

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER

National
Probation
Service



**New approaches to suicide prevention in
probation settings:
*Practice and research perspectives***

AMY BECK (NPS LONDON),
LISA COOK (NPS LONDON),
JAY-MARIE MACKENZIE (UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER)

What is Probation? Is Suicide Prevention Work Relevant to Probation?

What is
probation
?

- NPS (high risk) CRC (Medium-low)
- Assessments at Court (NPS only)
- Supervision in the community
- Community Rehabilitation
- Enforcement of requirements of sentence
- Assessment of risk of reoffending, serious harm to others, and harm to self throughout sentence

Is suicide
prevention
relevant?

- High risk of suicide in prison studies
- Limited research in probation
- Estimated rates 7-8 times higher than general population (Sattar, 2001)
- High risk of suicide in licencees (Pratt et al, 2010)
- Previous research does not address risk prediction or prevention

Probation
Staff role in
suicide
prevention

- Assessing risk of suicide/self harm
- Raising concerns
- Communicating risk
- Risk Management planning in community/custody

NPS Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Strategic Priorities

- ▶ Improve practice and available support
 - ▶ Change attitudes and beliefs
 - ▶ Reduce access to suicide methods
 - ▶ Engage key stakeholders
 - ▶ Ensure data quality
 - ▶ Raise awareness
- ▶ NB The plan covers all NPS areas not only Approved Premises

Suicide Prevention: NPS developments and innovations

Strategy

- Suicide Prevention Strategic Action Plans
- NPS London Suicide Prevention Forum
- AP Suicide Prevention Champions
- Strategic Partnerships/ Collaborations
- SP and Recognised for Excellence
- Links between SP and EE.

Research

- Collaborating on SP research
- Supporting SP research
- Publicising findings
- Contributing to national SP research commissioning

Awareness raising

- Organising SP Conference
- Promoting SP Campaigns
- Contributing SP information to relevant publications
- SP added to Probation team meeting agendas
- Christmas Guidance on managing SP risk

Training/ Development †

- Specialist probation suicide prevention training
- Probation SP Practitioner Guide
- Learning from suicide incidents
- Staff resilience workshops
- Trauma Support Debriefing

Systems and processes

- EQUIP Mapping
- Delius
- Safety knives in Aps
- DUS staff support packs
- Inquest support

“the AP has developed much more of an understanding of the issues around suicide and self harm over recent years”
(Jan 2018 AP staff member)

“To think within my team about how we can improve identification of those at high risk of SH/S and what our practice should be regarding breach and transitions”

(answer on how to take forward learning from Staff member who attended Suicide prevention conference 2017)

“A pan-London suicide prevention forum had developed an impressive suicide prevention strategy, which was being led by the NPS forensic psychologist. Further training was planned for staff, consultancy was available, and learning was being disseminated nationally.”

(HMIP, Jan 2018)

“I believe that all the staff here were grateful to have the offer of support even if they didn't all take it up. When I first mentioned it to staff there didn't appear to be much interest in taking it up. I was surprised on the day as to how many staff did take it up in the end and I think that is evidence as to how the team viewed it. The feedback I have received has all been very positive. I think particularly they felt reassured that they were managing well or reassured knowing there is support available. I would definitely recommend it to colleagues in a similar situation. I think having a space that is quiet and confidential for staff to talk it is important when delivering this support and I think that is something we were able to deliver”

(Staff feedback after trauma support meeting following a death)

“For the first time in years I felt able to wear a short sleeved t-shirt in public”

(Service user involved in planning self harm awareness day activities with staff in an Approved Premises in London)

Research: Understanding Probation Suicides in the context of the Probation Process

Review of
probation suicides
in the Community

(Case files)

Understanding
probation officer
suicide risk decisions

(OASys assessments)

Research: Understanding Probation Suicides in the context of the Probation Process



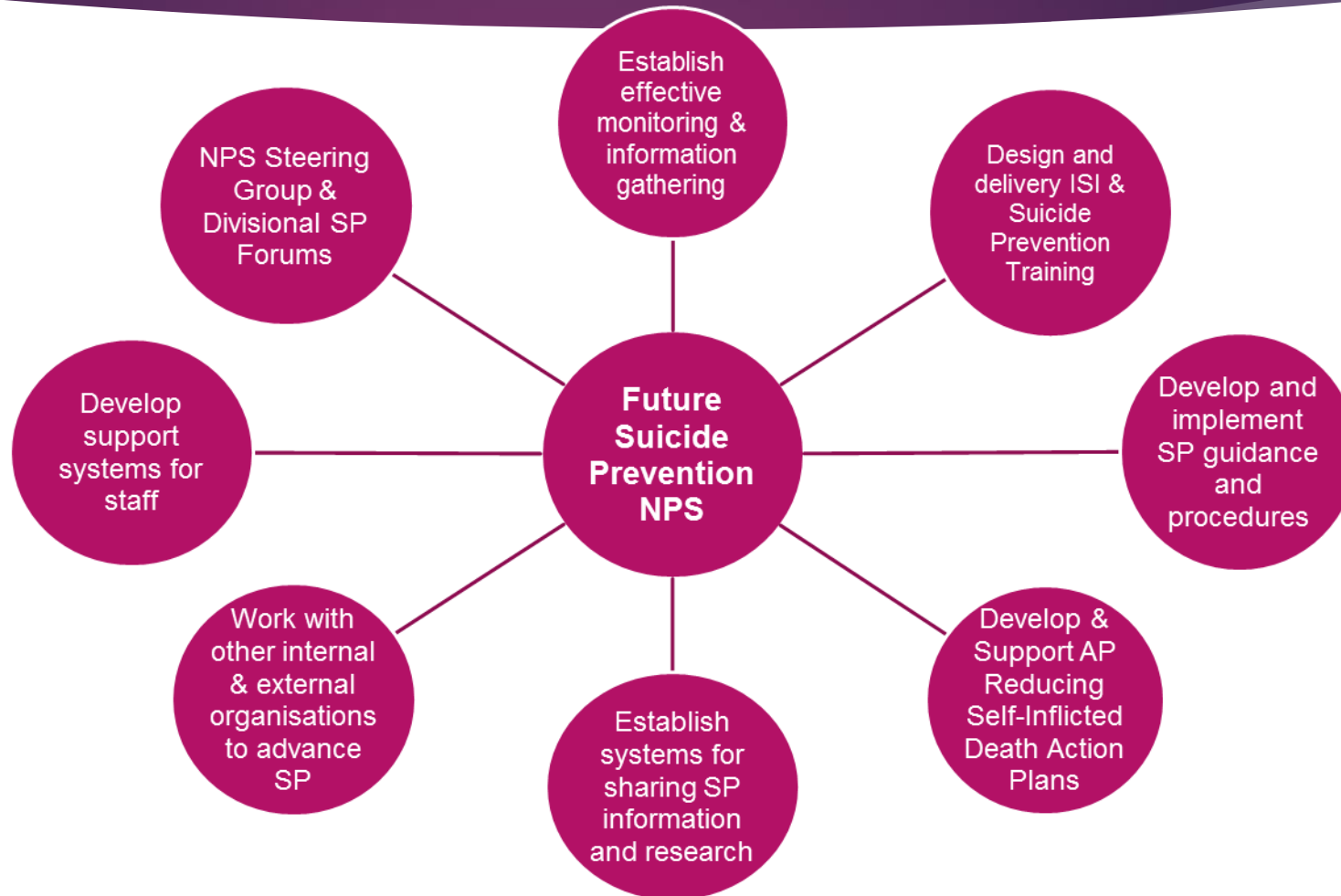
Research – key headlines

- ▶ **Importance of training**
- ▶ **Recognising Staff support needs**
- ▶ **High Risk Periods (Recall and Legal Proceedings, staff transitions)**
- ▶ **Warning signs (missed appointments, increased contact)**
- ▶ **Impact of significant life events** (bereavement, IPV, relationship breakdown/instability, child custody)
- ▶ **Presence of personal vulnerabilities** – mental health, alcohol, homelessness, employment, finances)
- ▶ **Issues around disclosure** – over reliance on self report, importance of asking all not just those with history, particularly risky stages, build trusting relationships
- ▶ **Potential benefits of Multi agency working** (e.g. partnership working, and specialist sentencing)
- ▶ **Overcoming barriers (flexible/responsive supervision planning, supporting compliance)**
- ▶ **Desire for meaning and purpose** (e.g service users – employment, voluntary agencies)

Examples outcomes of research

- ▶ **Provide a clear direction for future research**
- ▶ **Develop better understanding of personal vulnerabilities and life events in probation service users**
- ▶ **Raise awareness of specific high risk periods linked to the probation process**
- ▶ **Conference** – supporting evidence based practice, and encouraging collaboration, networking and innovation.
- ▶ **Support for why we need an NPS strategic direction on suicide**
- ▶ **Trauma Support Co-ordination & Promotion of Staff support**
- ▶ **Development of partnerships** -Linking with prisons, Samaritans, listeners conference, Together, NSPA.
- ▶ **Training** – updated to reflect new research findings – direct influence on practice

Watch this space – future development plans



Activity : Generating New Ideas for Collaboration

Do you have any existing services that may be relevant/helpful for this population?

What ideas have you got for collaborating on new initiatives to support this service user group?

How could you work with us in probation to support this service user group?

Some of our papers

Mackenzie, J. M., Borrill, J., & Dewart, H. (2013). Researching suicide, attempted suicide and near-lethal self-harm by offenders in community settings: challenges for future research. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, 12(1), 26-32.

Mackenzie, J. M., Cartwright, T., Beck, A., & Borrill, J. (2015). Probation staff experiences of managing suicidal and self-harming service users. *Probation Journal*, 0264550515571396.

Borrill, J., Mackenzie, J., Cook, L., & Beck, A. (2015). Relationships in the context of suicide risk. *Probation Journal*, 62(1), 71-73.

Cook, L. C., & Borrill, J. (2015). Identifying suicide risk in a metropolitan probation trust: Risk factors and staff decision making. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 20(2), 255-266.

Borrill, J., Cook, L., & Beck, A. (2016). Suicide and supervision Issues for probation practice. *Probation Journal*, 0264550516677770.

Mackenzie, J., Cartwright, T., & Borrill, J. (2017). Exploring suicidal behaviours by probation clients: A qualitative study of near-lethal attempts. *The Journal of Public Health* See QR code for this paper

Cook, L.C., Borrill, J., Beck, A. (2018). Understanding Suicides in probation service users under supervision in the community. Manuscript in preparation.

