

Understanding nurse's perspectives in suicide safety planning and risk management for children and adolescents in Leicester

About the Project

Suicide prevention is a global priority (WHO, 2018), and children and adolescents require special attention as rates in England are increasing (O'Connor and Robb, 2020). While many professionals work with children and adolescents who exhibit suicidal ideation, mostly this task falls to mental health professionals (Scheerder et al., 2010), with nurses playing a pivotal role (Wadey & Richardson, 2024). Working with child and adolescent self-harm and suicide, and ascertaining risk is a difficult part of the professional role (Hay et al., 2011) and designing questions to identify the nature and level of risk with this population requires careful consideration (O'Reilly et al., 2016). Nurses play a crucial role in working with children and adolescents and in suicide safety planning. While there are government related structural changes regarding NHS England, their recent work around suicide and self-harm has illustrated gaps in UK-based evidence, particularly around children and adolescents, and proposed that more attention needs to be paid to the nursing/patient therapeutic relationship, especially during crisis (NHS England, 2024).

This qualitative interview project proposes to engage local nurses working at a range of levels as experts in self-harm and suicidal ideation/behaviour. The project will seek their perspectives on identifying 1) the most effective approaches to safety planning and risk management with children and young people to meet the demographic and cultural profile of Leicester's population, and 2) their views on the best ways to create recovery-focused care plans to attend to the needs of groups of children and young people who might be constructed as more vulnerable, such as those in care, or from diverse ethnic groups, particularly attending to the local Leicester demographic. Enhancing suicide risk safety planning is a crucial ambition of the NHS broadly but requires sensitive and developmentally appropriate tailoring when working with children and adolescents and needs to account for the local context and service provision. NHS England (2024) reports the importance of determining how to strengthen collaborative family-focused suicide risk planning, and nurses' ideas, creativity, innovations, and perspectives can contribute to the solution. In so doing, attention needs to be paid to the nurses themselves, and therefore we additionally will seek to explore their views on keeping themselves emotionally safe in the delivery of effective care.

About the Project

This project has been co-created and is supported by researchers from University of Leicester, the De Montfort University and partners at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. The successful candidate for this project will be enrolled at University of Leicester.

Project Aims

The overall aims of this project are :

- 1.To identify the perceived most effective approaches to safety planning and risk management when working with culturally diverse children and adolescents.
- 2.To identify useful ways to create recovery-focused care plans for working with children and their families, particularly those from vulnerable groups.
- 3.To identify any locally pertinent barriers and challenges that nurses foresee in implementing approaches to safety planning and risk management.
- 4.To identify aspects of nurse's emotional safety and mechanisms to support that.

Supervisory Team

1. Lead Academic Supervisor: [Dr Michelle O'Reilly \(University of Leicester\)](#)
2. Academic Co-Supervisor(s): [Professor Tania Hart \(De Montfort University\)](#)
3. Community Supervisor(s): [Dr Lyn Williams \(Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust\)](#)

Key Details

Host University:	University of Leicester
School / department:	School of Psychology and Vision Science
Start date:	Monday 28 September 2025
Financial offer:	Tuition fees covered in full (worth approx. £ 15- 17k across full PhD programme). Monthly stipend based on £19,237 per annum, pro rata, tax-free.
Working hours	Full-time (minimum 37.5 hrs per week)
Working Style:	Primarily in-person at host university. Flexible working supported. Working pattern to be agreed between successful candidate and lead supervisor.

Competencies

Collaboratory Core Competencies		
Category	Competency	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)
Comprehension and evaluation	Strong understanding of the project and its subject matter.	A / I
	Analytical, researcher mindset with keen attention to detail.	A / I
	Communicate complex concepts with clarity and precision.	A / I
	Able to identify connections, patterns, gaps, and irregularities in information/data.	I
	Able to interpret data/information confidently with logic and empathy to derive meaning.	I
Social and emotional	Demonstrable experience of responding effectively changing contexts, information and demands.	A
	Ability to persevere in the face of challenges/failures and to remain constructive in developing solutions.	A
	Demonstrable passion for learning with clear drive and curiosity to undertake this specific research project.	A / I
	Willingness to immerse oneself in the research subject matter and make a contribute to new knowledge through a PhD.	A / I
	Strong desire to make a positive community impact through the research.	A / I
	Willingness to think deeply about complex concepts and engage with academic ideas and theory.	A / I
Preparedness and potential for success	Experience of working, collaborating and communicating effectively with different stakeholders.	A
	High level of self-motivation and ability to work with minimal guidance.	A / I
	Strong organisational and time-management skills with the ability to balance and prioritise multiple tasks.	A / I
	Ability to identify potential challenges and complexities and thoughtfully consider possible solutions.	A / I
	Able to identify the technical, personal, or professional skills required for a task and take action to develop these.	A / I

Competencies

Collaboratory Core Competencies			
Category		Competency	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)
Community Context		Genuine desire to undertake community-engaged research over more traditional approaches to research.	A
		Understand the impact of and need for the inclusion of diverse experiences and points of view in research.	A / I
		Appreciation/understanding of the importance of community insight and experience in the generation of new knowledge.	A / I
		Awareness/understanding of the broader societal context related to the subject matter of the project.	A / I

Project Specific Competencies			
Essential	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)	Desirable	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)
Demonstrable interviewing skills, with good communication skills.	A / I	Research experience working with sensitive topics	A / I
High level of professionalism	A / I	Clinical expertise or experience (e.g., trainee psychologist, or counselling certificate)	A / I
Some experience working with children and/or young people	A / I	Experience of working in the NHS	A / I
Some experience working in health (research in health, working in health, health communication or related area – voluntary or paid work, educational qualifications all acceptable).	A / I	Experience of collaborative research working and stakeholder engagement in research.	A / I
		Experience of planning and conducting patient and public involvement in research.	A / I

References for Further Reading

- Janiri, D., Doucet, G., Pompili, M., Sani, G., Luna, B., Brent, D., and Frangou, S., (2020). Risk and protective factors for childhood suicidality in a US population-based sample. *Lancet Psychiatry*, 7(4), 317-326 (available open access) [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32171431/#:~:text=The%20risk%20of%20child%2Dreported,7%2D0%C2%B79\).](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32171431/#:~:text=The%20risk%20of%20child%2Dreported,7%2D0%C2%B79).)
- Locke A, and Budds K. (2020). Applying critical discursive psychology to health psychology research: a practical guide. *Health Psychology Behav Medicine*, 8(1), 234-247. (available open access) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21642850.2020.1792307> NHS England (2024). <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/research-demand-signalling-mental-health-nursing/> (available open access).
- O'Reilly, M., Kiyimba, N. & Karim, K. (2016). "This is a question we have to ask everyone": Asking young people about self-harm and suicide. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 23, 479-488. (available through ResearchGate as a pre-proof or by emailing Michelle O'Reilly as the lead of this project)
- Sela Y, Levi-Belz Y. (2024) Nurses' Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Suicidal Patients: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Depression Management Training. *Healthcare (Basel)*. 2024 23;12(3):284. doi: 10.3390/healthcare12030284. PMID: 38338169 (available open access) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38338169/>