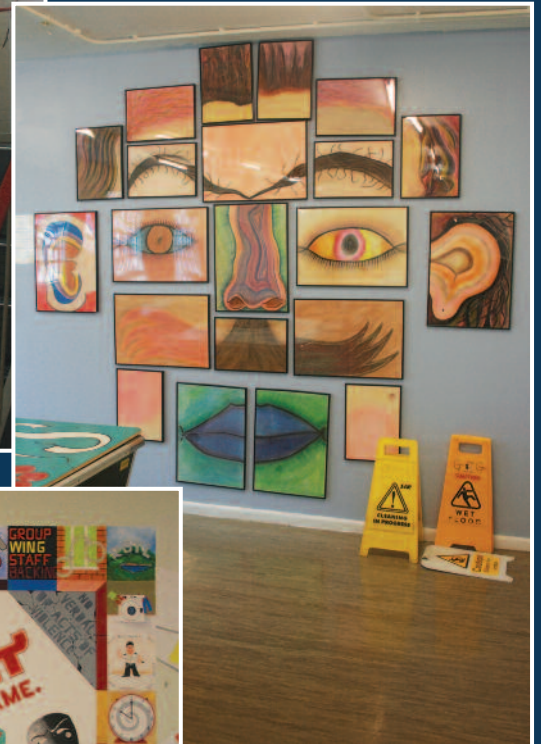


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Breaking the Cycle

Editorial Comment

The first three articles in this edition of *Prison Service Journal* are drawn from presentations delivered at a seminar held in HMP Grendon in July 2013 on the theme of 'Breaking the Cycle'. Many readers will be aware that HMP Grendon is the only prison in the country to operate entirely as a series of therapeutic communities. Reflecting its role and philosophy, HMP Grendon holds an annual seminar which explores an issue of relevance to therapeutic communities but also more widely. The contributors include internal and external speakers, academics, practitioners and sometimes also those who use the service. The audience includes external guests from a range of fields, but also staff and residents from within the prison.

The seminar deliberately derived its title from the 2010 Green Paper which set out the government's plans for the future of the criminal justice system. These plans included the intention to improve services designed to reduce reoffending by released prisoners and the promotion of competition for the provision of services, including the use of payment by results. The opening article by Dr. Alisa Stevens is based upon her research in therapeutic communities and outlines how they facilitate a process of personal reflection and transformative change in personal identity. Her work situates therapeutic communities in the literature of desistance and shows their continued relevance to support change including with those who have committed the most serious offences. Dr. Hanna Pickard takes a philosophical approach in her article, considering the values, beliefs and ethics that underpin work with those who suffer from personality disorders. In a closely argued and carefully considered piece, she outlines an approach based upon responsibility without blame. Whilst her article is based in medical practice, it has clear relevance for penal practitioners and indeed the wider criminal justice system. The third contribution comes from distinguished critical criminologist Professor Joe Sim. In his passionate and provocative work, he offers a challenging critique of the current system of criminal justice, the notion of rehabilitation and ideas about the efficacy of the market. Instead, Sim makes a case for the need for wider social change to address inequalities in wealth and power. The three contributions offer divergent and diverse ways of approaching the questions about the current and future direction of prison policy.

The remainder of the articles in this edition reflect and build upon this theme. Stacie Douglas and Dr. Laura Caulfield's article explores the role and experience of prison officers working in the therapeutic communities at Grendon. Those staff describe how they go through a

process of adaptation and embrace an organisational culture that in important regards is different from that of mainstream prisons. In contrast, Dr. Jennifer Sloan's fascinating article on masculinity and indeterminate sentences for public protection, discusses the ways in which the assessment of risk draws upon ideas of masculinity. She describes how those serving IPP sentences often have to manage a tension between the 'hyper-masculine' prison culture and the contrasting versions of masculinity that are likely to result in risk reduction being recognised and release approved. This raises important questions about prison and prisoner culture.

The last two articles draw upon specific examples of the effects of interventions on prisoners. Amy Bilderbeck, Miguel Farias and Inti Brazil's article summarises their research on the effects of yoga and meditation. This research was funded by the Prison Phoenix Trust and provides an example of how third sector organisations can contribute to evidence based practice and establish the credibility and value of their services. The results of the research are positive, illustrating beneficial effects on mood, psychological well-being and thinking, which taken together 'are indicative of the potential for yoga to influence affect and behavioural regulation in a prison setting'. Melanie Merola from HMYOI Aylesbury offers an article examining the benefits of a cognitive behavioural programme on institutional behaviour by prisoners.

In the review section, there are articles that also reflect upon the general theme of this edition, including Michael Brookes' review of *What Works in Offender Rehabilitation: An evidence-based approach to Assessment and Treatment* edited by Leam Craig, Louise Dixon and Theresa Gannon, and Paul Crossey's review of Rosie Meek's book on *Sport in prison*.

This edition attempts to loosely reflect the theme of 'Breaking the Cycle'. Primarily this is achieved by discussing different approaches to changing the behaviour of prisoners. This includes cognitive behavioural programmes, therapeutic communities and some less conventional approaches such as yoga and meditation. In adopting such a wide variety of examples, an imaginative and open-minded approach is being supported. As ever, *Prison Service Journal* also takes a wider perspective on the questions at hand. This edition therefore also raises questions about occupational and organisational culture as well as the philosophy of punishment. Further, this edition questions the cycles that are being or should be broken: is this a question of individual thinking and behaviour alone, or are there issues that need to be addressed about the nature of contemporary society?