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Editorial

This bespoke general edition of the Prison Service Journal brings together contributions from some of the speakers at the annual Perrie Lectures series and a range of articles that will be of interest to our diverse readership, with the aim to promote discussion, debate, and reflection. The edition concludes with a selection of book reviews and the announcement of the 2024 'Bennett Award' for outstanding article of the year.

The first three articles are taken from the Perrie Lectures. The Perrie Lectures is an annual event, which has the purpose of stimulating dialogue between criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector, and all those with an academic, legal, or practical interest in people in prison and their families. The theme for the 2024 Perrie Lecture was *Recruiting, Training and Retaining Great Prison Officers.*

Prison officers are crucial to the achievement of the goals of prisons. This has resulted in changes to the prison officer role. Although prison officers continue to do basic routine custodial work, they are also expected to occupy prisoners in purposeful activity and help them acknowledge and address their offending behaviour. The increased demand on prison officers has meant they are at greater risk of work-related stress, mental health problems and burnout, because they deal with difficult, emotional, threatening, and dangerous situations. It is therefore paramount that there is an increased focus on the role of prison officers and their wellbeing, to put them in the best position to do an important job well and improve retention. The first article is a transcript of a presentation given at The Perrie Lectures 2024. **Dr. Georgia Barnett and Dr Helen Wakeling** discuss the importance of prison officer wellbeing.

In the second article transcript, we hear from **Prof Berit Johnsen and Dr Vanja Lundgren Sørli,** they explore how the term 'prison officer' may act as a reductive term that no longer aligns with the professionalisation of the role. Illuminating the education of prison officers in Norway and the principles that guide this education role, they articulately show that prison officers are more than turnkeys.

The final article transcript from the Perrie Lectures 2024 in this edition, continues with the theme of how the prison officer role is perceived as an underappreciated profession within the sector and by the wider public. Written by **Andi Brierley and Max Dennehy,** they share their reflections from the book they edited — *The Good Prison Officer: Inside Perspectives.* They embark on a thought-provoking discussion that compels the reader to rethink the term 'rehabilitation' as a functional concept, that not only negatively impacts the lives of prisoners but has a detrimental effect on the morale of prison staff, and the retention of prison officers.

It's quite pertinent that the Perrie Lectures articles are followed by an article co-written by **Scott Thomas** and **Dr Helen Nichols.** They completed a critical review of prison education and posed a fundamental question — does lived experience reflect the government's narrative of education being a key tool to aid rehabilitation, or whether officials are simply paying 'lip service' to a required element of the prison regime.

The fifth article by **Helen Downham** discusses a prison activity that is generally under-researched — prison libraries. Prison libraries are a unique space within prisons because they promote positive activities by offering a calming community hub, while facilitating informal education that can support rehabilitation. This article endeavours to add to the empirical evidence of prison library research. In the final article **David Adlington-Rivers** discusses to what extent hope theory could transform the lives of people in and released from prison, with the aim to increase awareness of hope theory in forensic environments.

There are four book reviews in this edition. The first is a review of **Body Searches and Imprisonment** edited by Tom Daems and reviewed by **Ray Taylor.** This book explores and addresses body search practices in prison environments from different perspectives and different national contexts within Europe. It also highlights the different effects being routinely and regularly searched may have on the people who are subjected to the practice. The second book **Introduction to Convict Criminology**

by **Jeffrey Ian Ross** was reviewed by **Dr Baris Cayli Messina.** Using the language of the author, this book illuminates the positive impact of the convict's voice in the fields of corrections, criminology, criminal justice', and policy making. **Creating Space for Shakespeare — Working with Marginalized Communities,** by **Rowan Mackenzie** and reviewed by **Martin Kettle** is the third book review. This book is part of a series on 'Shakespeare and social justice, a research project that examined the ways in which performing Shakespeare can offer opportunities for reflection, transformation, and dialogue for people who feel imprisoned, whether literally or metaphorically. The final book review **Unmasking the Sexual Offender** by **Veronique N. Valliere** and reviewed by **Emma Tuschick,** details the motivations, techniques, and dynamics of sexual offenders and their behaviour, and provides an analysis of the factors that contribute to sexual offending, including psychological, environmental, and situational influences.

This edition concludes with the announcement of the 2024 'Bennett Award' for outstanding article of the year from special issue 272 — Knowledge Equity in Carceral Research. The winning article was co-written by Donna and Mark entitled *'Exploring Friendships behind Prison Walls through a Knowledge Equity Approach'*.

How can organisations protect the well-being of prison staff?

Dr Georgia Barnett *is a Chartered and Registered Forensic Psychologist and* ***Dr Helen Wakeling*** *is a Chartered Research Psychologist. Both are Founding Partners of KTA Research and Consulting, putting knowledge into action through evidence-based practice in criminal justice settings.*

This article is a transcript of a presentation given at The Perrie Lectures in 2024. The Perrie Lectures is an annual event which has the purpose of stimulating dialogue between criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector, and all those with an academic, legal, or practical interest in people in prison and their families. The theme of the 2024 event was 'Recruiting, training, and developing great prison officers'.

Staff well-being is a subject close to our hearts. We are both psychologists and before leaving in March we spent 22 years working for HM Prison Service during which time we visited countless prisons and met, worked alongside, and conducted research with, a huge number of staff. We have seen first-hand the amazing work prison staff do, as well as the challenging environment they face day after day.

Prisons are a high threat environment; staff have relatively little control over what can be an unpredictable and dangerous workplace. Prison officers regularly see and deal with difficult, emotional, threatening, and dangerous situations. Some get hurt physically, and some incur psychological injuries. First and foremost, we have a moral duty to protect the well-being and resilience of prison staff, but this has secondary benefits. By paying attention to well-being we help retain talented people in our organisations. Poorer well-being is linked to higher rates of sickness, lower rates of retention and poorer performance.[1] Our decision-making and general competence is affected by stress.[2] According to the latest workforce statistics, for the 12 months to the end of March 2024, the most common reason for sickness across HM Prison and Probation Service was mental ill health, which accounted for just over 40 per cent of known absences.[3]

So why do we need to focus on well-being? To protect prison staff, to keep staff, and to put them in the best position to do an important job well.

What are well-being and resilience?

There is no one agreed definition of well-being, but according to the 2014 Care Act, this encompasses several areas of life including personal dignity, contribution to society including participation in work/training or education, physical, mental, social, domestic, family and economic health, protection from abuse and neglect, control over day-to-day life and suitable living conditions.[4]

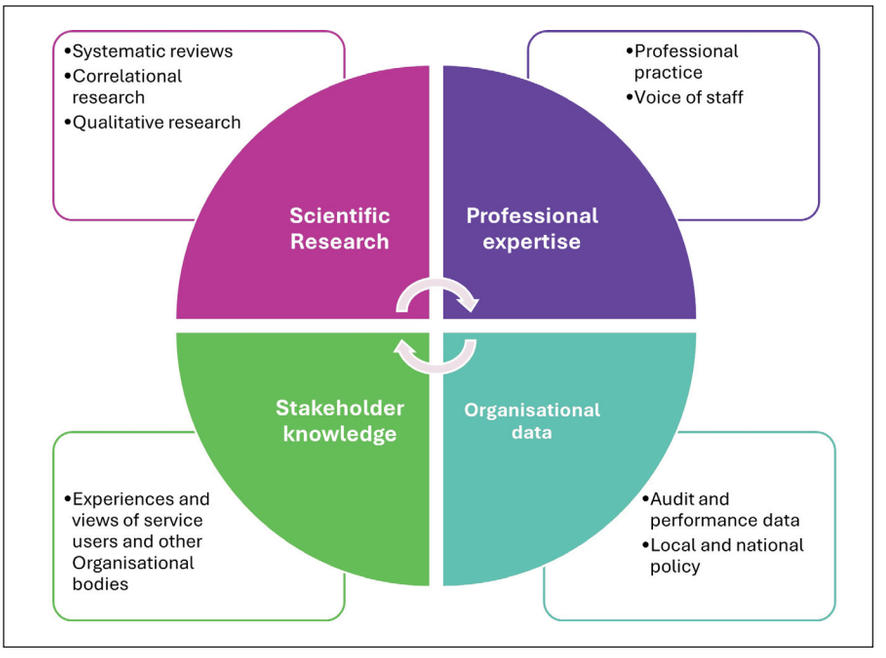
Resilience varies over the course of a lifetime, but is a process of adapting, positively, to difficult circumstances.[5] Resilience is affected by lots of things, including your physical health, how you think and feel about a potential source of stress, the social and practical support that is available to you, your environment and circumstances, and the wider systems and networks that you are a part of or living in.[6]

Applying an evidence-based approach to staff well-being

We are committed to promoting and supporting evidence-based practice (EBP); the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available evidence when making decisions. This involves integrating multiples sources of evidence in a structured approach to understand a problem and devise a solution. Figure 1 is a model developed by Rob Briner, an occupational psychologist who has done considerable work in this area, which suggests that we should obtain data from four different sources when examining and developing a response to an issue.[7]

1. Islam, M. S., & Amin, M. (2022). A systematic review of human capital and employee well-being: Putting human capital back on the track. *European Journal of Training and Development, 46*(5/6), 504-534.
2. American Psychological Association (2013). *How Stress Affects your Health: Factsheet.* APA.
3. HMPPS (2024). *HM Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly:* March 2024. Ministry of Justice.
4. HM Parliament (2014). *Care Act* 2014. London.
5. Ljntema, R.C., Burger, Y.D., & Schaufeli, W.B. (2019). Reviewing the labyrinth of psychological resilience: Establishing criteria for resilience-building programs. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 71,* 288-304
6 . Windle, G. (2011). What is resilience? A review and concept analysis. Reviews in Clinical Gerontology, 21, 1-18.
7. Briner, R. (2019). *The basics of evidence-based practice.* SHRM.

Figure 1. *Model of key sources of evidence*



The four sources of evidence comprise:

1. Scientific research: This tends to have the greatest rigour, relevance and independence. This includes systematic reviews, quantitative evaluations, correlational research and qualitative research.
2. Clinical or Professional expertise: This includes professional practice and the knowledge of staff working in the area of interest; this is the voice of experience.
3. Stakeholder knowledge: This includes the experiences and views of service users and partner agencies across the sector, which is another vital source of evidence.
4. Organisational data: This comes from the local setting and organisations themselves. This includes audit and performance data, local and national policies as well as information on situational constraints (such as resources and time).

Using EBP can help us to improve our chances of achieving positive outcomes, to use scant money and resources wisely, and to ensure that organisations continue to learn and grow.[8]

In this lecture we use these four sources of evidence to understand the factors influencing well-being for prison staff, as well as to identify some of the strategies which can help.

Factors that influence the well-being and resilience of prison staff

Starting with the scientific research, there's broad agreement that there are key work-related stressors — environmental, task-related, role-related, social, and emotional labour — which affect well-being at work for those in critical occupations.[9] We see these stressors in the accounts of prison officers' experience,[10] and key stakeholders, for example, prison managers, who identify stressors in each of these categories as impactful on the well-being of prison staff.[11] We see these factors in organisational data, like exit and staff surveys as well as in national and international research with people working in prisons.[12] This triangulation of evidence means we can be confident that these factors are important and make a difference to the well-being and resilience of prison staff. There are also individual-level factors that affect well-being and resilience of

8 Latessa, E. J. (2004). The challenge of change: correctional programs and evidence-based practice. *Criminology & Public Policy, 3,* 547-560.

9. Meadows, M. P., Shreffler, K. M., & Mullins-Sweatt, S. N. (2011). Occupational stressors and resilience in critical occupations: The role of personality. *Research in Occupational Stress and Well-Being,* 39-61.

10. Gayman, M. D., Bradley, M.S. (2013). Organizational climate, work stress, and depressive symptoms among probation and parole officers. *Criminal Justice Studies, 26,* 326-346.

11. Nichols, H., Saunders, G., Harrison, K., Mason, R., Smith, L., & Hall, L. (2024). It's not ok to not be ok . . . when you're a prison governor: The impact of workplace culture on prison governors' wellbeing in England, Scotland and Wales. *Incarceration,* 5.

12. Steiner, B., & Wooldridge, J. (2015). Individual and Environmental Sources of Work Stress Among Prison Officers. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour, 42,* 800-818.

prison officers — personality traits like optimism, tendency to ruminate, as well as the support network that people have outside of work and what's going on in their wider lives — but we are focussing in this lecture on factors specific to the workplace.

Environmental stressors

The first workplace stressor is the environment and specifically perceived exposure to threat or harm at work. There is evidence from studies across the world, that the well-being of staff in critical occupations is affected by how exposed they feel to threat.[13] There is also small-scale research outside of the U.K. to suggest that officers working with more dangerous prisoners, who are at highest risk of assault, report highest levels of stress,[14] and that rates of substance misuse in jails affect how safe officers here in the U.K. feel.[15]

Task-related stressors

The second group of stressors are task-related. These are things that get in the way of or affect completion of job tasks, and include time pressure and work overload, work complexity, and interruptions.[16] Research by the University of Lincoln found that unrealistic expectations and heavy workloads were a key source of stress for prison managers.[17] Research with frontline staff tells a similar story.[18] The latest workforce statistics tell us that the resignation rate for band 3-5 officers was 8.4 per cent in the year ending 31 March 2024 and that during this time, an average of 11 working days were lost to sickness in public sector prisons, all of which likely impacts on the workloads of those who remain.[19]

> ...the well-being of staff in critical occupations is affected by how exposed they feel to threat.

Role stressors

Role stressors comprise role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity. Role overload is when you are wearing too many different hats and it becomes difficult to fulfil the expectations of all of them in the time available to you. Role ambiguity is when the boundaries and expectations of your role are not clearly defined or are open to interpretation. Role conflict is when you hold one or more roles that pull that you in different directions; that conflict with each other. Research with frontline prison staff tells us that balancing care and control, and the conflict between maintaining security and working to rehabilitate people in prison, can be really difficult.[20] International studies suggest that this is a key source of strain for prison officers in some other jurisdictions too.[21]

Social stressors

Social stressors relate to relationships and social interactions at work, and include incivility, abuse and harassment, which are all common occurrences in prisons. Social stressors also include relationships with colleagues, managers and leaders, and research suggests that a perceived lack of support from colleagues can be a key source of stress amongst prison officers.[22] There is also good evidence that leadership styles and the behaviour of leaders are linked to stress levels of staff and conversely, resilience.[23]

All of these stressors are exaggerated when there are problems with retention and sickness which affect staffing levels, as staffing levels affect workloads, roles change to meet gaps in provision and how people interact, and people's relationships with their colleagues

13. Vyas, K. J., Delaney, E. M., Webb-Murphy, J. (2016). Psychological impact of deploying in support of the U.S. response to Ebola: A systematic review and meta-analysis of past outbreaks. *Military Medicine, 181,* 1515-1531.
14. Misis, M., Kim, B., Cheeseman, K., Hogan, N.L., & Lambert, E.G. (2013). The impact of correctional officer perceptions of inmates on job stress. *SAGE Open, 3*(2), 1–13.
15. Kinman, G., & Clements, A. (2021). New psychoactive substances, safety and mental health in prison officers. *Occupational Medicine.* 71.
16. Searle, B. J. (2017). How work design can enhance or erode employee resilience. In M. F. Crane (Ed.), Managing for Resilience: *A Practical Guide for Employee Well-being and Organizational Performance. Routledge.*
17. See footnote 15: Nichols et al. (2024).
18. Finney, C., Stergiopoulos, E., Hensel, J. et al., (2013). Organizational stressors associated with job stress and burnout in correctional officers: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health 13,* 82.
19. See footnote 3: HMPPS (2024).
20. Butler, H.D., Tasca, M., Zhang, Y., & Carpenter, C. (2019). A systematic and meta-analytic review of the literature on correctional officers: Identifying new avenues for research. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 60,* 84–92.
21. E.g. Clements, A. J., & Kinman, G. (2020). A forgotten profession: The need to invest in the well-being of prison officers. In Birch, P. & Sicard, L. (Eds.), *Prisons and Community Corrections: Critical Issues and Emerging Controversies.* Taylor & Francis.
22. Walters, G. D. (2020). Getting to the source: how inmates and other staff contribute to correctional officer stress. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 45*(1), 73–86.
23. Adler, A. B., & Saboe, K. N. (2017). How organisations and leaders can build resilience: Lessons from high risk occupations. In M. F. Crane (Ed.), *Managing for Resilience: A Practical Guide for Employee Well-being and Organizational Performance.* Routledge.

change. We may also see more challenging behaviour from prisoners who too are under increasing strain because of these issues, as well as the growing prison population.[24]

Emotional labour

There is also a distinct stressor for those in helping professions; emotional labour — having to routinely repress or display certain emotions, alongside use of empathy[25] — which can lead to compassion fatigue (emotional and physical exhaustion which can result from absorbing the emotional stress of others, making it difficult to empathise and care for people) and burnout (when people become emotionally, mentally and physically tired as a result of experiencing excessive and extended periods of stress).[26] A review of research into emotional labour by HM Inspectorate of Probation highlighted 'surface acting' as particularly problematic; this is when people have to simulate an emotion to fulfil expectations of their professional role, displaying feelings that they are not experiencing, which is linked to burnout.[27] In addition to surface acting, prison officers have to manage their fear of victimisation when working in unpredictable circumstances, and research suggests that those who feel less powerful and more afraid are more likely to quit.[28]

Doing tasks that have real-world significance, which feel meaningful and help provide a sense of purpose, is linked to greater resilience.

However, it is also the case that jobs that involve emotional labour can have some benefits too, including a high level of job satisfaction, because these are jobs that matter, that have real world impact, and have meaning and value. Doing tasks that have real-world significance, which feel meaningful and help provide a sense of purpose, is linked to greater resilience and less strain.[29]

Stressors are present in life, in and out of work, and it is not inevitable that they put a strain on people's mental and physical resources, leading to poor mood and impacting negatively on health. We often can and do recover from stressors, our energy is replenished, and we experience more positive emotions.

If we acknowledge that prison staff work in conditions characterised by key work-related stressors that have the potential to cause strain, important questions are how we can protect staff from potential harm by reducing the presence, frequency or intensity of workplace stressors, and how can we encourage recovery from contact with those that remain.

Strategies for protecting well-being at work

One way of determining what we can do to protect prison staff well-being, is to use an approach put forward by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to improve mental health at work.[30] A similar tiered-approach is also mentioned in the NICE guidelines for mental health at work.[31] This approach suggests that we need to look at strategies that 1) prevent harm, 2) protect and promote well-being, and 3) support those in need.

1. Prevent harm to well-being at work

To improve the well-being and resilience of staff in prisons, we need to think about how to prevent and address the causes of stress and burnout. Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, 'We need to stop just pulling people out of the river. Some of us need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in.' We need to stop waiting for people to become unwell and start addressing the factors which are causing them to become stressed and unwell in the first place. It is about being proactive rather than reactive, and further having a better understanding of the positive influences on well-being which can lead to an organisation which is better equipped to enhance the well-being of staff.

24. National Preventive Mechanism (2023). *Monitoring places of detention: 13th Annual Report of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism* 2021/22. NPM.
25. Newell, J. M., & MacNeil, G. A. (2010). Professional burnout, vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion fatigue. *Best Practices in Mental Health, 6*(2), 57-68.
26. See footnote 25: Newell & MacNeil (2010).
27. Phillips, J., Westaby, C., & Fowler, A. (2020). *Emotional Labour in Probation: HMIP Academic Insights 2020/03.* HM Inspectorate of Probation.
28. Stichman, A., & Gordon, J. (2015). A preliminary investigation of the effect of correlational officers' bases of power on their fear and risk of victimization. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 38*(4), 543–558.
29. Walker, E. J., Egan, H. H., Jackson, C. A., Tonkin, M. (2018). Work–Life and Well-Being in U.K. Therapeutic Prison Officers: A Thematic Analysis. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology,* 62(14), 4528-4544.
30. World Health Organization (2022). *WHO guidelines on mental health at work. Geneva:* World Health Organization.
31. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2022). *Mental Wellbeing at Work: NICE Guideline.* NICE.

The evidence suggests six priority areas to focus on.

Recruitment practices: To prevent harm to officers' well-being, we could have more targeted recruitment and selection procedures, and identify those most likely to require support with their well-being. We can ask, 'how do we attract people with the right skills and characteristics to this job?' 'Can we do more to think about how we recruit the right people, those who are resilient and able to reflect on their practice and well-being?'. We can also think about how we can use the information we obtain through the recruitment and selection process to tailor support packages to individual staff members' needs.

Research has found that personality factors such as open mindedness, conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability as well as support for rehabilitation amongst officers are related to more positive outcomes including engagement with work.[32] Understanding who is best suited to prison work could be helpful for recruitment, for interview panels, selection, as well as for identifying staff who may need support to build certain skills.

Screening programmes have been implemented in other fields, for example the Police. In a study which is due to be published soon, an assessment approach was trialled across three police forces.[33] This assessment indicated that around 80 per cent of the workforce in these three areas were well, 15 per cent had some troubling symptoms and 5 per cent had clinical symptoms which required treatment. The programme referred the 15 per cent with troubling symptoms to see a therapist and onwards from there, either on to the NHS or to short-term support via the organisation. The top 5 per cent were directly referred to the NHS. This screening approach was found to be cost-effective; there was around a 190 per cent return of investment of the programme (that is, the cost of the programme was £83,000 and the return was £241,000 in terms of ability to work, and minimising sickness rates). It seems worth testing whether a similar programme could be applied and see such benefits across prisons too.

> ...stop waiting for people to become unwell and start addressing the factors which are causing them to become stressed.

Culture and environment: Well-being is also impacted by culture and the working environment. The research evidence is clear that the culture of the prison has a significant impact on staff and prisoner well-being.[34] Culture is the atmosphere and environment we create around ourselves, the way things are done, the way we treat each other, relationships, the physical environment, and our everyday practices and behaviour. If staff work in better conditions and have the resources they need in turn the evidence indicates that we will see better well-being and decision making. In a decent environment and positive culture, people feel valued, are treated fairly, are listened to and cared for, feel empowered, diversity is valued, people are focussed on learning, processes are enabling, and there is collaboration.[35] Improving the safety of the environment — reducing violence, aggression and drug use in prisons will have an impact on the actual and perceived threats faced by prison officers, which is linked to poorer mental health and well-being.[36] We also know that improving the physical environment will help- research shows that overcrowding, poor prison conditions, lack of naturalistic settings, and poor lighting and noise can result in a range of negative outcomes for both prisoners and staff.[37]

Research recently published, based on interviews with 63 members of the Prison Governor's Association[38] suggested that the culture among prison governors could be described as a Masculinity Contest Culture comprising four key components (1) Show No Weakness (avoiding displays of femininity, such as vulnerability and some emotions), (2) Strength and Stamina (valorising physical strength and stamina), (3) Put Work First (expectations to work long hours and

32. Lin Chua, H. (2024). *The impact of individual differences on work outcomes of prison officers in Singapore Prison Service.* [Paper Presentation, Division of Occupational Psychology Conference, Sheffield].
33. Tehrani, N. (2024). *Economic evaluation of a psychological surveillance and support programmes: what has been achieved? [*Paper Presentation, Division of Occupational Psychology Conference, Sheffield].
34. Bierie, D. M. (2012). The Impact of Prison Conditions on Staff Well-Being. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology,* 56, 81- 95.
35. Fitzalan Howard, F., Gibson, R., & Wakeling, H. (2023). *Understanding culture change. A case study of an English Prison.* HMPPS.
36. Forman-Dolan, J., Caggiano, C., Anillo, I., Kennedy, T. D. (2022). Burnout among Professionals Working in Corrections: A Two Stage Review. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health,* 19, 9954.
37. Bierie, D. M. (2012). Is Tougher Better? The Impact of Physical Prison Conditions on Inmate Violence. I*nternational Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology,* 56, 338-355.
38. See footnote 11: Nichols et al. (2024).

put work ahead of family and any other external obligations) and (4) Dog-Eat-Dog (a hypercompetitive environment pitting one person against another). This was linked to a perception that accessing well-being support could have a negative impact on reputation and potentially be career-destroying, that support services are tokenistic, as well as sickness presenteeism (coming to work even though unwell) and working excessively long hours. As well as having a detrimental impact on leaders themselves, this sort of culture very likely impacts on prison officers too. One way to combat this is to work on normalising help-seeking behaviours and emphasising care. We were recently involved in studying the mechanisms of change in a prison that had a significant positive culture shift.[39] There was a strong emphasis on care across the jail; care was integrated into the vision of the prison ('be kind'), and there was real investment in the provision of care services. The prison provided dedicated time and roles to boost the Care Team, and managers seemed to really care about all staff members, shown through small acts such as remembering a birthday, and saying hello. Through these acts, help-seeking became normalised rather than stigmatised. People need to feel valued and cared for.

Leadership behaviour: Across critical occupations, leaders that actively promote and support employee health by meeting basic needs, talking about well-being, modelling looking after their own well-being, participating in and making time for relevant training, who make well-being everyone's responsibility, as well as those who create cohesive teams who have a shared identity and look out for each other, tend to have staff with higher levels of resilience than those who do not.[40]

There is also strong evidence that how people feel treated by those in authority can have an important impact on staff well-being in prisons. We conducted large-scale research across prisons in England and Wales, which found that procedural justice matters for prison staff.[41] When staff feel treated in a fair and just way by leaders and managers, this is related to less stress, sickness, absence and job burnout, more commitment to the organisation, better life and job satisfaction, improved well-being, being less likely to want to leave the job, having more support for rehabilitation of prisoners and less fear of being victimised. Using the four principles of procedural justice; conveying trustworthy motives, giving staff a voice, treating people with respect and applying rules with transparency and neutrality, can make a difference to prison officers' well-being.

> …we can use the information we obtain through the recruitment and selection process to tailor support packages.

Support: How supported people feel at work is one of the strongest influences on workplace well-being and resilience for those in critical occupations.[42] Research with prison officers tell us that they value:

- Peer support, whether this is formal or informal.[43] Having a shared identity at work, feeling in it together and looking out for each other makes an important difference to the well-being of people who work in critical occupations generally.[44] For prison officers this can help to foster positive behaviour at work, reduce feelings of loneliness and provide access to social, emotional and practical support.[45]
- Studies from the U.S. and the U.K. indicate that having protected space in which to talk about the emotional and moral demands of the work with colleagues is valued by people working in prisons.[46] This can be in the form of supervision- having formal contact over time with either peers, line managers or clinical supervisors, which has been linked to less stress and anxiety and better job satisfaction, and can help people feel valued.[47]

39. See footnote 35: Fitzalan Howard, Gibson, & Wakeling (2023).
40. See footnote 23: Adler, & Saboe (2017).
41. Wakeling, H.C., & Fitzalan Howard, F. (2022). Prison staff's perceptions of procedural justice in English and Welsh prisons: A quantitative study. T*he Howard Journal of Crime and Justice,* 1-18.
42. Brooks, S. K, Dunn, R., Amlot, R., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G.J. (2016). Social and occupational factors associated with psychological distress and disorder among disaster responders: A systematic review. *BMC Psychology,* 4, 18.
43. Costa, V., Monteiro, S., Cunha, A. I., Pereira, H., & Esgalhado, G. (2024). Job stress and burnout among prison staff: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Criminal Psychology, 14(*2), 196-212.
44. Lambert, E., Altheimer, I., & Hogan, N. (2010). Exploring the relationship between social support and job burnout among correctional staff. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour, 37*(11), 1217–1236.
45. E.g. Rankin, K. E., & Treston, K. C. (2024). A test of job demands-resources theory: Organizational citizenship behavior in a carceral setting. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 51*(4), 552-568.
46. Forsyth, J., Shaw, J., & Shepherd, A. (2022). The support and supervision needs of prison officers working within prison environments. An empty systematic review. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology, 33*(4), 475–490.
47. Winship, G., Shaw, S., & Haigh, R. (2019). Group supervision for prison officers: An orthopedagogical approach to emotional management. T*he Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology, 30(*6), 1006–1020.

- Line management. Line managers can act as an important buffer to stress for people working in high threat environments.[48] Regular contact with a line manager who is compassionate, helps with job crafting (see job demands and control section), who understands people's strengths and capabilities and provides developmental feedback, can make a real difference.[49] Line managers should have the training and support they need to do this important job well and to help them model that well-being is a priority.[50] They also play an important role in creating conditions under which people are more likely to detach from work which is strongly related to recovery from work stressors.[51] Line managers can enable some flexibility in working, avoid asking people to think about work-related tasks in non-work time and limit overtime to protect time for non-work-related activity.[52]

- Job demands and control: Research indicates that in general, having a high workload but little control over how you manage that work, leads to reduced job satisfaction, poorer health outcomes, and contributes to emotional exhaustion and burnout.[53] Evidence suggests this applies to prison officers too.[54] Managing staff workloads is therefore an important preventative well-being strategy, which combines not only looking at the demands on people's time but also at the level of control they have over the way they manage their time and tasks. Research suggests that such job control helps mitigate the impact of high workloads on stress, and that feeling empowered and having autonomy in roles can help prevent harm and encourage psychological recovery from stress.[55]

One way to combat this is to work on normalising help-seeking behaviours and emphasising care.

While managing job demands can be achieved through effective line management, and relies at least in part on effective recruitment and retention practices, evidence suggests that increasing job control has the potential to be achieved through greater use of job crafting and prototyping. Job crafting is initiated by the employees themselves. It consists of actively modifying the way they go about doing their job by reconfiguring the way they approach tasks, allowing employees to adjust what they do to fit with/make the most of their personal knowledge, skills and abilities, and to their preferences and needs.[56] Examples of job crafting include an employee actively developing their skills and knowledge by engaging in professional development activities —giving themselves the chance to do well — asking for help and feedback about the job from their supervisor or manager and co-workers, proactively offering to work on tasks that interest them and when there is little to do, offering help to co-workers and asking for more responsibility from their manager or supervisor. This helps employees balance job demands and resources with personal abilities and needs, which can result in increased satisfaction, reduction in risk of burnout and an increase in performance and productivity.[57] A recent study of prison officers in Poland found that those who engaged in job crafting felt their work was more meaningful and engaging.[58]

Prototyping is a form of service design that involves exploring how tasks are performed and testing new ways of doing things to improve outcomes.[59] There is work underway in prisons to explore how prototyping can be used to improve outcomes and better streamline

48. Kay, D., Brown, C. Hatton, T., Stevenson, J. R., Seville, E., & Vargo, J. (2019). Business recovery from disaster: A research update for practitioners. *Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies, 23*(2), 83-89.
49. Alfes, K., Truss, C., Soane, E. C., Rees, C., & Gatenby, M. (2013). The relationship between line manager behavior, perceived HRM practices and individual performance: Examining the mediating role of engagement. *Human Resource Management, 52,* 839–859.
50. See footnote 48: Kay et al. (2019).
51. Wendsche, J., & Lohmann-Haislah, A. (2017). A meta-analysis on antecedents and outcomes of detachment from work. *Frontiers in psychology, 7,* 2072.
52. Nagamine, M., Shigemura, J., Fujiwara, T., Waki, F., Tanichi, M., Saito, T., Toda, H., Yoshino, A., & Shimizu, K. (2018). The relationship between dispositional empathy, psychological distress, and posttraumatic stress responses among Japanese uniformed disaster workers: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Psychiatry, 18,* 328.
53. See footnote 16: Searle (2017).
54. E.g. Clements, A., & Kinman, G. (2021). Job demands, organizational justice, and emotional exhaustion in prison officers. *Criminal Justice Studies, 34,* 441-458.
55. Pijpker, R., Vaandrager, L., Veen, E., & Koelen, M. (2019). Combined interventions to reduce burnout complaints and promote return to work: A systematic review of effectiveness and mediators of change. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17,* 55.
56. Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of Management Review, 26,* 179–201.
57. Rudolph, C. W., Katz, I. M, Lavigne, K. N., & Zacher, H. (2017). Job crafting: A meta-analysis of relationships with individual differences, job characteristics, and work outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 102,* 112-138.
58. Nowicka-Kostrzewska, J., & Ro?nowski, B. (2023). "Personality in prison uniform". The influence of personality on building work engagement, applying job crafting strategies and well-being among prison officers. C*urrent Issues in Personality Psychology, 11*(4), 283-296
59. Cucierien-Zapan, M., & Hammel, V. (2019). Designing good jobs: Participatory ethnography and prototyping in service-oriented work ecosystems. *Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference Proceedings,* 514-532.

processes and systems, harnessing the insights of and working with people who are doing the job. As well as leveraging the experience and knowledge of those working on the front line, prototyping can help give staff a voice, and should lead to an increased sense of agency at work, which has the potential to lead to greater perceptions of job control and reduce levels of stress.

2. Protect and promote well-being at work

Another proactive strategy, protecting and promoting well-being at work involves strengthening capacities to recognise and act on mental health conditions at work, particularly among those with management or supervision responsibilities.

To protect mental health, WHO recommends:[60]

- Manager training for mental health, which helps managers spot and respond to staff experiencing emotional distress; builds interpersonal skills like active listening and good communication; and leads to better understanding of how job stressors affect mental health and can be managed;
- Training for staff in mental health literacy and awareness, to improve knowledge and reduce stigma that can affect how people deal with mental health conditions at work; and
- Interventions for staff to build skills to manage stress and reduce mental health symptoms, including psychosocial interventions and opportunities for physical activity.

  This can include interventions that target quality of sleep, which is vital for well-being and work performance. Recent research into factors affecting the quality of sleep of prison officers found that this was impacted by experience of aggression at work, and that those whose sleep suffered most were those with a tendency to be hypervigilant and to ruminate.[61] This suggests that, alongside work to reduce instances of aggression at work, promoting strategies which help officers manage these tendencies could be helpful in improving their quality of sleep. Recent research with Romanian prison officers found that psychological capital (which consists of hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism) can help protect staff from the effects of distress and negative relationships on well-being.[62] That is, officers with a high level of psychological capital were less burned out and had fewer physical and mental health complaints even in distressing circumstances. Helping staff to build these personal resources, therefore, can contribute — in tandem with organisational and system level interventions designed to improve working conditions — to protecting officer well-being.

Public and private prisons have a wide range of support services and individual-level interventions available to staff and managers including mental health allies, care teams, cognitive behavioural therapy for sleep issues, and one-to-one counselling through Occupational Health teams. One of the tasks, then, is to promote use of these services. We can take an evidence-based approach here by turning to behavioural science, which tells us that if we want people to engage in a behaviour that's good for their health, we need to make it as easy as possible for them to do that; we need to reduce any friction that might interfere with pursuing the desired course of action.[63]

There are a number of possible sources of friction, or obstacles that can get in the way of using the services and interventions on offer to those working in prisons. Some officers may not be aware of the services or of their eligibility for those services. For others, the sheer size of the offer might feel overwhelming. There may be practical barriers; some might want to access services but struggle to get the opportunity, or not have the time. Another potential issue is the stigma associated with accessing support. During a recent prison visit, we spoke to an officer who'd been over 30 years in service, and who was really open about his struggles with mental health. He spoke incredibly highly of the Care Team at that jail, but in the same breath, he also said that he would never go to them for support. It wasn't because he didn't think they were competent — quite the opposite — he thought they were really good at their jobs, but he said he knew the minute he went to see them, that everyone in the jail would know. He was a private and proud man, and he felt shame about needing help. That officer was not a one off. Research tells us that the culture in prisons, and the stigma associated with mental health issues, can get in the way of people getting the help they need.[64] If we

60. See footnote 30: World Health Organization (2022).
61. Kinman, G., & Clements, A. J. (2022). Prison officers' experiences of aggression: Implications for sleep and recovery. *Occupational Medicine (Oxford), 72*(9), 604-608.
62. Okros, N., Vîrg?, D., & Laz?r, T. (2022). Types of demands and well-being in correctional officers: The protective role of psychological capital. *Work (Reading, Mass.), 73*(1), 165-180.
63. Wendel, S. (2020). Designing for Behavior Change: *Applying Psychology and Behavioral Economics.* O'Reilly Media.
64. Ricciardelli, R., Haynes, S. H., Burdette, A., Keena, L., McCreary, D. R., Carleton, R. N., ... & Groll, D. (2021). Mental health, stigma, gender, and seeking treatment: Interpretations and experiences of prison employees. *Applied Psychology in Criminal Justice, 16*(1), 107-127.

want to protect and promote well-being, and encourage officers to use the range of services available, we need to work on addressing stigma, and normalising, reinforcing — even celebrating — looking after well-being and mental health, as the responsible and professional thing to do.

3. Support

The final set of strategies is centred on supporting those with mental health difficulties to thrive at work. This is both preventative, in preventing mental health from deteriorating, but also reactive by supporting people who develop mental health issues while at work.

WHO recommends three interventions to support people with mental health conditions to gain, sustain and participate in work:

- Reasonable accommodations at work, which involves adapting the work environment to the capacities, needs and preferences of staff with a mental health condition. This can include adaptations to work assignments or extra time to complete tasks, provision of flexible working hours, time off work to attend health appointments and regular meetings with supportive supervisors.
- Return-to-work programmes, which combine support to attend and participate in work (like reasonable accommodations or phased re-entry to work) with ongoing clinical support to reduce mental health symptoms and help individuals coming back to work after an absence related to a mental health condition.
- Supported employment initiatives, which help people with severe mental health conditions to gain or continue to work through provision of mental health and vocational support.[65]

A recent meta-analysis of well-being interventions for prison officers concluded that there just is not enough good research to tell us what works to reduce stress or manage mental health for frontline prison staff.[66] The same is true of interventions for people in some other critical occupations.[67] We need to do more work to build this evidence base. However, as we have heard, there are studies with prison officers which point to a few practices and psychological factors associated with resilience and better well-being, which give us some insight into the type of organisational support that can make a difference to well-being and mental health problems, including formal and informal support from peers and supervisors. In particular, effective line management can be an important source of support for prison officers. A recent large-scale study of the mental health of prison officers in the USA found that the competence of line managers and the support they offered acted as a buffer to the negative impacts of exposure to violence in the workplace.[68]

> ...feeling empowered and having autonomy in roles can help prevent harm and encourage psychological recovery from stress.

However, support for well-being at work is not just about attending to specific mental or physical health needs; it is about making sure people have what they need to be of value in their workplace, to have the right resources, the right knowledge and skills, the right ongoing support to learn and improve, through supervision/management and feedback.

The importance of mattering: Underpinning all of this, a sort of organising principle, if you will, is making sure that people know they matter. Mattering can be defined as the extent to which someone is acknowledged, relied upon and valued by others.[69] People working in prisons need to understand why their job matters, why the tasks assigned to them matter, and it's important that they know that their efforts are seen and valued, and that what they experience at work, matters. As human beings, having a sense of meaning and purpose is vital for our well-being, our resilience and better mental health.[70] Knowing that we play a role in our work

65. See footnote 30: World Health Organization (2022).
66. Evers, T. J., Ogloff, J. R. P., Trounson, J. S., & Pfeifer, J. E. (2020). Well-being interventions for correctional officers in a prison setting: A review and meta-analysis. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 47*(1), 3-21
67. Turley, R., et al., (2020). Promoting the retention, mental health and well-being of child and family social workers: A systematic review of workforce interventions. *What Works for Children's Social Care; Cardiff University.*
68. Lerman, A. E., Harney, J., & Sadin, M. (2022). Prisons and mental health: Violence, organizational support, and the effects of correctional work. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 49*(2), 181-199.
69. Piliavin, J. A., & Siegl, E. (2007). Health benefits of volunteering in the Wisconsin longitudinal Study. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 48,* 450–464.
70. Ryan, R. M., & Deci., E. L. (2001). On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well Being. *Annual Review of Psychology 52,* 131 66.

community, or having someone looking out for us, or looking to us for help, can provide us with a sense that we matter. A simple way of increasing a sense of mattering, is by recognising the realities and challenges of the working environment and the job, and by recognising and shining attention on particular behaviours or examples of good work by individuals or teams, which can increase resilience by validating people's hard work, and emphasising that their work is important, as well as encouraging people to reflect on the good that they're doing.

It is better not to impose support from the top down.[71] Evidence suggests we need to work with staff to design and deliver a range of support services that respond to and meet their needs — less doing to, and more doing with — working collaboratively to ensure that services are fit for purpose, feel relevant and credible and meet the diverse needs of prison officers.[72] How supported people feel matters; people need to feel the offer of support is authentic and that they could feasibly access that support if they needed to.

Encouraging voice and engagement from staff and getting staff involved in and contributing to decision making is important, and can reduce stress.[73] An in-depth study of prison culture change identified encouragement of voice and engagement from staff as a key mechanism of change.[74] We have also been involved in participatory action research at two prisons, HMPs Littlehey and Low Newton, where we worked with a group of motivated staff and prisoners to work towards improving the culture at the prisons. It struck us how valuable those involved felt that the project had been for them. When reflecting on their experiences, both project groups described the positive impact of having a voice and the collaborative working relationships that had developed within the groups on their well-being. What they had to say, and their experiences, mattered.

Concluding thoughts

The evidence tells us that prisons are challenging work environments, they contain lots of stressors, but they are also places where people do important and valuable work, and where staff can make a genuine difference. We know that being in a job that feels meaningful, provides a sense of purpose and belonging, and in which you can really see the difference you make, and the value you add, is linked to better well-being and increased resilience.

We can use an evidence-based approach to well-being and resilience. We can focus on what we can do to prevent harm, to protect staff by monitoring and improving conditions for well-being at work, to promote staff support services, and to support our staff to do a good job well through effective line management, development work, and working collaboratively to produce services that are accessible, practical and meet their needs.

Administrative level solutions for well-being and resilience, such as improving prison culture, ensuring good communication, providing recognition for officers doing a good job, and involving staff in decision-making, are just as important if not more so, than individual-level solutions.

And finally, if we want to make a difference to workplace well-being in prisons, we can commit to making sure every officer knows that they matter, and that the work that they do matters.

71. British Psychology Society Guidance (2020). *The psychological needs of healthcare staff as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.* BPS.
72. See footnote 21, Clements et al. (2020).
73. See footnote 43: Costa et al. (2024).
74. See footnote 35: Fitzalan Howard, Gibson, & Wakeling (2023).

Educating prison officers in Norway

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This article is a transcript of a presentation given at The Perrie Lectures in 2024. The Perrie Lectures is an annual event which has the purpose of stimulating dialogue between criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector, and all those with an academic, legal, or practical interest in people in prison and their families. The theme of the 2024 event was 'Recruiting, training, and developing great prison officers'.

Earlier this year, a new book on prison officers and their work was released: Prison Officers: International Perspectives on Prison Work, edited by Helen Arnold, Matthew Maycock and Rosemary Ricciardelli.[1] Throughout 17 chapters, different authors describe and analyse the highly-skilled and complex work prison officers perform in different jurisdictions throughout the world. In the concluding chapter, the editors summarise this highly-skilled and complex work, and in doing so, they constantly refer to the 'prison officer role'. This is a common concept to use when referring to prison officer work and raises several questions: Could this term be described as reductive? Is it fair to consider this highly-skilled and complex work as 'just' a role? Could it be understood and contextualised in other ways, and if so — how? In this article, we will elaborate upon these questions by describing and discussing the education of prison officers in Norway and the principles that guide this education.

'In Norway, we do not train prison officers, we educate them'

There are no international standards in order to qualify as a prison officer, but according to the Guidelines regarding recruitment, selection, education, training and professional development of prison and probation staff;

"Basic grade prison staff in daily contact with detainees should have entry educational equivalent to Level 4, of the European Qualification framework (EQF). In case they do not, they should have accomplished a (nationally recognised) apprenticeship or vocational equivalent, thus enabling them to apply for the training to become a prison officer."[2]

This falls below the level of higher education, with the learning outcomes being relatively basic, as seen in Table 1.[3]

Table 1. *Level 4 — learning outcomes*

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities

As for the qualification requirements for probation officers, however, the guidelines states that these should be at level 6, EQF, that is, on the level of higher education, where the learning outcomes are enhanced to an advanced and complex level, see Table 2.[4]

1. Arnold, H., Maycock, M., & Ricciardelli, R. (2024). *Prison Officers: International Perspectives on Prison Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.
2. Ministers' deputies, CM (2019) 111-add, 10 July 2019[1], 1356 meeting, 9 October 2019, 10.3.b European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC), para. 3.1. https://www.cep-probation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Guidelines-regarding-recruitment-selection-education-training-and-professional-development-of-prison-and-probation-staff.pdf.
3. Europass, European Union: Description of the eight EQF levels. https://europass.europa.eu/en/description-eight-eqf-levels.
4. See footnote 3.

Table 2. *Level 6 — learning outcomes*

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
Advanced knowledge of a field or work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups

In most countries, qualification as a prison officer happens through in-service programs, as is in line with the guideline, that last for some months or weeks. Most often, this qualification is referred to as 'training' — mainly of skills — composed of elements considered to be vital for the job, such as 'Control and Restraint'. As the training does not lead to a grade in a formalised educational system, the value of the training outside the prison or correctional system is limited. It is the knowledge gained from the experience of working as a prison officer that is valued rather than the knowledge gained from the training. However, it is important to recognise that people becoming prison officers may have some kind of higher education from universities or university colleges before they enter the prison service.[5]

Since 2012, to qualify as a prison officer in Norway, a candidate has to complete a 120 ECTS program in Correctional Studies.[6] ECTS stands for European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, meaning that credits taken at one education institution can be included in studies at another education institution. The ECTS indicates the volume or workload, and 60 ECTS correspond to a full-time study for one year. The 120 ECTS program in Correctional Studies is a full-time study for two years and leads to the degree 'University College Graduate in Correctional Studies'. From this point on, we will refer to this study program as the UCG-program. In addition, a prison officer may take a 60 ECTS supplementary study program leading to the degree 'Bachelor in Correctional Studies' — hereafter the BA-program. The program was established in 2019 and is a part time study lasting for two years (30 ECTS per year). Some 15 ECTS courses in the program are also offered to students outside the program, including exchange students from partner institutions abroad.

The UCG-program is paid, which means that students in the program are employed and receive a salary of 370.000 NOK (about £26,500) each year. The salary covers general living costs, such as accommodation, which the students have to arrange themselves. They are hired on probation for the two-year education period and have a formal status as trainees. If students do not pass their exams (in two attempts at each exam) or are found unsuitable during education, they are fired and cannot continue the education. After the education period, they must complete a mandatory in-service placement year before they can apply for jobs, preferably as prison officers. The placement year must be completed before they can apply for the BA-program.

As the UCG-program was accredited as a higher educational program in 2012, there are prison officers in the Correctional Service who have not completed the UCG-program. However, it is also possible for them to become BA-students, after a competence assessment.

It is the University College of Norwegian Correctional Service, KRUS, that educates prison officers in Norway, meaning that the education is an in-service training. However, the Act relating to universities and university colleges (2024),[7] with some exceptions,[8] is also valid for the education of prison officers. At KRUS the education is organised by the Department of Correctional studies, led by the head of department and the heads of the UCG- and BA-programs. The remaining number of employees in the department, approximately 30 persons, are scientific personnel — assistant professors, associate professors and professors — and prison officers. Besides teaching, the personnel also do research and development work (RandD). This means that the education of prison officers has to meet the standards for higher education

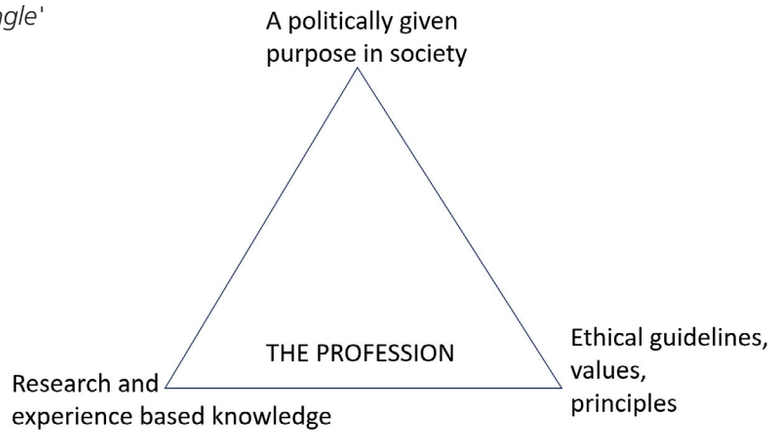
5. See, e.g., Akoensi, T. (2024). "Prison Officers Should be Treated Fairly". Perceptions and Experiences of Fairness Among Prison Officers in Ghana', pp. 271–297; Bruhn & Nylander (2024) 'Fairwell to Exceptionalism: An Analyses of Swedish Prison Officers' Attitudes Towards Prison Policy, Organisation, and Their Occupational Role in 2009 and 2019', pp.325–348; Herzog-Evans, M. & Thomas, J. (2024) 'French Prison Officers' legal Socialisation: "The Law, yes, Prisoners' Rights, No X: pp.83-109. In H. Arnold, M. Maycock & R. Ricciardelli (Eds.) *Prison Officers: International Perspectives on Prison Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.
6. We use the term "Correction" to emphasise that prison and probation is one service in Norway.
7. Act relating to universities and university colleges, LOV-2005-04-01-15, cf. LOV-2024-03-08-9 Norwegian Codes (2024).
8. Forskrift om delvis innlemming av Kriminalomsorgens høgskole og utdanningssenter (KRUS) under lov 1. april 2005 nr. 15 om universiteter og høyskoler, FOR-2012-10-26-993 Norwegian regulations of the law.

in Norway and Europe, which implies that, albeit short, prison officers are educated to a profession, not a role.

A profession — criteria and basis of knowledge

In order to fulfil the criteria for a profession, three requirements need to be fulfilled: There has to be 1) a purpose in society that is politically given, 2) a moral codex, i.e., the ethics of the profession, and 3) a source of knowledge that is based on research (in a broad sense) and taught at a level of higher education (university or university college), see Figure 1.[9]

Figure 1: Hallmarks of a profession: 'The profession triangle'



For prison officers, the politically given purpose is stated in The Execution of Sentences Act paragraph 2: 'A sentence shall be executed in a manner that takes into account the purpose of the sentence, that serves to prevent the commission of new criminal acts, that reassures society, and that, within this framework, ensures satisfactory conditions for the inmates'.[10] According to Nymo (2021), this purpose delegates authority to the prison officers and trusts them to perform their profession in line with the purpose and in accordance to the given values and principles. A central document in this regard is the *Ethical guidelines for the Public Service, with comments on the activities in the Correctional Service.*[11]

Concerning the purpose of the sentence, it is the utilitarian or relative theories that serve as the official purpose of imposing a punishment to someone in Norway.[12] The focus is progressive — what is to be achieved by the punishment — which is crime prevention through general deterrence or individual deterrence. General deterrence is to punish someone to prevent others from committing crimes, while individual deterrence is to prevent the person who has committed the crime, from committing new crimes. Here, we see that the first two parts of the politically given purpose — to take into account the purpose of the sentence and to prevent the commission of criminal acts — blur into one another. However, retribution and the retributive theories of revenge and punishment, as deserved for the crime that has been committed, also play a role. This is first and foremost expressed in what kind of sentence is passed — e.g., imprisonment or community sentence, and the 'amount' of punishment — e.g., years in prison or number of hours of community sentence.

While in prison, a prison officer is central in facilitating and helping a prisoner in the process of desisting from crime. At the same time, a prison officer must ensure that a prisoner does not commit new crimes or escape during the serving of the sentence. Besides reassuring society, this is important for general deterrence by demonstrating that the punishment is carried out. It is also important for the upholding of law and order in society by, for example, showing people that justice is done in order to prevent people from taking action against a practice they feel is unjust and start punishing each other.[13] A prison officer, especially when serving as a contact or personal officer, will also

9. Nymo, K. (2021). 'Profesjonsforståelse og profesjonell identitet (Understanding Professions and Professional Identity)'. In. M. I. Snetingdal & K. Nymo (Eds.) J*eg skal bli fengselsbetjent (I'm Going to be a Prison Officer).* Fagbokforlaget, pp. 55–68. Cf.: Halvorsen, L. R. (2017) 'Profesjonsutøvelse og profesjonsetikk (Professional Practice and Professional Ethics)'. Vernepleier, kort fagartikkel, 9. mai, https://vernepleier.no/2017/05/profesjonsutovelse-og-profesjonsetikk/; Hennum, B. A. & Østrem, S. (2016) *Barnehagelæreren som profesjonsutøver (The Kinderkarden Teacher as an Performer of a Profession).* Abstrakt forlag.
10. Act relation to the execution of sentences etc. (The Execution of Sentences Act) LOV-2001-05-18-21 Norwegian Codes (2001).
11. Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development & Norwegian Correctional Service (2020) E*tiske retningslinjer for statstjenestemenn. Med tillegg og kommentarer knyttet til kriminalomsorgens virksomhet.*
12. Andenæs, J. (1994). S*traffen som problem (The Problem of Punishment).* Exil; Hauge, R. (1996) Straffens begrunnelser (The Reasons of Punishment). Universitetsforlaget; Ot.prp. nr. 90 (2003–2004) *Om lov om straff (straffeloven) (The Penal Code – Law Proposition).* p. 77.
13. Storvik, B. (2022). S*traffegjennomføring (The Code of Corrections).* Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 4th ed.

be involved in decisions about a prisoner where assessments of justice in the sense of public opinion have an impact. This could include decisions regarding prison leave, transfer to open prisons or halfway houses, or release on parole.

In the above-mentioned prison officer work of balancing crime-preventive work and safety/security, it is important to bear in mind what punishment is. In Norway, punishment is defined as an evil — or pain — that is supposed to be experienced as an evil/pain.[14] The evil in punishment in prison is the loss of liberty, and a person is sent to prison as punishment, not for punishment. This is an important principle for guiding the last part of the purpose: to ensure satisfactory conditions for the prisoners. There are many factors that prison officers do not control in this regard, including the design of the prisons — like toilets in the cell, size of the yard, the economic situation of the prison, and so on. However, in the everyday life in the prison, where all parts of the purpose merge into the operation of the prison with its logistics, routines and state of readiness, there is a lot a prison officer can do by, for example, establishing rapport, building relations, meeting the prisoners' needs and making sure that the prisoners, the officers themselves and society itself are safe.

It is in this daily work the ethical guidelines come into force. The basis for the guidelines is general ethical values and norms such as fairness, loyalty, honesty, trustworthiness, and truthfulness. In meetings with other people, the prison officer shall behave correctly and in a respectful manner. Simply put, it is to 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. The basic principles in the European Prison Rules and the European Probation rules are also incorporated in the guidelines, such as respecting human rights and proportionality in the restrictions imposed and in the use of power. The purpose of the guideline is to ensure that prisoners are not exposed to arbitrary or unacceptable treatment. A high ethical quality in the service and the exercise of authority are also a prerequisite for citizens' trust in the Correctional Service.

The guidelines underline the personal responsibility prison officers have in learning to know and keep themselves updated on decisions and instructions in force and to follow them. At the same time, prison officers shall prevent the violation of fundamental rights, which requires them to have a critical stance and speak up as is protected by the Constitution.[15] The basis for their service is professional knowledge and discretion, and the principle of professional independence implies a right and a duty to raise well-grounded arguments or objections against political or administrative viewpoints, or against established practice when necessary.

This brings us to the third hallmark of the profession, which is knowledge. Both research-based and experience-based knowledge are fundamental for the prison officer profession. Additionally, there is a recognition that theoretical knowledge is important for professional practice. A characteristic of professions is that their knowledge base is composed of expertise from different subjects and fields. The subjects and fields composing the knowledge base for the education of prison officers in Norway is listed in the outer circle of figure 2. The inner circle illustrates how these subjects and fields constitute three pillars — safety and security, crime prevention, and profession, law and ethics — which are reflected in the subjects and curriculums in the UCG and BA-programs.

Figure 2: The basis of knowledge

14. Andenæs, J. (1976). S*tatsforfatningen i Norge, 4. utg. (The Condition of the State in Norway, 4th ed.).* Tanum-Norli; Rt, 1977: 1207, Supreme Court sentence; Christie, N. (1982) Pinens begrensning (The Limitation of Pain). Universitetsforlaget.
15. The Constitution of Norway, LOV-1814-05-17 Norwegian Codes § 100 (1814).

Most studies of prison officers are carried out within the field of criminology.[16] Such studies are important for the understanding of prison officer work, and they are essential contributions in the knowledge base for the programs. However, we need to develop and expand the knowledge base, with studies entrenched in other subjects, fields or a mixture of these. Studies entrenched in the field of, for example professional studies, yield new knowledge and enrich our understanding of prison officer work. This is an important task for KRUS, and especially for the staff at the Department for Correctional Studies. It is of utmost importance that this group is composed of staff with education and expertise within different subjects and fields relevant for the programs, such as law, sociology, criminology, philosophy, security, social work, pedagogy and so on. The group also consists of people educated as prison officers, who represent the practical knowledge. All staff need to develop their expertise, and in the last year, two members of staff who were educated as prison officers and have long experience from this work finished their PhD on safety and security work in prisons.[17]

The education programs need such staff with 'pracademic status' (practitioners and academics).[18] They are in a unique role that combines the theoretical and practical knowledge in their field of study, like safety and security in the context of prisons, which is of vital importance for the development of the prison officer profession. As one of the pillars of the education, this traditionally practice-led field needs theoretical and academic knowledge. This contrasts with the other two pillars, which are composed of subjects and fields with longer academic traditions, and thereby also have a certain status and recognition of being complex work that needs a certain level of qualification. Even so, these fields of study, for example social work, still need to be contextualised and theorised within a prison setting.

Both the studies of Midtlyng (2024) and Sørensen (2023) prove that operational safety and security work is highly-skilled and complex. Midtlyng's study of the embodied performance of operational work in a high-security prison shows the meaning of the tacit knowledge that Hay and Sparks in an earlier article in this journal presented as follows:

> *[P]rison officers have special abilities, but we can't quite say what they are, nor teach them — they are simply learned in a long process of initiation and experience (like becoming a member of the magic circle) (p. 3).*[19]

We disagree with Hay and Sparks and believe the so-called 'special abilities' of prison officers are necessary to study. By identifying, deconstructing and conceptualising them, we can produce knowledge that somewhat demystifies the 'magic circle'. Further, we can use this knowledge in the education of future officers to better prepare them for the job they will do.

…to qualify as a prison officer in Norway, a candidate has to complete a 120 ECTS program in Correctional Studies.

Recruitment and structure of the programmes

Compared to the rest of Europe, we have sufficient candidates and more than several other countries. Tables 3 and 4 show application and admission numbers from 2021 to 2023.[20] However, we do not have sufficient knowledge to claim that we recruit well enough, for example in terms of diversity. Therefore, our recruitment policy and admission system are currently under review.

16. See, e.g., Arnold et.al. (2024); Liebling, A., Price, D. & Shefer, G. (2011). *The Prison Officer.* Willan Publishing; Bennett, J., Crewe, B. & Wahidin, A. (2008). *Understanding Prison Staff.* Willan Publishing; Crawley, E. (2004) *Doing Prison Work: The Public and Private Lives of Prison Officers.* Willan Publishing.
17. Midtlyng, G. (2024). *Between chaos and control: Embodied performance of operational work in a high-security prison.* PhD dissertation, Oslo Metropolitan University, Centre for the Study of Professions; Sørensen, K. M. (2023) *"Hvem i helvete kommer nå?" Kriminalomsorgsarbeid i en ekstraordinær kritisk situasjon (Who the hell is coming now? Correctional work in an extraordinary critical situation).* PhD dissertation, University of Oslo, Faculty of Law, Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law.
18. Macduff, N., & Netting, F. E. (2008). 'Pracademic: A cultural anomaly'. *Vrijwillige Inzet Onderzocht, 50(*1), pp. 37–44.
19. Hay, W. & Sparks, R. (1991). 'What is a Prison Officer?' *Prison Service Journal, summer* 1991, pp. 2–7.
20. University College of Norwegian Service (2023) Kvalitetsrapport fra studiene ved KRUS (2023) (*Quality Report from the Studies at KRUS).*

Table 3. *Number of applicants, University College Graduate program, 2021-2023*

YEAR	2021			2022			2023		
	Total	**Women**	**Men**	**Total**	**W**	**M**	**Total**	**W**	**M**
Number of applicants	914	473	431	967	466	501	833	444	389
Qualified applicants	477	260	217	603	343	346	617		
Summoned to entrance tests	477	260	217	451	218	233	377		
Number of students	175	87	88	175	84	91	180	92	88
Number of places	180			180			180		
Qualified appl. pr place	2,65			3,35			3,52		

Table 4. *Number of applicants, Bachelor program, 2021-2023*

YEAR	2021	2022	2024
Number of applicants	205	165	210
Qualified applicants	176	146	191
Admitted students	34	35	32
Number of places	30	30	30
Qualified appl. pr place	5,87	4,87	6,37

All students at the UCG-level undergo the same programme. There is no specialisation, as Norway educates prison officers as generalists — they are able to work in all sorts of prisons (extra high, high, low security and halfway houses), with different kinds of prisoners (men, women, young people, sentenced persons, persons in pre-sentence custody, etc.), and different units (security oriented, crime-preventive oriented, etc.). Prison officers also work together with probation officers in electronic monitoring teams, and some even work as probation officers.

The first semester for the UCG students is a theoretical semester at campus. In the second and third semester, the students are in practice working in prisons where they have mentors while they work on the landings. They also complete theoretical courses in these semesters. The fourth and last semester is theoretical on campus. The dark grey areas in figure 3 give a more detailed description of the structure of the UCG programme.

The BA-programme opens for specialisation, as the students in the third semester have elective courses (see light grey area for the design of the programme, and the text after the star for a description of the elective courses). All courses in the BA-programme are theoretical and the teaching is session-based, with 3-4 sessions at each course. The teaching is hybrid, which means that the students can choose to be present at campus or follow the teaching online.

Bachelor Correctional Studies

Organisation	Semester	Courses		
Supplementary course of study (2 yrs. part-time)	8	KRUS 3900 Bachelor Thesis (15 credits)		
	7	Elective course (15 credits)*		
	6	KRUS 3100 Crime Prevention in the Correctional Service (15 credits)		
	5	KRUS 3000 The organisation of the Norwegian Correctional Service (15 credits)		
In-service placement year				
University College Graduate (2 yrs. full time)	4 Campus	KRUS 2200 Safety, Security and Risk Management II (7,5 credits)	KRUS 2300 Community Reintegration and Social Work II (15 credits)	KRUS 2400 Professional Knowledge and Ethics (7,5 credits)
	2 & 3 In prison	KRUS 1400 Assessment and Documentation (10 credits)	KRUS 2000 Safety, Security and Risk Management I (30 credits)	KRUS 2100 Community Reintegration and Social Work I (20 credits)
	1 Campus	KRUS 1000 Introduction to the Prison Officer Role and the Norwegian Correctional Service (10 credits)	KRUS 1100 The Code of Corrections and Other Legal Topics (10 credits	KRUS 1200 Crime and Punishment (10 credits)

* Isolation; Children and Young Adults in Correctional Care; Human Rights in the Serving of Sentences; Radicalization and Violent Extremism in the Correctional Service; Crime Prevention in Correctional Care; Tutoring in the Correctional Service; The Norwegian Penal System: Comparative, Practical Studies; Prisoners and Convicted with Mental Illness.

Figure 3: The study programs

Ambitions and realities

KRUS aims to be an accredited, practice-oriented, and unique university college with a research and study environment that promotes and develops competence in the field of corrections. According to our strategy, prison officers should have a bachelor's degree as foundational education. Our ambition is also to develop a master's programme in corrections. There are several prison officers who take their master's at other universities and university colleges, but we are convinced that offering a higher-level education at KRUS will have positive spin-off effects in the correctional service. It will, for example, make higher education more available for officers, raise their career opportunities, contribute to more research-based practice, and raise the status of the education even further.

Professionalisation of prison officer education is not a new idea. Aims and ambitions for a longer, research-based education have been long lasting. Forty years ago, in a report to the Ministry of Justice, a Public Committee argued that '*the work of a prison officer is no less demanding than the work of many other professions which today require a three-year college education'* (p. 52) (our translation).[21] As examples, the Committee mentioned nurses and social educators, who also work in institution-based settings. The arguments of why prison officers needed the same length of their foundational education were rather principal:

> *The most important resource in prisons is the people who work there, but the unique environment in prisons also affects the staff, making it difficult to be a humane counterbalance to some of the negative effects of imprisonment. The staff are under constant pressure and often feel after a few years that they have no energy left to give. Education helps to build a foundation and provides better opportunities for maintaining and renewing oneself in the job, so that one always has something to offer the prisoners.*[22] (our translation)

Throughout 40 years these arguments have been repeated. Other arguments, such as the need to raise competence and professionalism to meet crime challenges, have been added.[23] However, the recommendations have been met with political reluctancy and little will to change education for prison officers. The changes from a two-year programme with no credits to a UCG-program in 2012 and the establishment of a BA-programme in 2019 have been strongly supported by stakeholders, such as the Directorate of the Correctional Service and the prison officers' unions, but the main actor has been the staff at KRUS.[24] The premise to establish a BA-programme was no extra costs, but by the effort of KRUS-staff it became possible to launch it. Costs have been a central political argument for not expanding the studies beyond two years. A condition of establishing a three-year compulsory bachelor programme has been to cut the salary during education, and politicians have been anxious that recruitment then will be problematic due to the low status of the job. In our opinion, the robust application to the BA-program (see table 4) has proven this wrong.

Both research-based and experience-based knowledge are fundamental for the prison officer profession.

Another argument against a compulsory bachelor programme for prison officers is that they will become too well educated for the job. Rather than working in prisons, they will find jobs elsewhere than in the Correctional Service. It is especially the unions that put forward this argument, but there are also arguments that making prison officer education more attractive will enhance the status of the job.[25] At the same time, we also think that other kinds of qualifications, such as

21. Ministry of Justice and Police (1984) *Utdanning for arbeid i kriminalomsorgen (Education for Work in the Correctional Services)* [Norwegian Public Report, NOU 1984:2].
22. See footnote 21 p. 52.
23. Kriminalomsorgens sentrale forvaltning (2004). *Delinnstilling 2, Utdanning for fengselsbetjenter (Education for Prison Officers).* Ministry of Justice and police; Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2021) *Kriminalomsorgsmeldingen – fremtidens kriminalomsorg og straffegjennomføring (White Paper on Corrections – Corrections for the future)* [White paper, Meld. St. 39 (2020 –2021].
24. Brun, A., Nylander, P. Å., & Johnsen, B. (2017). From Prison Guards to … What? Occupational Development of Prison Officers in Sweden and Norway. J*ournal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention, 18*(1), 68–83.
25. For such correlation in the Norwegian police: Pedersen, C & Damen; M.L. (2021). 'Politielever og politistudenter gjennom hundre år (Police Cadets and Police Students Over One Hundred Years)'. In: B. Ellefsen, V. Sørli & M. Egge: *Kunnskap for et tryggere samfunn? Norsk politiutdanning 1920-2020 (Knowledge for a Safer Society? Norwegian Police Education 1920-2020).* Cappelen Damm Akademisk, pp. 252–258.

social workers and social educators, could qualify for a job along with the prison officers at the landings. This is for example the case in some preventive detention units,[26] where prison officers, social workers, social educators and child welfare officers work together. They all wear the same uniform, and the prisoners cannot see the difference between them. This will strengthen the crime-preventive work in the prisons, and KRUS could provide special courses in safety and security (with credits) for those not educated as prison officers.

Despite adequate recruitment for our study programs, many prison officers leave the job within a few years, and right now Norwegian prisons lack staff. Additionally, a significant proportion of those who stay exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mental strain.[27] This research indicates that Norwegian prison officers have issues like those warned about in NOU 1984:2. As in many other countries, most prisoners in Norway have severe mental health problems.[28] Budgets cuts over an eight-year period with a conservative government (2013—2021) have also deteriorated the prison conditions. All these factors are leading to Norwegian prisons being further from exceptional today than they were 10—20 years ago.

Closure

One may wonder why the qualification requirements are different between prison and probation officers. Is this based on tradition, that probation officers traditionally have been qualified social workers, while prison officers have not? Is the work of a probation officer more complex than a prison officer, or is social or crime-preventive work in a correctional setting considered to be more 'intellectual' than work that involves both crime-prevention, safety and security, including the use of physical strength? It may be that the traditional hierarchical division between culture (the intellect) and nature (the body) tacitly has an impact on how these professions are regarded. In a country where the purpose and ethical foundation for the work is the same, there should be no reasons, whether based on tradition or 'intellect', to separate between the qualifications needed for prison and probation work. Crime prevention constitutes an important part of prison officer work in Norway, and this work starts from day one of imprisonment.

Besides, the safety and security work of prison officers requires academic recognition. The use of, for example, dynamic security — the humane factor in safety and security work — is complicated and sensitive work and needs to be explored and discussed in the education of prison officers. Moreover, there is a complex body of laws and regulations that regulate the work of prison officers, which is becoming increasingly complicated due to the impact of Human Rights. To read and understand this legislation and accordingly regulate the practice requires competence and skills that can be provided through education.[29] We perceive the UCG-program as inadequate in order to provide the necessary competence and skills in this regard.

We align ourselves with previous reports and policy documents and recognise the claim that the work of a prison officer is as complex as the work of probation officers, social workers, social educators and the like. Therefore, a mandatory bachelor education for the qualification of becoming a prison officer is long overdue.

26. Preventive detention is an informal life sentence.
27. Rambøll Management Consulting (2023). Kartlegging av psykiske belastninger blant ansatte i kriminalomsorgen (Mapping of Mental Strains among Staff in the Correctional Service.
28. Penal Reform International and Thailand Institute of Justice (2024). *Global Prison Trends 2024.* https://www.penalreform.org/global-prison-trends-2024/; Bukten A, Virtanen S, Hesse M, et al. (2024) 'The Prevalence and Comorbidity of Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders in Scandinavian Prisons 2010–2019: A Multi-national Register Study'. BMC Psychiatry 24,95.
29. See also Hertzog-Evans & Thomas (2024).

The Good Prison Officer and Rehabilitation: An Inside Perspective

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This article is a transcript of a presentation given at The Perrie Lectures in 2024. The Perrie Lectures is an annual event which has the purpose of stimulating dialogue between criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector, and all those with an academic, legal, or practical interest in people in prison and their families. The theme of the 2024 event was 'Recruiting, training, and developing great prison officers'.

We are happy to be here and thankful for having such a great opportunity, especially as two people who come from the predisposition of prisoners who have served several sentences, didn't complete school, and fought through addiction and recovery. If someone would have come to our doors whilst in any of those prison sentences we served and said, 'you will deliver a Perrie Lecture;' we're pretty sure we would have said, 'we don't think so.' We may have framed this with different terminology whilst in prison, but we have learnt to leave that lingo in the prison cell. Or at least get it out of the way in the car on the way to conferences!

Today, we intend to problematise the application of the word 'rehabilitation' to the role of the prison officer. This talk will cover insights from our personal experiences of incarceration and criminal justice practice combined with contributions and our reflections from the book we recently edited titled 'The Good Prison Officer: Inside Perspectives.[1] Through this process, we intend to demonstrate how the term 'rehabilitation' is a functional concept that has a direct impact on the experience of both prisoners and prison officers, a finding that emerged from the production and publication of our book. We will posit that the work of the prison officer requires humanity, connection, empathy, understanding, and a balance between the use of force and security and the engagement of trust in a complex and intense carceral environment, which is no mean feat.

Michael Howard declared in 1993 at the Conservative Party Conference: 'Prison works. It ensures that we are protected from murderers, muggers, and rapists — and it makes many who are tempted to commit crime think twice...'[2] 30 years on and the prison system, in the eyes of stakeholders — from prisoners, prison officers, and politicians alike — is in dire straits. Since that speech, the imprisonment rate in England and Wales has risen by 93 per cent, making it the highest imprisonment rate per capita in Western Europe.[3] We are sending more and more people to prison, and for longer and longer. Subsequently, the prison estate is severely overcrowded. Furthermore, the general condition and safety of the prison system have rapidly deteriorated within the last decade. Prison, in its current form, is broken and harmful, yet the term 'rehabilitation' is used more now than when either of us was in prison, spanning over two decades.

By the time we have finished this short talk, in addition to outlining both the thinking and contents of 'The Good Prison Officer' book, we will offer the provocation that the concept of rehabilitation — as an actionable process and intervention that can be done to people — not the idea that prisoners can go on to build successful and functional lives away from offending post-prison — can, through an uncritical and diluted application, not only obscure and sanitise the harsh reality of prison life, but can also, through constructing the prison as a place of treatment and positive intervention, serve to inadvertently legitimise and amplify the position of those such as Michael Howard who claim that Prison Works. We claim that overstating the efficacy of rehabilitation in the prison estate — and the ability of prison officers to be able to carry out such a task — not only negatively impacts the lives of prisoners but, just as significantly, has a detrimental effect on the morale of prison staff and the retention of prison officers.

The Good Prison Officer: Inside Perspective

The 'Good Prison Officer: Inside Perspectives' was edited, written, and produced by seven ex-prisoners

1. Brierley, A. (2023). The Good Prison Officer. Routledge.
2. Howard, M. DOES PRISON WORK? Available online at Prison_Works.doc (live.com) Accessed on 27/6/24
3. Fleck, A (2023). The Western European Nations Imprisoning the Most People. Statista. : Available online at Chart: The Western European Nations Imprisoning the Most People | Statista

who are now in roles within criminal justice practice, addiction and recovery services, or academia. Routledge — a leading academic publisher — published the book; this makes our team enormously proud because, at the time of writing and publication, none of the authors had a doctoral degree. In response, as a collective, we had to work extra hard to capitalise on our shared knowledge and skills to produce a piece of work that met the rigorous and high standards required for academic publishing.

Background, Aim and Impact

Routed in the editor's extensive participatory approach to youth justice practice, and in the lived experience of incarceration, the overarching philosophy that underpins the book is in the recognition that it is a necessity for those who are closest to a problem to be a fundamental and essential part of the solution. This philosophy has transitioned across contexts from youth justice practice to teaching on the Unlocked Graduates Scheme for Leeds Trinity University. It was in becoming more familiar with the available literature on prison officer practice that a gap was identified; there was a distinct lack of prisoners and ex-prisoners making a direct contribution to the literature on what constitutes both 'good' and 'bad' prison officer practice from an inside perspective. Therefore, we took on the challenge to explore whether a group of early-career academics and practitioners with prison experience would produce such a contribution.

This led to the difficult task of finding the voices of those who occupy the dual role of possessing both a lived experience of prison *and* 'professional' experience too. The decision to pursue this task was made to ensure that the work would contain an understanding of professional expertise and an appreciation of the challenges of working in and around the criminal justice system. In a bid to represent the voice of the general prison population, a further decision was made to seek out the often most socially excluded voices. So, an additional criterion was made that the contributors would have experienced intersectional and multiple disadvantages, such as: 1) school exclusion, 2) addiction and recovery, 3) placement in the care of a local authority, 4) experience of several sentences (the revolving door of custody), and 5) youth incarceration.

Once the team was selected, we held informal monthly meetings and set up a lively WhatsApp group. We embarked on a journey together as a 'redemption community' with a shared vision that, through influencing prison officer practice, we may improve the prison system for prisoners. However, during this process, we found that the book's focus also began to include how prison officers are often not cared for or adequately supported. It is a view shared by the contributors of this book that strong social relations are an essential feature of desistance. With this in mind, we began to explore and question the implications of this lack of workforce support and underappreciated professional value within the sector and by the wider public. Our view is that prison officers not receiving adequate support hinders them from being best equipped to provide those necessary social relations for prisoners in custody.

It is a view shared by the contributors of this book that strong social relations are an essential feature of desistance.

It is essential to explain the impact of our work on the lives of prisoners, prison officers, and the prison sector in the UK, both in the North and in the South. The first book launch took place at Westminster University, with the second at HMP Edinburgh; this included attendance of men and women serving prison sentences, prison governors, leading criminology scholars, third sector organisations, and the Cabinet Secretary of Justice and Home Affairs, Angela Constance. Consequently, we were all invited to the Scottish Parliament to participate in a discussion with politicians about how Scotland can improve their prison system through the lens of improving prison officer practice. Several authors have also visited prisons to speak to current prisoners and delivered workshops and training to officers about the book's content and recommendations. As a result of this work, we are immensely proud that all new prison officer recruits in Scotland — estimated to be about 700 per year — will receive electronic versions of our book whilst completing their initial training.

For us, the most significant impact was having Michael O'Leary write a review of the book.[4] Amid all the doom and gloom that hovers over the prison sector, Michael — a serving prisoner — reviewed an academic book about prison officers' practice written by seven ex-prisoners in professional roles, and it was published in the Probation Journal — you couldn't make it up! Talk about a redemptive 360°. It is critical to hold on to

4. O'Leary, M. (2024). Book review: The Good Prison Officer – Inside Perspectives. *Probation Journal, 71*(1), 108-110.

those informal and unstructured positive news stories because although, as previously outlined, the Prison Service has its challenges, there certainly are pockets of hope and humanity we can reach for.

The Jarring Question

For some former or serving prisoners, the book's title — 'The Good Prison Officer' — may prove particularly jarring. They would not be alone. When Andi first approached Max to contribute to the book, this was something he had to wrestle with. Initially, framing a book about prison life and prison experience in terms of good prison officers is something that took Max aback. However, as Maruna eloquently outlines in the book's foreword, 'who better to describe prison officer practice than those who have been on the receiving end of it.' Furthermore, Max reflected that, even as a serving prisoner, he had always understood that, although in a position of potentially unwelcomed power, prison officers were just people, like everyone else, trying to do a job. Furthermore, the characterisation of the 'us and them' relationship between prisoners and prison staff did not, in fact, ring true as much as, for example, the relationship with the police.

In addition to this, as a team, we understood that the role of a prison officer is extremely complex and multifaceted. Not many other jobs require the adoption of just so many — and often conflicting — 'hats'. Prison officers are not only required to deliver the prison regime but also to act as security and surveillance on the landings, to protect themselves, their fellow officers, and the prisoners in their care, but also to behave in pastoral roles akin to a social worker, mental health practitioner, conflict resolution facilitator, and caregiver — sometimes these roles can be enacted simultaneously.

Moreover, it rings true to the book's authors that, across the entire sector of the statutory criminal justice system, it is likely prison officers who have the closest relationships — and the closest thing to an *authentic* relationship — to those who have been sentenced to prison. However, prison officers are often absent from the discourse around prisons and prison reform and the attention of scholarly work. It is both for the complexity of the prison officer's role and the unique proximity to prisoners — and therefore the potential for both good and bad practices to impact the conditions of those inside the prison — that we believe that the good prison officer is deserving of our attention and amplification.

> For us, the most significant impact was having Michael O'Leary write a review of the book.

Flexibility: Negotiation and Discretion

When tasked with thinking about what it was that may constitute a 'good prison officer', we were drawn to the notion that, for us, a good prison officer was one who could, to the best degree probable, allow us to navigate the prison environment as well as possible. The prison environment — on either side of the equation — as we are sure that everyone who has either lived or worked in prison can attest to, can be one of hypervigilance and intensity. The chronic undercurrent of violence, underpinned by a relentless landscape of scrutiny and surveillance (from both prisoners and prison officers), can result in high levels of toxic stress and, by any measure, is unhealthy and unhelpful. To navigate such a landscape successfully requires a level of performance.

Hypervigilance (or an increased level of awareness) may manifest in a sense of being 'tuned in' to the wing. For example, being able to 'feel' in the air that something is about to 'kick off'; picking up on small patterns of behaviour, movements, or sounds that indicate a shift in the tone of the wing — and the subsequent implications of this, i.e., violence. Another example may be in the everyday interactions of prisoners; 'where are you from, what are you in for.' Although this interaction may be seemingly banal and uninteresting in the eyes of an observer, it is steeped in hypervigilance, scrutiny, and performance. The back and forth that follows is underwritten by each prisoner attempting to assess each other: 'Who do you know, what jails have you been in etc.' — this is a real-time process of analysis and scrutinisation to look for discrepancies, contradictions, and any other information that may communicate either legitimacy or illegitimacy of a prisoner's status, and whether a prisoner may be either vulnerable, a threat (in a multitude of different manners), or dangerous.

The sociologist Erving Goffman describes life as a 'dramaturgy' — that is, life is a performance similar to a stage show.[5] In this dramaturgy, Goffman describes how people — actors — move through life by adopting either front- or back-stage roles. A clear example of this is the instance of a waiter in a particularly high-end

5. Goffman, E. (2023). The presentation of self in everyday life. In W. Longhofer, W. & D. Winchester (Eds.), Social theory Re-Wired: *New Connections to Classical and Contemporary Perspectives* (pp. 450-459). Routledge.

restaurant. In the 'frontstage', the waiter may move around the restaurant elegantly and speak in soft and hushed tones. However, as the waiter moves into the kitchen — or the 'backstage' — he may drop his frontstage performance and begin to shout and bark orders at the kitchen staff. It is in the backstage that the messy business of maintaining the frontstage performance can be carried out. The prison is no different in this sense.

For some, the cell may serve as a backstage space, somewhere where the stressors of the prison regime may be momentarily paused and offer a brief respite from the hypervigilance and performance of front-facing prison life. However, we believe that pockets of space resembling the cell — in terms of momentary respite — can be carved out from the front-facing prison regime on the landings; this often requires prison officers to enact degrees of flexibility and discretion. Often, the pockets of space and time carved out of the regime may be unsanctioned and not necessarily within the strict guidelines of prison officer training. However, it is grounded in the intuitive and attuned understanding of the officers who undertake dynamic assessments to become relational in the moment, and to make discretionary decisions that harness authenticity and trust whilst still maintaining power and authority.

Hypervigilance (or an increased level of awareness) may manifest in a sense of being 'tuned in' to the wing.

Just one example of this may be, when the cells are unlocked in the morning for movements, it may be pretty standard for a prisoner — who is not in work or education — to dart out of the pad and try to hide (or 'blend in') until the time when the doors were locked again, then hoping to remain out of the cell for the morning while the cleaners may be doing their work. Max describes in his chapter that the officers on the wing may give him a look or a nudge that let him know they knew what was going on — but had chosen to be flexible to maintain order in the wing through a relational approach. We reflect that, in doing this ourselves, it is often in these kinds of moments — as backstage spaces — in which the intense glare of prison life seems less bright, that allows for pockets of space for interaction between prisoners or prison staff that are the most authentic and grounded in humanity.

Practising flexibility and discretion are finely tuned skills; there is an art to knowing when to bend and when to stay firm. An overuse of discretion may render an officer a weak and easy target. An overenforcement of the rules may destroy the officer's legitimacy as a credible actor. Finding the 'sweet spot' may take some practice. Discretion may not be a new concept to some prison officers. For those who have been in the Service for a considerable about of time, they may enact discretion and flexibility as second nature. In a similar way to as previously described in the context of prisoners, for officers too, spending considerable amounts of time in the prison environment can result in being attuned to the rhythms, the emotions, and the subtleties of prison life and the ability to navigate and influence the terrain successfully — this is often referred to as 'jail craft'; for discretion, jail craft is critical.

It is no secret that the Prison Service faces considerable challenges around the recruitment and, perhaps more worryingly, the retention of prison staff. We have heard accounts of officers on the landings having only been in the job for just over 12 months, often being the most experienced officers on the wings. Aside from the obvious challenges this poses to the functionality of the prison, this highlights to us the very real issue of experience being lost from the Prison Service in increasing numbers, and the unwritten and uncoded skills and knowledge that come from possessing a level of 'jail craft' being potentially lost too. The ability to walk the fine line of discretion whilst maintaining legitimacy may be something that is witnessed and cascades down from officer to officer. With increasing levels of junior officers juxtaposed against a continuously decreasing level of experienced staff, it is essential that skills and tools such as flexibility and discretion — and other aspects of jail craft — are captured within the literature in order to preserve the qualities that contribute to becoming a 'good prison officer.'

Presence, Attunement, Connection and Trust (PACT)

As a person with lived experience of several community disposals, four prison sentences and consequently four episodes of licence conditions on probation, Andi strategically used these service recipient experiences in relationship building — formulating a practice model for working with people involved in prolific offending or on the margins of society. Having a subsequent extensive career in youth justice for 15 years, qualifying in 2013, with the additional experience of working in Secure Children's Homes and currently in a Young Offender Institution — with the highest rates of violence in the prison service

— Andi amalgamated his myriad of experiences to construct a relational way of connecting with those he worked with, shaping authentic relationships within criminal and carceral social fields to establish a set of key practice principles which increase the likelihood of developing trusting relationships within criminal justice practice. These principles also complement and set foundations for both trauma-informed practice and desistance ideals.

The PACT principles shaped Andi's professional response to those he worked with over his career, just in the same way he built reciprocal relationships prior to his career within criminal and carceral spaces. Those justice practitioners with backgrounds like his may need to develop an understanding of safeguarding, risk management, and multi-agency approaches, but most already know how to build organic relationships with a profile of people with similar identities and experiences who have also endured living on the margins.

This axiomatic insight constructs an intuitive understanding that without a reciprocal relationship which is natural and organic with those involved in criminality — on the wings in prison or within formal community interventions — the intended aim of changes in behaviour or improved social and health outcomes is illusionary. The principals and component parts of the PACT model are developed from receiving 'good' and 'bad' practices from justice practitioners, and strategically integrating that lived understanding into practice, as well as the integration and observations of effective approaches from colleagues.[6]

Presence is the power of showing up in the moment to investigate what the person we are working with sees when they look at us as practitioners and what our service or institution 'feels' like for them. This is beyond reflective practice or our intentions; it is what the system we work for represents from their lived experience perspective. On prison wings, this could be considering how the prisoner experiences the uniform, the criminal justice system, professionals in general or authority due to their previous experiences that often include social exclusion, educational rejection, and social care involvement in childhood, or as parents.

Attunement is our response once we have reached out beyond reflective practice and gained an understanding of their perspective of our service, power, and society. We can then attune our relational position to meet them where they are. This holds true to the 'responsivity' principle of Risk Needs Responsivity, which requires us to be dynamic in our approach and to attune to the relational needs, cognitive capacity, learning style, motivation, and strengths of the person.[7] For prison officers, this is intuitively knowing how to operate in the carceral margins through jail craft. As Max outlines in his chapter of our book, it is when to use discretion, be flexible and negotiate with prisoners, maintain security, safety, and order, and construct backstage spaces, where the magic happens.

> It is in the backstage that the messy business of maintaining the frontstage performance can be carried out.

Connection is recognising the reciprocal nature of relationship building in all contexts. When we say, 'they are not engaging,' it places the emphasis on the individual receiving our service, placing little responsibility on the part of us as practitioners. Instead, we suggest we use 'we are not connecting' as this leans into a relational approach. When we consider those with lived experience of trauma, racism, social exclusion, addiction, and poverty who are disproportionately overrepresented in the criminal justice system, our approach as practitioners influences how they respond. Therefore, the principle of connection allows a practitioner to recognise reciprocity and reduce blame and fault. On the wing, this reframing allows us to recognise our position of power and influence on prisoners. It can ensure that we consistently critique our approach, allowing space for reflective practice, professional flexibility, and innovation, which is certainly not easy in the prison terrain and requires practice.

Trust; if we as justice practitioners follow the first three key principles of the PACT model, we are more likely to obtain 'trusting' relationships from those we work with and reduce the power dynamics that often create barriers in a criminal justice context. Relational components that have been argued to embody trauma-informed practice in prisons: safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment.[8] We cannot obtain trust from every prisoner, but we can aspire to reach

6. Brierley, A. (2021). *Connecting with young people in trouble: Risk, relationships and lived experience.* Waterside Press.
7. Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2007). Risk-need-responsivity model for offender assessment and rehabilitation. *Rehabilitation, 6*(1), 1-22.
8. Bradley, A. (2021). Viewing Her Majesty's Prison Service through a trauma-informed Lens. *Prison Service Journal, 255,* 4-11.

that level as a relational ambition. This is when a prisoner may open up about a relationship breakdown, ask an officer to help with a personal issue, or show vulnerability within a backstage — reaching out to our humanity.

Relationships, Desistance and Rehabilitation?

On reflection, after publishing our book, we found it particularly interesting that, unlike the proliferation of 'rehabilitation' within the contemporary discourse around prisons and prison officers, this was a theme that was absent from the collection of chapters in 'The Good Prison Officer'. The term 'rehabilitation' is mentioned 81 times in the 2021 Prison Strategy White Paper;[9] it is woven and threaded through the document at almost every turn and policy decision — and its subsequent justifications. Additionally, the notion of prison officers as potential agents of rehabilitation is seemingly enshrined in the available literature from His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and other schemes focused on prison officer recruitment. However, in our reflections from the book's chapters on the qualities that construct a good prison officer, or in our accounts of our prison experience and desistance journeys, having practitioners who can deliver this 'rehabilitation' seems lacking. Providing his unique inside perspective on the tension between prison officers' ability to deliver rehabilitation and the agentic nature of desistance was eloquently argued by Michael O'Reilly in his review of the book, when he states that 'by being Good Prison Officers, they could help more people to rehabilitate themselves.'

It is our position that mandating prison officers with the role of rehabilitating prisoners has an adverse effect on the relational aspect of the work of the good prison officer. When rehabilitation — as an interventionist, measured, and outcome-based process — is introduced as a key function to the role of the prison officer, it transforms the prison officer/prisoner relationship into one that is both conditional and transactional. Furthermore — and somewhat ironically — often, when reflecting on which officers were most impactful or genuine — and therefore creating the potential for a space that may facilitate or support some aspects of the desistance process — it was precisely the lack of an agenda that made those interactions and officers most authentic.

Asking prison officers, in and amongst the midst of a complex, strained, and difficult job, to now take on the responsibility to 'rehabilitate' prisoners and, by extension, prevent reoffending is a tall order. Even with our first-hand experiences of prison and subsequent desistance, addiction and recovery, of working in practice with prison leavers and those involved with the justice system, and with additional academic knowledge of such processes on top, we do not claim to possess the skills or ability to 'rehabilitate' those people we work alongside. We can, however — as good prison officers can too — facilitate, support, and create the conditions for desistance pathways that people can step into, if they so choose. Furthermore, this approach has never altered our unfaltering and axiomatic belief that people can, and do, go on to lead successful and non-offending lives.

With all this in mind, what is our proposition? If we want to recruit, train, and retain great prison officers, we must recognise what we are asking of them, the complexity of the role, their expectations, and priorities. We have argued within this talk that being relational, understanding discretion and building connections with prisoners as prison officers within the carceral context can be complex, intense, and demanding. Our position is that we can indeed educate prison officers to be relational and responsive, without applying the responsibility and pressure of having to rehabilitate prisoners. This level of expectations within the role of prison officers, which is multifaceted and stressful and even at times traumatic, can negatively impact retaining great prison officers. After all, prison officers are human and can only do what is within the power of their practice and constraints of prison itself.

There are two critical considerations when applying the term 'rehabilitation' to the prison officer role and expectations within the current prison context. The first is that prison officers can be trusting, caring, and responsive without having to approach their work through the transactional term of rehabilitation. Desistance can be harnessed collaboratively through interpersonal relationships, but we argue here that it is often a consequence of reciprocal relationships; it should not be a prerequisite. The second is that being a prison officer and delivering care, nurture, flexibility, discretion, being responsive, fair, firm, safe, and trusting is an incredible privilege and, equally, a bloody difficult and testing role. Desistance may be borne out of all the above, but let's recruit and retain 'Good Prison Officers' by allowing them to measure their daily roles on their humanity, not their individual ability to reduce reoffending.

9. Ministry of Justice (2021). Prisons Strategy White Paper. HM Government.

Behind Bars.

HMPPS Education and Higher Education Policy Framework: Critiques and recommendations from a lifer's lived experience

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Education provision across the prison estate often falls under the radar when it comes to regime and policy prioritisation. This article offers a critical review of the policies that are currently in place and applies them to the lived experience of a serving life sentenced prisoner. It is evident from the findings of this review that the policies are inconsistent, ambiguous and cause significant frustration for prisoners, education providers and prison staff. This in turn creates a significant set of barriers to education within prison in relation to both engagement and delivery. However, evidence shows that with careful navigation and sensible application of the policy frameworks, academic success is possible. This article raises the question of whether lived experience reflects the government narrative of education being a key tool to aid rehabilitation, or whether officials are simply paying lip service to a required element of the prison regime. This article also provides a vivid insight that may go some way to uncovering the lived realities of policy delivery in practice, and for some, the revelations presented may be surprising to read.

This paper includes an auto-ethnographic narrative to bring the policy review to life. According to Ellis and Bochner[1] 'the goal of auto-ethnography is to see the researcher as a subject and to tell highly reflective and personal narratives'. Ethnographic texts are designed to convince readers of the reality of events and situations described.[2] The article is delivered in two sections, followed by a conclusion to highlight the key points of discussion. Each of the two sections explores a different policy framework, with critical analysis embedded, to establish whether the policy is supportive of a prisoner's academic journey.

The establishment of whether the policy is assessed as supportive of a prisoner's academic journey is done so as an assessment from the author's own individual experiences. While this may not be representative of the experiences of all prison-based learners, it nonetheless offers an account that is true to the author and consistent with the auto-ethnographic approach. Given the auto-ethnographic nature of this article, it seems appropriate to provide some background context to the author's story. This will be written in the first person, as will other parts of this article.

I, the author, am a life sentenced prisoner and have been in custody for the past 17 years. I have spent most of my time in prison focusing on education, and I am currently studying a Masters in Crime and Justice and hope to progress onto study for a PhD. I have forged professional relationships with several academics who provide information, advice and guidance that has opened up opportunities for collaboration. This has inspired me to write for the *Prison Service Journal.* I continue to advocate for positive change within the prison service, but also the wider criminal justice environment.

Education and Library Services

This section of the article will critically review a series of policy extracts concerning education and library services. Specifically, it will focus on The Prison Rules 1999, tuition fees for higher education, and the importance of record keeping. All policy extracts within this section are taken from the *Prison Education and Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework.*

Section 1.1 of the *Prison Education and Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework*

1. Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed, pp. 733-768). Sage.
2. Bryman, A., Clark, T., Foster, L., & Sloan, L. (2021). *Bryman's Social Research Methods* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.

states that the aim of education in the prison setting is to:

> *'. . . give individuals the skills they need to unlock their potential, gain employment and become assets to their communities. It should also build social capital and improve the wellbeing of prisoners during their sentences and once released.'*

The opening statement in the policy sets the scene and focus for the education provision and support within the prison estate. However, as will be discussed, the reality can be very different and, from my experience, many of the following policy extracts are not well considered.

i. The Prison Rules 1999

According to Rule 32 of the Prison Rules 1999, 'every prisoner able to profit from the education facilities provided at a prison shall be encouraged to do so'.[3]

My own academic journey has been varied, with many classroom-based courses at level 1 and level 2 predominantly during the early years of my sentence. In the early years I spent time at multiple prison establishments. The education facilities at each prison varied considerably, with some being more conducive to study than others. On average each class is allocated twelve students, but I have rarely seen full attendance. Quite often prisoners do not go to lessons because they claim not to have requested to study the subject and assert that the prison allocations team have simply allocated them without any prior discussion. Some prisons operate a strict policy that sees those not attending being given an Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) warning and being locked in their cell for the session when they should be in class. This can and does cause conflict and quite often the IEP scheme is applied inconsistently. A lack of robust application of the scheme was captured in the most recent annual report of His Majesty's Inspector of Prisons which reported that 'Prison incentives schemes offered little distinction between the reward levels and were not effective' and that in the inspectorate's survey '. . . only 41 per cent of prisoners said the incentives or rewards encouraged them to behave well . . . and only 32 per cent felt they had been treated fairly in the behaviour management scheme'.[4]

All of the accredited courses delivered in prisons are designed with a specific number of guided hours, meaning that the tutor must evidence that each student was in class for a set period of time throughout the course. However, the course content can often be completed in less than half of the recommended learning hours. This results in students wanting to then return to their own cells. This is a cause of conflict, as the education provider and the prison are measured on the number of hours that are given to purposeful activity within the prison. The students are then told they must remain in the class, and all too often (as per my own experience) tutors will simply turn to YouTube for video content that can be played to simply pass the time. The common videos that I have seen in many classrooms, irrespective of the subject being taught, are from the television series *Ramsey's Kitchen Nightmares*. Another way that is used to fill the time is for the tutor to take the whole class to the library, which then sees a number of the men returning back to their cells. Very often, I have seen a blind eye being turned at this point as it can be too confrontational for the tutors to ensure that each prisoner stays in the education department.

> The inconsistent approach to the recognition of self-study is a clear barrier that often prevents many of my peers from enrolling on a distance learning course.

The Prison Rules 1999, which impose a statutory obligation on prison governors and in turn education providers, make clear that 'reasonable facilities' should be provided to those who want to study by way of distance learning. During my time in custody, I have been held in eight different prisons and the facilities and support provided to distance learning students varies considerably across the prison estate. For example, some prisons do not recognise self-study as a purposeful activity and therefore will not allocate a prisoner to any sessions of self-study, claiming that as the learning is self-directed it needs to be completed in-cell during the evening or weekend. However, other prisons do recognise self-study within the education department. Once a prison recognises self-study as purposeful activity, they can then allocate the learner to paid education sessions which provide access to computers and tutor support if required. The

3. The Prison Rules 1999 No.728. Available at The Prison Rules 1999 (legislation.gov.uk)
4. His Majesty's Inspector of Prisons (2023). *His Majesty's Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2022-23.* His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

inconsistent approach to the recognition of self-study is a clear barrier that often prevents many of my peers from enrolling on a distance learning course and has seen some learners abandon their studies part way through due to the lack of support from the individual prison.

Access to computers is also, in many prisons, a barrier to self-study. In my current prison there are five computers available for approximately 60 self-study students. This inevitably causes frustration for many learners and some resort to handwriting all of their assignments, whilst others simply abandon their studies.

From the lived experience perspective, there are several recommendations that can be made in relation to the issues raised in this section. Firstly, prison and education providers should work collaboratively to make sure that prisoners are only allocated to courses if requested and following an initial conversation with the prisoner about the course and the expectations of study. In addition, I would encourage tutors to design course delivery to fill the full guided learning hours, even if this means going beyond the content of the course specification. It would also be important for all prisons to recognise self-study as a purposeful activity and if requested by prisoners they should be allocated part-time or full-time self-study, which will attract prisoner wage and allow access to education departments for support and guidance. Finally, all prisons should have a dedicated classroom with access to computers where those allocated self-study sessions can study in an environment which is supportive of the challenges inherent with distance learning. Simple adjustments to the provision of support would allow self-study students to experience and benefit from an adult learning environment that would feel more like studying at a college or university, rather than the hostile environment of the prison.

Simple adjustments to the provision of support would allow self-study students to experience and benefit from an adult learning environment.

ii. Tuition Fee Loans for Higher Education

Tuition fee loans are available to people serving prison sentences, subject to a series of requirements. To qualify for an undergraduate tuition fee loan, a prisoner must be within six years of their earliest release date on the first day of the academic year of the course or part-time course. For an Advanced Learner Loan, a prisoner must be within six years of their earliest release date on the first day of the course. A postgraduate master's loan requires a prisoner to be within four years of their earliest release date on the first day of the academic year of the course or part-time course. For a loan for doctoral study, a prisoner must be within eight years of their earliest release date on the first day of the academic year of the course or part-time course. According to section 4.7 of the *Prison Education and Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework,* for prisoners with indeterminate sentences, the minimum period of imprisonment set at trial (the sentence tariff) should be treated as the earliest release date.

Paying for a course has been a contentious issue for as long as I have been in prison. The Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) have, for many years, been the go-to provider of self-study courses, that are funded by PET, with a 10 per cent contribution from the prison. The courses range from GCSEs to A-levels, and many other courses predominantly between level 1 and level 3. The application process involves completing a detailed application form which is then considered by PET. PET require applicants to hold level 2 in English and maths before being able to apply for many of the courses. This can be a barrier for many prisoners which I will discuss later in this article.

If a prisoner wants to embark on a degree course, they must first consider how the costs of the degree will be covered. As noted above, student finance is available in the same way as it is in the community, but the time left to serve in prison is a determining factor on eligibility. For those, like myself, who are serving a long sentence, traditional student finance is not an option until later in the sentence. A small number of charitable organisations do offer financial support to help cover fees, but many prisoners are prevented from accessing degree level study due to the lack of available funds to pay for the course.

My own higher education in prison has been funded through a combination of self-funding, sponsorship, and charitable funding. Each year, I spend considerable time researching funding options and writing applications. This can be stressful as decisions about funding are, from some organisations, made only days prior to the course start date. While I reflect here on my own experience, I am conscious that other people serving prison sentences have faced the same

challenges in education access which can create a barrier to meaningful and purposeful activity. Consistent with McFarlane's policy proposal presented in 2019,[5] my own view is that Student Support Regulations for England and Wales should be amended to extend student loan eligibility to include people in prison who have more than six years to run on their sentence. As noted by McFarlane, the costs associated with enabling people in prison to commence higher education studies earlier in a long sentence have the potential to be offset by associated reductions in the cost of reoffending. From my own anecdotal evidence, I would also encourage PET to explore in more detail the private funds available to prisoners who apply to them for financial support. In doing so, funding from PET could be prioritised for those who have no alternative means for funding education programmes.

iii. Challenges of an inconsistent curriculum and record keeping

According to section 4.9 of the *Prison Education and Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework,* prison governors must ensure that education providers deliver a core common curriculum of English, maths, information technology and communication technology (ICT) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The Governor can decide upon the other services that will make up their education offer but must meet the definition (purpose) of education as set out in paragraph 1.1 of the framework.

The education provision across the prison estate is a contracted-out service with private education providers bidding for contracts. Several large providers dominate the sector. From a prisoner's perspective, the inconsistent curriculum can create frustration and barriers to fluid progression. In my own experience, I began a level three teacher training qualification during which I was then transferred to another prison where the same course was not available. The curriculum can vary considerably across prison establishments, and even if a course appears to be available at the next prison, the awarding body for the qualification can differ, thus requiring the course to be completed again. A helpful example to illustrate this would be the mentoring course which I have now completed four times at different prisons due to the awarding body being different within the various establishments. Those serving medium to long term sentences, such as myself, can become frustrated by the requirement to repeat qualifications and this is problematic as it may disincentivise some to continue pursuing qualifications they are working towards.

The repeating of assessments and qualifications can also arise from problems with record keeping and sharing. Section 4.13 of the *Prison Education and Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework* sets out that governors must ensure that maths and English assessment results and LDD screening results are recorded on a central system so that data is stored for future use and is thus available across the estate. However, the ineffective transfer of educational records between prison establishments was highlighted in the House of Commons Education Committee's report, *Not just another brick in the wall: why prisoners need education to climb the ladder of opportunity.*[6] In the report, evidence of experiences very similar to my own were presented with prisoners describing feeling dispirited, frustrated and resentful, with some unwilling to repeat initial assessments and courses. My own experience has involved prisons not accepting or recognising learning and progression plans from other prisons, even when email confirmation has been sent from colleagues at other establishments. Consistent with the Education Committee's report noted above, I have seen many of my peers give up on their academic journey when they transfer to a different prison because of the inability to produce certificates in English and maths.

Those serving medium to long term sentences, such as myself, can become frustrated by the requirement to repeat qualifications.

Many prisoners and education staff I have interacted with over the years have been in agreement that English and maths qualifications are a significant point of conflict. The primary focus of education providers is English and maths attainment to level 2, despite the resource to achieve this being woefully inadequate.[7] From my experience, every prison I have entered has treated me and other prisoners as if we are new to prison life. I have experienced problems on many occasions due to not being able to produce

5. McFarlane, R. (2019). *Student loans for those on long prison sentences.* Higher Education Policy Institute: Policy Note 18
6. House of Commons Education Committee (2022). *Not just another brick in the wall: why prisoners need an education to climb the ladder of opportunity.* House of Commons
7. See footnote 4: HMIP (2023).

copies of GCSE certificates which I was awarded over 30 years ago. Despite now being a postgraduate student, having studied to this level whilst in custody (which evidences my attainment of maths and English at Level 2 or above), I have had to complain in order to have my achievements accepted during each transfer process.

It is evident that prisoners should be provided with an individual learning and progression plan on entry to custody, which should then be recognised and accepted when a prisoner is transferred to a new establishment. Doing so consistently, in line with recommendations made in the Coates Review (which will be returned to later),[8] would achieve a higher level of consistency and avoid potentially hostile education induction processes. While the prison service does use a central database, the Learner Records System (LRS), this is not routinely updated and was only introduced in 2019, meaning qualifications prior to this point do not always appear on records. This is an area of penal practice requiring attention to ensure that all academic achievements are recorded correctly, and representative of individuals' skills and qualifications.

Higher Education and Distance Learning

Having discussed tuition loans and challenges associated with inconsistencies in curriculum design and record keeping, this section of the paper will briefly consider higher education and distance learning for people serving custodial sentences. All policy extracts in this section are from *PSI 32/2012 Open University, Higher Education and Distance Learning*.

According to Section 1.1, establishments are encouraged to 'provide prisoners with opportunities for higher education and distance learning as an important contribution to their resettlement, as well as a way to assist prisoners with long term sentences to positively engage with regimes.'[9] PET funds prisoners to study courses via distance learning in subjects at levels that are not generally available through mainstream education. An analysis looking at employment outcomes and re-offending behaviour of 9,041 adults who received grants for distance learning from PET between 2001 and 2007, compared with a group of similar offenders who did not receive grants, provided overall results that show educated prison leavers are less likely to re-offend. However, much like the inconsistencies in prison education curricula previously discussed, higher education provision and access across the prison estate varies considerably. It is widely understood that the primary focus of education providers in prisons is on lower-level learning. From a lived experience perspective, higher education can often seem like an inconvenience within prison education departments. The inconsistency of approach to supporting higher education and distance learning is a clear barrier for many prisoners and this is consistent with established academic scholarship in this area.[10][11]

According to section 2.2 of PSI 32/2012, to be eligible to apply for an Open University, other higher education or distance learning course, a prisoner must:

- Be a sentenced prisoner regardless of whether an appeal is underway or has been lodged;
- Be able to demonstrate evidence of appropriate learning and attainment at or above National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 2 through ILP records;
- Be in receipt of appropriate information advice and guidance, including from the National Careers Service;
- Have a current Individual Learning Plan indicating OU or DL as a viable objective whether or not the learner is self-funding;
- Have evidence of the required potential and motivation to complete DL or HE programme;
- Meet the security screening requirements indicated at paragraphs 2.21 and 2.22;
- Have a successful application or be in receipt of adequate funding to pay for their DL or HE programme.

This policy prevents those held on remand from being able to study higher education via distance learning. While this can be understandable in terms of remand prisoners being held in custody for a potentially short time, some are held on remand for more than 18 months, as in my own case. Preventing remand prisoners from studying higher education via distance learning creates a cause for concern as they are often left to languish in their cells for months on end without any access to purposeful activity. Taking a more flexible approach to accessing distance learning provision could prevent prisoners experiencing extensive 'dead time', and thus has implications for prisoner wellbeing and safety. This would require reconsideration of how such prisoners could access this provision, and also what education in prison is for in a broader sense.

8. Coates, S. (2016). Unlocking Potential: A Review of Education in Prison. [online] Unlocking potential *A review of education in prison* (publishing.service.gov.uk)
9. Prisoners Education Trust (2021). Government research: Impact on prison education goes beyond finding work [online] https://www.russelwebster.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/iustice-data-lab-infographic-ipg.
10. Ballans, J (2015). Barriers to inclusion in prisoner education: eExperiences of a learner. Research Summary for the Open University module H818 The Networked Practitioner.
11. Hughes, E. (2016). Education in prison: *Studying through distance learning.* Routledge.

Justifiably the focus of education in prison is on basic skills in order to elevate prisoners' employment prospects to increase the chance of successful re-integration into the community on release. However, it is worth questioning the extent to which this focus on basic skills should dominate policy and practice. Rehabilitation and reintegration will often require complex learning with multiple objectives, designed to enable personal change as well as skill acquisition. According to Bynner,[12] three things are needed here;

1. A life course approach which sees the offender as changing over time, with particular needs at particular stages. Quantitative and qualitative longitudinal studies are especially valuable;
2. An approach which understands the offender in his or her own cultural and social context, and relates their potential and progress to the world outside; and,
3. A pluralism and method and generosity of communication.

Interestingly Behan observed that, 'Although the prison institution itself can be negative, the people inside can help build up learners' strengths and draw out the positives. It is like 'a scaffolding of support'.[13] Education can provide structures of meaning, feeling and mutuality away from the numbing detachment and self-destruction, towards restoration and transformation. These broader understandings of the value of education for people serving prison sentences thus complements evidence which suggests that steady employment, particularly if it offers a sense of achievement, satisfaction or mastery, can support offenders in stopping offending (Ministry of Justice, 2013).[14]

Dame Sally Coates' review of education in prisons in 2016 provided an insight into prison education which supports the narrative that education in our prisons is in need of reform.[15] With a focus on prison education in England and Wales and examining how it supports effective rehabilitation of different populations of prison leavers (for example; young adults, older prisoners, female offenders, short sentenced prisoners and longer sentenced/life sentenced prisoners), the recommendations may mirror the issues raised in this article, showing consistency with the report's recommendations and what is still being experienced by people serving custodial sentences in the years since.

Conclusion

The discussions presented in this article suggest that the current policies and frameworks that cover education and distance learning are out of date, contradictory and not applied consistently across the prison estate. The lack of a standardised approach to delivering education services in prison is a barrier for many prisoners at all levels of study, and a hurdle that is often insurmountable for many who would otherwise benefit from higher education and distance learning.

Approximately three fifths of prisoners leave prison without identified employment or education training outcome, and as such, careful thought needs to be given to the issues that are highlighted in this article, and have so consistently been platformed before. Despite the inconsistent approach to policy which is evident across the prison estate, I personally have found it possible to use both the Education and Higher Education Policy Frameworks to support my academic development. From my own experience of almost two decades of engagement with prison education, I have been able to achieve academic success. However, this has required a significant amount of personal determination to navigate many barriers and hurdles, in addition to support from within and outside of prison. As identified in this article, for some people serving prison sentences, navigating such barriers can result in disenchantment with education causing them to cease this pursuit, despite having the desire to engage in education initiatives.

Going forward, I would recommend that the two policy frameworks be combined into one document and updated with input from people with lived experience who have a passion for education, self-change and rehabilitation. Further, more research needs to be undertaken on the relative effectiveness of educational and vocational interventions within the prison estate. It would be simplistic and perhaps naive to propose a direct causal relationship between engagement in prison education and reduction in reoffending. However, because results of studies in this area vary greatly according to the assumptions made, jumping to a definitive conclusion would, in my opinion, be unwise. My own experience tells me that education success in the prison environment is possible, and I thoroughly believe in its capacity to genuinely change lives. The issues raised in this article offer an opportunity, through improvements in policy and practice, for many more people serving sentences to experience the full benefit that education has to offer.

12. Bynner, J. (2009). *Lifelong Learning and Crime: A Life Course Perspective: IFLL Public Value Paper 4.* NIACE.
13. Behan, C. (2015). Speaking at European Prison Education Association Conference. www.prisonereducation.org.uk/news/blog-what-is-prison-education-for.
14. Ministry of Justice Analytical Services. (2013). T*ransforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending.* Ministry of Justice
15. See footnote 8: Coates, S. (2016).

Prison libraries and their future potential in England and Wales

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The prison environment is complex and governors often, understandably, prioritise safety and security.[2] Yet, this can be at the expense of promoting positive activities that can support rehabilitation.[3] There is a lack of empirical evidence around prison libraries and research is often isolated to the field of librarianship, which does not appreciate the intersecting disciplines involved in library practice.[4 5] However, there is a range of literature and public discourse emerging that considers the broad reaching benefits and potential of prison libraries.[6 7 8 9 10] This article aims to add to the empirical evidence of prison library research. Firstly, the article will discuss the purpose of prison libraries and current practice in England and Wales. It will then explore the trends in access to prison libraries and their resource materials using survey data collected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) from adults in prison over the last 20 years. This will support prison leaders on how to optimise prison libraries for people in prison, prison establishments and wider society, and to guide further research.

Prison Libraries in England and Wales

Purpose of prison libraries

Libraries are a unique space within prisons, offering a calming community hub.[11] They can facilitate informal education that is more welcoming than formal classrooms in which people in prison have often had negative experiences.[12] This can include supporting wellbeing, developing agency, and building social capital, in addition to facilitating academic qualifications. Healthcare professionals in the community recognise the health and wellbeing benefits of community spaces, such as libraries, and use 'social prescribing' to direct patients to these activities. There is work currently underway by the Clinks charity to incorporate this practice into prisons and the wider criminal justice system.[13]

Research conducted with prison library staff across the UK (which have similar operating models across each jurisdiction) highlighted their top objectives were 'meeting information needs' and 'supporting educational needs'.[14] This includes enabling people in prison to work on their legal cases, review prison rules, improve literacy, and complete education courses.[15]

1. This article is written in a personal capacity and does not necessarily represent the views of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons.
2. Harrison, K., Mason, R., Nichols, H., & Smith, L. (2024). *Work, Culture, and Wellbeing Among Prison Governors in England and Wales.* Palgrave Macmillan Cham.
3. HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2023). *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales: Annual Report 2022-23* (HC 1451). HM Inspectorate of Prisons.
4. Sulé, A., & Ardanuy, J. (2023). Evolution of research on prison library: A bibliometric study. *Library Philosophy and Practice, 7607,* 1-18.
5. Garner, J. (2022). Fifty Years of Prison Library Scholarly Publishing: A Literature Analysis. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy,* 92(3), 241-258.
6. National Literacy Trust (2022, October 3). Libraries Week 3 -9 October 2022: Libraries as the beating heart of prison life. *National Literacy Trust.* https://literacytrust.org.uk/news/libraries-week-2022-libraries-heart-prison-life/
7. Finlay, J., & Bates, J. (2018). What is the Role of the Prison Library? The Development of a Theoretical Foundation. *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry, 5*(2), 120-139.
8. Finlay, J. (2024). Staff perspectives of providing prison library services in the United Kingdom. J*ournal of Librarianship and Information Science, 56*(1), 57-70.
9. Prison Reform Trust (2017). Access to the library. *Prison Reform Trust.*
10. Mishra, S., Chaudhuri, M., Dey, A. K., Tiwari, R., & Singh, R. (2022). Prison libraries serving the 'whole person': A qualitative study. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, 54*(2), 284-293.
11. See footnote 6: National Literacy Trust (2022, October 3).
12. See footnote 7: Finlay, J., & Bates, J. (2018).
13. Dehnavi, O. (2023, June 27). Social prescribing in the criminal justice system – building the evidence base. *Clinks.* https://www.clinks.org/community/blog-posts/social-prescribing-criminal-justice-system-building-evidence-base
14. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).
15. See footnote 9: Prison Reform Trust (2017).

Further objectives reported by prison library staff in the same study were 'enabling reading for pleasure' and 'providing a safe, neutral environment'.[16] They viewed prison libraries as a space that supports desistance by empowering people in prison.

The same study highlighted differing opinions from senior management on the purpose of prison libraries.[17] Some staff reported Governors or Directors positively engaging with the library and viewing the smooth running of the library as indicative of the whole prison. But some staff reported their frustration that senior management viewed the library as just a 'trolley of books'. This negative perception then impacted prioritisation of time and investment in the library. The purpose described by library staff overlaps with other departments with whom they work closely, such as education and resettlement. But investment in these other departments is often at the expense of libraries rather than a collaborative approach.[18] This is likely due to having clearer quantifiable targets, such as graded courses and employment levels, that senior managers can quickly assess within the confines of HMPPS practice and budgets.[19] Yet investment should focus on prison library outcomes in tandem with other prison services to fully support their users.

Like their community counterparts, prison library users view libraries as a space that provides holistic support and hope for the future.[20] For people in prison they can facilitate development of pro-social identities, behaviours and attitudes.[21] This can then support desistance journeys and better engagement across prison life and on release. For example, InsideTime shared a story from a prison library orderly who now enjoyed books in a new way and felt 'enthusiastic' about their future employability.[22] There are additional challenges for prison libraries compared to public libraries, such as security and access to technology (discussed in the current practice section below).[23] But the overarching purpose is the same. Libraries are a community hub that provide a range of resources that support education, wellbeing and personal development.[24]

Libraries are a community hub that provide a range of resources that support education, wellbeing and personal development.

Legal provision and expectations of prison libraries

There have been significant developments in practice and funding, but the legal foundation for adult prison libraries in England and Wales remains under the Prison Rules 1999/728, Section 33.[25] It places a legal requirement for adult prisons to have a library and provide access to the library, in line with the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964. The 'Prison Education and Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework' stipulates the prison library should provide accessible support for learning, literacy and resettlement. It should also 'promote reading as a source of pleasure and provide prisoners with opportunities for wider cultural engagement'.[26] Further operational guidance is provided under the prison service instruction (PSI) '02/2015 Prison service library'.[27] This includes that people should have weekly access to the library for a minimum of thirty minutes. However, the education elements of this PSI were replaced by the policy framework which can be interpreted as removing the minimum access requirements.[28]

Alongside operational guidance, HMIP sets out expectations for prisons. HMIP is an independent body that inspects prisons, immigration removal centres and youth detention across England and Wales. Their expectations vary marginally for different types of

16. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).
17. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).
18. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).
19. Prison Reform Trust (2024). B*romley Briefings Prison Factfile: February 2024.* Prison Reform Trust.
20. See footnote 10: Mishra, et al. (2022).
21. See footnote 7: Finlay, J., & Bates, J. (2018).
22. Billington, R. (2023, November 1). Life on the shelf: Prison libraries are great – if they're open. InsideTime. Retrieved from https://insidetime.org/comment/life-on-the-shelf-prison-libraries-are-great-if-theyre-open/
23. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).
24. Gordon, J., Blackett, A., Fordham, R., Garraffa, M., Howard Wilsher, S., Leist, E., Ponzo, A., Smith, D., Welsh, A., & Xydopoulos, G. (2023). *Libraries for living, and for living better: The value and impact of public libraries in the East of England.* UEA Publishing Project.
25. Bowe, C. (2011). Recent Trends in UK Prison Libraries. *Library Trends, 59(3)*, 427-445.
26. Ministry of Justice (2019). P*rison Education & Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework*. Ministry of Justice.
27. National Offender Management Service (2019). *Guidance: Prison service instructions (PSIs).* Ministry of Justice.
28. Prison Reform Trust (2022). Regime and Time out of cell. *Prison Reform Trust.*

custody but broadly fit into the same four healthy prison tests: safety, respect, purposeful activity and preparation for release. Under purposeful activity there is an expectation that 'Prisoners benefit from regular access to a suitable library, library materials and additional learning resources that meet their needs'.[29] The published guidance further details indicators on how prison libraries can meet this expectation. This retains the expectation that adults have access to the prison library or library services at least once a week and that available materials are relevant to their needs.

Current practice in prison libraries

The standard operating model for prison libraries in England and Wales is to pay their local community counterparts a fee to provide stock and information support.[30] The aim of this partnership is to deliver on the legal requirements and expectations for prison libraries. However, public libraries across England and Wales are experiencing reduced funding and closures, which consequently impacts prison libraries.[31] A study was conducted with prison library staff across the UK (which have similar operating models across each jurisdiction) highlighted the challenges of delivering library services within this model.[32] Library staff said they felt isolated from the librarian profession due to a physical and professional distance in prisons that limit access to technology and development opportunities. This limits the ability of prison libraries to deliver a key function of their community counterparts, digital inclusion.[33]

Since the Covid-19 pandemic there has been an increase in digital communication in personal and professional relationships, but prisons are still limited.[34] As society has rapidly deployed digital solutions, prisons have struggled to keep up across all services.[35] During the pandemic, prison libraries were closed completely and most only provided a small selection of books on residential wings as there were limited digital alternatives, such as laptops.[36] HMIP annual reports following the Covid-19 pandemic reported that access to libraries remained limited and progress was slow and uneven across the prison estate.[37] Spurred by the Covid-19 pandemic, the prison estate is beginning to introduce more digital solutions across all services.[38] For prison libraries this can include better delivery of digital education, streamlined borrowing systems and e-materials via in-cell technology. But implementation does not match the pace of digitalisation in the community due to limitations in infrastructure, such as old buildings, and security procedures.[39] Policies, infrastructure and staff need to have flexibility to adapt with fast paced technological advancements. The 'smart prisons' being introduced in England and Wales may create this foundation, but it is difficult yet to evaluate their impact.[40]

> Focus is often on other departments, such as education and resettlement, but library work heavily overlaps with these areas.

Alongside feeling isolated in their profession with limited access to development and technology, prison library staff in the UK reported that dual management between local councils and prison governors led to poor direction from leadership and limited understanding of library work.[41] Staff reported the metrics of success were often limited and overly simplistic. They focused on attendance numbers or book loans without acknowledging the broader impacts of the library around literacy, employment and

29. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2023). Expectations: *Criteria for assessing the treatment of and conditions for men in prison.* HM Inspectorate of Prisons.
30. Krolak, L. (2019). Books beyond bars: T*he transformative potential of prison libraries.* UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.
31. Lynch, P., Tomas, P., & Hattenstone, A. (2024, September 3). Public libraries in 'crisis' as councils cut services. BBC. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn9lexplel5o
32. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).
33. See footnote 24: Gordon, J., et al. (2023).
34. Centre for Social Justice. (2021). *Digital Technology in Prisons: Unlocking relationships, learning and skills in UK prisons.* Centre for Social Justice.
35. Edge, C., Hayward, A., Whitfield, A., & Hard, J. (2020). COVID-19: digital equivalence of health care in English prisons. *Lancet Digit Health, 2(9)*, 450-452.
36. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2021). *What happens to prisoners in a pandemic? A thematic review.* HM Inspectorate of Prisons.
37. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2023). *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales: Annual Report 2022-23* (HC 1451). HM Inspectorate of Prisons.
38. See footnote 34: Centre for Social Justice (2021).
39. See footnote 34: Centre for Social Justice (2021).
40. Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service. (2022, March 4). Britain's first 'smart' prison to drive down crime. *Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-s-first-smart-prison-to-drive-down-crime
41. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).

wellbeing. This meant library work was overlooked, and staff were often excluded from strategy conversations. A standard approach to making quick resource decisions within budget constraints is quantitative key performance indicators, but staff in this study suggested supplementing data with qualitative user feedback would better reflect the library's impact.

Current structures make it difficult for prison libraries to deliver their purpose of supporting education and reading.[42] Ofsted and HMIP conducted a review of reading education in prisons and found prison libraries were not fully utilised.[43] This was due to lack of prioritisation, limited session availability, schedule clashes and staff shortages. There were examples of passionate librarians facilitating initiatives such as Storybook Dads,[44] and book clubs, but this was not supported by wider infrastructure or policy. In a 2023 review, Ofsted and HMIP found not much had changed and the solution required investment and promotion for libraries from governors.[45] Focus is often on other departments, such as education and resettlement, but library work heavily overlaps with these areas. Libraries need to be fully embedded in strategic and operational conversations to streamline services within prisons. This can be achieved within the current system and the CILIP Prison Libraries Group produced a framework for practice that includes positive case studies.[46]

The following research explores trends in people's experience of using prison libraries. The aim is to add to the evidence in this area and expand the conversation beyond librarianship research to help inform practice decisions.

Methods and Ethics

Secondary analysis was conducted for this article using data from surveys conducted by HMIP with people in prison since 2003.[47] This was accessed through the UK Data Service and used in accordance with their End User Licence Agreement.[48] The original purpose of the surveys was to inform each respective prison inspection. A self-completion questionnaire is distributed to a sample of people held in the prison being inspected and the data is used to triangulate findings alongside a range of other sources.[49] The questionnaire asks a series of multiple-choice and open-ended questions about the person's experience in their current prison and their demographic information. Topics in the questionnaire are designed to follow the person's 'journey' from reception through to release and align with HMIP's healthy prison tests.

Participant consent is obtained during the survey process but previously did not mention using data for wider research beyond the inspection. Before the data was originally published by HMIP, focus groups were conducted with people held in prison to gauge if they were happy for old survey data to be used more broadly.[50] During these focus groups they expressed they were content for survey data to be used for wider research that had the same aim as inspections of bringing change to prisons. One concern was access being too wide and enabling misrepresentation of their voice. Therefore, data was shared via the UK Data Service at two levels of detail, the most in-depth requiring an application to HMIP, and both requiring the user to agree to strict user guidelines. This analysis aligns with the aim to bring change to prisons by discussing practice and proposing future improvements. It discusses generalised groups using the aggregated version of this data to avoid misinterpretation of individual voices.

The survey data is published in separate yearly files and since 2003, there have been multiple iterations with new questions introduced in 2012, 2017 and 2021. For this secondary analysis the data was therefore first cleaned using R Studio to combine data from each inspection year into a singular comparable dataset. The current survey iteration has three questions related to the library:

- How often are you able to go to the library? (asked since 2003)
- Does the library have a wide enough range of materials to meet your needs? (asked since 2012)
- How often are you able to have library materials delivered to you? (asked since 2021)

42. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).
43. Ofsted and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2022). *Prison education: a review of reading education in prisons.* Ofsted and HM Inspectorate of Prisons.
44. See https://www.storybookdads.org.uk/
45. Ofsted and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2023). *The quality of reading education in prisons: one year on.* Ofsted and HM Inspectorate of Prisons.
46. CILIP Prison Libraries Group (2023). *Making the Difference: An excellence framework for prison libraries.* CILIP Prison Libraries Group.
47. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2023). *HMIP Prisoner Survey: Adults in England and Wales, 2000-2023* (SN: 9161). UK Data Service. https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=9161
48. UK Data Service (2024). *End User Licence Agreement. UK Data Service.* https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/app/uploads/cd137-enduserlicence.pdf
49. Reising, K., Bowstead, J. C., Hardwick, N., Meek, R., Riley, S., & Simmonds, J. (2023). *HMIP Prisoner Survey: Adults in England and Wales – User Manual (1st Edition) Volume A.* Royal Holloway University of London.
50. Quinn, A., Shaw, C., Hardwick, N., Meek, R., Moore, C., Ranns, H., & Sahni, S. (2020). Prisoner Interpretations and Expectations for the Ethical Governance of HMIP Survey Data. *Criminal Justice Ethics, 39*(3), 163-182.

Each inspection year includes different prisons of different types and therefore yearly comparisons should be drawn with caution. This applies especially to the year 2020/21 in which only a small number of full surveys took place before the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time the inspection process changed and did not include survey questions about the library. While there are caveats for this analysis, it provides a valuable overview of prison libraries in England and Wales that can inform practice improvement.

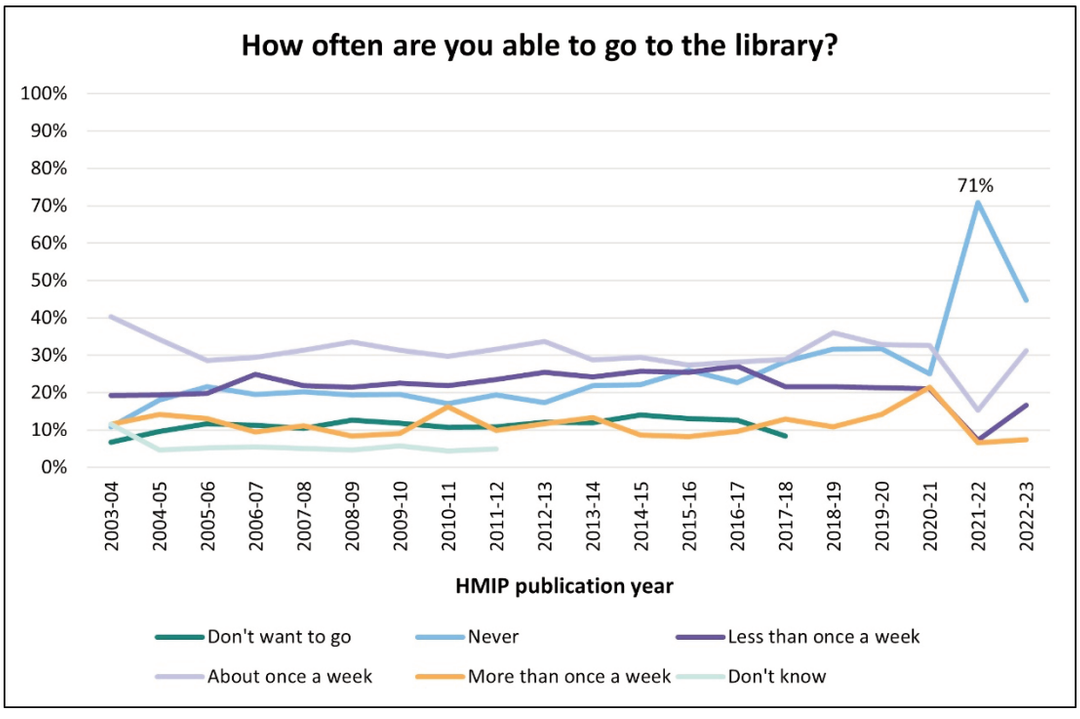
The following analysis includes summary statistics of trends for the three library questions across each year that has comparable data. It then provides comparison based on aggregated data of respondent's ethnicity, age and the type of prison in which they were held. Note that all NA responses (meaning the question was either not asked or not answered) were removed from calculating percentages. The latter element of analysis will only include data since 2017 due to the comparability of question responses. This also focuses the discourse on the most relevant practice.

Findings

Trends in prison libraries over the past 20 years

According to the responses in the survey, over the last 20 years, there has been consistently low access to prison libraries (see Figure 1 below). Less than 20 per cent of survey respondents each year state they can go to the library more than once a week, except for 2020/21 (21 per cent). In the first year of surveys following the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021/22, responses of 'Never' being able to attend the library peaked at 71 per cent. Response in the following year, 2022/23, show access rates beginning to return, but people are still reporting less access than the already low levels pre-pandemic.

Figure 1. *Access to prison libraries.*



Each year around 60 per cent of respondents that use the library reported having enough materials to meet their needs, since the question was introduced in 2012. There was a slight dip in 2015/16 to 53 per cent, but levels returned to around 60 per cent in subsequent years which suggests this year was an anomaly rather than a point of change. The question does not expand on what needs are not being met. But this could relate to a limited range of genres, types of materials, language options or outdated legal information.

The survey question regarding materials being delivered to people on residential wings from the prison library was introduced in 2021/22. This reflected the change in practice during and after the Covid-19 pandemic as libraries adapted, but limits the data available for analysis. The proportion of people reporting library materials being delivered 'Twice a week or more' reduced from 19 per cent in 2021/22 to 9 per cent in 2022/23. This may be due to increased access to the library space lowering the need for

delivery to residential wings. But some people will always have limited access to the library for mobility or personal security reasons and should continue to benefit from this adaptation.

Access to prison libraries by demographics (since 2017)

People held in Category D prisons reported the most frequent access to prison libraries, with 43 per cent stating they were able to go to the library 'Twice a week or more'. This is understandable given the freedom of movement permitted within Category D prisons. Survey responses suggest Category A prisons were the next best at providing frequent access. Of those in Category A prisons, 53 per cent reported having access to the prison library 'About once a week'. The worst access appeared to be in local prisons and those for young adults, with 48 per cent and 49 per cent respectively reporting they 'Never go to the library'. This could be a result of Category A prisons having more stable populations and people new to prison or young adults not knowing what activities are available. However, there may be replicable practice from Category D and Category A prisons that could be applied across the secure estate.

There may be replicable practice from Category D and Category A prisons that could be applied across the secure estate.

Responses on access appeared largely consistent between ethnicities. Though the proportion of Black people in prison answering 'Never go to the library' was the highest (47 per cent) for all ethnicity groups and lowest for White people in prison (39 per cent). There may be clearer variation if the data were broken down into ethnicity subsets. This was not feasible for this study but warrants future exploration using the disaggregated HMIP survey data.

The youngest people in prison reported the lowest access to prison libraries. Of those aged 25 and under, 62 per cent reported they 'Never go to the library'. When people did go to the library, the frequency of access appeared consistent across age groups. This could be due to younger people having less interest in using a library that does not have the same technology they are used to outside prison or being less familiar with what is available and how to request access. It is important for all people in prison to fully understand the resources available and for those resources to meet everyone's access needs.

The range of materials available from prison libraries by demographics (since 2017)

Similarly to access, people held in Category A and Category D prisons were more likely to report the library having enough materials to meet their needs (67 per cent and 73 per cent respectively). This is again likely due to them having more stable populations where librarians can better learn the needs of individuals. The next highest were women's and young adult prisons, with 63 per cent in both reporting that the library carried a wide enough range of materials. This is a broad overview, and conclusions must be drawn with caution. However, there could be management differences within these types of prisons that could be beneficial across the estate. This could include processes that facilitate regular communication with prison populations to ensure their needs are met.

Between 40-50 per cent of people from Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic backgrounds in prison reported the library having a wide enough range of materials, compared to 63 per cent of White people in prison. This suggests that prison libraries are not stocked for culturally diverse populations. Prison libraries are predominantly stocked through local public libraries which cater for the local people. But there is a disparity in prison populations, and it is unlikely to match local demographics due to movement across the secure estate. Therefore, this highlights the importance of understanding the diversity within prisons and across the secure estate and collaborative working between prison libraries.

The age of respondents appeared to correlate with reporting the prison library had a wide enough range to meet their needs. In the group of people aged 25 and under, 53 per cent reported the range of materials being wide enough, compared to 72 per cent aged 70 and over. This suggests that prison library materials are more catered towards older people in prison. This could be due to older people being more likely to access the library (as seen in the responses to the access question discussed above) and librarians therefore knowing their needs better. But could also be due to limited access to the technology that young people are used to, and materials not being regularly refreshed. This could be an area of investment to improve engagement with wider demographics.

Materials delivered from prison libraries by demographics (since 2021)

The pattern of most positive responses continued for Category A and Category D prisons for library materials being delivered. Out of respondents held in Category D prisons, 42 per cent reported being able to have library materials delivered 'Twice a week or more'. In Category A prisons, 69 per cent reported being able to have library materials delivered 'About once a week'. The higher frequency of library materials being delivered could be due to these populations being less able to collect materials from the library. For example, people in Category D prisons may be out at work and those in Category A prisons may have more movement restrictions for security. However, when viewed alongside responses to the library access question, it suggests libraries in these prisons provide a range of engagement opportunities to meet the different needs across their populations.

There was a generally consistent response across all ethnicity groups for being able to get library materials delivered. Though, notably over half (56 per cent) of people of Other ethnic backgrounds reported being able to have materials delivered 'Less than once a week'. It is difficult to draw conclusions from such broad ethnicity groups, but it would be an area of interest for further research using the disaggregated HMIP survey data.

Responses for the question of materials being delivered were similar across age groups. However, the lowest engagement appeared to be from the youngest and oldest groups. Of those aged 25 and under, 46 per cent reported being able to have materials delivered to them 'Less than once a week' and 45 per cent of those aged 70 and over. Young people may not know delivery is an option and older people could need more support accessing materials that is only available in the library. Or these age groups may simply prefer going to the library if they want materials. This data does not provide a conclusive reason but does suggest different age groups have different engagement styles that should be catered for and acknowledged.

Conclusion

This article aims to elevate prison library research within the criminology field that is relevant to those in practice. There is emerging research into prison libraries that incorporates the disciplines for desistance, informal learning and critical librarianship.[51] It highlights the wide-reaching benefits of prison libraries for people in prison, prison establishments and wider society. People in prison can learn pro-social skills that set them up to succeed in prison and on release.[52] To achieve these benefits people in prison need to have access to library spaces and library materials. But this does not consistently happen as libraries are not prioritised within prison regimes.[53]

This article highlights that people in prison are often unable to go to library spaces or get materials regularly delivered to residential wings. The range of available materials also does not meet everyone's needs. Libraries appear to function better in Category A and Category D prisons, while young adults and those from Black or Other ethnic backgrounds appear to have the worst engagement and experience with prison libraries. This research is limited to a board overview of opinions on prison libraries from people in prison. The survey questions do not delve into why people engage with the library or how they want to engage with the library or what library materials would meet the needs of people in prison.

There needs to be clear policy-driven direction that incorporates the voice of people in prison alongside prison librarians, staff and management.[54] Policy should centre on the purpose of prison libraries and consider the holistic benefits for people in prison, prison establishments and wider society. Within a system-wide context of austerity, limited funding is a large barrier to achieving change, but the positive outcomes achieved by prison libraries warrant investment. Budget discussions should utilise a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures for prison libraries to make the best decisions. This will allow libraries to evolve with the reading interests and preferred reading approaches of people in prison. There have been previous funding models set by government that provide promising examples of how this could be achieved.[55]

Further research should be conducted within establishments alongside system-wide overviews to guide more targeted improvements. This should incorporate the views of people in prison alongside prison librarians, staff and management. Research should consider the changing nature of how people in prison engage with services through technology and how this can be optimised. This will facilitate a realistic discussion on how prison libraries can fulfil their purpose and achieve positive outcomes for people in prison, the prison estate and wider society.

51. See footnote 7: Finlay, J., & Bates, J. (2018).
52. See footnote 7: Finlay, J., & Bates, J. (2018).
53. See footnote 8: Finlay, J. (2024).
54. Finlay, J., Hanlon, S., & Bates, J. (2024). An evidence-based approach to prison library provision: aligning policy and practice. *Journal of Prison Education Research, 8*(1), 1-16.
55. See footnote 25: Bowe, C. (2011).

Unravelling the Complexities of Hope: the experience and potential of hope for people in prison and people with criminal justice experience.

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The nature and potential of hope theory for people in and released from prison is a developing area of academic exploration. The prison population in England and Wales is at record levels,[1] and people in prison can often experience imported trauma on entry, such as childhood abuse, domestic violence, and exposure to community violence.[2] Prisons can be challenging environments, and places of despair and hopelessness, with prisoners suffering with mental health issues. Former prisoners face structural issues in the community due to social stigma and statutory impositions. If situations of despair can be turned into hopeful moments, this could lead to positive outcomes and support desistance from crime. Conventional hope theory (pioneered by American Psychologist, Rick Snyder, in the 1990s) has yielded results in the general population.[3][4] Arguably, in the general population, individuals have less barriers to overcome in setting and achieving goals than in restrictive forensic settings such as prisons. People released from prison are often subject to post-release conditions in the community that restrict movement, opportunity, and personal growth. The research set out in this article explores to what extent hope theory could transform the lives of people in and released from prison, and to gain insights into how hope theory is experienced in forensic applications. The purpose of writing this article is to communicate and reflect on research conducted to date in this important area of Forensic Psychology, and to increase awareness of hope theory in forensic environments. It is hoped that other academics and practitioners in the criminal justice field can begin to explore the potential of hope now and in the future, as part of a wider repertoire of rehabilitative measures, and to further research this niche field of study.

What is hope theory?

Contemporary hope theory, as developed by Charles R. Snyder, is a concept within positive psychology that defines hope as a positive motivational state.[5] Hope consists of two main components: (a) Agency: a belief in one's ability to initiate and sustain actions towards achieving goals, and (b) Pathways: the ability to generate multiple routes or strategies to reach those goals. This involves planning and finding ways to overcome obstacles.

Hope theory applications in the general population

Research in hope theory has increased over recent years, with successful applications in education, business, sport, social work, psychotherapy, science and medicine.[6]

There have been some measurable improvements in mental health and wellbeing from hope theory application in the general population, including self-

1. Ministry of Justice (2013). *Prison population statistics.* Ministry of Justice.
2. Bradley, A. (2021). Viewing her majesty's prison service through a trauma-informed lens. *Prison Service Journal, 255,* 4-11.
3. Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological inquiry, 13*(4), 249-275.
4. Rand, K. L., & Cheavens, J. S. (2009). Hope theory. In C. R. Snyder (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology (chapter 30).* Oxford Academic.
5. Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., et al. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60,* 570–585.
6. Colla, R., Williams, P., Oades, L. G., & Camacho-Morles, J. (2022). "A New Hope" for positive psychology: A dynamic systems reconceptualization of hope theory. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13,* 809053.

reported reductions in adult depression,[7] reductions in symptoms of anxiety, increases in the meaning of life and self-esteem, and a greater sense of purpose in life, through the setting and achievement of goals using pathways.[8] Hope is also linked to a greater sense of purpose in life.[9] If the improvements in mental health and wellbeing demonstrated in the general population can be extended to forensic populations, there is an opportunity to transform the lives of people in prison and those people with criminal justice experience.

Hope transformations in forensic applications

There is an emerging focus on hope in forensic applications which uses the measurable effects of hope in the general population and extends them to forensic populations.[10] Hope theory in forensic settings is a hybrid concept uniquely seated within the disciplines of positive and forensic psychology — the imagination of a better future in a restrictive environment. Hope transformation for people in prison and with those with criminal justice experience at its highest level is the achievement of a positive motivational state. This transformation can be seen from many perspectives, from prison management to the experience of the person serving a prison sentence (or former prisoner). A prisoner should be afforded the right to be rehabilitated, or to make good their actions, as part of a civilised and progressive society, and a person with criminal justice experience should be afforded the opportunity to achieve personal goals and have purpose in their life. From a criminal justice perspective, prison is expensive, but there is a statutory duty to protect the public from harm, and for justice to be seen to be done. This must be balanced against the potential of people to change and rehabilitate, reducing the risk of harm to the public, and thereby creating a safer society. A rehabilitated prisoner may become an asset to society in the future. Hope to achieve goals provides the potential for positive outcomes, and can be used as a protective factor in forensic risk assessments. Hope can act as a powerful coping mechanism,[11] and has a role to play in the preparation of the release of a prisoner.[12] Hope may support the desistance from crime,[13] and is a fundamental part of the Good Lives Model (GLM), a strengths-based approach to prisoner rehabilitation.[14]

Research in hope theory has increased over recent years, with successful applications in education, business, sport, social work, psychotherapy, science and medicine.

Masters Research: The experience and potential of hope in prison

Research on hope undertaken by the author at Coventry University as part of a Masters degree, under the supervision of Dr Mira Yaneva,[15] documents hope experience using autobiographical accounts from former prisoners from around the world using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA); a method ideally suited to lived experience applications.[16] The research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic when access to people in prison was very difficult. In this qualitative study, autobiographical accounts from 7 participants with lived experience of prison who were subsequently released, were interpretatively analysed. The core theme of the research was to understand how people in prison make sense of hope, to understand its nature, and how the experience might differ from hope theory application in the general population.

7. Klausner, E. J., Clarkin. J. F., Spielman, L., Pupo, C., Abrams, R., & Alexopoulos, G. S. (1998). Late-life depression and functional disability: The role of goal-focused group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 13,* 707-716.
8. Cheavens, J. S., Feldman, D. B., Gum, A., Michael, S. T., & Snyder, C. R. (2006). Hope therapy in a community sample: A pilot investigation. *Social Indicators Research, 77*(1), 61-78.
9. Kashdan, T. B., McKnight, P. E., & Goodman, F. R. (2022). Evolving positive psychology: A blueprint for advancing the study of purpose in life, psychological strengths, and resilience. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 17*(2), 210-218.
10. Wright, S., Hulley, S., & Crewe, B. (2023). Trajectories of hope/lessness among men and women in the late stage of a life sentence. *Theoretical Criminology, 27*(1), 66-84.
11. Leigey, M.E. (2015). *The Forgotten Men: Serving a Life without Parole Sentence.* Rutgers University Press.
12. van Ginneken, E. (2015). The Role of Hope in Preparation for Release from Prison. *Prison Service Journal, 220,* 10-15.
13. Maruna, S., (2001). *Making good.* American Psychological Association.
14. Barnao, M., Robertson, P., & Ward, T. (2010). Good lives model applied to a forensic population. *Psychiatry, psychology and law, 17*(2), 202-217.
15. Adlington-Rivers, D., & Yaneva, M. (2024). Hope Behind Bars: An autobiographical interpretation of hope experience in prison (preprint).
16. Smith, J. A., & Nizza, I. E. (2022). *Essentials of interpretative phenomenological analysis.* American Psychological Association.

One of the biggest challenges of the research was to nail down a definition of hope, as developed by conventional hope theory. Definitions of hope are nuanced and can be difficult to interpret, because hope usually involves: (a) the imagination of time, and (b) emotions (e.g. feeling hopeful or hopeless). Conventional hope theory requires the setting of goals (time imagination), laying the pathways to achieve them (time imagination and creative thinking skills), and the eventual achievement of the goals (motivation/willpower/resilience).[17] The research discusses that hope in prison is not as straightforward as setting and achieving goals using pathways, as the structural barriers created by the restrictive security regime in prisons makes it difficult for prisoners to imagine long term goals. This requires a high level of imagination and resilience, which is often depleted in prisons. The findings from the research identified themes that can be used as indicators of hope in prison. When hope is maintained, it results in positive changes to behaviour in the present time. This could be achieved through increasing autonomy for prisoners, supporting positive relationships with others, providing a stable prison regime that discourages volatility, providing transparent and predictable procedures, and the right conditions for mental growth and imagination. The provision of a wide range of meaningful activities could equip prisoners with a sense of purpose, and encourage more future-focused, resilient thinking, that could, in turn, support more hopeful thinking. Hope momentum could be implemented as part of a hope-led prison strategy, where hope management is an integral part of prisoner rehabilitation. Sustained hope could overcome short-term, process orientated rehabilitation programmes that can sometimes fail due to lack of momentum and provide long-term continuity, through the momentum of high hope.

Hope theory in forensic settings is a hybrid concept uniquely seated within the disciplines of positive and forensic psychology.

Findings: Identification of hope factors

The Masters research identified the following hope factors for people in prison, which could act as hope motivators or depressants.

1. Autonomy and Control

The perceived levels of autonomy and control over a prisoner's life is an important hope factor. If a prisoner is unable to act with a sense of agency in most situations, this will naturally limit their ability to think of opportunities and possibilities in the future. Empowerment creates hope.

2. Positive emotional connections

Positive emotional connections with other people in prison is a strong hope factor. Contact with family is also a strong hope factor but typically led to short lived hope. The natural high of seeing close relatives visiting prison creates a form of escapism and humanisation for the prisoner, which is lost when returning to the prison wing, in what can be described as an emotional rollercoaster.

3. Meaningful activities and altruism

A strong hope factor is meaningful activities and self-development. This is strongly linked to purpose. Prisoners felt more hopeful when they amounted to someone that had a purpose, rather than being seen as a number serving a prison sentence imposed by the state. Prison has the effect of dehumanising people by using practices such as imposed routines, limiting choice, and restricting movement. When prisoners are given opportunities to do meaningful activities, hope plays a positive part in their life. Self-development can include education, and employment (in improving self-worth), and religious faith or spiritual awareness can also be a positive factor in defining a purpose or reframing their existence. For people serving long sentences, where hope of a positive future is arguably more distant than a short sentenced prisoner, altruism was shown to make a positive difference, and create feelings of hope. Helping others provided a reason to feel good about themselves, in the hope that others could benefit in the future.

4. Introspection and reflection

The research identifies that introspection, imagination and dreaming play a part in developing hopeful feelings for some prisoners. Prisoners were able

17 Snyder, C. R. (1994). T*he psychology of hope: You can get there from here.* Free Press.

to transcend their day-to-day existence in prison, and imagined positive futures, to survive the despair of the present moment. It became a motivating factor, and coping mechanism. Reflection also provided former prisoners with opportunities to analyse and evaluate their experiences in prison and modify their behaviour as part of self-improvement.

5. Volatility

Insights from the research suggests that hope comes and goes and is rarely fixed. Hope in prison indicates a variance from conventional hope theory, due to more structural barriers, including environmental conditions. People in prison are limited to what goals they can achieve within a restrictive regime, and hope is therefore a volatile commodity. This makes sustained hope difficult to achieve in prison, without interventions to promote hopeful thinking, and the enablement of an environment that would allow a prisoner to reach their full potential.

Abstract hope and hope momentum notions

Two notions are proposed from the Masters research to harness the potential of hope in prison, using the hope factors identified. Firstly, 'abstract hope' is proposed as a type of hope that provides hopeful feelings, but without a clearly defined goal. It is characterised by a prisoner not fully forming an outcome in the future (future imagining), but metaphorically planting a seed in the hope of something good happening in the future. The future does not need to be defined as a long term or solidified concept. It is further proposed that if we know what hope factors motivate positive thoughts and actions, or suppress them, it is possible that we can measure them as part of a 'hope momentum' scale, based on the Adult Hope Scale which is used to measure hope levels in the general population.[18] This could be used with prisoners to support hope interventions, through improved cognitive skills.

Limitations of the research

The Masters research provides valuable insights into how prisoners make sense of hope, and provides a platform for development of further investigation of its potential. There were clear limitations such as the use of autobiographical interpretations, rather than participants living in a prison environment. This means that the accounts may be more reflective in nature, rather than a current representation of events or experiences. The research did however identify common patterns or themes between the accounts, despite each participant being in a different country, and having a different offence and sentence type. The basic ideas from this research were incorporated into a self-help book for people in prison,[19] which is stocked in many prison libraries, available at Broadmoor Hospital and is being used to support neurodiverse people at HMP Grendon.

Current PhD Research: The experience and potential of hope for former prisoners living in the community

Current research by the author is being conducted as part of a PhD programme supervised by Professor Graham Towl and Professor Tammi Walker; two well respected Professors in Forensic Psychology at Durham University, who are both engaged in forensic research.

The Masters research conducted by the author provides a good starting point for understanding how hope is experienced by people who have served a prison sentence, and the differences between conventional hope applications in the general population, when compared with forensic applications. The research provides insights into a range of interpretatively analysed hope factors and cites limitations to 'hope momentum' which would increase hope, due to lack of agency within the prison environment.

The natural development of the research was to take this evidence and to extend it to people released from prison. It was hypothesised (using a working model) that people released from prison would have more agency and be able to set and achieve long term goals, which would be more compatible with hope theory in the general population, capable of yielding similar results. The hypothesis utilised 3 dispositional states (Surviving, Striving and Thriving), with Thriving defined as reaching one's full potential.

The current research focuses on interviews with participants that are now living in the community and have served a prison sentence, to explore their hope experience since leaving prison, and to what extent this has contributed to desistance from crime. This widens the scope of the potential of hope theory, that could be used to develop post-release interventions to reduce reoffending and drive higher levels of life satisfaction.

In 2023, ethics approval was obtained to interview 5 participants who are former prisoners, working with a specialist recruitment agency that places people with criminal justice experience into employment. The

18. Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., Sigmon, S. T., et al. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*(4), 570-585.
19. Adlington-Rivers, D. (2023). *Freedom is in the Mind.* D. Adlington-Rivers.

participants were interviewed about their experience of hope and the extent to which it contributes to desistance from crime. The participants have successfully lived in the community, and not returned to a life of crime. All the participants are male and served varying sentences in England for different offence types, including large-scale fraud, murder and drug smuggling.

Preliminary findings from pilot interviews

Preliminary findings from the pilot research provide unique insights into how hope is experienced by former prisoners. Conventional hope theory dictates that people can set and achieve goals, using a range of pathways, and provides the opportunity for people to reach their full potential (or to Thrive using the hypothesised model), however, evidence from the pilot research suggests that hope is not experienced as a long-term vision, and 'thriving' is now considered to be too subjective on a case-by-case basis. For one person, thriving can be getting a job, and for others, it can be recovering from substance use. Hope is experienced as an iterative event, within the constraints of daily struggles, and overcoming these become the impending goals that might trigger a hopeful episode.

An example of structural barriers include:-

- Statutory obligations such as licence conditions, court-imposed restrictions (such as orders), probation requirements.
- Finding somewhere to live and security of accommodation.
- Finding suitable employment due to criminal record.
- Mental health support and resources (often to reduce risk of reoffending).
- Reintegration challenges/Maintaining meaningful relationships due to social stigma and loss of good character/reputation.
- Loss of autonomy.

The findings contradict the original hypothesis because the participants did not sufficiently enjoy the level of agency predicted to set and achieve long term goals. A framework has been developed to characterise and reflect how hope is experienced by people released from prison, using a hierarchy of achievement, which includes the following:-

1. Staying out of prison.
2. Dealing with new realities.
3. Stabilisation.
4. Aspiration.

Future direction of research

The future direction of the research is to develop the framework further to explain hope experience for people released from prison, and to understand the extent to which hope theory contributes to desistance from crime. This will support the efficacy of hope interventions for people released from prison in the future.

The interpretation of whether hope is a factor in desistance from crime is difficult to evidence from the pilot interview analysis without further research, as the evidence suggests that participants directly linked understanding of the trigger of their index offence to desistance from crime. This in some cases involved desistance from using alcohol, drugs, or engaging in behaviours that caused their original offence to be committed. This however could be interpreted as a hopeful feeling and considered a goal in itself within hope theory. The next round of research interviews will investigate this further. The inclusion criteria will include participants that are statistically more likely to reoffend, to provide more credibility to the extent to which hope may have contributed to their desistance from crime.

Conclusion

The emergence of hope theory as a cognitive tool for positive change for people in and released from prison should be explored, at a time when the prison population is too high, and focus and policy is shifting towards rehabilitative approaches to our penal system. It can be used as an intervention by a range of practitioners such as prison officers, probation officers, and other professionals working in criminal justice. Hope theory has proven benefits for people in general society and can be applied in forensic settings to support rehabilitation, by supporting a person in reaching their full potential, if the right conditions exist. Hopeful thinking can be used to project a person into the future, serving as a good coping mechanism for today, and focusing their mind on progressive outcomes.

Understanding of hope in forensic applications is in its infancy, and research is still developing, but the evidence suggests that if hopeful thinking can be encouraged and practiced in prisons to increase hope factors, that it may lead to positive outcomes. This would need the executive support of prison governors and managers, as part of an underpinning hope programme.

It is hoped that other forensic research on hope will be developed in the coming years, to provide further evidence of its efficacy, and that hope programmes can be developed as part of a wider, strategic plan to accelerate rehabilitative practices for people in and released from prison.

Body Searches and Imprisonment
Edited by Tom Daems
Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan (2023)
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*Reviewer: **Ray Taylor** is a former prison officer.*

Most people have been searched at one time or another, perhaps when travelling and passing through airport security. Those of us who have worked in prisons are also used to being searched and may treat it as merely another routine and necessary security measure, perhaps taking it in our stride. Being searched as a prisoner, however, is a profoundly different experience. Body Searches and Imprisonment provides a detailed insight into how and why prisoner body searching is different, and the effect that being routinely and regularly searched may have on the people who are subjected to the practice.

The work is based on presentations at the 'Body Searches and Imprisonment' international workshop at the Leuven Institute of Criminology in April 2022. Contributions come from the Universities of Agen (France), Belfast (UK), Birmingham (UK), Geneva (Switzerland), Oxford (UK), Leuven (Belgium), London (UK), Málaga (Spain), and Pau (France).

Opening the series of essays, Jason Warr considers the imposition of power through touch. Or, as Warr puts it, exploring 'the reality of searching practices through the lens of sensory criminology, and sensory penalities more specifically… how concepts of penal power are communicated through securitised touch' (p8).

Warr notes that Vannini and others describe the sensory element of human experience and how we derive meaning from our environment and our sensory experience of it (p9). Warr gives an account of the process of searching and the regulation governing the practice in prisons (England and Wales), as does Bennett subsequently. In these prisons a strip search (as described by Warr) is referred to as a full search and does not allow the person being searched to be completely naked and neither must the person be touched. Instead, the upper clothing is removed and replaced after visual inspection, followed by the lower half of the body. Warr also describes the different kinds of rub down or pat down searching.

He then goes on to describe the experience of being searched, drawing a stark contrast with the procedural and regulation viewpoint. He references first-hand accounts of the feeling of loss of power, of being under someone else's control and not being able to evade the experience of being touched and having the uncertainty of not knowing when it will end, or where and when it may occur.

Bennett continues the theme of experience set against the backdrop of security need: 'Despite its regularity, apparent effectiveness and regulatory controls, searching is invasive and can be experienced as harmful or distressing by those subjected to it' (p36). He explains how, during his time as Deputy Director of Operational Security (HM Prison and Probation Service of England and Wales) there were efforts to draw upon security theory to 'refashion the approach to security practices to make them more legitimate' (p28).

Bennet begins with a critical discussion about the nature and definition of security as a 'contested term' (p29) and differing approaches to security practice. Drawing comparisons with other professions and discussing the contrasting viewpoint of traditional and entrepreneurial approaches to security, he identifies a clear need to develop professional standards. He continues by describing current security thinking in HMPPS and discusses how security practice in relation to searching might develop in future.

Barbara Bernath (p45) considers searching in the context of risk of harm to those subject to searching and how this may be mitigated through monitoring processes. She considers the work of such bodies as the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) in checking the legality of strip searches in Norway, France, and other jurisdictions.

Bernath discusses the Legality of 'full body' searches in the context of decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the judicial institution overseeing the European Convention (ECHR). The ECtHR, says Bernath, has repeatedly indicated that it accepts that 'strip searches may be necessary on occasions to ensure prison security or to prevent disorder or crime' but that they are likely to be experienced as invasive and humiliating. The Court will nonetheless be inclined to scrutinise any claimed necessity (p76).

Natasa Mavronicola and Elaine Webster invite us to consider how strip searching may be seen in the context of European Human Rights law. In particular, ECHR Article 3,

which prohibits torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In their interpretation of judgments of the ECtHR, the Court determines the practice of strip searching to be a necessary evil, only allowing appeals on the basis of contextual argument. Although the court may not consider strip searching to be contrary to Article 3 per se it has 'viewed body searches with suspicion' (p 75).

Aurore Vanliefde's chapter deals with body searching and vulnerable groups, in particular women and LGBTQI+ people, children, those with disabilities and any religious, ethnic or cultural minorities. The chapter begins with a useful discussion of key concepts including the definition and explanation of LGBTQI+ and how gender and gender identity affects how people may be treated in prison. The vulnerability of women and LGBTQI+ people, says Vanliefde, 'is not inherent to their gender identity/sexual orientation in itself, but must be understood in relation to particular contexts (such as prisons) where particular forms of masculinity prevail, and where she says misogyny, homophobia and transphobia are prevalent' (p105).

The chapter also discusses how searching can be dehumanising and isolating, and especially humiliating for women during menstruation and pregnancy. For instance, prisoners may be asked to remove their sanitary items and dispose of them before being searched. They are not always provided with new sanitary items after the search or must pay for one themselves, which adds up to other inequalities related to menstruation (p109).

Tom Daems considers what he describes as a time of controversy in Belgian prisons surrounding searching in prisons and the 2005 law on prisoners' rights. Daems discusses the original intentions of the Belgian Prison Act of 12 January 2005 and demonstrates how these intentions and the procedures that were designed, aligned with prevailing European norms on regulating strip searches (Sect. 2). Daems considers the many ways in which those intentions were challenged and circumvented by prisons on the basis that the new rules that were perceived to be an obstacle to prison security. In this way Daems ably illustrates the dynamic tension between security procedures and the need to preserve prisoner dignity, integrity and basic human rights.

Joana Falxa considers similar concerns in France, resulting in the 2009 Prison Act. This chapter provides a detailed description of the French prison regulatory regime before and after the 2009 Act. Falxa explains that Article 57 of the Act required principles of necessity, proportionality, and subsidiarity. The result of the operation of these and other principles in the Act led to an increased scrutiny of searching within the French administrative courts (p158). Dissatisfaction with Article 57 among prison managers, however, resulted in these original wording being 'immediately hampered by various forms of resistance from the prison administration' (p161), eventually allowing the reintroduction of systematic searching (p163).

Cristina Güerri Looks in detail at prison searches and punishment in Spanish prisons, considering data sets on how many searches are conducted, what kind of searches, and whether searches have positive result (unauthorised or banned items found). Guerri's analysis of these data indicates that over 95 per cent of searches produce a negative result — nothing is found. On this basis, Guerri argues that such searches are mostly unnecessary.

Conor Byrne and Linda Moore remind us that strip searching was among a range of measures used against those who considered themselves political prisoners in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 80s. Prisoners who participated in the 'blanket protests' — refusing to wear prison uniform after their clothing had been taken away, instead covering themselves with just a blanket. Already without clothes, they were in a vulnerable position, exacerbated by an attempt by the prison to 'assert control through the use of force, including violent and intimate body searching' (p233).

In Armah women's prison, the authors describe how the position was worse and became worse still in the 1980s. Then, routine strip searching was increased, prisoners not conforming to regime requirements were denied access to toilet and sanitary provision and strip searching took on an even more aggressive form. This included women who were pregnant and those who had recently given birth or miscarried. Searching was fully naked, witnesses by multiple women officers.

Anaïs Tschanz acknowledges the widespread criticism of searching but takes a contrasting look into technology as a potential alternative to the practice of body searches in prison. His analysis draws on multi-method research split into two parts. The first consisting of interviews with male and female prisoners of all age groups incarcerated in prisons in the Quebec province of Canada. The second part looks specifically at one device — the so-called BOSS chair (Body Orifice Security Scanner).

Tschanz quotes one prisoner as saying: 'You have staff who are alright, courteous, and respectful. But then you've got others, it's like day and night. There are others still who have no notion of respect. Then, it's out of control' (Jerome, 30 years old).

Another: 'Once, I had a strip search where 12 of them got together, making jokes,

inappropriate jokes' (Étienne, 51 years old) (both quotes p250).

The introduction into Canadian prisons of the BOSS chair brought with it, says Tschanz, a new ritual (p252) to replace the old. The change and difference is considered against the manufacturer's claims of a 'non-intrusive and non-invasive search method that does not require contact' (p251).

Concluding the series, Daems discusses the future of searching as new body scanning technologies are introduced into prisons across the globe. Will this development result in a reduced requirement to conduct full body searching or will it, as in the UK, be used in addition to body searching as a further control and security measure?

Overall, the book provides a comprehensive account of various aspects of security searching of the person, including a range of views and perspectives from those people subject to searching in prisons. It does not, however, give any insight into the perspective of those who are required to carry out bodily searching as part of their duties. As such, we have accounts of the regulatory perspective, the prisoner perspective, but none in relation to the operational practitioner, the person required to carry out the searching procedures. This would appear to be a glaring gap in an otherwise multi-faceted account of searching of the person, as part of the prison security process in European jurisdictions.

Introduction to Convict Criminology

By Jeffrey Ian Ross

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Reviewer: ***Dr Baris Cayli Messina,*** *Associate Professor of Criminology, University of Lincoln and Editor of Temple Studies in Criminalization, History, and Society and Editor-in-Chief of International Social Science Journal.*

This book stands as a cornerstone in the domain of convict criminology. Penned by a world-renowned criminologist and one of the esteemed founding scholars of the discipline, it presents a compelling and indispensable perspective, explaining in an accessible way why the lives of convicts are not only relevant to the field of criminology but are also essential for fostering positive social change.

The book is structured into three distinct parts, each meticulously arranged to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of the significance of convict criminology within the broader context of crime, punishment, and justice. The first part explores the foundational aspects of convict criminology, offering a detailed examination of the ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings that emphasise the importance of convict criminology. This section helps readers to better understand the importance of this growing discipline thanks to an insightful introduction, elucidating why this special sub-field is integral to the field of criminology as a whole.

In the second part, the author redirects our attention towards pedagogy and mentorship, underscoring the critical importance of education and guidance in empowering inmates and ex-convicts to play active roles in shaping convict criminology. By positioning convicted individuals as partners in this endeavour, this section compellingly illustrates the transformative potential inherent within this collaborative approach, both academically and in practice.

The final part of the book uncovers the role of activism and public policy, providing a compelling exploration of the intersection between academia and advocacy. Through a nuanced examination of activism and engaging with the public, Ross elucidates the vital role of engagement with broader actors but always bringing attention to the survivors of criminalising justice system in advancing the objectives of convict criminology. In addition, the section offers invaluable insights into the future trajectory of this burgeoning field, offering readers thought-provoking reflections on its potential evolution and impact of activism in convict criminology.

Francesca Vianello, in her forward for the book, eloquently articulated the transformative power in amplifying the voices of those who have long been silenced by systemic injustices. She astutely noted that by granting access to these hidden realms of human resilience, transformation, and redemption, we not only enrich our understanding but also pave the way for meaningful societal change (p. 15). Indeed, Jeffrey Ian Ross has masterfully achieved this objective within the pages of this book. Ross transcends the realm of mere statistical analysis by accurately dissecting the nuanced experiences of convicted individuals. In doing so, he offers a renewed perspective on the multifaceted dimensions of their personal journeys, providing valuable perspective for educators and all those who interact with individuals who have been convicted. Through empathetic analysis, Ross challenges established criminological frameworks and proposes a potential path towards comprehending punishment and its profound impact on the lives of the

countless individuals who have experienced incarceration.

Following a thorough exposition of the origins of convict criminology, where Ross elucidates its inception through the active involvement of ex-convict participants (p. 14), the subsequent section delves into the paramount significance of education and pedagogy within the discipline. Here, the narrative highlights the myriad challenges faced within correctional facilities, including social, bureaucratic, and resource constraints, which impede access to quality education for incarcerated individuals. Drawing from case studies in the United States, United Kingdom, and Italy, Ross emphasises the critical need to prioritise education within correctional settings. By showcasing successful educational programmes in countries where convict criminology has garnered significant attention and scholarly interest, Ross advocates for the integration and sustenance of higher education initiatives for inmates (p. 84).

Ross's scholarship accentuates the imperative to transcend superficial conceptions of crime and punishment, urging a deeper exploration of the human dimensions involved in these phenomena. Through collaborative partnerships with convicted individuals and an empathetic examination of their lived experiences, Ross illustrates how convict criminological research can catalyse meaningful social change. Although Convict Criminology shares commonalities with critical criminology and correction studies, its nuanced focus bestows upon it a distinctive character. This distinction is evident to readers, thanks to the meticulous organisation of the book.

Jeffrey Ian Ross presents a compelling argument for the continued relevance and necessity of Convict Criminology. Ross astutely contends that as long as the voices of individuals impacted by the criminal justice system remain unheard and marginalised, and as long as correctional facilities persist, Convict Criminology will endure (p. 145). However, Ross goes beyond mere diagnosis to offer a comprehensive framework for enhancing the efficacy and impact of Convict Criminology. His insightful suggestions encompass a wide array of strategies aimed at bolstering the field's visibility, effectiveness, and influence. These include advocating for representation within other scholarly organisations, implementing robust mechanisms for tracking achievements, fostering a culture of self-reflection, disseminating convict criminology-related information to the public through various channels, hosting regular conferences to facilitate discourse and collaboration, establishing dedicated national convict criminology groups, embracing emerging communication technologies, curating special issues in relevant academic journals, countering misinformation on divisive ideological topics, and fortifying mentoring initiatives (p. 141-144).

Ross's meticulous attention to detail and his proactive approach to addressing the challenges faced by Convict Criminology underscore the depth of his commitment to advancing the field. By offering a comprehensive roadmap for its evolution and development, Ross's work not only reaffirms the importance of Convict Criminology. Through his invaluable contributions, Ross has solidified 'Introduction to Convict Criminology' as an indispensable resource for scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and advocates alike. Its enduring impact on the discourse surrounding crime, punishment, justice, and rehabilitation is undeniable.

Written in an accessible manner, this book is a testament to Jeffrey Ian Ross's commitment to making the complex subject of convict criminology comprehensible to a wide audience. The inclusion of exhibit boxes throughout the book enhances readers' engagement and facilitate deeper connections with the material. This book represents a tour de force in the realm of convict criminology. Through meticulous documentation of the discipline's significant milestones and a detailed exploration of its rapid evolution over recent decades, Ross has crafted a definitive resource that is destined to make a lasting impact for years to come.

Creating Space for Shakespeare — Working with Marginalized Communities

By Rowan Mackenzie
Publisher: Bloomsbury (2023)
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Reviewer: ***Martin Kettle*** *is an inspector with HM Inspectorate of Prisons*

Dr Mackenzie wrote an article in the January 2024 issue of PSJ, about the 'applied theatre' project which she runs at HMP Stafford, 'Emergency Shakespeare'. That article breathed a confidence about what can be achieved through in-prison theatre, especially in the lives of individuals, both through doing drama in a group where spontaneity, trust and risk-taking feel safe, and through the new perspectives on one's own life experience through stepping into another role.

Her book shows that calm sense of confidence stems from very wide knowledge and experience of community projects centred on Shakespeare. Many of us know the importance of creating spaces within prisons which have

something of not-prison about them. She has also researched applied theatre in the community, especially relating to people living with learning disabilities and those with mental health conditions, going back to 'Shakespeare comes to Broadmoor' around 1990 and taking in Cardboard Citizens, a recent drama project involving homeless people.

The rehearsal space is the first main focus of the book, a creative space which is not easy to enter, and trauma-informed approaches are important. Engaging with Shakespeare, that colossus of European cultural capital who has tended to be captured by the middle-class and the contented, is not easy for many, though most will learn to enjoy the richness of his language and of the stories and worlds he created. Mackenzie looks in detail at many approaches, including short-term work stripping Shakespeare down to an absolute minimum for people with significant ASD, and in schools for children with SEND, or in remand prisons. The many stories of how children and adults were gently drawn into the activity over a number of sessions give an object lesson in what engagement really means. Longer-term work in English prisons, especially the Gallowfield Players at Gartree, and including the Stafford project dealt with in Dr Mackenzie's PSJ article, would be a good place for prison-based readers to begin this book (pp 48-69).

Performance is the second major theme. The nature of the interaction between actors and audience, always mysterious and constantly discussed, is here considered where marginalised people are the actors the audience or both. Practicalities about different performance spaces, ready-made or improvised. A company formed of mental health service users present in various venues a pastiche of Shakespeare characters set in a psychiatric hospital. Some youth theatres and others use actual theatres, which have the security of a demarcated space meant for drama. In prisons, both space and time have to be carved out of an institutional building and institutional regime. In the midst of constant adaptation, Shakespeare retains his power: 'It is perhaps (the) ability for Shakespeare's work to be used to articulate trauma when words may be otherwise elusive which imbues it with much of its power' (pp 95, of a production of The Tempest in HMP New Hall). Some powerful performances are described before audiences wholly of families and friends of the prisoners involved.

Thirdly, the impact on individuals is considered. We are taken to internment camps in the two world wars of the last century, where Shakespeare was commonly a way for people to hold on. Also, Robben Island. Then to prisons during COVID, when Dr Mackenzie produced weekly Shakespeare activity packs that were widely appreciated. The effects of working in a group are also spelt out, largely through 'rehearsal diaries' of individual prisoners. These testimonies, of personal epiphanies and growth in emotional resilience, are probably the most powerful elements in the book, and impossible to summarise. A shorter final chapter surveys ways in which prison theatre has been projected through media of every kind from printed programmes to documentary programmes.

This book, part of a series on 'Shakespeare and social justice', combines to a remarkable degree a breadth of academic understanding with a depth of experience of the difference that doing Shakespeare can make to marginalised individuals and to the institutions in which they are contained, especially prisons. Its main riches lie in stories — of many different projects and even more individuals testifying to what difference doing Shakespeare has made in their life. Even if you just go to the middle chapters for the vivid stories of work done in prisons, you will find staring you in the face and ringing in your ears the evidence of how effective prison drama can be, as a contribution to changing lives.

Unmasking the Sexual Offender
By Veronique N. Valliere
Publisher: Routledge (2023)
ISBN: 9780367741532 (Hardback)
9780367741242 (Paperback)
Price: £125.00 (Hardback) £29.99 (Paperback)

Reviewer: ***Emma Tuschick*** *is a Research Associate and PhD Candidate in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Law, Teesside University, Middlesbrough, United Kingdom.*

Veronique N. Valliere's Unmasking the Sexual Offender provides a comprehensive and insightful exploration into the complexities surrounding 'sexual offenders', their victims, and the societal dynamics that influence both. Valliere, a licensed psychologist with extensive experience in the field, meticulously examines the dynamics, motivations, and treatment of individuals who commit sexual offences.

Valliere establishes a foundational understanding of sexual offending by detailing various typologies and classifications of offenders. She presents a nuanced analysis of the factors contributing to sexual offending, including psychological, environmental, and situational influences. Through case studies and often shocking real-life examples, Valliere deepens readers' understanding of the diverse range of individuals involved in sexual offending behaviour. Notably, she challenges common assumptions about men convicted of sexual offences, highlighting instances

where some offenders have demonstrated compassion and therefore suggests the importance of temporary shifts in people's mindset towards this population.

A significant strength of the book is its examination of the psychological and emotional complexities underlying sexual offending. Valliere delves into the motivations and thought processes of offenders, providing valuable insights into the causes of their behaviour. Although she insists on holding offenders accountable, Valliere explores various psychological factors, such as cognitive distortions, trauma histories, and personality disorders, that can contribute to an individual's propensity for sexual offending. This detailed psychological analysis helps to demystify the often-misunderstood internal drivers that lead to such harmful actions.

Valliere's openness and honesty about her own experiences and feelings, derived from witnessing numerous distressing scenarios, significantly enhance the book's authenticity and relatability. Valliere does not shy away from discussing the emotional toll that working with this population can take on professionals in the field. Her candid reflections on her personal challenges and emotional responses add a humanising element to the narrative, making it clear that understanding and addressing sexual offending is not just an academic exercise but a deeply personal and emotionally charged endeavor.

Valliere also addresses the impact of sexual offending on victims, offenders' families, and the broader community. From the victim's perspective, she presents compelling evidence and poses challenging questions about the inadequacies in current preventative measures and societal responses. Valliere urges the audience to adopt a more proactive and supportive stance, criticising societal tendencies to blame victims and perpetuate rape myths, and noting how professionals sometimes minimise the issue's severity.

Moreover, Valliere explores the stigmatisation and self-blame experienced by family members of offenders, contrasting their attitudes with those of the general public. She critically examines sex offender registries, suggesting that the associated stigma requires reevaluation. By debunking myths and offering advice to family members, Valliere empathetically places herself in their position, enabling readers to connect with the difficult realities they face. She highlights that family members, often overlooked, are victims too, thereby broadening the understanding of the pervasive impact of sexual offending.

Another noteworthy aspect of Valliere's work is her exploration of societal attitudes towards individuals convicted of a sexual offence, particularly the differential treatment of celebrities and sports figures. She argues that public forgiveness towards high-profile individuals reveals a troubling disparity in societal perceptions and reactions to sexual offences based on the offender's social status. This analysis raises critical questions about the influence of media and societal norms in shaping public opinion, indicating an essential area for further discussion. Valliere also critiques the media for perpetuating misconceptions about sexual violence and sensationalising cases, distorting reality. Her balanced examination of both male and female victims provides a nuanced perspective on the widespread and indiscriminate nature of sexual violence, reinforcing the need for a societal shift in attitudes and behaviours.

Valliere's exploration of the treatment and management of sexual offenders is another highlight. She offers an in-depth analysis of various treatment modalities, including cognitive-behavioural therapy, group therapy, and pharmacological interventions. Drawing on her experiences working with offenders, Valliere provides practical advice for clinicians and therapists in this challenging field. She advocates for a multidisciplinary approach to addressing sexual offending behaviour, emphasising the need for collaboration between psychologists, social workers, law enforcement, and other professionals to develop comprehensive prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation strategies.

Throughout the book, Valliere emphasises understanding sexual offending behaviour within the broader context of individual and societal factors. She challenges readers to move beyond simplistic explanations of sexual offending and to consider the complex interplay of psychological, social, and environmental factors contributing to this behaviour. By providing a deeper understanding of the motivations and thought processes of sexual offenders, Valliere aims to promote more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

However, one limitation of Unmasking the Sexual Offender is Valliere's use of terminology. Throughout the book, she refers to individuals who have committed sexual offences as 'sexual offenders.' It may be more appropriate to use the term 'men convicted of a sexual offence' to avoid labeling individuals solely by their past behaviour. Employing person-first language acknowledges that individuals are more than their offences and promotes a more respectful and dignified approach to discussing sexual offending behaviour. While this limitation does not detract from the book's overall quality, it is an

important consideration for readers.

Additionally, while Valliere briefly touches on the legal and policy implications of sexual offending behaviour, a more comprehensive analysis of this aspect would enhance the book. A deeper exploration of legal and policy frameworks surrounding sexual offending, including discussions on sex offender registries, sentencing guidelines, and rehabilitation programmes, would provide readers with a more thorough understanding of the broader context in which sexual offending occurs.

In conclusion, Unmasking the Sexual Offender is a thought-provoking, accessible, and essential read for those seeking to understand the complexities of sexual offending and victimisation. Valliere concludes with a powerful call to action, emphasising the importance of prevention, early education, and societal change. She highlights the need for supportive and understanding environments to facilitate true change and better support victims. Ultimately, Unmasking the Sexual Offender serves as a crucial reminder of the pervasive impact of sexual violence and the urgent need for a collective effort to address this issue.

Bennett Award Winner 2024

The 'Bennett Award' for outstanding article of the year is in its eighth year and was renamed in 2020 in honour of our former editor of seventeen years – Dr Jamie Bennett.

The Prison Service Journal editorial board reviewed a shortlist of articles in 2024. The board weighed each article by its merit. We have endeavored to make our judgement as unbiased and objective as possible. In so doing, we chose the article that best reflected the aims of the PSJ which is to inform theory and practice.

The Editorial board selected an article from the 272 special issue: Knowledge Equity in Carceral Research. All authors were introduced by first name only in this edition to ensure all authors receive full and equal credit for their contributions.

The winning article for our 2024 annual Bennett Award is: 'Exploring Friendships behind Prison Walls through a Knowledge Equity Approach'. This article was co-written by Donna a Research Fellow in Public Health at the University of Southampton and Marc the CEO of Fair Justice, an organisation striving for a fairer criminal justice system. The article provides an insight into prison friendships, illuminating the similarities and differences in how these friendships function compared to friendships beyond the prison gate.

The 2025 Bennett award shortlist will be agreed in the autumn this year. If you would like to nominate an article from the 2025 editions, please send your nominations to prisonservicejournal@crimeandjustice.gov.uk

PRISON SERVICE
JOURNAL

Journal purpose: *The Prison Service Journal* (PSJ) is a peer reviewed journal published by, but editorially independent from, HM Prison and Probation Service of England and Wales (HMPPS).

The purpose of the PSJ is to provide a platform for exchanging knowledge on issues relating to the Prison Service. Its scope includes imprisonment, the wider criminal justice systems, and other related fields. It aims to present good quality, evidence-informed, and practice-focused publications to encourage discussion and debate on topics at the forefront of research, policy, and practice.

Correspondence: Please contact the editors via: prisonservicejournal@crimeandjustice.org.uk, or by post to: Prison Service Journal, c/o Print Shop Manager, HMP Leyhill, Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, GL12 8BT.

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