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Going equipped

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College of Policing Limited
Leamington Road
Ryton-on-Dunsmore
Coventry
CV8 3EN

Contact us if you're interested in writing for us or would like to be a peer reviewer.

[**Goingequipped@college.pnn.police.uk**](mailto:Goingequipped@college.pnn.police.uk)

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Editorial

Chief Superintendent Katy Barrow-Grint ♦ Thames Valley Police

I am delighted to present issue 3 of Going equipped, a publication written by policing for policing. This issue is filled with an eclectic mix of articles, which have been written by officers and staff from all over the country and even further afield, including our first article from the Royal Gibraltar Police!

The value of Going equipped is the opportunity to bring together interesting articles about topics that you may be dealing with every day, such as our practice note on a shoplifting project and a short reminder of what to remember when we talk to young children. New ideas include using community impact statements in knife crime cases and providing distraction items to detainees to reduce stress. Other articles address subjects that you may only come across once in your career, such as a body submerged in water or the use of digital evidence from a smart doorbell in the conviction of a murder suspect.

The articles all provide a lens into the diverse and varied experiences of officers and staff across policing. Our 'spotlight on a role' article focuses on a force's development



of a new role of PCSO supervisor. We also hear about efforts to support firearms officers returning to their specialist roles following maternity leave.

With the current focus on addressing violence against women and girls sitting squarely at the heart of national policing, I am really pleased that this issue includes a review of Professor Jane Monckton Smith's thought-provoking book 'In control: Dangerous relationships

and how they end in murder’, as well as a very pertinent long read on honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

I enjoyed reading how some of our contributors linked their projects to academic research, and how evaluation was an important factor in many of the articles. Most of all, I appreciated how each of the articles brought new views to the fore and ideas for us all to think about.

My thanks to all those involved in bringing you Going equipped, including our authors and peer reviewers, the editorial board made up of colleagues from across the country, and the College of Policing team, who work exceptionally hard to bring this all together.

If you would like to find out about how you can get involved in Going equipped, please do get in contact at [**Goingequipped@college.pnn.police.uk**](mailto:Goingequipped@college.pnn.police.uk)



PRACTICE NOTE

Tackling prolific retail theft

Retired Inspector Graham Osborne ♦ Nottinghamshire Police

I spent the last two years of my police service on secondment to the Co-op, working in their risk team to support crime and security. It became apparent that there was a disconnection between the retailers and the police regarding retail crime. Retailers recognise police resourcing pressures but were frustrated at inconsistencies in how different police forces responded to shoplifting, particularly when the retailer does not receive a visit from the police. For their part, retailers may then not report crimes or make CCTV available, which results in crimes being closed down with no further investigation. Police forces adopt a threat, risk and harm approach to the management of resources, which sometimes means that shoplifting is considered a lower priority than violent crime. In 2020, [research sponsored by the Co-op](#) showed that shoplifting was the biggest driver of in-store violent crime, with 38% of all violent crimes being the result of someone shoplifting in a store.

What did you do?

Project Zeal was launched to strengthen the relationship between retail, security and policing

by sharing information, using technology to identify prolific offenders and tailoring policing solutions to tackle crime. It involved:

- cross-referencing crime recorded by police with the Co-op's internal system (My Safety), which confirmed a misleading intelligence picture for the police
- selecting nine stores across four policing neighbourhoods with varied levels of security
- Mitie (the Co-op's security provider) sharing Merlin crime software with police free of charge and providing a dedicated analyst
- agreeing a working protocol with the neighbourhood policing inspectors
- Merlin being developed to link up crimes for unknown offenders by allocating a nickname to images of each offender for all stores to use, which meant offenders were charged with between 20 and 30 crimes, rather than two or three
- setting up an information sharing agreement between the three parties with a simple summary confirming about what could and couldn't be shared

- the Co-op legal team being able to serve banning notices directly to the offender
- each Neighbourhood team providing a single point of contact (SPoC) to focus on prolific offenders committing crime in their area and to support Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) applications
- a Crown Prosecution Service SPoC to oversee CBO applications
- listening sessions with stores, leading to better communications and improved access to specialist services, such as victim support
- an education piece for stores on the importance of attending court, giving statements, police resourcing of incidents, and policing procedure around threat, risk and harm
- a weekly meeting between Co-op, Mitie and the police that focused on reporting issues, emerging prolific offenders, and positive or negative outcomes

What were the results?

Prolific offenders were charged with multiple offences. Previously unknown offenders were also identified and charged with high volumes of offences. In the nine stores where Project Zeal operated, retail crime reduced by 30% between October 2020 and April 2021 (as measured by My Safety), against an increase of 28% across the national Co-op estate over the same period. Stores reported that prolific offenders

stopped seeing the Co-op as an easy target and no longer cause problems, as they know that crime will be reported and the police will investigate. The detection rate for the Zeal stores is 33%, compared to a force detection rate of 15% for all retail crime.

Confidence in the police has also notably increased among shop workers. Prior to Zeal going live, a Co-op colleague was seriously assaulted in store and the offender was never charged. He was scared to go to work and felt let down by the criminal justice system. He now has confidence in the police and feels safe in his working environment.

Project Zeal was a finalist at the Retail Risk Awards and the British Security Awards for the most innovative project in 2021. Funding has also been secured from Co-op, Mitie and our PCC to work with prisons and commissioned providers to support the rehabilitation of offenders and to address their complex problems, building on the excellent work of West Midlands Police.

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This article was peer reviewed by Detective Chief Inspector Claire McGuire, Greater Manchester Police.

LONG READ

Do frontline practitioners recognise the signs of honour-based abuse?

Jennifer Holton, Citizens in Policing Manager ♦ Wiltshire Police

Introduction

In 2014, I was working as an investigator for the Public Protection Department when I was approached by my inspector about completing a project on honour-based abuse (HBA). As a force at that point, we had no policy or procedure on it and fairly little knowledge on the front line. I began researching the subject and became fascinated by the complexity of it, and by how these brutal and violent crimes were being committed with little intervention from statutory agencies. I quickly became the force lead and, in line with the changing way that we were viewing domestic abuse, we began calling it HBA rather than violence. As I progressed through my career, I continued my passion for the subject. I remained a tactical advisor for live cases and I continued to participate in the regional HBA panel. Huge strides have been made since I first started looking into HBA in 2014. With forced marriage (FM), female genital mutilation (FGM) and honour killings still occurring frequently across the UK, though, I remain motivated to bring about further change.



The term HBA is used to describe the coercive, manipulative or violent behaviour towards a victim on the premise of perceived honour. FM is a criminal offence and is defined as ‘a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor’ (CPS, 2020). FGM is also a criminal offence and is defined in statute as ‘a term for a range of procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons’ (CPS, 2020). Statutory agencies have a duty of care to protect the population from risk of harm. However, with continued emerging threats requiring focus, frontline practitioners can become overwhelmed with trying to be subject matter experts (SMEs) in every field.

While HBA, FM and FGM differ greatly in definition, they are intrinsically linked by the motivation being in the name of so-called honour. The term HBA is therefore often confused or used as the collective name for all three subjects.

Literature review

Offences linked to HBA can cross many different crime types, including harassment, rape and murder, as well as many others. Due to this, these crimes are often not correctly recorded as having an HBA qualifier, which makes obtaining an accurate picture of the issue difficult (Mulvihill and others, 2018). CPS statistics document 80 HBA-related cases referred to them for charging decisions for 2018-2019, with 49 suspects charged. This figure is disproportionately low when compared to the 13,124 calls received by HBA-based charity Karma Nirvana requesting advice for the same period. Deep-dive audits of police records also show inconsistency in cases being recognised.

The Home Office created the Forced Marriage Unit jointly with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2005. FM was made a standalone criminal offence in the UK in 2014, with legislation that not only covers forcing (physically or coercively) individuals to marry against their will in the UK, but also covers taking an individual overseas for this purpose, as well as facilitating the marriage of someone

who lacks mental capacity. FM within the UK is a crime that predominately affects Indian women, although it is not limited to people of this heritage and also takes place in other groups, including among Gypsies and Irish Travellers (Gill and Harvey, 2016). In 2019, 1,355 cases were referred to the Forced Marriage Unit for advice. Of these cases, 64% were reported by professionals, 18% were reported by victims, and 18% were reported by friends and family or anonymously. The low proportion of cases referred by victims reinforces the important role that professionals play.

FGM is not only a form of child abuse, but also has significant health implications, including long-term trauma affecting mental health, urinary tract infections and childbirth (NHS, 2020). The 2003 FGM legislation prohibits not only the physical act itself but also assisting a female to mutilate her own genitals, assisting a non-UK national overseas to mutilate the genitalia and failing to protect a child from FGM. Data collected by the NHS for April 2018 to March 2019 documents that there were 6,415 females who attended a healthcare setting with signs of FGM. Despite the number of reports, the first conviction for FGM took place in February 2019, in which a female had committed FGM on her three-year old daughter (Ontiveros, 2019).

Crimes committed in the name of so-called honour differ from other

offences because they generally involve collusion, support and facilitation by extended family or communities (Xavier, Petherick and Sinnamon, 2017). This makes it incredibly difficult for a victim to speak out and places a natural burden on professionals to spot the indicating factors.

Aplin (2017) found a common trend in frontline practitioners attempting to put the onus on someone else, finding that professionals regularly documented that a victim had 'capacity' and therefore 'freewill to make their own decisions', and thus pushed the burden of safety back onto the victim. This notion not only relies on the premise that individuals who are subject to long-term abuse are able to think rationally about risk, which goes against the basis of coercive control, but also apportions blame to an individual for the consequences of perpetrator behaviour (Long, Harper and Harvey, 2017).

Siddiqui and Patel (2003) argued that practitioners often feel nervous about challenging perpetrators about HBA concerns because of fear that they will be accused of racism. The repetitive scrutiny from the media causes racial anxiety in professionals and little is said in support of their actions, especially if their intuition does not result in their concerns being founded (Siddiqui and Patel, 2003). Claims that there

are unresolved mental health issues and that allegations form part of a wider custody battle over children are common, with professionals becoming distracted and failing to focus on the initial report (NSPCC, 2021). This is particularly apparent in crimes involving HBA, due to the support that a perpetrator may receive from the wider community. By focusing on a victim's perceived vulnerabilities, as opposed to defaulting to the notion that victims should be believed, practitioners from the multi-agencies therefore inadvertently collude with perpetrators (HMICFRS, 2015).

Further issues that present themselves with practitioners responding to allegations of abuse is the inability to recognise female perpetrators. An HMICFRS review in 2015 found that women were regularly complicit in carrying out abuse, with siblings facilitating the reporting of 'breaches' to them. The abuse carried out by women is often emotional, with manipulation and coercion achieved through threats to kill themselves and fabricated illness. Physical abuse is generally perpetrated by males, but women collude to facilitate this by locking their daughters within the home. In contrast, mother-in-laws are most likely to perpetrate domestic servitude and verbal degradation (Bates, 2018). While it is recognised by many that women can perpetrate abuse due to coercion, there are a variety of other factors that motivate

females to do this (Glick and others, 2016). Aplin (2019) found that case reports submitted by police officers often referred to mothers as secondary victims, even where there was no evidence to suggest this. This demonstrates that unconscious bias exists in professionals from the first interaction and there is a presumption that mothers are unable to be wilful perpetrators.

Methodology

This study involved a thematic review of academic research and an online survey of statutory agencies throughout the South West of England. In all, 137 multi-agency partners responded to the survey, which was distributed through five local police forces and the Safeguarding Children's Boards. Trying to obtain an individual's knowledge on emotive subjects can result in practitioners becoming defensive and therefore being subconsciously untruthful in their answers, due to perceived failure. It was essential for the purposes of accuracy, analysis and facilitating positive change that individuals are aware that the focus of study is systematic learning and not proportion of blame. For this reason, survey responses were anonymous. The results were analysed to gauge a level of understanding of HBA, FM and FGM, as well as whether this was linked to confidence levels of dealing with these subjects.

The survey questions asked individuals to identify which agency they worked for, in order for themes to be drawn out to establish if certain agencies could demonstrate best practice. However, there remained a clear emphasis on anonymity, to enable individuals to be open about their knowledge levels. Age, gender and sexuality were not asked because they were not deemed relevant characteristics for the purposes of this research. The only eligibility criteria was that participants worked for a statutory agency in the South West region.

Findings

The questionnaire was primarily answered by respondents from police forces (77%, 105 participants), with the remaining from local safeguarding children's boards, health, education, probation, social services, and the fire and rescue service. Over half identified themselves as frontline practitioners. As all of the policing roles had a direct impact on frontline decision making, 77% of participants were considered to be frontline practitioners for the purpose of this research.

Over half (53%) of those who took part had been employed by their organisation for more than 10 years, with 14% being in service for between 5 and 10 years, and a quarter being in service for between 1 and 5 years. Only 7% of participants were still in a

probationary period, which negates the argument that limited knowledge and awareness was due to individuals being early in their post and therefore yet to receive planned training.

The results found that 72% of respondents had received training on HBA, FM and/or FGM. However, 54% stated that they did not feel adequately equipped to deal with it. There was no evidence to suggest some agencies were more confident than others in dealing with these issues. This suggests that organisations recognise the importance of training in these areas but the facilitation of learning may not achieve its objective. The type of training received was not scrutinised. Participants were asked to score their confidence levels on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being extremely confident. Individuals felt more confident recognising HBA compared to FM and FGM, but the average scores were only 2.5, 2 and 1 respectively.

When participants were asked to list the agencies that could support with HBA cases, the responses were mixed. Just two individuals who had received training could list a number of support agencies. This level of understanding was a common theme. Only seven respondents could name more than two support agencies, which suggests that the service a victim will receive may be inconsistent.

In all, 44% (60) of respondents stated that their agency had a

nominated individual who could be contacted for advice. However, 33 of those stated that they didn't know how to contact them. This is a recurrent theme across agencies. No single agency showed either outstanding knowledge or specific areas for concern, which may be exacerbated by the lack of confidence that frontline practitioners have in identifying cases of HBA. Cases can only be referred to SMEs once they have been identified by frontline practitioners. If practitioners are unable to identify cases, the concept of using an additional layer of expertise may be redundant.

Over half of participants did not know what a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO) or a FGM Protection Order was, even though both should be immediate safeguarding considerations. Further to this, 56% of respondents believed these are criminal orders (rather than civil) and were therefore working to a higher burden of proof, while 71% of respondents confirmed that they did not know who was able to apply for these orders.

In all, 85% of participants stated that their response would not change if the victim was under or over 18 years of age. Section 47 of the Children's Act 1989 dictates that the local authority takes primacy in child protection investigations. It is therefore the responsibility of the

local authority to apply for FMPOs on under 18s, whereas this obligation falls to the police for adults (HM Government, 2014). This indicates that professionals do not know what their role is in these circumstances.

Responses about cases that breached international boundaries commonly involved referring to a supervisor. This is not an incorrect course of action, but it is only productive if the first-line supervisor has the subject knowledge to respond effectively. This is unlikely, given the natural career progression that takes place in statutory agencies, where the frontline practitioners of today are the frontline supervisors of tomorrow. Only six respondents stated that they would seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit or Interpol. No respondents mentioned ports warnings, passport enquiries, force guidance or other investigative opportunities, indicating a lack of exploratory mindset amongst frontline practitioners in these instances.

Conclusion

The survey findings indicate that frontline practitioners may not be fully equipped to deal with cases of HBA in the South West. Collective thematic review suggests reliance on e-learning packages alone may have limitations for upskilling practitioners. The effectiveness of training techniques in the South West region was not examined by this research.

Further research could explore the impact of using other training techniques on FLP understanding, such as using interactions with survivors. Having specialist SMEs to provide tactical advice was deemed as positive. However, with seemingly poor pathways for frontline practitioners to know who these individuals are, as well as academic research showing that there are weak mechanisms for replacing SMEs when they move on (Seba and Rowley, 2010), this concept is flawed.

Recommendations

- 1 Organisations should ensure that there are robust pathways for succession planning for SMEs.
- 2 Executive leaders should be vocal in the support of frontline practitioners who act in accordance with the National Decision Model, even if their referrals result in their concerns being unfounded.
- 3 Organisations should consider whether frontline practitioners need to be trained on individual strands of vulnerability or whether they could be trained on crosscutting indicators of abuse to highlight those at risk, with a triage function performed by multi-agency safeguarding hub for allocation to SMEs.

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This article was peer reviewed by Sergeant Elizabeth Barnett, West Yorkshire Police.

What I learned from...

Talking to young children

**Retired Detective Constable, Ann Stuart MBE ♦
Metropolitan Police Service**

I spent 34 years in the Metropolitan Police Service. It wasn't until 17 years into my service, when I started to work in child protection, that I realised some of the skills I was learning would have been helpful to me as a frontline cop.

The tips below would have helped me to establish some essential details – 'who', 'what', 'when' and 'where' – in that initial account from a young child who has witnessed domestic abuse, a murder or another serious crime.

You don't need specialist child witness interview training – that's for the detectives investigating child abuse – but these simple tips could make it easier to help a child help you.

- Use your first name when introducing yourself. Formalities don't work, as it reminds them of school and rules. Rules mean being quiet and listening, which is the opposite of what you want to achieve.
- Children are not little adults. Get down to their level but don't demand eye contact. Ignore the old phrase 'look at me when I am talking to you', as that can be intimidating.



- Children can remember a lot of detail when given the chance to tell. Compassion and patience are key.
- Younger children may believe that adults know everything. They may not tell you something because they think you know already! Empower the child by telling them that you need their help, as you weren't there and you don't know what happened.
- Communication is important, so don't use big words or police lingo. Keep it short and simple. Remember that young children will use words they have heard but won't necessarily know the meaning.
- Be patient, take your time and stay calm.



- Don't make any promises you can't keep.
- Learn about non-directive communication, also referred as observational commentary, where you say out loud what you see without interpretation or explanation. This can help with rapport building. Practise this approach with others, as it works well when making that initial contact.
- Remember the value of good listening. Try not to be distracted with your radio or phone.
- Avoid long sentences and multiple questions. Remember that no two children are the same cognitively, even if they are the same age.
- Don't repeat questions if the child doesn't answer straight away, as they may be scared or traumatised.
- Young children may not understand what has happened or may not have the words to describe it, but they can remember. You just need to work out how to help them tell you, which may mean leaving it for a specialist child witness interviewer.
- Always make a written record of what you saw, what you said, and what the child said or did. Non-verbal communication is often more informative, so note how the child presented and don't forget the usual, day, date, time and place.
- Finally, don't make assumptions about a child, as assumptions cause most of our decision-making errors.

This article was peer reviewed by Detective Sergeant Lucy Edgeworth, Avon and Somerset Police.

Shift in the life of... A marine section officer

Police Constable Robert McKnight ♦ Royal Gibraltar Police

It's the first day of a shift cycle. I begin my routine and take the short five-minute motorcycle ride to the Gibraltar Government Maritime Station (GGMS) at HM Naval Base.

Gibraltar is a small bustling city, about twice the size of Central Park, New York. It is a peninsula linked via land to Spain to the north. Just over eight miles away is Morocco. A 10-minute journey across the Strait on a fast-moving vessel makes British Gibraltar territorial waters a small but busy thoroughfare for all those transiting from Africa to mainland Europe.

I check my emails and read the night shift crew's handover. They have been busy chasing small

zodiacs (inflatable dinghies) used for smuggling tobacco to Spain. Windmill Hill Signal Station (WHSS) also reported suspected drug smuggling activity, with two vessels monitored transiting the Spanish side of the bay on the western side of Gibraltar.

It's now approaching 8am. It is still dark but the new day is beginning to dawn. I meet the other three members of my crew and we carry out the necessary safety checks and risk assessments. As the duty senior coxswain, I conduct a briefing and discuss any intelligence.

A call is received from WHSS of a suspect vessel leaving the Spanish coastline at speed. We spring into

action and head down to the vessel, carrying out equipment checks as we go. Control and Dispatch (CAD) and WHSS are informed that we are deploying to intercept. No matter how many pursuits we've engaged in, the adrenalin still kicks in.

As we exit the harbour, the suspect vessel is sighted approximately 0.5 nautical miles (NM)



North West of us. I estimate its speed and head on an intercept course. The vessel is identified as a rigid-hull inflatable boat (RHIB), which has four people on board wearing foul-weather gear and balaclavas. It appears to still have half a load of bales suspected to contain cannabis resin, wrapped in their distinctive blue and light brown hessian (approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a ton in total). Blue police beacons are engaged and the vessel has been repeatedly signalled to stop, but continues to carry out manoeuvres in an attempt to gain distance. The sea spray is cold and strikes the flesh like pins and needles. After a few minutes, which feel like an eternity, the pursuit is discontinued at the 3NM limits of territorial waters. CAD are informed and requested to inform Spanish Guardia Civil of the vessel's last known speed and heading. No doubt it will return that night to attempt to unload its remaining cargo.

I monitor the area and one of the crew observes something floating in the water. It is suspected to be a bale of cannabis resin, approximately 30-35kg in weight. It is retrieved and found to be in a good state with no marine growth. It is unclear whether it fell off the vessel recently pursued or belongs to a previous incident. The area is searched but nothing more is found.

I return to GGMS, where I conduct a debrief. The bale is processed and conveyed to a police station for secure storage. I then complete the necessary paperwork, while the crew slip a zodiac out from the water, which was linked to the recovery of five North African migrants from the sea the previous day, and place the vessel on land.

We continue with the mundane but necessary yard and vessel maintenance work. We grab a bite to eat, chat about the morning pursuit and joke about our recent mishaps. The work can be intense but we always manage to fill it with laughter.

It's now 2pm. The afternoon crew arrive. I give them a brief and handover. I then deploy on our training RHIB. As a qualified police instructor, I carry out powerboat training drills for the junior crew member. It reminds me of my early days at the helm and I enjoy passing on the knowledge.

At 3.30pm, I return to base and carry out a debrief on the day's activities. It's the end of the shift. Let's see what the next day brings – maybe another encounter with that RHIB. For now, I go home!

This article was peer reviewed by Chief Inspector Jean-Pierre le Breton, Guernsey Police.

PRACTICE NOTE

Using distraction items in custody

Custody Sergeant Becky Davies ♦ Devon and Cornwall Police

Over several years, I have undertaken work relating to mental health. During 2019, I noticed that our mental health practitioners had a stretch ball. Occasionally, they would ask if they could give this to a detainee. I noticed how effective these balls could be in helping to reduce panic attacks and self-harm, as well as improving communication.

The custody environment

In custody, personal items are historically removed from detainees, who are then placed in a cell with very little other than a mattress, pillow and four plain walls to look at. Research shows that these practices may re-traumatise detainees who have experienced trauma in their past (Beyond Youth Custody 2016). There are a number of professionals based in the custody unit. However, if the detainees are unfit to engage, then they are not able to benefit from the support that these professionals can provide. The purpose of this initiative was therefore to provide the detainees with items to help to reduce the anxiety and stress they experience, so that they are more able to engage. A significant proportion



of detainees have communication difficulties, with youth offending teams reporting that this figure is between 60% and 90% for young people (Bryan and others, 2015).

From idea to implementation

I had a conversation with my line manager, who is keen on innovation and empowers staff to try out new ideas. We carried out robust risk assessments on the distraction items and, due to the low costs involved, we were able to source them without bureaucracy. The foam footballs, stretch balls and mindful colouring that we introduced cost a couple of pounds each, while the jigsaws were donated at no cost by staff and a local community charity called 'Roots.'

We carried out learning events with our staff before the launch. One of our objectives was to initiate discussions about emotional dysregulation, which describes an emotional response that is poorly regulated and does not fall within the accepted range of emotional reactions. We aimed to get some buy-in from staff who would be expected to give out the distraction items. The distraction items were initially trialled in Exeter custody centre. As this was successful, they were then rolled out across the force area. The distraction item that staff selected varied depending on the detainee's preference and the risk that they presented. For example, certain items may not be provided if the detainee was known to be at risk of self-harm or had a propensity towards violence.

Early findings

Feedback was sought from staff and detainees via surveys that were left in the custody office and could be updated by hand, to make the process as straightforward as possible. Surveys included questions requiring a simple 'yes/no' answer, such as whether staff thought the use of distraction items was effective and whether they presented any issues or problems. Detainees had an opportunity to provide qualitative feedback as to what they thought of the availability and use of the items.

My interim evaluation indicated that the distraction items were effective

and were well received by staff and detainees. Detainees reported reduced anxiety levels, which helped them to distract and engage better with the custody process. Other benefits include reductions in self-harm, use of force and other high-demand behaviours. We have now introduced items to support neurodiverse detainees, such as earplugs to block out noise. We intend to carry out a full-scale evaluation of the initiative.

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This article was peer reviewed by Melanie Wiffin, Change and Research Team Manager, Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

LONG READ

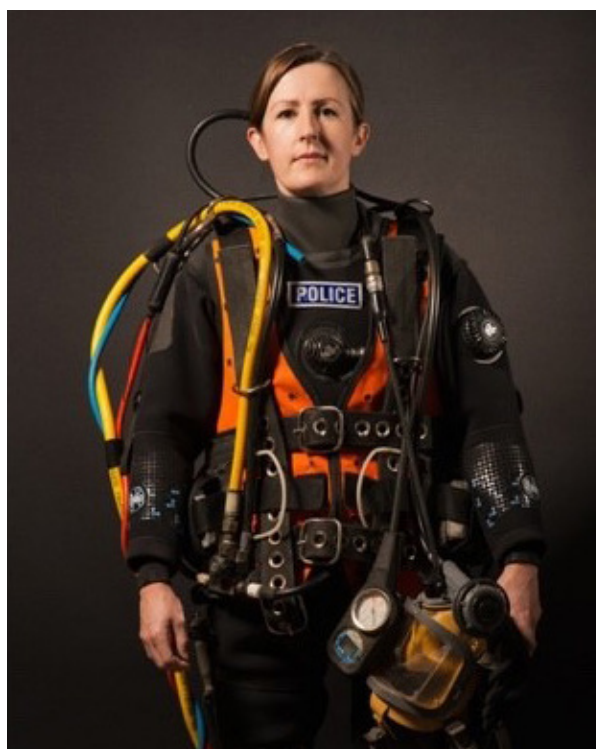
Body recovery from water study

Sergeant Lorna Dennison-Wilkins ♦ Sussex Police

I joined Sussex Police Specialist Search Unit in 2007, and became a police diver and police search advisor. Part of our role was to search for, and recover, missing people in hazardous places where additional personal protective equipment and skill sets were required. We were well used in Sussex and our neighboring counties, until the unit was disbanded in 2015.

In order to set a search strategy as a search advisor, we use information relating to the circumstances of the case to prioritise likely hypotheses as to why the person may be missing. We then refer to established and existing datasets based on past research, to enhance our understanding of likely places where that individual may migrate to on land during their missing episode (Gibb and Woolnough, 2007; Perkins, Roberts and Feeney, 2011; Eales, 2016).

During my first year in the unit, I quickly recognised that there were patterns in body movement in water. Despite this, we did not have a dataset or past research to refer to when making decisions, in terms of where in the water that person or body might be. I had seen



the impact that not knowing the whereabouts of a missing person has on families and loved ones, and I wanted to do anything I could to alleviate this suffering.

I designed a questionnaire containing fields that I felt were relevant to body movement in water and, in 2008, I started collecting data so that I could research this topic myself. I called the project 'The body recovery from water study'. The questionnaire gathers data relating to inland water incidents or those in a coastal location in contact with the land, but

the findings of the study can also be used in a marine environment. It is not necessary to know the point of entry into the water to provide information or to use the research coming from the project.

I set the aims and objectives as follows:

- to collect data and share analysis of this data with the international search community, investigation teams and other interested parties regarding the movement of bodies in inland water
- to enhance learning to make us more effective in the searching for, and recovery of, bodies in water
- to minimise the risk to search personnel
- to reduce search time to gain an earlier resolution in missing person cases
- to provide sanitised information to public bodies so measures can be made to prevent drowning incidents

These aims remain unchanged and have set the direction of my research for the past 12 years. This journey took me to the Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science at the University of Dundee, where I obtained my PhD in January 2021. I am now working on post-doctoral research on this topic.

Literature review

I started this project for two reasons: because I was fascinated by it and because there was very little research that could assist us with missing person searches. Many of the studies relating to bodies in water were in the fields of anthropology and pathology, which, although useful, were not specifically aimed at locating missing people at the earliest opportunity. The majority of the research was also conducted on opportunistic samples or the retrospective use of records (e.g. post-mortem files), and I couldn't find a project aimed specifically at establishing the likely movement of bodies in water. I always made use of whatever I could find, so I did a broad search of all literature. This resulted in me delving into fields including sports science and textile construction in search of influences on the likely buoyancy of human bodies.

One scientist (Reh, 1967) conducted observations of submerged bodies in the 1950s in Germany, with a view to establishing the stages of body decomposition depending on the temperature of the water. Some of Reh's work is relevant to predicting the likely buoyancy of a body in colder seasons today (Doberentz and Madea, 2010), particularly the significance of the bloat phase, which occurs though decomposition of the body and can often cause a second phase of body movement due to increased buoyancy.



I approached my research as I would approach a search

Methodology

I approached my research as I would approach a search and I split the missing episode into three areas.

1 Initial stage – where should we look in the early stages, shortly after the time of entry to the water and for the first 24 hours?

2 Subsequent stage – where should we look in the period after 24 hours, when decomposition of a body is more likely to become a factor?

3 Exit strategy – the rationale for reducing or altering search activity because the initial and subsequent search have not found the missing person.

The questionnaire that I designed was based on observations that I had made as a practitioner in the field. It covered three main areas:

- the circumstances of how the person came to be in the water and those of the subsequent recovery

- factors relating to the environment
- information about the missing person – for example, their sex, age, size and clothing

By the time I came to the data analysis stage of my PhD, I had collected just over 280 cases. These came from UK national and international practitioners. The dataset is continually growing, so my plan was to do initial exploratory statistical analyses on this sample and then later re-analyse it as new cases were added. As my data analysis was exploratory, I did this with an open mind. However, the variables that I had chosen for inclusion on the questionnaire were already based on some hypotheses that I had formed in the field. These included the following:

- there are differences in buoyancy relating to clothing and footwear amount, type and construction
- buoyancy increases with age of the individual
- the buoyancy of bodies differs depending on the manner of death

As well as having fun doing the data analysis, I was excited to see patterns emerging from the data, and I was able to develop a model of prediction using some of the variables. This model gave the statistical percentage of the probability of buoyancy for a body, depending on a range of factors.

One challenge I had was that I didn't have enough data in some

areas to be able to distinguish exactly what factor was the key influencer on the buoyancy. Was it clothing type, footwear, age, body mass or other factors? Or was it a combination of some or all of them? This challenge is ongoing but the collection of data is also continuing (there are currently 465 cases). With every case that is added, the results of data analyses are likely to be a more accurate representation of what we think would happen in the field.

After analysing the data, I tested two of the key findings that had emerged from this in the civil engineering laboratory at the University of Dundee. I built a man-sized model (which I named Duncan) and dressed it in various clothing and footwear configurations to assess the impact of these on buoyancy. These combinations included four clothing amount categories, from no clothing to heavy clothing, and four different types of footwear. I then used the results from this experimentation to create an empirical equation, which could be used for predictive purposes.

Results and conclusion

The indications of the data confirmed the hypotheses that I had formed while working as a practitioner. I found that in the initial phase (the first 24 hours), the older the body was, the more buoyant it was (as a general rule),

and that accidental deaths were less buoyant than suicidal ones. There was no correlation with advanced age and body mass, indicating that the increase in buoyancy in age could be due to reduced bone density, reduced muscle mass, and clothing and footwear. Generally, more of the accidental cases where the body was less clothed (for example, swimming accidents) were younger people and the smaller sample of accidental cases involving older people were more heavily clothed. Conversely, where some suicide cases did remove their clothing prior to entry into the water, this was not common, so deaths in water by suicide were consequently more heavily clothed and in the colder weather. The lab work corroborated these trends.

Buoyancy increased with the amount of clothing. This was because air got trapped between the layers of clothing, which aided buoyancy until it released during the submersion process. This corroborates a finding in an experiment on cold water immersion, where air trapped within layers of clothing on live subjects was found to enhance buoyancy (Barwood and others, 2011). I found that in my experiments, buoyancy differed depending on the footwear. No footwear or wearing boots seemed to reduce buoyancy, while trainers and shoes aided it.

In the subsequent phase (the period after 24 hours), the buoyancy of the bodies increased with time in the water, as we would expect, and this was influenced by water temperature. There was also a correlation with post-mortem submersion interval (time in the water) and decomposition. The window of time at which the body could refloat was measurable, and I made a basic model of prediction that showed the time at which a percentage of cases would be likely to be on the surface.

Overall, the trends emerging from this research inform our decision making when searching for missing people in water. Theoretically, the movement of a positively buoyant body that is not restricted in any way will be influenced by the environment – for example, the dynamics of the water or, if the body is on the surface and there is no water flow, it may be carried by the wind or other factors. A negatively buoyant body can also be moved by water currents or flow. However, it will experience friction with the bottom of the water course and contact with obstructions, which may slow or hinder movement.

If we do not locate our missing person in the initial phase, we want to know whether that body will refloat, and what the timeframe for this is. In the event that a body is not found during this stage, it may travel and eventually submerge, which will

reduce the chances of discovery through search processes.

This research is designed to be used as an aid to decision making by people with existing knowledge and experience. It is not an exact science or a replication of what will happen in the field. I feel a sense of responsibility to translate the findings of my research in an appropriate way, and I feel strongly that we should value the knowledge and experience of the search practitioner. This research is not designed to replace that, but to be an additional tool to use if required. I am developing an app, which will be freely available to any person who wishes to use it for the greater good. This will be a real-time version of the results of my research, which will be updated periodically as more cases are added to the database and as I complete more experimentation. It will incorporate my research and any wider research that could be relevant to the prioritisation of search areas and selection of resources in a missing person investigation.

Recommendations

- There is a 90-minute survivability window, so early recovery could lead to resuscitation (Tipton and Golden, 2011). The point at which the incident changes from a rescue to a recovery is not defined, and it is useful to establish the circumstances with clarity and act as quickly as possible.

- In the early stages of a missing person report, consider the likely initial buoyancy of the person, the environment and what resources should be deployed. For example, in the case of an older subject in winter clothing who has fallen in a flowing river, should you consider downstream spotters on bridges and banks?
- Value the existing knowledge and experience of search personnel, as well as those with local knowledge of the geographic area and water courses.
- View research as a key part of the jigsaw puzzle and as a basis on which the rationale for decisions can be made or prioritised.
- Policing is an evidence-based profession, so it is important to emphasise the importance of research at the operational, tactical and strategic levels, as well as its application to our craft of policing in all its forms.

About the author

Lorna has been a police search advisor at Sussex Police since 2007. She spent eight of these years on a specialist search unit, where she was operational in police diving, marine operations, and search and recovery in other hazardous areas. She has a BSc (Hons) in Criminology and was awarded funding through

the College bursary scheme to support her PhD for her research on the movement of bodies in inland waterways. Her work, entitled 'The body recovery from water study' (bodywaterstudy.co.uk), is an ongoing research project, which she continues in her own time alongside her police role.

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This article was peer reviewed by Dave Suffield, Public Protection Development Manager, Lancashire Constabulary.

PRACTICE NOTE

Authorised Firearms Officer Maternity Support Programme

Police Constable Josephine Brindley-McEvoy, National Firearms Instructor and Diversity and Inclusion Parental Support lead for the Specialist Firearms Command ♦ Metropolitan Police Service

The creation of the All Armed Command

Authorised Firearms Officer (AFO) Maternity Support Programme originated via an armed response vehicle female focus group in 2019. There was a common theme about the process of returning to operational duty following maternity leave. Some officers were positive about their return to armed duties but many reported negative experiences, which resulted in them not returning. These retention issues have led to a significant loss of female AFOs across all armed role profiles.

Returning to work following maternity leave can be daunting, especially with the pressures of demonstrating skills in weapon classifications, obtaining



the required fitness level, tactics and search training. This reflected

my own experience after the birth of my daughter in 2015, where juggling my new responsibilities as a mother, feeling physically different following child birth and the disconnection with work – having been away from my team and training for over a year – all added to the doubt about returning to the job I once loved. The working group agreed that more should be done to support officers from the moment they declared themselves pregnant, during pregnancy, while on maternity leave and on their return.

Aim

The programme provides returning AFOs with a supported route back to armed duties. It allows them to take part in various elements of training once they feel ready, via a graduated development. This contrasts with the longstanding regulations of being expected to achieve the required fitness level and do an AFO reaccreditation ('back to ops') course immediately after returning to work, without any personalised acclimatisation.

The programme is implemented when an AFO has been absent from an operational firearms role due to having a baby. Depending on the length of leave taken, this period of absence can vary from 10 months to three years.

How does it work?

The officer opts in to the five-step programme.

The minimum requirement is achieving entry-level job-related fitness test 5.4 on the bleep test and passing the AFO standard eyesight and hearing test, as part of the one-stop shop health screening. Participants must be signed off by Occupational Health and have a risk assessment completed by their line manager. The officer is then allocated a dedicated national firearms instructor. With this instructor, they develop an individual training plan in a Back to Operations Workbook, which plots the training required to return to armed operational status. Extra support is offered in integrating back into the tactical training environment, building confidence, weapon familiarisation and shooting practice on the range. If required, a physical fitness instructor specialising in post-natal physical training can be allocated to assist in achieving the required role-specific fitness level. Mental health and wellbeing support information is also made available with a guide for line managers and participants, in conjunction with occupational health resources.

The programme recognises that being away from the AFO role and training environment may require time for readjustment.

A personal touch is the key to success. Its ethos is to treat each



armed officer as an individual with their own personal concerns and experiences, as shared with their dedicated national firearms instructor. Since the programme's launch, it has already assisted officers, particularly where the required fitness level has been achieved but the individual had concerns about returning to the training environment. Specific familiarisation sessions reduced fears and increased confidence to attend reaccreditation 'back to ops' courses. The programme is in its infancy and, as more women are attracted to a

career in firearms, we anticipate that AFO Maternity Support Programme will support the retention of officers returning post-maternity leave. It also aims to encourage those considering an armed role by reinforcing that officers will be valued and supported throughout their career, including return to armed operations from maternity leave.

This article was peer reviewed by Detective Chief Inspector Heather Whoriskey, West Yorkshire Police.

Spotlight on a role

PCSO supervisor

PCSO Supervisor Michelle Haimes ♦ Avon and Somerset Police

I started working for Avon and Somerset Police at the age of 16 and had various roles before becoming a PCSO in 2004. The PCSO role has evolved since then and in November 2019, Avon and Somerset began a pilot scheme to introduce PCSO supervisors to support neighbourhood sergeants, who were having to manage teams of over 20 PCs and PCSOs. I was fortunate to be one of the five people trialling the new role in the Somerset East district. The role, which is designed to reduce pressure on the sergeants, involves working alongside them to improve the support and supervision of the PCSOs.

Having received three weeks of training in relevant administration and management, we joined our teams. A typical day consists of holding monthly one-to-ones to discuss workload, mentoring, giving structured daily briefings and working with partner agencies. The most important part of the role is dealing with everyday business, as well as meeting the training and welfare needs of the PCSOs. I manage and support a team of 10 PCSOs over three stations. Our role is a police staff equivalent to



the neighbourhood sergeants and we report to our neighbourhood inspectors.

Following the pilot, all of the neighbourhood sergeants were consulted about the PCSO supervisor role and the impact that it had had on them and their workload. They reported benefits from a reduction in their workloads, which enabled them to focus on daily tasks and planning. It also led to improvements in the level of support that neighbourhood sergeants can provide to PCs and their teams as a whole. The role has been well received by

the staff, as reflected in a recent survey. The supervisor role affords an opportunity for PCSO career progression for our talented staff and benefits the force by giving more time for supervision to build strong, resilient and cohesive teams. PCSOs showing leadership potential are already being given the opportunity to undertake acting duties as supervisors.

Eighteen months on, it has been a (very) steep learning curve, but this is definitely the most rewarding role I have had in my 37 years with

Avon and Somerset. The PCSO supervisor role has been made permanent in Avon and Somerset, and has now been rolled out across the force. I have learned a lot and I am incredibly proud of my team and the difference they make to the communities they serve. I would highly recommend this role to other forces, given the benefits it brings to neighbourhood policing teams.

This article was peer reviewed
by PCSO Justin Piercy,
North Yorkshire Police.



Five things about... The Internet of Things

Philip Huxter, Cyber Crime Investigator ♦ Greater Manchester Police

1 The Internet of Things (IoT) collectively refers to any **electronic smart device** equipped with sensors and internet connectivity that can action, collect, store and share data. IoT devices are everywhere and can be almost anything, from light bulbs and energy monitors to door locks, kitchen appliances, pet cameras and smartphones.

2 According to a 2021 **statistics report**, there are approximately **four devices** for each of the 7.9 billion humans on the planet. IoT data can be present on a device but is more often stored

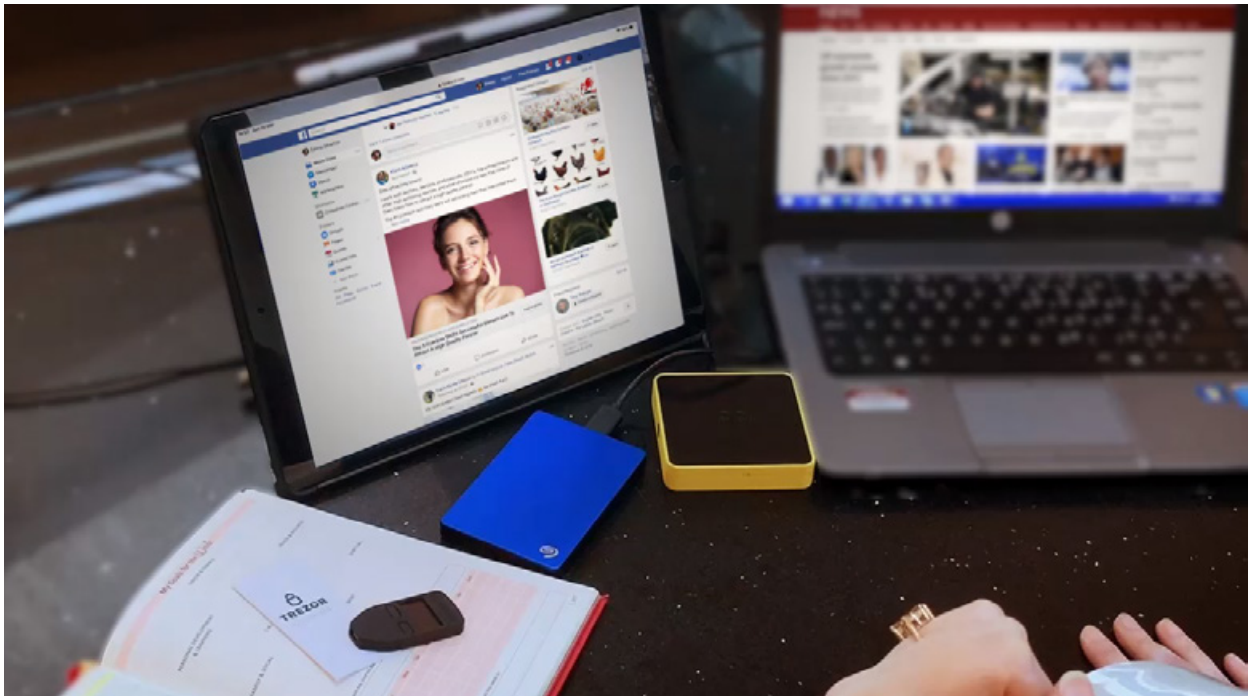
online in the Cloud, from which it can be more easily extracted. Our challenge is to recognise IoT devices and to understand what data they collect, as well as how this data can be used for investigations.

3 IoT devices include **wearable technology** (wearables) such as watches, belts and even shoes. These devices typically capture location and personal health data, and have been used to identify the time of death of murder victims via the built-in heart rate monitor. The **BBC reports** that IoT devices are also being used to facilitate domestic abuse. Devices

Internet of things (IoT)

This is everything connected to the internet. Devices that talk to us and each other.





such as wearables, cameras and voice assistants can be used to watch, track and listen in on private conversations. IoT can facilitate unprecedented forms of coercive control and cyber stalking.

4 Cyber security concerns are raised by **security updates** not being applied and default passwords not being changed by the owner, making devices vulnerable to hackers. Even benign IoT devices can present serious vulnerabilities. Examples include a hacked fish tank smart temperature monitor in a US casino, which gave unauthorised access to the casino network (including a high roller database), and hacked smart baby monitors, which were used to watch a child via the camera and to shout and talk via the built-in speaker.

5 IoT devices are essentially **digital witnesses**. Smart doorbells, such as Ring doorbells, feature a high-quality camera with night vision that auto-captures audio and video when activated. These devices have successfully provided evidence of a person confessing to a murder and a person assaulting his children, positive identifications of a burglar, and alibis of people who have been falsely accused. When trying to access recordings, some doorbells require a paid subscription for storage, while others do not.

This article was peer reviewed by Temporary Detective Sergeant Jugdeep Atwal, Metropolitan Police Service.

MY IDEA

Using community impact statements to build knife crime cases

Inspector Rob Ranstead ♦ Metropolitan Police Service

Violent crime, particularly crime involving knives and weapons, can be fatal for victims and has a huge impact on communities. Increases in serious violence have also created significant challenges for frontline policing. A number of strategies have emerged to improve the detection of weapon carrying and to deny opportunities for those who seek to commit such offences.

My team arrested a male who had a knife on him, who was then released without any further action. After discussing the case, I realised that the outlooks of the senior leadership teams and prosecutors differed, in terms of the wider consequences of knife crime. When considering the evidential test for charging, I noticed that there was an opportunity to influence the public interest element of the test, where the impact of a crime type on a community can be taken into account.

My idea was to introduce knife crime community impact statements into case files. These statements are written by senior officers and cover the impact that

knife crime has had on the area. Some statements have included evidence of the links between knife crime, gang culture, illegal drugs and youth violence. Others have used this as an opportunity to express the views of schools and neighbourhood officers.

I am pleased that now, half of the Basic Command Units (BCUs) in the Met have produced community impact statements around knife crime, with others in the process of introducing them. Using these statements has two main benefits. First, they stress the importance that the senior leadership teams place on knife crime to prosecutors. Second, they remind decision makers of the broader impact that knife crime has on the community. Since introducing these statements, there has been an increase in positive outcomes for charges made for knife crime offences in the BCUs that use them.

This article was peer reviewed by Sergeant Jagwant Singh, Leicestershire Police.

BOOK REVIEW

In control: Dangerous relationships and how they end in murder

Sergeant Rob Lewis ♦ Thames Valley Police

Every four days in the UK, a woman is killed by her partner or ex-partner. In her gripping and informative read, 'In Control: Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder', Jane Monckton Smith argues that this is a 'pandemic so severe' that we radically need to adapt our understanding of, and our approach to, domestic homicide.

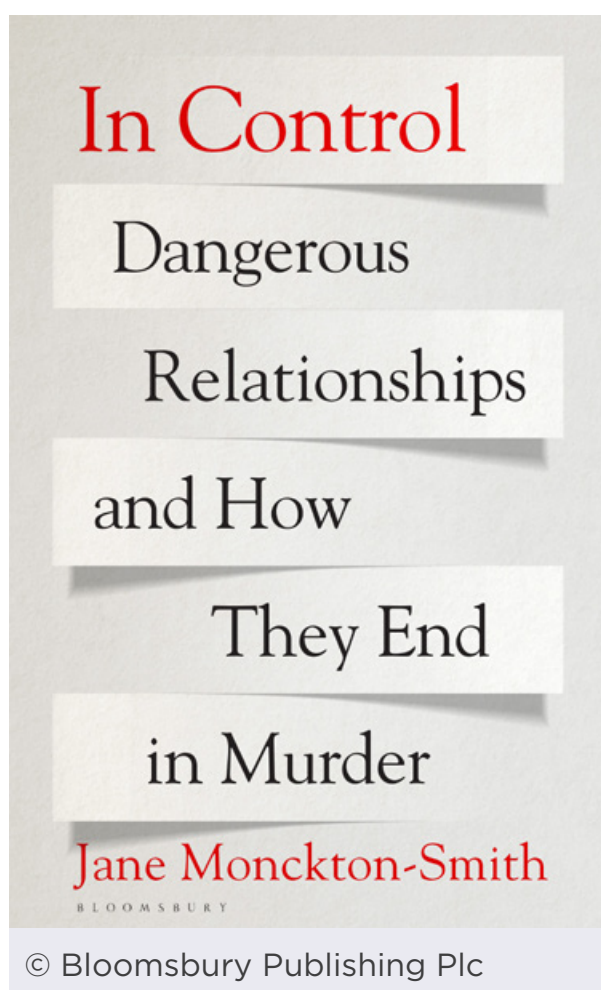
The author's expertise, as both a former police officer and an academic, is evident throughout the book. She establishes that 'crimes of passion' are a myth: 'killers do not snap and lose control'. Killings take place as part of clear patterns of coercive control. By recognising these patterns, we can track how, and why, risk may escalate for victims and we can provide crucial intervention. The book reminds us that coercive control is often difficult to identify and understand, despite its recognition in law.

Each of the eight chapters focuses on a different stage of Monckton Smith's Homicide Timeline. These are demonstrated through case studies, homicide reviews, and interviews with perpetrators and the families and friends of victims.



Chapter one describes the first stage, which is having a history of controlling behaviour or stalking. It implores readers to look for 'red flags' in past relationships, as well as the likelihood that somebody will repeat this behaviour. For example, when Lenny first met Marcie, he immediately took control, telling her where to sit in the bar and insisting that he would pay for her drinks. Early on, he blamed past relationship failures on his ex-girlfriend, without acknowledging his own role. This alarming pattern can often be overlooked.

Chapter two explores 'the commitment whirlwind', where a



controlling person moves things forward with a new partner extremely quickly or with intense persistence. This can happen subtly but the impact can be huge. The author describes the case of Astrid and Loki, where Loki stayed overnight and never went home. In Astrid's words: 'It wasn't like we made a decision, it just happened.'

Living with control is the third stage and the most substantial chapter. It describes how perpetrators establish and maintain control through fear and routines, some of which may seem innocuous. One example was Vincent's demand

that the whole family would watch his favourite soap opera at the same time, every day. Everyone had to be there when the theme music started until the end.

Chapter four describes 'triggers', which can be danger signs and may include circumstances when perpetrators are challenged, such as when reports of domestic abuse are made to the police. The process of escalation is examined in chapter five, with a focus on stalking based on fixation, obsession, unwanted contact and repeated behaviour. Chapter six examines a change in thinking, which can help us to recognise signs of perpetrators planning to kill. In the case of Vincent, Donna told her family that she had not been forced to watch Coronation Street the night before she was murdered. Chapters seven and eight cover planning and carrying out the homicide, including insights into some well-known cases.

Police officers and practitioners will find this book illuminating. It invites them to consider previous investigations and to adapt their thinking for future cases. The author describes the case of Kasia, whose death was initially identified as being caused by suicide by illegal drug use, despite her having no history of drug misuse. Evidence of coercive control and physical injuries led to a reinvestigation, which challenged initial assumptions and resulted in Kasia's

case being correctly identified as a murder.

‘In Control’ provides an honest and detailed pathway through the Homicide Timeline, addressing the challenges that we face in recognising signs of coercive control. In doing so, it reaffirms

our responsibility to consider our approach through this lens.

This article was peer reviewed by Sergeant Sam Knott, North Yorkshire Police.



With thanks to

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