the planning process when an individual has been identified as being at risk and it requires any member of staff that works in a prison to open it if they have immediate concerns regarding an offender. It ensures specific actions are taken to safeguard an offender and processes are put in place to help reduce the offender's risk of suicide and self-harm (Pike and George, 2019). The document is an essential source of information because it allows all prison staff to document any key information regarding the offender and maintains a strong connection of

communication daily which allows staff to understand the current issues and how often the offender has self-harmed or attempted suicide each day. Without this document, staff would not be able to identify trends in the offender's self-harm and many staff members would not be aware of the current issues the offender is facing alongside the reasoning behind their self-harm. Although this is an essential document in prison establishments going forward, the ACCT document was only introduced in 2009 when merging Suicide Prevention and Self Harm Management and Managing Deaths in Custody to create 'one risk-based audit' (Ministry of Justice, 2011). When an offender has been identified as at risk of suicide or self-harm an ACCT must be opened for the following reasons:

- Made statements of suicide/self-harm
- Low in mood
- Attempted suicide/Act of self-harm
- Entered custody and has previously self-harmed.

Once the ACCT has been opened the offender will have an assessment by a trained assessor who determines whether the ACCT should stay open and how many observations an hour should be carried out alongside a meaningful conversation three times per day. When the observations have been noted these can increase or decrease depending on whether the offender has stopped self-harming or if their self-harm escalates (Her Majesty's Prison Service, 2005).

The ACCT document has allowed staff to be held accountable through their documentation and provided all prison staff whether that is managers, healthcare, substance misuse, mental health, officers, or probation workers with the correct training and tools to help support and manage individuals at risk of suicide and self-harm. Also, without these documents and the set observations offenders would have time to be successful

in their attempts however, being checked within the hour has enabled staff to prevent the offender's self-harm attempts and even save the lives of offenders who can carry out the action before their next check. Without these documents, there would be a higher death rate in custody. Although the ACCT document is a powerful tool there is a small percentage of offenders that do not portray any cause for concern to staff and unexpectedly carry out an act of suicide or self-harm and unfortunately results in a death in custody which is followed by an investigation into the offender's death.

Safer Custody Department

The Prison Advice Bureau has provided the importance of safer custody departments in establishments for prisoners, staff, and family members. The prison advice provides vital information for families on how their family members are supported whilst in prison and how to contact prisons if they have any concerns.

If the Prison Advice did not exist, families and staff would not have the vital information needed regarding safer custody. Most prisons have a Safer Custody department which has staff who are trained to a highly skilled level to help prisoners that self-harm or attempt suicide. The purpose of the safer custody team is to manage prisoners who actively self-harm and collectively discover ways of supporting the prisoners and finding ways to reduce their self-harm. For example, they will provide prisoners with multiple distraction items such as colouring, word puzzles, drawing/writing material, fidget cubes, puzzles, and scratch arts. The purpose of these items is to act as a deterrent when prisoners feel the need to self-harm and the items provided should help them become distracted with their impulsive thoughts and encourage them that they can control the impulsive thoughts. As well as supporting prisoners, the Safer

Custody teams provide support to family members if they have severe concerns regarding the prisoner's welfare by having a phone line that can be accessed, and concerns can be raised. Following this, the Safer Custody team reassures family members and contacts relevant residential units to ensure wing staff monitors the prisoner and therefore allows the Safer Custody team to feedback reassuring information to concerned family members or friends (Prison Advice, 2020). Without the safer custody team prisons would not be able to maintain family connections and would not be able to combat suicide and self-harm without specialist trained teams that know how to manage and support prisoners who are most at risk of suicide and self-harm.

However, of all the prisons across England and Wales, there are only 35 prisons that have to release their safer custody line which means there are a substantial amount of family concerns not shared with prison staff because the family is unable to contact the prisons safety line (Shaw, 2019).

During an experiment to discover how useful the safer custody lines were across prisons in England and Wales, of the 97 numbers that were identified, only 75 of them went through to the safer custody line, and only 13 of those calls were answered by staff, 66 of them went to the answering machine. Of these figures, a much lower percentage of calls were successful in reaching the safer custody line in the female estate. Using the safer custody numbers for the female estate, only 60% of calls successfully went through to safer custody compared to 81% in the male estate and 84% in the YOI estate. This is massively concerning considering there are much fewer female establishments across England & Wales which results in women being placed in establishments that are a significant distance from where they reside, making it much harder for families to visit and emphasises the importance of safer custody lines for families who are unable to visit to raise their concerns. The numbers of self-harm

in female estates are significantly higher compared to the male estate which emphasises family connections and the need for safer custody lines are vital (The Prison Reform Trust, 2019).

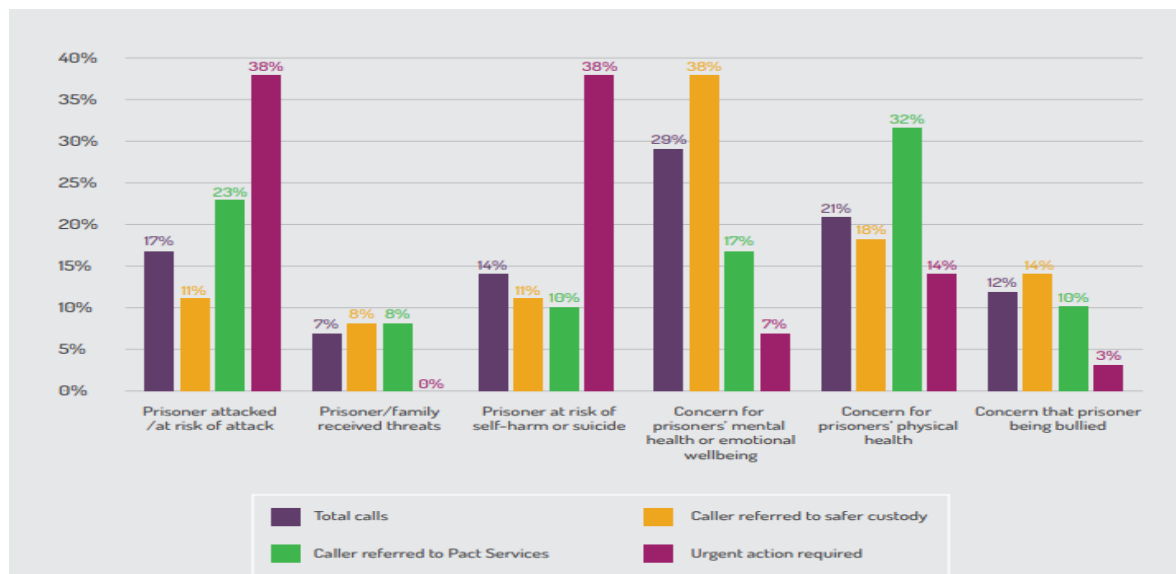


FIGURE 2 NATURE OF CALLS TO SAFER CUSTODY HELPLINE BY THE PRISON REFORM TRUST, (2019).

Figure 2 indicates there are many reasons as to why families contact the safer custody lines which range from suicide and self-harm to concerns for their general wellbeing. However, when looking closely the most common calls are for concerns of the prisoner's mental health or emotional wellbeing and suicide and self-harm. Self-harm and suicide equate for 14% of the total calls and 38% of those requiring urgent action due to the severity of information received. These figures emphasise the correlation between mental health and suicide and self-harm.

Prison Service Instructions (PSI)

All establishments have many policies they have to abide by in all aspects of prisoners' safety and well-being, there is a large quantity of literature available that shows what PSIs are to be followed with regards to suicide and self-harm. Before PSI's were introduced prisons followed Prison Service Orders (PSO) however, these have now changed to PSIs.

In the past there were three main PSOs that were followed with suicide and self-harm, they were:

- PSO 2700 Suicide Prevention and Self-harm Management,
- PSO 2750 Violence Reduction,
- PSO 2710 Follow Up to Deaths in Custody.

Each policy was separate to provide in-depth guidance on the management of suicide and self-harm across all establishments however, management in prisons discovered that three separate policies which had to be followed and provided guidance on severe incidents within the prison environment could be condensed into a larger policy which outlines guidance for all areas.

The most up to date PSI that is currently followed is PSI 64/2011 which sets out guidance on how to manage prisoners that are at risk of harm to themselves, others, and others and this policy has replaced several other policies which were known as Prison Service Orders (PSO) due to policies needing to be updated regularly to move with the current climate. Ministry of Justice, (2012) indicates the purpose of PSI 64/2011 is to provide a framework for delivering safer custody procedures and practices to ensure prisons are a safe environment for individuals who live and work there, both staff and prisoners. PSI's are extremely important because they provide step-by-step guidance on every aspect of the prison which allows staff to have a full understanding of how to manage and deal with instances of self-harm or suicide. Without the current PSI in place, staff would not know how to support vulnerable prisoners correctly. For example, PSI 64/2011 sets out how family engagement is essential in supporting prisoners that are likely to self-harm. Alongside identifying their risks and triggers which is imperative because it allows staff to become prepared for specific dates and provide

more support when the prisoner needs it most which could help result in the prevention of self-harm through being made aware of triggers and risks (HMPPS, 2020).

PSI 64/2011 outlines the staff's responsibility to distinguish differences in prisoner's behaviour which is in an instant indication of an increased risk to themselves and how these differences are relayed to managers and ensuring these concerns are documented.

Without having this framework to follow prisons would not be able to improve the prison environment by reducing the incidents of suicide and self-harm in custody, prisons would not be able to identify and manage prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm and prisons would not be able to learn from past incidents which provide an insight on how to manage future incidents more effectively.

Mental Health

Literature from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, (1996) shows that many years ago the support available to individuals when detained in prison was very poor because it was the responsibility of prisons to provide health care to their detainees and the health care was provided by the Prison Health Service which was labelled as the Prison Medical Service.

However, the support available for prisoners was not at an adequate level and suggestions were made for the prison's health service to be taken over by the National Health Service (NHS) around 1948. Although the NHS provided a health service for everyone in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, they were not obliged to consider the needs of individuals in prison.

From 1996, reports were written by the Health Advisory Committee for the Prison Service (1997) which indicated the weaknesses in the prison's health service, especially

highlighting the quality of care provided to detainees and suggesting that the NHS should take over the health care for prisons alongside recommendations on how the NHS could achieve this. It was not until 1997 the mental health of prisoners was considered through the Health Advisory Committee who highlighted that there was a need for thorough aftercare arrangements and promoted the concept of equivalence of care. The next step in the reform for the NHS was ground-breaking because it involved prison establishments and the NHS working in partnership to provide adequate care to detainees which is adequate to the health care provided to the general public. All of these recommendations were eventually accepted in 2000 and developments began to take place in the delivery of health care in prisons. From April 2003, the funding responsibility for health care in prisons was given to the department of health whereas before this it was funded by the Home Office (Birmingham, 2003).

Mental health issues cause the most problematic situations in prisons which create a huge challenge across the Prison Service. Gunn et al, (1991) indicated the most common diagnosis in sentenced prisoners by mental health professionals were Psychoses, Neuroses, Personality Disorder, Substance misuse/abuse, and organic disorders. Studies on mental health in prisons revealed that mental health issues were much more prevalent in prisons compared to the general public (Meltzer et al, 1995).

There is a wide range of academic literature surrounding mental health in prisons and the severity of mental health across all establishments. HMPPS is responsible for making sure that the prison environment remains safe, secure, and decent for all prisoners across England and Wales. Alongside this prisons deal with a mass number of prisoners that face several mental health issues.

Statistics show that between 10-90% of the prison population suffers from mental health issues which results in an increased demand of the NHS, in 2016 approximately

£150 million was spent on substance misuse and mental health services in prisons (House of Commons, 2017).

It is extremely difficult to monitor the figures of prisoners suffering from mental health issues because there is such a high turnaround in prisons and not every prisoner's mental health problems are identified by staff. When identified as mentally unwell in prison the individual should be transferred and admitted to a secure hospital within 14 days to receive the correct care they require. Though, only 34% are admitted within this period, where 7% of prisoners waited more than 140 days to be transferred in 2016-2017 (Morse, 2017). The process of transferring prisoners is extremely complex and on occasions are placed on a waiting list for a bed to become available which is why many of the transfers are not completed in 14 days.

Nevertheless, holding mentally ill prisoners in a prison environment will only exacerbate their mental health problems and cause the individual to decline rapidly (National Audit Office, 2017).

Literature suggests that mental health problems are overrepresented in the criminal justice system with studies showing that compared to the general population of the world, prisoners have an increased risk of developing mental health/psychiatric problems whilst being in prison. In a previous study carried out by Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, (2018) it was identified that several mental health problems are prevalent in prisons such as; Anxiety, Depression, Paranoid Ideation, and Psychoticism.

Contributing Factors to Self-Harm

Prisons in England and Wales have been in crisis since 2012 due to austerity which has impacted how prisons can run effectively.

There are several factors of the crisis which contribute to suicide and self-harm such as overcrowding in each establishment.

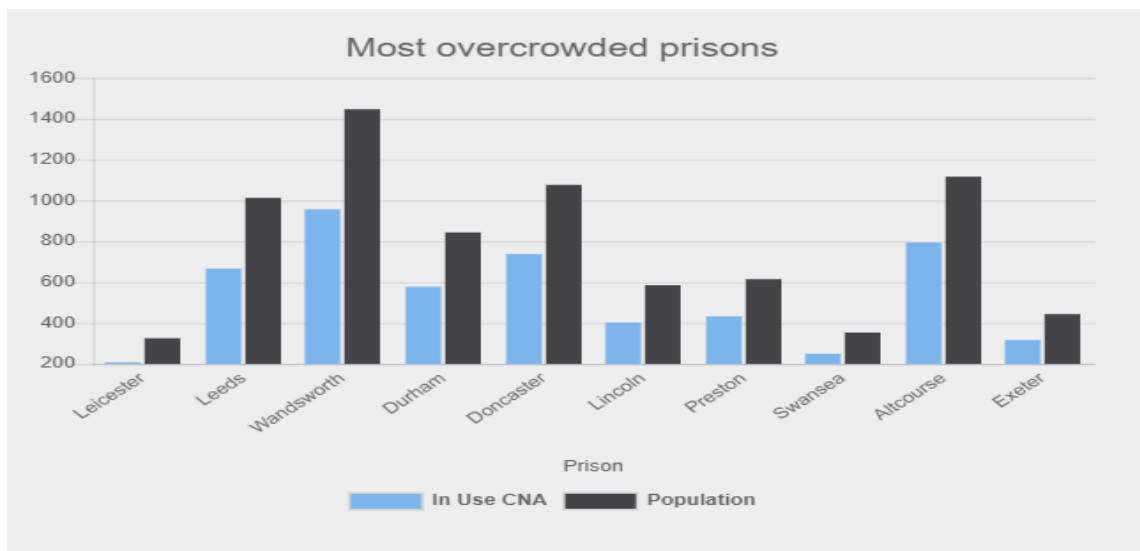


FIGURE 3 OVERCROWDED PRISONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES BY THE HOWARD LEAGUE OF LEGAL REFORM, (2020)

As shown in Figure 3, there are several prisons across England and Wales that are overcrowded and beyond their capacity limits especially Wandsworth and Doncaster. Wandsworth has a capacity of 957 and currently has a population of 1447 and Doncaster have a capacity of 738 and currently has a population of 1077, indicating they are massively overcrowded which has a detrimental effect on the prisoners within these establishments (The Howard League for Legal Reform, 2020). Overcrowded prisons negatively impact prisoners and their mental health because it results in their needs not being met and valuable time that should be spent with them cannot be facilitated due to the pressures which could lead to prisoners self-harming as a way of coping or feeling as though they are not important.

Self-harm figures have dramatically increased and with staff not investing time into each individual they are not getting the correct support to help them reduce their self-harm.

Staffing levels across prisons in England and Wales are extremely low which makes it difficult for prisons to run a normal regime and more often than not they run a restricted regime to maintain the security of their establishment.

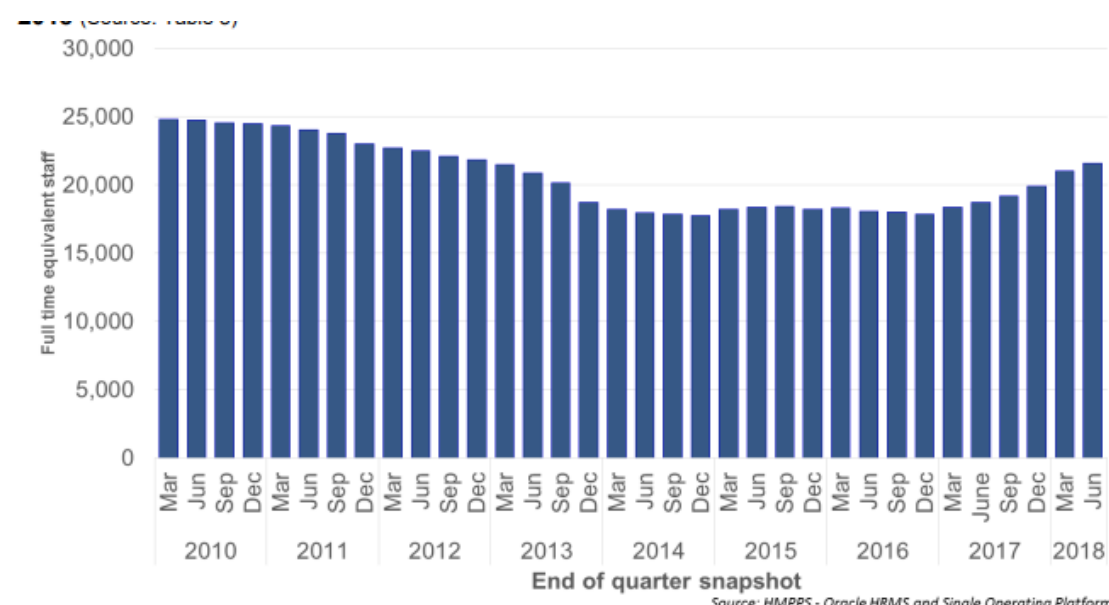


FIGURE 4 NUMBER OF BAND 3-5 OPERATIONAL STAFF IN POST ON A FULL-TIME BASIS, (ONS, 2018).

Figure 4 indicates how staffing levels decreased dramatically in 2015 despite this, through the recruitment drive prisons have nearly the same amount of staff in June 2018 as they did in June 2010.

On the other hand, this has a detrimental effect on prisoner's mental health because the staff is less likely to identify prisoners with mental health issues therefore, it will take longer for the prisoner's needs to be managed. The proportion of band 3-5 prison officers with less than 3 years' service on 30 June 2018 rose to 37.8% compared to 36.4% on 31 March 2018. In contrast, the proportion of officers in the post with 10 years or more experience decreased by 2.2 percentage points from 51.3% on 31 March 2018 to 49.1% on 30 June 2018 (The Office of National Statistics, 2018).

Although the current recruitment drive is positive for the prison service because they can provide a normal regime with safe staffing levels with new recruits to meet the demand of operational needs (Travis, 2016).

It does come with several downfalls, one being the ratio between experienced staff and new recruits appointed to a designated work area, which means it is difficult for new staff members to learn how to run regimes effectively and how to identify triggers of suicide and self-harm with the most complex prisoners on the unit. More than half of new staff recruited have less than a years' experience which complicates how prisoners are dealt with and the lack of boundaries set by the new staff, resulting in the staff having a lack of control over prisoners. Also, resulting in mental health issues spiralling out of control leading to self-harm instances increasing because prisoners feel as though they are not getting the correct support which they should be having due to not having built a good rapport with the staff to express the issues they are struggling with (Garside et al, 2018).

Due to low staffing levels, on occasion, it results in around 15% of prisoners missing outside medical appointments which could be detrimental to their recovery (House of Commons, 2017). However, to improve this situation HMPPS has started a recruitment campaign to improve staffing levels and throughout their training, they will be provided enhanced mental health training, especially suicide awareness. Also, the prisons are implementing the role of 'key workers' which will allow prisoners to have a dedicated staff member to rely on and talk through their issues and state what they are struggling with. By doing this the prisoners will get the help they need to rehabilitate and signposted to the correct services which can provide them with the relevant support within the prison and on their release. This indicates that HMPPS are moving in the right direction when supporting prisoners (POA, 2020).

Low levels of staffing result in establishments running restricted regimes and cancelling purposeful activities such as education and work. Carrying out these activities make prisoners feel as though they have a purpose because they are bettering themselves which helps them prepare for their release and a brighter future (Home Office, 2013). Not only do activities help them rebuild hope, it ensures prisoners are busy which gives them less time to think about their traumatic ordeals and personal issues. When staffing levels reduce and these activities are put on hold or cancelled it results in prisoners having to spend a lot more time in their cells which triggers their memories of bad experiences and are unable to deal with their emotions alone in their room which results in flashbacks and their mental health deteriorating (Justice Inspectorates, 2020). Though, when this continues over a long period and not being able to release the negative feelings inside it leads to prisoners resorting to self-harm because it is the only way they know how to release the stress and pressures they feel and the longer the regimes are restricted it is more likely to increase the levels of self-harm and the extent of self-harm inflicted on themselves (Cohen & Taylor, 2006). This indicates that prisoners are impacted tremendously when regimes are restricted, and they cannot access the services which help them deal with their trauma. This proves that prisoners need to remain distracted and involved in activities that make them feel as though they have a purpose because it will reduce self-harm levels and change their mindsets to look at life more positively.

Involvement in purposeful activity

Prisoners have the opportunity to be involved in activities to better themselves and provide them with a better future by accepting these opportunities helps prisoners feel more positive about their future. Through these activities, supports prisoners and prevents them from harming themselves due to them not spending a lot of time in their

room. The purposeful activity in prisons covers a wide range of skills such as work, education which provides them with valuable life skills (The Prison Reform Trust, 2020). Through working in prison, it allows prisoners to regain a sense of responsibility and routine in their life because they have to attend work for certain times and through their work, many others rely on them such as when working in the kitchens and laundry. As well as attending education which allows them to gain qualifications and learn essential life skills which prepare them for their release and potentially get a job to gain financial security on release (Home Office, 2020). When involving themselves in a purposeful activity it allows prisoners to leave their life of negativity and poor choices of coping mechanisms such as self-harm and look forward to a positive future by bettering themselves (Bunce, 2020).

Chapter 3 Methodology

When constructing research, the researcher needs to invest time in deciding how the research will be carried out and discovering the most appropriate methods to follow which will help readers understand why the researcher has chosen their topic alongside their strategies behind carrying out relevant research. The researcher will be collecting their own data because of their ability to access information which is imperative to the chosen research topic.

Collis and Hussey, (2013) explain how there is no consensus on how research should be defined because research can mean several things to different people due to everyone's perception of research being different. Nevertheless, the overall agreement of research is a process of enquiry and systematic and methodical. Although there is no definitive definition, Collis and Hussey have described the research as a systematic and methodical process of enquiry and investigation, intending to increase knowledge'. Every individual's view of research differs because of their perspective but, Saunders et al, (2019) produced a diagram which is known as the 'research onion' which is shown in Figure 1, research is described as an onion because onions have layers. Saunders et al, (2019) believe that research has to be carried out in layers and each layer has to be explored before moving onto the next and reaching the centre which allows researchers to provide an answer to their chosen topic.

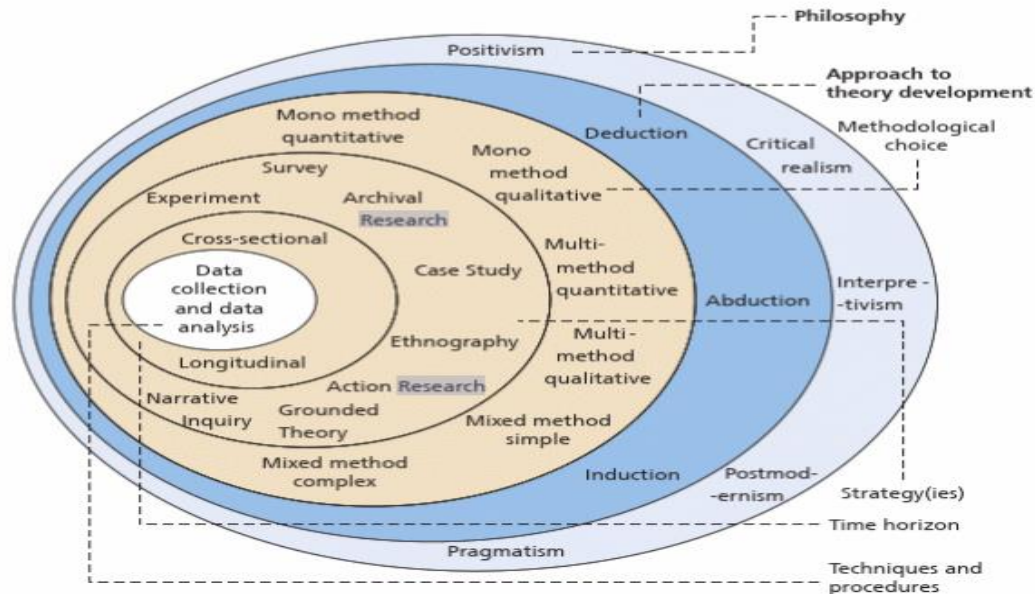


FIGURE 5 THE RESEARCH ONION. SOURCE: SAUNDERS ET AL, (2019).

As shown in the diagram above, when researching several areas need to be covered to produce a valid research project. To start the process of researching, researchers will need to decide on the philosophies they wish to use before moving onto their approach to theory development and will then move onto the methodological choice for their research.

Once these have been chosen researchers will move onto the strategies which will help them form answers to their research question followed by the length of time the research will be carried out over. Finally, the techniques and procedures will be chosen to further their research before being able to describe their findings and recommendations on their chosen research topic (Saunders et al, 2019).

Philosophy

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition that uses words and thoughts as a tool and an instrument for prediction and problem solving and rejects the idea that the function of thought is to describe and mirror reality. According to Morgan, (2014), it is known as a practical approach to solving problems and pragmatists attempt to find a balance

between principles. A pragmatist will always consider the practical side and does not worry about the theory or ideology behind a subject. Goldkuhl, (2012) stated pragmatism is an important paradigm for researchers that carry out qualitative research.

Pragmatism provides a different account of knowledge and a different understanding of the way human beings can acquire knowledge (Biesta and Burbles, 2003). A tendency of philosophy to conform to the needs and utilities of life in its fundamental principles. When thought about an object has found its rest in belief, only then their action on the subject can firmly and safely begin (Bawden, 1904).

Interpretivism

Interpretivism is opposite to positivism. After all, interpretivist believe that every individual is intricate and complex because everyone experiences the same 'objective reality' in very different ways and have their own reasoning behind the way they have interpreted and understood the information (Thomas, 2015). Interpretivism requires researchers to grasp the meaning of others' research to make gain their own understanding of what they have researched (Blaxter et al, 2010).

Interpretivism is an extremely important methodology tool during research because it gathers others' opinions on a chosen topic which allows the researcher to analyse their chosen topic in further detail (Williams, 2000).

Positivism

Positivism is a contrasting philosophy to Interpretivism because it promotes the application of methods used in natural science to social reality (Bryman, 2016). Positivism is a philosophical system that is deeply rooted in science and mathematics because it is based on views that what exists can be verified through experiments, observations, and mathematical proof. Positivists believe that everything else is non-existent and

only believe in the objective truth which can be discovered through science and mathematics (Hammersley, 1992). Alongside this, a positivist approach will be based on examining statistics from previous studies which will support carrying out investigations into their chosen research topic. Positivism is known as a descriptive category because it allows researchers to gather factual information in controlled environments and research can be measured more accurately within the controlled environment (Chandler and Munday, 2011).

Although the philosophies stated above will be highlighted throughout the research carried out, the main philosophy that was followed was Pragmatism. The reasoning for focusing on a pragmatist approach is because it is also known as a halfway approach where the researcher understands that there were statistics available to implement a picture regarding suicide and self-harm, on the other hand, the researcher understands that situations change over time and therefore the outlook on specific situations vary dependant on the time the previous research has taken place. Pragmatism is the most appropriate philosophy because it allowed the researcher to find a balance between factual evidence and information gathered through primary research.

Type

Qualitative

Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data to gain an understanding of concepts or experiences and it can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for current or future research. Qualitative research is used in the humanities and social sciences (Hennink, 2020). It is also used to understand how individuals view the world and although there are many approaches to this sort of research, it tends to be flexible with a focus on retaining rich meaning when interpreting data. Researchers that follow a qualitative approach are

often considered as instruments because all observations, analyses, and interpretations are filtered through their own personal views (Janis et al, 2020). The advantages of qualitative research are that it provides meaningful insights within a natural setting, provides flexibility, and generates new ideas, and does not require direct observation. The disadvantages to qualitative research are that it becomes very subjective and potentially unreliable as well as limited generalisability (McBurney, 1998).

Quantitative

Quantitative research allows researchers to deal with numbers and statistics which can be used to test a hypothesis by systematically collecting and analysing data. Quantitative research is expressed through numbers and graphs to test or confirm assumptions or theories. Gomm, (2004) states that the most common approach used when carrying out quantitative research is surveys because they contain closed-ended questions although, the researcher can use case studies to aid their research (Pole and Lampard, 2002). To carry out quantitative research requires a large number of participants.

Black, (1998) explains the strengths of quantitative research are that it allows the researcher to reach a higher sample size to gain greater credibility, information can be collected quickly and the participants can remain anonymous which provides reassurance for the participants and their willingness to engage. The weaknesses of quantitative research are it sometimes creates unnatural environments and resulting in false answers being provided and there is no access to specific feedback or explanation to the answers discovered throughout the research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

An emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative was essential during the researcher's primary research because the researcher gathered information that provided statistical

evidence alongside, opinions and informative evidence which was collated to form the analysis.

Approach

Deductive

When following the deductive approach individuals set out with a generalisation/hypothesis which follows a process to reach a specific and logical conclusion. From this process, researchers will make a prediction from their hypothesis. According to Bryman, (2016) deduction uses more common information to arrive at a specific conclusion. Yet, a conclusion is reached based on the validity of the original hypothesis, and the conclusion is strongly based on the hypothesis for a deductive approach to be used within a research project (O'Leary, 2014). The process involves a theory which then the researcher can decide a hypothesis, then move onto the research and observation and finalise results in a conclusion of their hypothesis.

The researcher has decided to follow a deductive approach because they have a hypothesis in mind which is 'suicide and self-harm appears worse within female prisons compared to male prisons'.

Methodological Choice

Triangulation

According to Flick, (2007) triangulation implies that there is more than one source of information or more than one way of collecting data to ensure the researcher exhausts all avenues of research and interpretation of the data collected. McNeil and Chapman, (2005) suggest by doing this it allows the opportunity for the information gathered from individual sources to be cross-checked by another source which helps make the research more reliable (Noble and Heale, 2019). The researcher has chosen the triangulation method because the information they gathered came from a wide variety of sources both through primary and secondary research. Also, the researcher aimed to

gather an extensive amount of research which enabled them to provide a full picture of the research topic before deciding on recommendations and forming an opinion.

Strategies

Surveys

Surveys are one of the main ways to gain information from individuals for a particular research topic as well as the most popular strategy because they can be conducted in many ways and have many purposes.

Surveys allow researchers to ask minimal participants however, they can ask a large number of individuals depending on their target group. Surveys are a popular choice when conducting research because they can be distributed as questionnaires online, over the phone, via mail, or in-person says Biggam, (2011) supporting this argument, Caes, et al, (2018) suggests that surveys can be used as a tool via social media to reach larger target groups. The information is gathered using a standardized procedure that allows all participants to be asked the same questions, in the same way, to ensure the research is reliable and to avoid any biased opinions to impact the outcome of the research.

Surveys provide researchers with the opportunity to conduct the research in several ways depending on the methodological approach used for the topic (Bourque and Fielder, 2003). Choosing to carry out a survey comes with many benefits such as, it is easy and quick to analyse, provides accuracy, respondents can be honest and flexible and it allows more people to participate due to the variety of ways surveys can be distributed. In contrast to this, surveys come with disadvantages such as, close-ended questions have lower validity rates, errors in the data due to not all the questions being answered and respondents may not be honest in their answers which produces a bias in the data.

Interviews

Bell, (2014) expressed how interviews are an excellent way in gathering extensive information because researchers can ask their interviewees to expand on the answers they have given as well as read their body language. Interviews are much more personal than other research strategies yet, it is one of the best ways to gather information to reach a conclusion from research (Rapley, 2016). There are many advantages to interviews which are, they enable researchers to gather detailed information and perceptions of a specific topic and they allow more detailed questions to be asked compared to a survey. The disadvantages to interviews are that they are very time-consuming and transcribing what has been said can be difficult because not all the information may be gathered. Also, when interviewing each interviewer will understand and transcribe in different ways (Denscombe, 2014). During the current pandemic, interviews are much harder to conduct due to the risk of infection. Despite this, the researcher is fortunate to work within a prison environment and is therefore near to their target group. Although interviews have been advised not to take place due to the pandemic, the researcher was fortunate to be able to use this form of strategy to assist in gathering valuable information because of their occupation.

Ethnography

Ethnographic research is a strategy that is not used as often as other strategy options and falls into qualitative research yet, using this strategy allows researchers to observe and interact with the study participants in their real-life environment. Ethnography was made more popular through anthropology but is now used across a wide range of social sciences (Popescu, 2018). The aim behind ethnographic research is to gain insights into how users interact in their natural environment because it provides an in-depth insight into participants and their actions when responding to specific encoun-

ters during the day. Mariampolski, (2005) explains that ethnography allows the researcher to understand exactly what happens within the environment and how participants interact with everyone around them. Ethnographic research can be carried out in several ways such as diary studies, video recordings, direct observation, and photography. The length of research for this approach can vary depending on how much information is gained from the researcher's observations.

Ethnography comes with many benefits such as providing a deeper understanding of experiences and practices, it can provide a voice to practices that have been overlooked and it can uncover experiences and knowledge that other methods miss out on due to it being in a real-life setting. In contrast to this, it also has disadvantages because it involves extensive work which is time-consuming, and it could take longer than the researcher has planned. Also, it is very difficult to negotiate access to the setting from external companies and may not be allowed to carry out this sort of research due to sensitivity reasons (Home Office, 2020).

Time Horizon

Cross-sectional

Cross-sectional research is also known as cross-sectional analysis and is a type of observational study that analyses data from a set population or a representative subset, at a specific point in time. Researchers will choose their participants based on particular variables of interest and is likely to be used during social science, education, and developmental psychology (Sarantakos, 1998). Cross-sectional research has been described as descriptive research and not relational which means you cannot use the variables to determine the cause of something. Researchers record the information, however, will not change the variables set in the study. This method is used to make inferences about possible relationships and to gather data which will be used

to support further research and experiments (Buchanan, 2009). Cross-sectional research has many advantages such as, being fast and inexpensive, prompts further study by providing a springboard to research further. However, it does have several disadvantages because it cannot differentiate between cause and effect which means a conclusion cannot be found. Also, it can result in biases because surveys are based on individuals' lives and may result in reporting being inaccurate due to the information not being verified.

Techniques and Procedures

Data Collection

Data collection is a process used to collect and measure data on specific variables through established systems which allow researchers to evaluate the outcome by answering the questions designed. Data can be collected through many avenues such as via the internet, using previously collected data, or reusing someone else's data (Punch, 1998). The relevant data is collected by carrying out surveys, interviews, polls, and focus groups which are known as primary data collection. Other techniques of collecting data are by using government reports, sales reports, mission statements, or financial reports, this form of data collection is known as secondary data collection. This emphasises how there is a vast majority of ways for researchers to collect data to produce a good quality project (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process that involves moulded data to be examined for the researcher to interpret and discover relevant information, propose conclusions, and aid decision-making of issues that arise in the research. According to the University of Minnesota, (2019) data analysis provides the opportunity for the researcher to discover links between primary research carried out and statistical research. Following on, the analysis of data allows the researcher to determine the impact of the work

carried out, communicate results found and assess the quality of their findings (Kumar, 2014).

Research Design and Implementation

The researcher had invested a lot of time in making decisions regarding the best way to gather up-to-date and reliable information for suicide and self-harm in prisons. The main aspect which has proven to be a huge advantage for the researcher is the fact they work as a prison officer and have many contacts in the other establishments and the correct field to assist in their primary research if their colleagues and associates are willing to participate. Also, working as a prison officer has given the researcher the passion and interest to pursue research in their chosen field because the researcher would like others to understand the extent and issues revolving around suicide and self-harm in prisons. The researcher gathered data through carefully selecting relevant questions which supported them in answering the overall dissertation question and enabled the researcher to produce an accurate analysis of the data gathered. The data was gathered through using the researcher's personal diary and observations they carried out throughout their working day as well as, making a questionnaire and interviewing individuals with a wealth of knowledge in the topic area.

By doing this the researcher gathered an extensive amount of data to work from which enabled them to draw conclusions and emphasise the issues regarding suicide and self-harm by making valuable recommendations on how to improve the current prison crisis.

The researcher chose their target group as associates and individual that work in prisons because they have a clear understanding of how difficult the situations surrounding suicide and self-harm and it was the suitable option to gather the correct information in a statistical and opinionated manner.

The data gathered was analysed and formed using Google Forms because it provided the researcher with graphs and statistics from the questionnaire. The researcher has chosen Google Forms to formulate all the data because it provided statistical evidence such as percentages which helped to articulate the answers and provided a clearer overview for specific questions. It also provided the researcher the opportunity to design questions in different ways such as; open-ended questions, one-worded answers, multiple-choice and enabled the researcher to highlight the questions that needed to be answered and made a priority. Google Forms was an efficient way to gather information and is not as time extensive as formulating the graphs manually and grouping all the information gathered.

Sample

When carrying out the research, a sample group was chosen which supported gathering relevant information to answer the dissertation question. The researcher had chosen a sample of 21 participants that have a range of experience within the prison environment, whether that is through being an existing officer, non-operational staff, or prison officers that have retired recently.

The small sample size was chosen because it was difficult to access other prisons due to Covid-19, but it would have increased if accessibility was easier. The prison staff was chosen at close proximity because the researcher had decided to focus on prisons across England and Wales. Therefore, the researcher chose a maximum of six prisons which are located across England and Wales and both male and female establishments in order to distinguish differences between them. The target group had been chosen to carry out primary research because they provided the researcher with ex-

tremely valuable information through their experience of working in prisons. The participants were able to provide first-hand information based on real-life situations which are essential for the researcher because they were able to ascertain accurate and credible information. Alongside, providing the most up-to-date evidence of the difficulties when dealing with instances of suicide and self-harm currently and over previous years. The researcher had chosen this type of sample group because it provided them with valuable data because it was based on first-hand experiences also, it allowed the researcher to carefully choose individuals with specialist expertise and knowledge in the subject chosen and the information provided can provide insight to the topic.

Limitations

There There were an extensive amount of limitations for the researcher when carrying out their primary research because the topic they have chosen is an extremely sensitive topic that has to be spoken about correctly in order for the general public to gain an accurate view of suicide and self-harm in prisons. The main difficulty the researcher had was gaining access to the appropriate participants to retrieve the most reliable information to ensure the dissertation has the most beneficial data to work from. However, alongside accessing the participants the researcher had another hurdle to surpass which was entering the establishments to talk to prison staff.

This in itself posed a huge limitation because many prisons did not allow visitors into their establishments, especially when asking for such sensitive information which could lead back to their establishment. The researcher had to go through several security checks to ensure they were allowed entry into the establishment as well as providing the governors an oversight on what they wished to research when interviewing their prison staff.

Still, this could have been stopped if a governor refused to allow the researcher to use their staff as participants and would have resulted in the researcher having to re-think their strategy and where they will gain the information from to complete the research on suicide and self-harm.

Another limitation the researcher faced was whether the participants are willing to take part in surveys or interviews because they may become hostile when providing information that is essential to the dissertation. The participants may have become distant and not want to have continued with the interview which causes an issue for the researcher because they have not been able to gain as much information as they would have liked to add to their data collection. Finally, the most difficult limitation the researcher was faced with was asking the participants extremely sensitive questions to gain appropriate data but, this could have caused a lot of distress to the participants because they will have had to re-live many of their traumatic experiences due to some of the questions being personal and the participant may have become hostile towards the researcher because they are having to talk about their personal experiences which they may find extremely difficult.

Data protection was one of the most common limitations in this sort of topic because the data that was provided will be based on individuals' lives. It also involved statistics that are specific to the establishment and they may not want the public to know about these and the participants may have become reluctant to provide valuable information. Alongside this, the information provided was regarding individuals and their complex needs which many organisations are reluctant to provide because of the General Data Protection Regulations.

Ethics

Ethics will play an extremely important role in the researcher's chosen topic because of the sensitivity and the information that will be acquired through primary research. When carrying out the research, the researcher had to consider the severity of maintaining the anonymity of the establishments chosen as well as its participants remaining anonymous throughout the whole process of primary data collecting. Anonymity was imperative throughout this topic because the information given was specifically targeted for the individual establishment which could have posed a risk of readers discovering which establishment provided specific information therefore, anonymity had to be a priority throughout. Also, the integrity of establishments needed to be maintained throughout the whole process, and this was done by ensuring anonymity was upheld.

This was done by not using the names of the establishments and labelling them as numbers as well as not using names or genders of participants to prevent bias and ensuring their identity was not revealed to others, participants were as labelled as numbers to prevent any issues arising for the participant and their current working establishment.

Validity was maintained throughout the data collection process by using credible and reliable sources to gather information.

It was important to use reliable sources because it indicated that the information gathered by the researcher shows accuracy as well as factual information to base the thought process behind the entire topic.

In order for the researcher to carry out their primary research, they ensured consent was given from the participants and establishment managers and emphasised that the

participants are assisting with the research voluntarily. Before allowing the participants to voluntarily take part in the research the project was explained in depth to ensure they were comfortable with taking part as well as throughout the interviewing process. The researcher highlighted that the participants could stop the process whenever they felt uncomfortable or if they wanted to withdraw their participation in the interview whenever they felt was necessary and the researcher reassured the participant that the information gathered will be treated with respect and will remain confidential throughout.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis

Analysis of Questionnaire

The main focus of the research carried out was to discover what types of self-harm are prominent across male and female prisons in England and Wales, and how establishments support individuals in crisis. An important factor to consider was to ensure questionnaires and interviews were carried out with staff that work in a male or female establishment or that have had experience working in both.

The graphs were formed from statistical data gathered from close-ended questions within the questionnaire and the themes discovered were formed from the open-ended questions from the researcher's questionnaire as well as the interviews. Figure 6 indicates that 45.5% of respondents have worked in male and female establishments. This is extremely important because it prevents any bias and the participants are able to identify the main differences which are essential for the findings

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2. Have you worked in a male or female prison?
22 responses

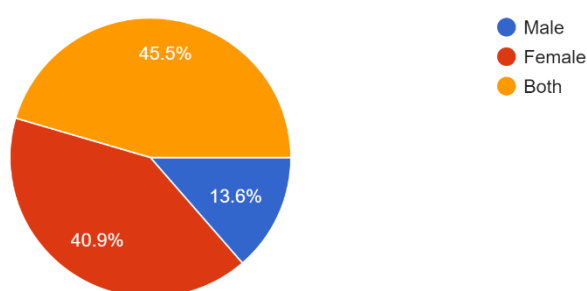


FIGURE 6 RESPONDENTS WORKING IN A MALE OR FEMALE ESTABLISHMENT

Alongside ensuring the correct target group was selected it was vital to consider participants that work in different areas of the prison and not just officers as well as selecting individuals that

have various years' service because the prison service is evolving and procedures are changing due to advancements in the service.

Figure 7 highlights that the respondents have had various lengths of service, however, emphasises the lack of experience in prisons with 50% of respondents only having 1-5 years. This in itself poses problems because as stated by participant 12 "it takes several years to be a competent officer". However, it is contradicted by interviewee 3 who stated, "new staff can bring a lot to the service due to their drive and enthusiasm compared to longer-serving staff that "desensitise to issues that arise". Garside et al, (2018) supports the view of participant 12 because they expressed how it takes a period of time to be able to learn the regime and how to deal with complex prisoners which indicate it will take a while to become competent in the role. The researcher's diary confirms the lack of experience within the prison whereby each residential unit has at least 4 members of staff with under 3 years of experience in the job role.

1. How many years service do you have working in Prisons?
22 responses

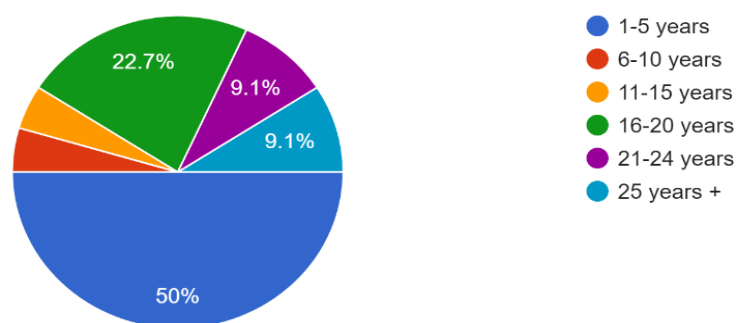


FIGURE 7 LENGTH OF SERVICE IN THE PRISON SERVICE

When carrying out research surrounding male and female self-harm in prisons, Garbutt & Casey (2015) released figures showing between 7 & 17% of men self-harm in prisons compared to 10 & 17% of females self-harm which indicates self-harm is much

more prominent in the female estate. This literature is corroborated with the data collected in Figure 8, 95.5% of participants have said self-harm is worse in the female estate. However, this leads to querying what the literature and respondents mean by self-harm being worse. Participant 15 stated, “the frequency of self-harm in the female estate is much worse with a lot of superficial self-harm whereas, in the male estate it doesn’t happen as often but when someone self-harms it is more severe”. This is also shown in figure 3 which indicates the frequency of self-harm in prisons. Not only does literature support the self-harm figures across the female estate, the researcher’s diary indicates that there was at least 1 act of self-harm on every unit each day from the period the diary was undertaken. The researcher’s observations support the statement of increased escalation of self-harm in the female estate where on one occasion ‘an individual self-harmed in excess of seven times in the space of four hours with each instance escalating and results in the prisoner needing outside hospital attention. The self-harm started as superficial cuts and resulted in a deep laceration which required suturing as well as the individual attempting to drown themselves. It is alarming to discover that women account for the majority of self-harm in prisons when according to the Howard League for Penal Reform, (2020) there are 76,320 men in custody across England and Wales and 3235 women, indicating the population difference between male and females is enormous.

3. How often does self-harm take place at your place of work?

22 responses

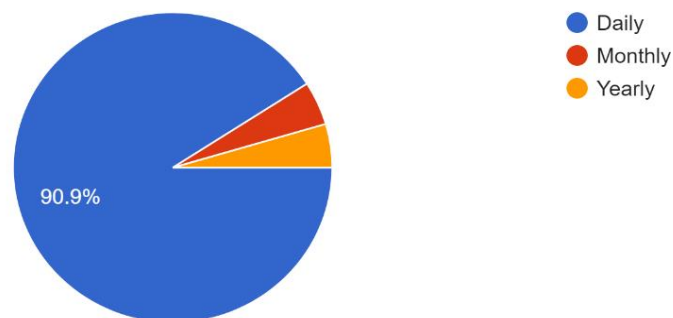


FIGURE 8 FREQUENCY OF SELF-HARM IN THE RESPONDENTS ESTABLISHMENT.

Also, figure 9 indicates how often a suicide attempt takes place across different establishments in England and Wales.

Suicides in prisons have become an ever-growing concern with figures increasing each year, the Howard League for legal reform 2020, released figures showing between 2013-2016 suicide attempts rose by 43%. Though, it is difficult to indicate from these figures whether there were more in male or female prisons. But from an interview carried out with interviewee 2, having experience in both establishments whose role covers prisoners welfare stated: "suicide is much worse in the male estate because they bottle up their feelings, therefore, do not have the correct support networks in place which leads them to act on impulse because they feel they cannot cope any longer whereas women are more likely to express how their feeling and receive intervention from the correct departments before acting on suicidal thoughts". The response from interviewee 2 and the figures from the research is confirmed by Dooley, (1990) which indicates that suicide is higher in the male estate compared to the female estate.

4. How often does a suicide/suicide attempt take place at your place of work? If unknown, provide an average.
22 responses

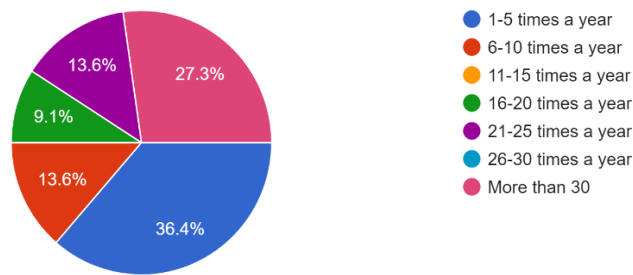


FIGURE 9 SUICIDE ATTEMPTS IN SPECIFIC ESTABLISHMENTS

Issues in prisons can vary however, one of the main problems that make managing prisoners is mental health. There is a massive percentage of prisoners that suffer from mental health issues at different levels and there are many that have not been identified because they have never sought support. Gunn et al, (1991) indicate the most common mental health issues diagnosed by mental health professionals were: psychoses, personality disorder, and substance misuse/abuse. Some of these were corroborated with participants who stated that personality disorder is prominent at their place of work, with 100% of participants highlighted this as most common. Yet, 95.5% of participants indicated that anxiety and depression are apparent at their establishment. This is concerning that outside mental health professionals have not recognised anxiety and depression as being a mental health issue in prisons especially when most prisoners are under the mental health team which was revealed in the researcher's diary. More than 75% of prisoners the researcher observed had a visit from the mental health team or asked staff to contact them because they were struggling with anxiety and the research logged that most prisoners stated they suffered from anxiety, depression, personality disorder, and PTSD. Figure 10 identifies the mental health issues prison staff are aware of and deal with daily.

13. What types of mental health issues are prominent in your establishment? Please tick the relevant answers.

22 responses

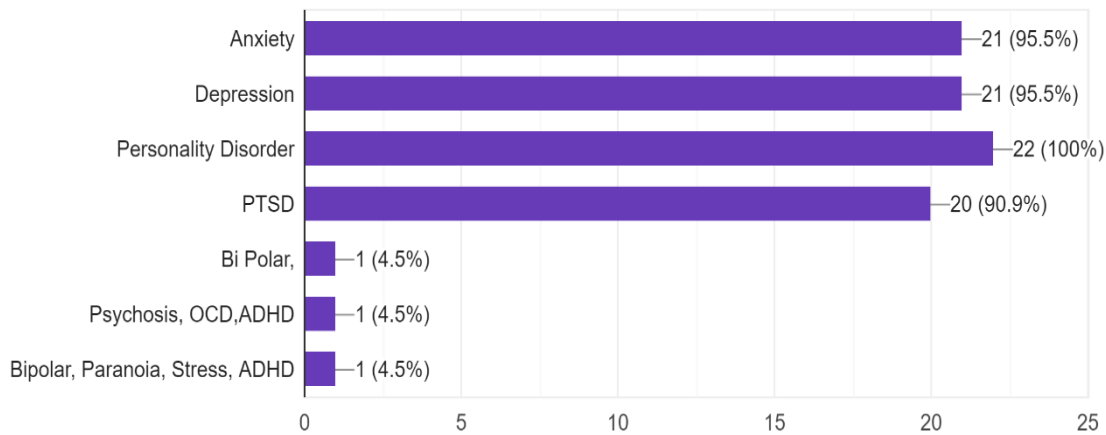


FIGURE 10 FIGURE 10: MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS PROMINENT WITHIN A CUSTODIAL ENVIRONMENT

Themes

When analysing the data gathered through the questionnaires and interviews 5 clear themes were identified in the answers, they are: need continuity, lack of time, activities are important, communication is important, and prisoners need to know someone cares. These were common themes that staff identified were needed to better support prisoners during their time in custody.

Continuity

When reviewing these themes, needing continuity is absolutely essential within a custodial environment because prisoners form a relationship and trust with their designated wing staff which allows them to confide in staff which de-escalates their intense emotions. For example, participant 12 stated “the majority don’t like change, and some don’t like to confide in new staff. Also, participant 14 states” majority of prisoners done like change”. Most of all this is supported by interviewee 1 who stated, “both staff and prisoners need consistency which would benefit both”. Garside et al, (2018) also emphasise the need of prisoners needing a good rapport with the staff to confide in them. Whereas, if several staff members are changing the location of work this causes

uncertainty for the prisoners because they have not built bonds with other staff and makes it extremely difficult for other staff to notice when a prisoner is acting definitely or becoming very withdrawn. This was documented by the researcher because on several days where there was no regular staff on a specific unit self-harm increased and, on several occasions, staff assistance was required to de-escalate volatile situations. Therefore, it is evident that continuity is key within a custodial environment to assist with rehabilitation because prisoners need to be surrounded by people they trust and feel safe whilst in custody. Without continuity, it will have a drastic effect on prisoners' rehabilitation.

Distraction Material

Another extremely prominent theme is the accessibility to distraction materials. Distraction items are vital for prisoners because it enables them to remain busy and occupied which can potentially prevent prisoners from self-harming out of boredom which was highlighted throughout the questionnaire response. Prisoners need to be busy and involved in the purposeful activity because it gives them the motivation to continue their journey with bettering themselves. For example, several participants listed activities available to prisoners in their establishment, such as gym, education, work, family visits, multi-faith rooms, and in-room activities. Each activity provides a vital role in keeping prisoners distracted. However, more recently there is a strong focus on providing ample in cell activities due to prison regimes becoming extremely restricted due to the global pandemic the country is facing. Due to COVID-19, all activities have been suspended and only a short amount of time is allocated to be out of their cells. Therefore, distraction items are essential for prisoners especially when suffering from mental health. This was supported by participant 24 who stated in their interview "we provide items such as card making, material, writing, material to stay in contact with

families, arts & crafts, fidget cubes, puzzles and more recently video calls to the family due to face to face visits being suspended” without any of these activities or items prisoners would struggle massively due to having a lot of time to think about their past and traumatic experiences, emphasising the importance of distracting prisoners. The argument for distraction material was supported by literature from Prison Advice, (2020) which stated that distraction materials such as word search puzzles are provided to keep prisoners occupied and reduce their self-harm.

To Feel Safe and Cared For

The main focus when in prison is for prisoners to feel safe, comforted, and cared for. Many prisoners come from extremely traumatic backgrounds or have no support networks in the communities which makes it important for them to feel cared for this becomes a highlighted theme during research. Participant 1 stated prisoners need “attention”, participant 14 said “ staff provide support and makes prisoners feel safe”, interviewee 5 emphasised “prison makes them feel like they aren’t alone” and interviewee 4 emphasises how staff showing compassion allows prisoners to “voice more of their concerns and feel listened to as well as feeling as if they have a voice which helps build trust”, indicating both questionnaire participants and interviewees share the same vision. Many prisoners have been through horrific childhoods and involved with a lot of abuse whether that being physical, emotional, mental, or sexual abuse which makes it extremely difficult for them to trust staff because everyone they have trusted previously has caused them a great deal of trauma. Therefore, being in prison is a safe place for them, but, makes it extremely difficult for prisoners to build relationships with staff and to trust them without doubting staff. However, once this barrier has been overcome it allows prisoners to be open and honest with staff, resulting in staff

providing the emotional support they need and show empathy which prisoners are grateful for.

Prison becomes an environment where prisoners feel cared for and supported because of the multiple agencies that are offered to them with specialised skills to assist prisoners when dealing with trauma, which is one of the stages towards rehabilitation. Participant 25 shows the agencies available in prisons are: mental health, substance misuse, drug, and alcohol rehabilitation schemes, specialise in personality disorder, and key workers. Supported by interviewee 1 who states, 'prisoners having one-to-one sessions with their keywork helps relieve pressures and feel as though they are understood because they build an extremely strong rapport with their key worker'. Emphasising the need for a multi-agency approach is essential when supporting prisoners through trauma because of the number of resources invested into each individual. Not only having a multi-agency approach but overall having staff that care is vital to the prisoners when reliving their past. If prisoners didn't feel cared for or listened to whilst in custody it would make their journey much more difficult and would not want to change because they feel they cannot go through these changes alone. Therefore, having a support network from staff is imperative.

Importance of Communication

Finally, another theme that becomes apparent within the questionnaire answers was the importance of communication with a custodial environment, especially when referring to prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm. Communication is vital especially with the vast amount of shift changes on a given unit because all staff needs to be aware of prisoners that are more at risk and what their risk factors are, without knowing this staff is not able to pass important information onto the next shift change over. Several

respondents stated that staff needs to “communicate more” and “feedback vital” information because it allows staff to become more effective when dealing with a prisoner who is struggling. On the other hand, prisoners need to be a part of the communication because they can inform staff of others who are struggling and have been confided in. If staff and prisoners communicate effectively it will help build stronger relationships and enable prisoners to feel as though they have a support network behind them and therefore, reducing the impulse of prisoners wanting to self-harm because staff have provided them with a piece of valuable information and not feeling as though they are forgotten about. Communication is the most important skill needed in custodial environments whether that is written, verbal, or listening to others. Because multiple agencies within a prison work together to support and formulate new strategies in reducing suicide and self-harm. Regardless of the form of communication that takes place, everything must be documented in a prisoners case file just in case the unfortunate happens and that individual ends their life, emphasising the importance because the establishment will be required to show evidence of the communication and support they have provided that prisoner to ensure it was sufficient to show everything was done to support them. This statement is supported by Her Majesty’s Prison Service (2005) which outlined the importance of communication via an ACCT especially recording the conversations has with specific prisoners’.

Importance of the ACCT Document

The Assessment care in Custody Teamwork (ACCT) document is one of the most important documents that are filled out daily when prisoners are at risk of suicide and self-harm and overall becomes a safeguarding document. Staff members across establishments across Wales and England identified that an ACCT will be opened when there is a “Change in the mood”, “act of self-harm or attempt suicide” Or thoughts of

self-harm, these responses are supported and literature from Her Majesty's prison service (2005). This document highlights individuals that need further support and reassurance compared to others. The ACCT document is vital because if a prisoner soberly self-harm or attempt suicide, it is likely they will be found during their ACCT due to their checks and potentially stops the prisoner from ending their life. From the questionnaires, participants have highlighted ACCT documents as a way of "support for prisoners" with 90% of participants stating it provides "necessary support". An individual's risk to themselves is graded by their level of observation which ranges from 1 per hour to 5 per hour and a constant watch according to participants to participant 19. This indicates that the risk is tailored to each individual and that a prisoner on 1 observation poses less risk of suicide and self-harm however, a prisoner that has been placed on a constant watch poses a severe risk where they cannot be left alone and is under constant supervision 24 hours a day. Although the ACCT document becomes the most important document that must be completed by staff when managing risk, it does cause a lot of controversy amongst staff. For example, participant 1 has highlighted that ACCT documents in the male and female establishments are completely different, they expressed in a female establishment prisoners on an ACCT are checked every hour a 4 conversations need to be recorded throughout the day such as AM, PM, EVENING and NIGHT. However, in male establishments, a conversation has to be recorded within a specified time frame. This causes a lot of concern and raises many questions because all establishments follow HMPPS protocols which should be the same across male and female establishments however, there must be an apparent reason why female establishments follow a separate ACCT document. Participant 9 stated how "self-harm is less frequent in the male estate and self-harm

in the female estate is so high and requires the checks per hour to ensure no irreversible damage has been caused". This statement corroborates with several pieces of literature that self-harm is more prominent in the female establishment and happens more frequently compared to the male establishment. Finally, it confirms the hypothesis that "suicide and self-harm are worse in the female estate". Not only does the literature suggest this but the primary research carried out has allowed the researches hypothesis to be proven. Although proven as an essential document participants expressed their concerns regarding the ACCT, participant 13 argued that they are "very time and resource-intensive" and the "quality is often questionable" which appears alarming when these are used to support a prisoner in crisis.

Analysis of Diary

When reviewing the questionnaire relating to policies staff follow concerning suicide and self-harm it was extremely alarming to discover that a small percentage of staff feel that the policy does not provide them with enough guidance for dealing with suicide and self-harm incidents. This creates worry because the policy is the care document that staff refers to and it could cause staff to question their ability. However, in these instances, it can become extremely dangerous very quickly and staff should feel confident when faced with difficult circumstances. If staff doubt their ability it could potentially result in them not effectively dealing with the situation at hand. Although, in defence of the current PSI, it is extremely difficult to provide guidance covering every scenario because each self-harm or suicide because each incident will be unique and have different contributing factors which led to the incident machining it extremely difficult for HPPS to deliver a policy which covers all situations. Also, given the environment, it means staff learns as the instances happen because improvements will be made from the previous instance.

Another being staff who responded to the questionnaire feel as though they do not get enough training to deal with the challenges working in a prison involves, 13 respondents, share the same view. This appears concerning because all staff should feel confident in their abilities and should feel competent to fulfill their role once completing training, indicating the current training that is being delivered to staff may need reviewing to improve the way staff feels. During an interview, respondent 4 stated “we are given the basic tools to perform the role, but not current regime low staffing levels do not allow the establishment to deliver training or refresher courses. Also, staff only have access to certain tool when supporting prisoners” however an argument against this would be if the staff does not feel competent and they want to have further training it is their responsibility to ask and reach out for help because establishments have hundreds of staff and cannot ask everyone individually, staff need to take responsibility and ownership in asking for more training in the areas they feel less competent. By doing this it improves staff morale and confidence in one another’s the ability when working together. This argument is supported by respondent 16 who argued “staff need to request refreshers; however, more workshops need to be put in place to help staff when talking to prisoners in crisis or in the act of self-harming.”

The most alarming concern was during an interview with respondent 20 who stated, “if a prisoner/person wants to end their life then they will find a way regardless of all the support and resources available”. This statement was the most distressing statement discovered throughout the primary and secondary research. After all, it emphasises the reality of the mindset individuals are in when they cannot see a way forward and make the most awful decision to want to end their life because they cannot deal with the pain that they feel every day.

Chapter 5 Conclusion & Recommendations

Conclusion

To conclude, from the extensive research carried out it is clear to see that suicide and self-harm is are many issues across prison establishments in England and Wales however, the research carried out only accounts for a small sample because there are prisons across the UK which have not been included in this research. Although a small sample has been chosen it was large enough to gain valuable knowledge and information to answer the hypothesis designed by the researcher. If the opportunity arises to research this topic in the future, a larger sample group should be chosen and a focus on all prisons should be considered to enable a more accurate representation of suicide and self-harm in prisons. From the secondary research and responses from the primary research it has been confirmed that self-harm is more prominent across the female estate in England and Wales compared to the male estate but in contrast to this suicide was much higher across male establishments which indicates that only part of the researcher's hypothesis was correct.

There is an extensive amount of literature available regarding suicide and self-harm across prison establishments which indicates it is a common topic when researching prisons however, it signifies that suicide and self-harm rates are continuously increasing and becoming higher each year. The procedures and protocols in place to reduce self-harm and suicide are not sufficient enough and need reviewing to improve the figures. For this to be successful it cannot be done by prison officers alone, it has to be done using a multi-agency approach because it allows individuals with valuable knowledge to come together and share their views and experiences on what would work best for each prisoner that has self-harm or attempted to take their own life.

Finally, the researcher carried out indicates that there is a lot more work to be done to support prisoners in crisis and to reduce the self-harm and suicide figures however, it is difficult to do so due to the complexity of individuals within a custodial environment and each case is unique to the individual, therefore, making it extremely difficult to provide a generalisation of guidance. Unfortunately, it is the situation that prison staff learns from each time they deal with an incident because they will all differ from one another.

Future research on this topic would be beneficial, especially focusing on wider prisons rather than narrowing it to prisons in England and Wales as this would provide a much clearer picture across the whole prison estates, including young offender institutes. Also, if this topic was to be explored further it would benefit from more qualitative research such as focus groups because it allows an opportunity for an open-ended discussion rather than select questions. However, this was not able to be carried out during this research due to being in a global pandemic and accessibility into establishments and to carry out focus groups where prohibited making the research available to be carried out extremely limited for the safety of the researcher and participants.

Recommendations:

- Review current PSI relating to suicide and self-harm to ensure staff feels confident in their ability.
- Offer more training and refreshers for staff to improve their skills often.
- Provide workshops relating to mental health for officers to be able to have a better understanding especially because of the complexity surrounding mental health.
- Have a closer multi-agency approach to all prisoners not just individuals on an open ACCT.

- Ensure the welfare of staff is a priority as well as the welfare of prisons because the challenging environment affects staff differently.

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Appendix

Appendix 1- Questionnaire

Questions

Responses

22

A study of Suicide and Self Harm in Male and Female establishments across England and Wales.

Dear participant,

I would like to thank you for taking the time to complete my online survey about 'Prison Staff perceptions of methods used to deal with suicide and self-harm across male and female establishments in England and Wales'. My name is Tia Kimber and I am currently a Masters student at University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information to support my research as to whether suicide and self-harm is worse in the male or female estate. There will be no more than 23 questions to be answered, ranging from multiple choice to extended answers and all responses will remain completely confidential between yourself and the researcher. To ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout each participant will remain anonymous and will be identified as 'participant 1' when writing the findings from this survey. If you have an information relating to the research or would like a copy of the dissertation, contact me on tkimber.148653@student.uwtsd.ac.uk. A copy of the dissertation will be available from 31 March 2021 if you wish to receive a copy. An ethics form was submitted to the University explaining how the research would take place and approval was given to proceed with the chosen research topic.

Are you Male or Female?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other...

1. How many years service do you have working in Prisons? *

- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21-24 years
- ☐ 25 years +

2. Have you worked in a male or female prison? *

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Both

3. How often does self-harm take place at your place of work? *

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Yearly
- ☐ Other...

4. How often does a suicide/suicide attempt take place at your place of work? If unknown, provide an average. *

- ☐ 1-5 times a year
- ☐ 6-10 times a year
- ☐ 11-15 times a year
- ☐ 16-20 times a year
- ☐ 21-25 times a year
- ☐ 26-30 times a year
- ☐ More than 30

5. What type of self-harm takes place in your work place? Please tick the relevant answers. *

- ☐ Ligaturing
- ☐ Cutting
- ☐ Burning
- ☐ Scratching
- ☐ Starving
- ☐ Hanging
- ☐ Drug Use
- ☐ Other...

6. In your opinion is self-harm worse in the Male or Female estate? *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

7. Why do prisoners self-harm? Please select the relevant answers.

- ☐ Build up of Pressure
- ☐ Bad News
- ☐ Relieve Stress
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Cannot have what they want
- ☐ Other...

8. Can you explain the ACCT document for your establishment? Focus on the checks carried out. *

Long answer text

9. What are the reasons for an ACCT to be opened?

Long answer text

10. Does your establishment have a Safer Custody *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. What support is available to prisoners who are struggling with their mental health? Please select the relevant answers.

- ☐ Samaritans
- ☐ Listeners Line
- ☐ Chaplaincy
- ☐ Mental Health Team
- ☐ Staff Support
- ☐ Other...

15. Do you believe involving prisoners in purposeful activity reduces the numbers of suicide and self-harm?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. If yes, why do you believe it reduced the levels of suicide and self-harm?

Long answer text

17. What purposeful activity is available to prisoners at your establishment? Please select the relevant answers. *

- ☐ In cell activity
- ☐ Gym
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Work
- ☐ Multi Faith Room
- ☐ Family Visits
- ☐ Other...

18. Do you believe low staffing levels can contribute towards suicide and self-harm? And why? *

Long answer text

19. Do you believe having a lack of experience on the landings can affect suicide and self-harm figures? And why? *

Long answer text

20. Prisons have introduced the role of a 'Key Worker', do you believe this role is effective? And why? *

Long answer text

21. Do you believe staff are provided with enough training to deal with daily challenges within establishments? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

22. What can prisons do in an attempt to reduce suicide and self-harm rates? *

Long answer text

23. How often does your establishment offer refresher training relating to suicide and self-harm? *

- ☐ Every 6 months
- ☐ Yearly
- ☐ Not sure