

Guest editorial

Karen Slade

Karen Slade is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Psychology, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK.

Self-harm and suicide in forensic settings

This special edition of the *Journal of Criminal Psychology* is a timely edition with concerns in many jurisdictions regarding the rising rates of suicide and self-harm within prisons and other forensic services. The relevance of a broad view of this area is clear, with a need to draw together across disciplines and settings to develop our knowledge and practice. I am honoured to present a range of papers from significant authors in the field of suicide and self-harm prevention who provide fresh insights from which the field can continue to develop.

The first paper, by Forrester and colleagues evaluates the prevalence and correlates of suicide ideation amongst 888 detainees in police custody. They reflect the high levels of ideation prevalence (16 per cent) and confirm risks surrounding previous self-harm, recent substance and alcohol use and mental health disorder amongst those experiencing ideation. The authors conclude that there is strong case for integrated services to manage risk across the criminal justice pathway.

The second paper, by Marzano explores the needs and motivations of 20 men who self-harm in prison without apparent suicidal intent. Her findings reflect a backdrop of early traumatic experiences and recent aversive events where self-harm is a means to release tension, sadness and frustration and of being heard in an unresponsive system.

Following the prison theme, Walker and colleagues are our third paper, who present a qualitative study from the perspective of prison staff. Interviewing 14 prison staff working with imprisoned females they identified key themes relating to developing relationships, self-help strategies and relational interventions. The authors conclude that there is need for greater training and support for prison staff to meet their dual role of custodian and carer.

Bringing a novel perspective from Belgium, paper four from Wittouk and colleagues is an insight into the correlates of suicide ideation within four prisons across Belgium. The results confirm that suicidality is a major health concern with dynamic psychological and social factors and recent negative experiences coupled with limited coping skills are of importance.

The final research paper by Wright reflects young males in a US residential programme and the associations between being a perpetrator or victim of bullying with non-suicidal self-harm and suicide ideation; and the mediating effect of parental warmth. Their findings indicate that involvement in bullying increases the risk of self-harm and suicide ideation; with stronger associations for self-harm for those reporting low-parental warmth.

Following our research papers, Hatton and Akerman provide a review of a training event delivered by Slade on “Working with suicide risk in offenders” at HMP Grendon, a noted therapeutic prison. The topics covered include the link between self-harm and suicide, why offenders harm themselves, assessment and finally care planning. A particular note was the benefits of collaboration between professionals and the residents at the prison in understanding suicide and self-harm.

This edition concludes with a book review by Logan on *Preventing Self-Injury and Suicide in Women's Prisons* by Walker and Towl, providing useful commentary on this informative book which is highly relevant to this edition.