

# Mental health training for front line police officers: a randomised controlled trial

<b>Submission date</b> 13/05/2016	<b>Recruitment status</b> No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b> 03/06/2016	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 10/07/2023	<b>Condition category</b> Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

A significant amount of police time is spent dealing with incidents involving people who are mentally vulnerable. Whilst we are aware that police officers are not experts in mental health, nor should they be, they are often the first responders and yet have minimal training in this area. The Independent Commission on Mental Health and Policing reported there is often poor performance in dealing with mental health issues because of the inadequacy of systems and procedures. Even when a person is identified as having a mental health problem, the information may not be recorded in a coherent manner and there are failures in making use of available resources (e.g. mental health street triage).

When Police officers are called to an incident, one of the considerations they need to take into account is the mental state of those involved. Police officers are not trained mental health professionals so good communication skills and knowledge of how to assess vulnerability, and options for referral are essential. These skills are not necessarily part of current police training but are none the less increasingly important in the day to day work of police officers in the control room, station desks and out in the community. This study is looking at the effectiveness of a new face-to-face mental health training intervention compared with a 'business as usual' control group of police officers. The mental health training intervention for front-line police officers aims to reduce demand on police resources through improving officers' knowledge, awareness and understanding of mental ill health and vulnerability, referral pathways (including knowing who to call and when), and the skills necessary to work both with people in mental health distress and with colleagues in partner agencies.

### Who can participate?

Police community support officers, police constables, inspectors and sergeants

### What does the study involve?

Police stations are recruited and randomised to two groups: the police officers from the stations in one group are given new mental health training and the other group receive any planned routine training and be a 'business as usual' control group. The mental health training is being delivered by mental health professionals from Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust (TEWV). Though this training, the officers develop a greater awareness and knowledge of a range of mental health conditions and be better equipped to identify mental health vulnerabilities; and

communicate with people with mental ill health. They are also expected to understand the importance of and mechanisms for recording incidents involving people with mental ill health, the types of services and organisations that exist in their local area, and ways to refer people experiencing mental health difficulties. They should also be aware of the various roles and organisations who may be involved with a person in mental health crisis (ambulance crew, approved mental health professionals, doctors, social workers, A&E staff, care home staff, etc.), their responsibilities and the restrictions facing each. The training should also help in them gaining some insight into the real-world experiences of people with different mental health conditions. Officers from all the stations are asked to complete an online survey before and six months after delivery of the training. From this data the researchers aim to measure the impact of the training on officers' knowledge, awareness, attitudes and responses to people with mental ill health or vulnerabilities.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

There are no guarantees that participants will benefit directly from taking part in this study as it is not known how effective the training package will be. However, it is expected that the training will increase front line officers' knowledge, understanding and confidence in working with mental health problems, local mental health services, referral pathways, multi-agency working and recording of incidents appearing to involve an element of mental distress. The study is considered low risk as it does not involve any invasive or potentially harmful procedures.

However, the training package focuses on how officers respond to incidents involving individuals in mental health crisis or distress. These are sensitive issues. The training will be delivered by mental health professionals who will not only be experts in discussing the issues sensitively but will also encourage and foster a supportive environment in the training sessions. Additionally, a support information sheet which contains contact details of organisations that individuals could contact for information, advice or emotional support will be made available.

Where is the study run from?

12 police stations within North Yorkshire (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

September 2015 to March 2017

Who is funding the study?

The Police Knowledge Fund, funded by: The Home Office, The College of Policing and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (UK)

Who is the main contact?

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**Study website**

<http://connectebp.org/>

## Contact information

**Type(s)**

Scientific

**Contact name**

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**Additional identifiers**

EudraCT/CTIS number

IRAS number

ClinicalTrials.gov number

Secondary identifying numbers

Connectprotocolv.5.1

**Study information****Scientific Title**

Effectiveness of a training programme for police officers who come into contact with people with mental health problems: a pragmatic randomised controlled trial

**Acronym**

Connect

**Study objectives**

The aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of a face-to-face mental health training intervention delivered by mental health practitioners to Police Community Support Officers, Police Constables, Sergeants and Inspectors compared with routine training.

The trial also aims to:

1. Investigate whether the specialised training intervention better equips front line officers to deal with individuals with mental ill-health and reduces demand on police resources
2. Assess the impact of the training intervention on officers' knowledge of, and attitudes toward, mental ill health and vulnerability; and their confidence in identifying mental distress, responding to people experiencing mental distress, recording incidents as appearing to involve a person experiencing mental distress, referring individuals to local mental health services and any other relevant agency, and working with partner agencies

**Ethics approval required**

Old ethics approval format

**Ethics approval(s)**

University of York, Health Sciences Research Governance Committee, 18/03/2016

**Study design**

Pragmatic cluster randomised controlled trial

**Primary study design**

Interventional

**Secondary study design**

Cluster randomised trial

**Study setting(s)**

Other

**Study type(s)**

Other

**Participant information sheet**

Not available in web format, please use the contact details to request a patient information sheet

**Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Mental health training

**Interventions**

Mental Health Training will be delivered to all officers within the ranks of Police Community Support Officer, Police Constable, Sergeant and Inspector from Response and Safer Neighbourhood Teams from the police stations randomised to the intervention group. The training will be a one-day event, delivered face-to-face in classroom settings by qualified mental health professionals. The training aims to reduce demand on police resources through improving officers' knowledge, awareness and understanding of mental ill health and vulnerability, referral pathways and the skills necessary to work both with people in mental health distress and with colleagues in partner agencies. The content of the training will be informed by the College of Policing Learning Standards, which provide a framework for mental health training for police officers, as well as by findings of the systematic review of evaluations of mental health training for non-mental health professionals being undertaken by the York Trials Unit.

The control group will receive routine training provided by North Yorkshire Police.

All participants will be asked to complete an online survey before and 4-6 months after the delivery of the intervention. Semi-structured interviews with approximately 20 officers who received the intervention will be conducted 6 months after the intervention.

**Intervention Type**

Other

**Primary outcome measure**

Number of calls per person, routinely collected via the Police's in-house Niche system. Assessed up to 6 months post-intervention.

### **Secondary outcome measures**

1. Number of incidents with section 136 applied
2. Number of incidents with 'mental health tags' applied
3. Number of individuals with a 'mental health flag' applied
4. Number of frequent callers

All outcomes will be assessed up to 6 months post-intervention. All study data is routinely collected via the Police's in-house Niche system. The appropriateness of mental health tags applied to a random sample of incidents will be checked by an independent mental health professional

### **Overall study start date**

01/09/2015

### **Completion date**

31/03/2017

## **Eligibility**

### **Key inclusion criteria**

1. Response and safer neighbourhood team officers within the ranks Police Community Support Officer, Police Constable, Inspector and Sergeant will be included in the trial, as these officers have regular contact with individuals with mental ill health
2. The two police stations with the highest number of eligible frontline police officers within each of the six Safer Command Areas will be recruited into the trial

### **Participant type(s)**

Other

### **Age group**

Adult

### **Sex**

Both

### **Target number of participants**

12 police stations within North Yorkshire. Approval for all aspects of the trial was obtained from the North Yorkshire Police Training Commissioning Group. Undertaking the mental health training intervention will be mandatory for those officers in stations randomised to the intervention group. 722 officers will be included in the trial (328 intervention, 294 control).

### **Key exclusion criteria**

1. To reduce the possibility of contamination, frontline officers with specialist roles (Fire-arms, Major Crimes and Dog units) will be excluded from the trial as these individuals often move between police stations
2. Control room and custody staff will also be excluded, as the study is aimed at frontline staff

**Date of first enrolment**

10/02/2016

**Date of final enrolment**

31/07/2016

## **Locations**

**Countries of recruitment**

England

United Kingdom

**Study participating centre**

**University of York**

York

United Kingdom

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## **Sponsor information**

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University of York

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**Sponsor type**

University/education

**ROR**

<https://ror.org/04m01e293>

## **Funder(s)**

**Funder type**

Government

## Funder Name

The Police Knowledge Fund, funded by: The Home Office, The College of Policing and the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

## Results and Publications

### Publication and dissemination plan

A public website has been built and will provide a vehicle for raising awareness of the Connect project aims, methods, progress and results, including this trial which is part of the overall project. When the trial results are available we will tailor dissemination of the findings to the relevant audiences (e.g. the police, policymakers and academics) and produce appropriate outputs. These may include: a formal report (project book chapter), a summary report in lay language, academic publications, conference presentations, workshops, news releases and short articles/blogs for the websites of interested organisations and other relevant lay media. Social media will also be used to raise awareness of the trial. The trial findings will be presented at Partners meetings and shared with the national College of Policing. Details of the trial are already available on the College of Policing and Crime Reduction Research Map <http://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Research-Map/Pages/Research-Map.aspx> The findings will be fed back to North Yorkshire Police to inform the roll out of the intervention training to other officers in North Yorkshire Police and the content and format of future training programmes. In collaborating with the College of Policing training unit, we anticipate the findings of the trial will impact on the next review of the National Policing Curriculum for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, via the College of Policing's training maintenance cycle.

### Intention to publish date

31/03/2018

### Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

### IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available

### Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Participant information sheet</a>	version V2	15/02/2016	08/06/2016	No	Yes
<a href="#">Results article</a>	results	08/09/2017		Yes	No
<a href="#">Other publications</a>	methodological and practical challenges	22/12/2017		Yes	No
<a href="#">Protocol (other)</a>		08/09/2017	10/07/2023	No	No