

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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Contents

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Dr Oscar O'Mara is a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Public Health and Wellbeing at the University of Essex. **Dr Maria Cristina Rodriguez Rivero** is a Research Associate in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at the University of Cambridge. **Professor Stuart Dalziel** is a Professor in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at the University of Cambridge. **Professor Stuart Dalziel** is a Professor of Architecture in the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde.

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Reza Barmaki is a criminology lecturer in the department of Social Science at York University, Canada

2 Editorial

3 Stale and Still: The Importance of Air Quality and Ventilation in Prisons.

Dr Oscar O'Mara, Dr Maria Cristina Rodriguez Rivero, Professor Stuart Dalziel and Professor Tim Sharpe

10 Creating the Roots of Hope: Using Art to support well-being in prison

Mark Jones

21 Addiction, Correctional Programming, and Rehabilitation of Canada's Federally Incarcerated Indigenous Individuals: A Trauma-Informed Explanation of the Failure of 'Pathways Initiatives'

Reza Barmaki

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University of Derby
Dr Rosie Travers
HMPPS
Dr Matt Maycock
Monash University
Dr Munazzah Choudhary
Ministry of Justice
Jackson Joseph
HMP Leyhill

July 2025

29 The confines of 'Invisible Walls': An exploration of life sentenced men in an open prison

Charlotte O'Brien and Guy T

Charlotte O'Brien is Head of Reducing Reoffending at HMP Millsike, with a Masters in Criminology & Penology, Cambridge University. Guy T is a serving Life-Sentenced Prisoner with a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy with the Open University.

37 Interview with Helen Judge: Area Executive Director North East England

Helen Judge is the Area Executive Director for North East England. She is interviewed by Dr Ruth Armstrong, Director of Justice Matters at the University of Liverpool.

41 Keeping individuals, and communities, safe and supported. Interview with Martin Jones CBE

Martin Jones is the Chief Inspector of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. He is interviewed by Professor Lynn Saunders, Professor Applied Criminology University of Derby and former prison governor.

Book reviews

45 Sound, order and survival in prison: The Rhythms and routines of HMP Midtown

Dr Kate Herrity

Dr Jamie Bennett is a Prison Group Director and Research Associate at the Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford, UK.

47 Islam in Prison. Finding Faith, Freedom and Fraternity

Lamia Irfan, Mallory Schnewly Purdie, Muzammil Quraishi, Matthew Wilkinson

Dr Hannah Bennett is a Doctoral Student at Staffordshire University and Intelligence Officer

49 'Star Men' in English Convict Prisons, 1879-1948

Ben Bethell

Joe Hale is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Nottingham Trent University.

The Editorial Board wishes to make clear that the views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Prison Service.

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Editorial

Dr. Rachel Gibson is a Forensic Psychologist within HMPPS and Co-Editor of the Prison Service Journal.

This general edition of the Prison Service Journal brings together a diverse range of content which will be of interest to our readers.

Our first article by **Dr Oscar O'Mara, Dr Maria Cristina Rodriguez Rivero, Professor Stuart Dalziel, and Professor Tim Sharpe**, discusses the importance of air quality and ventilation in prisons. The authors argue that air quality is an important issue that has been rarely explored in prisons. They draw attention to the relationship between air quality, health outcomes, and behaviour, and make a number of recommendations regarding means of addressing these issues.

Next, we have an article by **Mark Jones** which reflects on the experiences, and impact, of those involved in Creative Roots, an arts project in HMP/YOI Parc. Mark discusses the experiences of those involved in the project utilising the CHIME (Connected, Hope, Identity, Meaning, and Empowerment) recovery model. Those involved in the project described a range of positive outcomes, including improved wellbeing, connection, and hope.

We then have an article by **Reza Barmaki** who presents a trauma-informed explanation of the failure of a Canadian rehabilitative programme ('Pathways Initiatives') designed for incarcerated indigenous people with addiction issues. Reza suggests that failing to consider the intergenerational trauma of indigenous people in Canada as part of this programme has limited its effectiveness.

Our final article in this edition is from **Charlotte O'Brien and Guy T.** They present findings from a study which explored the challenges, and coping mechanisms, of those serving a life sentence in the open prison estate. The paper also explores current interventions designed to support transitions and reintegration into the community, and offers a number of reflections on how to enhance practice.

We are pleased to then have two interviews in this general edition. The first is with **Helen Judge**, Area Executive Director for the North East England, who is interviewed by **Dr Ruth Armstrong**. Helen reflects on her career to date, her hopes and priorities, and how

she is prioritising supporting staff to get back to the fundamental work that makes a positive difference in people's lives. We then have an interview with **Martin Jones CBE**, Chief Inspector of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, who is interviewed by **Professor Lynn Saunders**. In this interview, Martin reflects on the role of the inspectorate to support improvement and raise standards. He also acknowledges the consistent challenges identified across Probation in relation to excessive workloads and staffing difficulties, and how the complexity of the work undertaken by the service is not always recognised.

Finally, we have three book reviews. The first is a review of the book **Sound, Order and Survival in Prison** written by **Kate Herrity** and reviewed by **Dr. Jamie Bennett**. The book is based on fieldwork undertaken within one prison where listening is used to explore and understand the social world. Jamie concludes that this is an innovative and insightful book, and one which leads him to consider some of the practical implications of Herrity's findings in his review. Our second review is by **Hannah Bennett** of the book, **Islam in Prison: Finding Faith, Freedom, and Fraternity** written by **Lamia Irfan, Mallory Schnewwly Purdie, Muzammil Quraishi and Matthew Wilkinson**. The book is based on a large international study of Islam in prison and is described by Hannah as offering a 'refreshing departure' from the usual narrative around radicalisation of people in prison. Finally, we have a review of **Star Men** in English Convict Prisons, 1879-1948, written by **Ben Bethell** and reviewed by **Joe Hale**. Star men were a group of prisoners identified by authorities as being 'gentleman convicts', with no previous convictions. Concerns over a 'contamination' effect of being located with those who had repeatedly offended meant that this different 'class' of prisoner were located separately and regimes (including employment) were less physically demanding. Joe described the book as being well-researched and an essential read for anyone interested in the history of prisons and the treatment of prisoners in England and Wales.

Stale and Still: The Importance of Air Quality and Ventilation in Prisons.

Dr Oscar O'Mara¹ is a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Public Health and Wellbeing at the University of Essex. **Dr Maria Cristina Rodriguez Rivero** is a Research Associate in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at the University of Cambridge. **Professor Stuart Dalziel** is a Professor in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at the University of Cambridge. **Professor Tim Sharpe** is a Professor of Architecture in the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde.²

The air we breathe affects us all. It influences our health, our behaviour, and our life course.³ However, it is an underappreciated aspect of imprisonment, contributing to violence and shaping behaviour.⁴ As an interdisciplinary authorship team spanning public health, criminology, architecture and fluid dynamics, we address the importance of air quality and ventilation in prisons with a bottom-up zemiological approach,^{5,6} contending that poor air quality is a structural harm with social and health consequences. We propose recommendations and novel opportunities for improving air quality in prisons that can improve prison safety and public health.

Air quality is an underexplored issue in prisons. Whilst it is widely accepted that prison ventilation is inadequate,⁷ literature generally overlooks why it is important and what can be done to address it. Even the Certified Prisoner Accommodation Framework (2023) is vague in its definition of 'adequate' ventilation and the 'likely' risk to health.⁸ There is only one mention of 'air' and one brief section on ventilation. However, awareness of its importance has recently increased.

COVID-19 refocused attention and awareness of indoor air quality. The pandemic presented as one of

the most impactful and global public health challenges in recent history. By May 2023, COVID-19 accounted for more than 7 million deaths worldwide,^{9,10} with over 225,000 in the UK.¹¹ Many of the highest death rates were found in enclosed settings, particularly indoor residential and care spaces, where people mix frequently and closely.¹² Influenced by environmental, demographic, and pre-existing vulnerability factors, there were 3.33 times more deaths among people in prisons than expected given the age and sex of the population.¹³ These settings present a unique health risk to those living and working inside but are interdependent with wider social settings. Addressing the environmental harms associated with these settings will provide a public health dividend for all. In this article, we focus on prison settings, where security measures restrict the opportunities for mitigations, but monitoring and responding to inadequate air quality and ventilation are critical for prison and public safety.

The Value of Air Quality in Prisons

Prisoners can spend more than 95 per cent of their time indoors.¹⁴ Yet, indoor air quality is a relatively understudied subject matter in prison literature. Of the

1. Corresponding author: o.omara@essex.ac.uk
2. The authors acknowledge support and funding from the PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study on transmission and environment.
3. Whitty, C. (2022). *Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2022: Air pollution*. HM Government.
4. Bondy, M., Roth, S., & Sager, L. (2020). Crime is in the air: The contemporaneous relationship between air pollution and crime. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists*, 7(3), 555-585.
5. Ventilation is the process of bringing in fresh air from outside and removing stale indoor air, which may contain pollutants including chemicals, particulates, bacteria and virus particles. Ventilation is central to reducing indoor air pollution and enabling good indoor air quality.
6. Canning, V., & Tombs, S. (2021). *From social harm to zemiology: A critical introduction*. Routledge.
7. Jewkes, Y., & Moran, D. (2015). The paradox of the 'green' prison: Sustaining the environment or sustaining the penal complex? *Theoretical Criminology*, 19(4), 451-469.
8. Ministry of Justice (2023). *Certified Prisoner Accommodation Framework*. Ministry of Justice.
9. The WHO Director General suggested the true total may be as high as 20 million deaths.
10. World Health Organization (2023). *Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - 4 May*. WHO
11. UK Government (2023). *Deaths in the UK; Coronavirus in the UK (30 Jul)*. HM Government.
12. Office for National Statistics (2023). *Number of deaths in care homes notified to the Care Quality Commission, England*. Office for National Statistics.
13. Braithwaite, I., Lewer, D., & Edge, C. (2021). *Indirect age- and sex-standardisation of COVID-19-related mortality rates for the prison population of England and Wales*. UCL Collaborative Centre for Inclusion Health.
14. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2022). *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons annual report: 2021 to 2022*. HMIP

few known studies on indoor air quality, these suggest a pervasive problem. In Canada, prison staff revealed that prison spaces that were poorly ventilated or contaminated by mould created a perceived risk to physical health and exposure to airborne pathogens.¹⁵ In a Bahamian prison, the 'stale, contaminated air',¹⁶ combined with overcrowding, was associated with exposure to respiratory tract infections. In a study of nine Italian prisons,¹⁷ prison spaces represent a crucial setting for tuberculosis (TB) — a disease spread through the inhalation of expelled *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacteria. Data from 32 wing landings across four England prisons in 2016 indicated that air quality improved significantly with the introduction of a smoke-free policy. However, air pollution remained an issue and further work was required.¹⁸ More recently, the prevalence of vaping has increased the level of particulates in the air with possible adverse respiratory and cardiovascular effects.¹⁹ These studies suggest that inadequate air quality is systemic across prisons and prison services are failing to address this issue.

These issues exacerbate ongoing delivery challenges as prisons experience high levels of sickness and disproportionate health outcomes among staff and residents. Approximately 10 per cent of annual staff sickness absences are due to respiratory conditions.²⁰ In the two years to April 2022, 'epidemic/ pandemic' sickness was the leading cause of absence, exceeding mental health issues. Among

residents, respiratory infections are twice as common than the wider community,²¹ with a long history of experiencing outbreaks, such as tuberculosis,²² diarrhoea/vomiting, and influenza.²³ Enclosed by walls, doors and windows, those working and living in these settings find themselves sharing the experience: sharing air, respiratory aerosols, bodily fluids, and often physical contact. The high connectivity within these settings and with the wider community poses a public health risk to residents, staff, and wider society.²⁴

Part of the problem (and solution) is identifying what to do. Prisons are part of a vast social ecosystem and cannot be epidemiologically isolated. Through inter-prison transfers, staff movements, prisoner release, court appearances, hospitalisation, Release on

Temporary License (ROTL), social visits, and new receptions, prisons are interconnected with wider society. Due to this connectivity, the crowded prisoner population, and the proximity of interactions, prisons act as 'amplifiers' and 'reservoirs' of infection, increasing infections and stimulating variants and mutations.²⁵ In February 2020, a COVID-19 outbreak in a prison 450 miles away from Wuhan, China, was seeded by staff who had visited the Wuhan area, resulting in over 200 infections.²⁶

Between March and April 2020, there were 135 outbreaks of COVID-19 across prisons in England and Wales. By February 2023, there were over 49,000 known positive cases of infections among prisoners across 130 settings with over 300 confirmed

The air we breathe affects us all. It influences our health, our behaviour, and our life course.

15. Turner, J., Ricciardelli, R., & Gacek, J. (2023). The "Pains of Employment"? Connecting Air and Sound Quality to Correctional Officer Experiences of Health and Wellness in Prison Space. *The Prison Journal*, 103(5), 610-632.
16. Moxey-Adderley T., Williams E., Gibson-Mobley I., Sands S. (2016). Prison conditions and the health and well-being of inmates. In W. Fielding, V. Balance, P. Smith, A. Veyrat-Pontet, & H. Sutton (Eds.), *Our prisoners: A collection of papers arising from a 2016 Survey at The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services Facility at Fox Hill* (pp. 161–170). Inter-American Development Bank.
17. Carbonara S., Babudieri S., Longo B., Starnini G., Monarca R., Brunetti B., Andreoni M., Pastore G., De Marco V., Rezza G., & Gruppo di Lavoro Infettivologi Penitenziari (GLIP) (2005). Correlates of *Mycobacterium Tuberculosis* infection in a prison population. *European Respiratory Journal*, 25(6), 1070–1076
18. Jayes, L. R., Murray, R. L., Breton, M. O., Hill, C., Ratschen, E., & Britton, J. (2019) Smoke-free prisons in England: indoor air quality before and after implementation of a comprehensive smoke-free policy. *BMJ open*, 9(6), e025782.
19. Li, L., Lin, Y., Xia, T. & Zhu, Y. (2020). Effects of Electronic Cigarettes on Indoor Air Quality and Health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 41, 363–380
20. HM Prison and Probation Service (2024). *Workforce quarterly: June 2024*. Ministry of Justice.
21. House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee (2018). *Prison Health. Twelfth Report of Session 2017–19, HC 963*. House of Commons.
22. Smith, C. M., Trienekens, S. C., Anderson, C., ... & Maguire, H. (2017). Twenty years and counting: epidemiology of an outbreak of isoniazid-resistant tuberculosis in England and Wales, 1995 to 2014. *Eurosurveillance*, 22(8), 30467.
23. Kinner, S. A., Young, J. T., Snow, K., Southalan, L., Lopez-Acuña, D., Ferreira-Borges, C., & O'Moore, É. (2020). Prisons and custodial settings are part of a comprehensive response to COVID-19. *The Lancet Public Health*, 5(4), e188-e189.
24. SAGE (2021). *EMG: COVID-19 risk by occupation and workplace - 11 Feb*. HM Government.
25. SAGE (2021). *COVID-19 Transmission in Prison settings*. HM Government.
26. Barnert, E., Ahalt, C., & Williams, B. (2020). Prisons: Amplifiers of the COVID-19 Pandemic Hiding in Plain Sight. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110(7), 964–966
27. HMPPS (2023). Official Statistics, *HMPPS COVID-19 statistics – February 2023*. Ministry of Justice.

deaths.²⁷ As Farmer wrote, ‘better habitats for epidemics of airborne disease could hardly be found than overcrowded prisons’.²⁸ However, improving ventilation and air quality in these settings is challenging, especially as prisons are intended to be physically secure and operational.

In parts of the world that have been urbanised for longer, prisons are frequently older buildings, built either to older standards or before standards were introduced. Some older prison buildings, particularly those built during the nineteenth century, had clear ventilation strategies and provisions. Ventilation was considered important due to the need to exhaust combustion products from lighting and heating systems (such as open fires).²⁹ However, adaptations over the years, particularly those aimed at improving physical security and energy efficiency, may have reduced the effectiveness of these systems. With limited access to outdoor spaces and restrictions on window openings and free movement, prisons are populous but confining spaces with low ceilings and generally poor air circulation. Although it is unclear how ‘new’ prisons (built in the previous twenty years) perform, during research in prisons across England during the pandemic as part of the National Core Study (NCS) PROTECT project,³⁰ the (poor) air quality was immediately apparent in a diverse range of spaces and building types, even without instrumentation. Air in the cells and on the wings felt still and dense with ‘security’ measures, such as reinforced concrete cells and limited window openings, hindering circulation. This has resulted in high occupancy buildings in-use today that do not meet current guidelines or what was considered good practice when they were built.

Understandably, the attention looking forward is on how to ‘build better’, but existing buildings remain the bulk of the stock. Our focus on prisons emerges

from these risks and the related challenges of interventions. Whilst monitoring air quality was hampered by physical restrictions, affecting many of the privileges we take for granted in wider society (such as remote internet access) we found that prisons have significant potential for mitigations and improvements in public health. Our working assumption is that, with regular environmental monitoring and servicing of natural and mechanical systems, many of the public health risks associated with prisons can be mitigated at low economic cost for high social value.

The relationship between air quality, ventilation, and health outcomes

Poor air quality and inadequate ventilation may impact the behaviour and health of occupants. In addition to deaths from communicable diseases, air pollution contributes to an estimated mortality burden of between 26,000 and 38,000 a year in England.³¹ Air quality has been linked to adverse birth outcomes, diabetes, impaired cognitive performance, violence, and susceptibility to more severe health outcomes,³² with the most deprived experiencing the most adverse effects of poor air quality and the worst health outcomes.³³

³⁴ There is an interdependent relationship between air quality

and ventilation, health, and social outcomes.

With many infectious diseases spread via the respiratory tract,³⁵ inadequate ventilation and poor air quality pose a well-established risk of aerosol transmission and infection. Aerosol or ‘airborne’ transmission depends on the interaction between viral emission, ventilation, duration of exposure, environmental conditions, and the number and susceptibility of occupants in an area. In spaces where activities generate high levels of aerosols (e.g. singing, shouting, or aerobic activity) or where people mix in

Inadequate air quality is systemic across prisons and prison services are failing to address this issue.

28. Farmer, P. (2005) *Pathologies of power*. University of California Press

29. Jacob, E. (1894). *Notes on the Ventilation and Warming of Houses, Churches, Schools and Other Buildings*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

30. Other publications are in development

31. See footnote 3: Whitty (2022).

32. Lu, J.G. (2020). Air pollution: A systematic review of its psychological, economic, and social effects. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 32, 52–65.

33. Bell, M., Zanobetti, A. & Dominici, F. (2013). Evidence on Vulnerability and Susceptibility to Health Risks Associated With Short-Term Exposure to Particulate Matter: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 178(6), 865–876

34. Marmot, M., Allen, J., Boyce, T., Goldblatt, P. & Morrison, J. (2020). *Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On*. The Health Foundation.

35. Dasaraju, P. & Liu, C. (1996). Infections of the Respiratory System. In S. Baron (Ed.), *Medical Microbiology* (4th ed) (chapter 93). University of Texas.

densely populated spaces (e.g. prisons), adequate ventilation is critical to mitigating infection and illness. Ventilation rates (the amount of outdoor air brought into an indoor space over a given time) below 8-10 litres per second (L/s) per person increase the risk of infections, asthma, allergies, short-term sick leave and decreased perceptions of productivity.³⁶ The higher the ventilation rate, the more fresh air for occupants and the removal of airborne contaminants.

Addressing indoor air quality may also affect criminality. Studies have shown that air pollution and inadequate air quality are part of a complex social ecology linked to violent crime.³⁷ In a study of London, Bondy and colleagues (2020) identified that air pollution was linked to higher crime rates and affects crimes that are more likely to be spontaneous (interpersonal violence, criminal damage), concluding that exposure to air pollution may be associated with aggressive or impulsive reactions in people.³⁸ Air quality is a critical environmental factor contributing to harm.³⁹ As such, addressing inadequate indoor air quality can contribute to safety and security efforts in prisons and wider society.

Ventilation and good air quality can further mitigate exposure to Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). These are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids and are widely found as ingredients in household products such as floorings, paints and many cleaning, disinfecting, and cosmetic products. Many of these are benign, but some VOCs are associated with short- and long-term health issues, such as cancers.⁴⁰ VOCs are ubiquitous indoors and concentrations of many VOCs are consistently higher indoors (up to ten times higher) than outdoors.⁴¹ Residents and staff in prisons, particularly older buildings, are at increased risk of exposure and health issues due to the physical restrictions of their (total) function and delivery, with residents and staff in frequent and close contact in an environment with inadequate ventilation. Monitoring

and responding to these risks protects public health and reduces the socioeconomic burden on prison and health services.

Where a building or setting is situated is also an important consideration. It should be noted that where simple ad hoc measures such as opening windows are possible, the ingress of external pollutants from road and rail networks or industrial operations may increase greatly. Air from external smoking areas may infiltrate the buildings, imposing passive smoking on people inside. Similarly, combustion products from site boilers or kitchen extractors may re-enter indoor spaces. A complicating factor here is the dependence on external wind patterns that may shift and alter the risk. At its core, indoor air is outdoor air and as such, certain buildings and sites in urban areas are at more risk than others. Prisons pose a public health risk according to their design and location.

As Farmer wrote,
'better habitats for
epidemics of
airborne disease
could hardly be
found than
overcrowded
prisons'.

How can air quality and ventilation be improved?

In settings, like prisons, where individuals have little control over their environment and the air they breathe, it is critical to maximise ventilation while keeping buildings thermally comfortable and efficient. Building designs may differ but the first step is to inform

policymakers about the relationship between air quality and health. In a report on air pollution in 2022, the Chief Medical Officer for the UK reiterated the importance of air quality and the duty of society to respond:

[Air quality] is associated with impacts on lung development in children, heart disease, stroke, cancer, exacerbation of asthma and increased mortality, among other health effects. Except for air quality in our own homes, we have little control as individuals over the level of pollution that we and our

36. Wargocki, P., et al. (2002). Ventilation and health in non-industrial indoor environments: report from a European multidisciplinary scientific consensus meeting (EUROVEN). *Indoor Air*, 12(2), 113–128
37. Berman, J. D., Burkhardt, J., Bayham, J., Carter, E., & Wilson, A. (2019). Acute air pollution exposure and the risk of violent behavior in the United States. *Epidemiology*, 30(6), 799–806.
38. Bondy, M., Roth, S., & Sager, L. (2020). Crime is in the air: The contemporaneous relationship between air pollution and crime. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists*, 7(3), 555–585.
39. Cruz, E., D'alessio, S. & Stolzenberg, L. (2021). Air Pollution and Violent Criminal Behaviour. *British Journal of Criminology*, 62, 450–467.
40. Rumchev, K., Brown, H., & Spickett, J. (2007). Volatile organic compounds: do they present a risk to our health? *Reviews on Environmental Health*, 22(1), 39–56.
41. De Gennaro, G., Farella, G., Marzocca, A., Mazzone, A., & Tutino, M. (2013). Indoor and Outdoor Monitoring of Volatile Organic Compounds in School Buildings: Indicators Based on Health Risk Assessment to Single out Critical Issues. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 10(12), 6273–6291.
42. See footnote 3: Whitty (2022). p. i

*families breathe — this must be seen as a societal problem to solve.*⁴²

However, prisons are not required to routinely monitor indoor air quality and ventilation.

Prison design and construction are assessed against and should comply with accepted standards. In the UK these are provided by the Building Regulations (2021), The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations (1992), and Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) standards (Guide A). The recommended standard for workplaces (including law courts, offices, conference rooms, education areas, recreation rooms, and changing rooms) is a fresh air supply/ventilation rate of at least 10 L/s/person, reflecting how a space is used and occupied. However, many UK prisons were designed and built long before these guidelines, and compliance with these regulations is not adequately assessed, with relatively few buildings retrofitted for ventilation purposes in recent times. Moreover, some aspects of the regulations (e.g., the Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare regulations) apply to prison staff but not to prisoners, while for others the exposure limits are no longer considered acceptable. Critically, our research undertaken as part of the NCS PROTECT project in 2022 across four prisons indicates that the volume, occupancy and behaviours of a space may be more significant than the age of the building.⁴³ This highlights that 'build better' does not necessarily mean 'build new'. So, what can be done about existing buildings and those prisons that cannot be easily modified or rebuilt?

Educate and Empower

A prerequisite to improving indoor air quality and the associated health outcomes is increasing knowledge about the importance and value of indoor air quality and ventilation among policymakers and building users. This is particularly important in prisons

which are often 'forgotten about' or purposefully neglected to represent and reflect the punitive agenda of imprisonment.⁴⁴

This punitive agenda disregards the impact of the environment on health outcomes and affects everyone in society. For example, between 1844 and 1865 some prisons in England had in-cell sanitation. This was introduced to improve public health and hygiene, however, due to political pressure, in-cell sanitation was removed following the Prison Act of 1865 and was not reinstated in prisons such as Reading until 1990.⁴⁵ Prisons have since remained reservoirs and amplifiers of infectious disease, sustaining epidemics such as tuberculosis and streptococcus, affecting public health outcomes for prisoners, staff, and the wider public.⁴⁶ As

such, education for policymakers and politicians is vital to avoid the mistakes of the past and protect us in the future.

Educating people about what good air quality and ventilation means allows for interventions to be adequately executed. Information for, and the education of, both facilities managers and the occupants are vital. Having buy-in from both those in control of systems and users of the systems is an essential ingredient of implementing improvements, particularly one where there may be a perception of an increase in cost or a reduction in thermal comfort. There needs to be a

focus on occupancy and the introduction of clean air, e.g., ventilation and monitoring systems. Alone, each intervention may have minimal effect, but collectively these technologies can contribute significantly to addressing the social harms of inadequate air quality.

These interventions range from controlling room occupancy to improving ventilation by using windows and doors efficiently. Conveying of interventions could range from simple guidance for all or most users of a space to more detailed guidance to those in charge of managing the space (prison officers, teachers, etc.) and thorough guidance and/or training to those controlling ventilation settings to a larger extent (such as those in facilities teams, especially when mechanical ventilation, hybrid ventilation or automated building management

Those working and
living in these
settings find
themselves sharing
the experience:
sharing air,
respiratory aerosols,
bodily fluids, and
often physical
contact.

43. National Core Studies programme (2022). <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-core-studies-programme>

44. D. Moran and Y. Jewkes (2015). Linking the carceral and the punitive state: A review of research on prison architecture, design, technology and the lived experience of carceral space. *Annals of Géographie*, 124, 163–184

45. Berkshire Record Office Collections. <http://www2.berkshirenclosure.org.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=PRP1>

46. Tavošči, L., O'Moore, E. & Hedrich, D. (2019). Challenges and opportunities for the management of infectious diseases in European prisons: evidence-based guidance. *Lancet Infectious Diseases*, 19(7), e253–e258.

systems are in place). Guidance can be shared through simple messages during inductions or newsletters, or training activities that cover straightforward interventions about when and how to use vents or control room occupancy to a detailed explanation of ventilation strategies. However, this information is predicated on effective and serviceable ventilation systems.

The use of vents — windows, doors and trickle vents — generally increases the ventilation rate,⁴⁷ and their use should be recommended (where they are functioning), particularly when relying solely on natural ventilation. The location and opening position of the windows in the space also affect the flow and information on how to best use them should be considered.⁴⁸ These measures could lead to changes in temperature, acoustics or even an increase of other pollutants (such as particulate matter from outdoors), so a degree of guidance and personal control about which vents could be left open more generally (such as trickle vents) and which should be used on a more temporal basis (large area vents) would make a positive difference. Using filtering systems may also be recommended when openings cannot be used (because of a lack of them or detriment to other air quality conditions) or if they provide insufficient mitigation.⁴⁹

Improving air quality is not impossible, even in enclosed settings, but it starts with education, willpower, and investment.

Monitor CO2 in 'High-risk, high-contact' spaces

Building and accommodation policies should reflect the changing use and conditions of prison spaces, not just the initial design and building standards. Consequently, prisons require investment in longitudinal monitoring and research of ventilation and air quality. This should start in high-risk, high-contact spaces.

Air quality monitoring can quantitatively assess ventilation in occupied spaces and elicit an appropriate

mitigation. Longitudinal monitoring and immediately visible measurements of the air conditions (or gases and aerosols) in a room can be used to identify air quality and the adequacy of or need for ventilation. One of the most used indicators of air quality is the concentration of CO2. As advocated by the HSE, this came to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic because, in many settings, CO2 can be used as a proxy for the relationship between occupancy and ventilation, therefore informing the risk of exposure and transmission from an infected case. CO2 — along with water vapour, aerosolised droplets from the respiratory tracts and a variety of volatile compounds — is exhaled in the occupants' breath. In the absence of other significant sources of CO2, its measurement can indicate how the air circulates and exchanges, from which the risk of exposure to pathogens or pollutants can be measured. The precise concentration varies depending on the activity performed (e.g., aerobic activity can increase CO2 levels), but for a given level of activity and occupancy, higher CO2 concentrations mean poorer ventilation and a higher risk of exposure.⁵⁰

While the UK's workplace exposure limit for CO2 is currently set at 5000 ppm for eight hours, this is no longer considered acceptable. The recommendation for schools has been 1500 ppm since 2018. More recently, the HSE has issued guidelines stating, 'CO2 levels consistently higher than 1500 ppm in an occupied room indicate poor ventilation and you should take action to improve it'.^{51 52} In prisons, there are no standards for monitoring or responding to CO2 levels.

Knowing how a space is designed and used is important to understand air quality and ventilation. The design of the space — its windows, doors, walls, vents and other infrastructure differences — will affect the ventilation, and the levels of occupancy and activity will affect the concentration of CO2, potentially infectious aerosols and other pollutants. Including the requirement to monitor CO2 as part of a Building policy provides a valuable quantitative proxy, indicating when

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47. Kolokotroni, M., White, M. & Perera, M. (1997). Trickle ventilators: Field measurements in refurbished offices. *Building Services Engineering Research and Technology*, 18(4) 193–199.

48. N. Khan, Y. Su, and S. B. Riffat (2008). A review on wind driven ventilation techniques. *Energy & Buildings*, 40(8), 1586–1604.

49. Faulkner, C.A., Castellini, J.E., Zuo, W., Lorenzetti, D. & Sohn, M. (2022). Investigation of HVAC operation strategies for office buildings during COVID-19 pandemic. *Building and Environment*, 207, p.108519

50. Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (2021). *Covid-19 Guidance: Ventilation (v4)*. CIBSE

51. UK Government (2018). BB 101: *Ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality 2018*. HM Government.

52. Health and Safety Executive (2023). *Using CO2 monitors - Ventilation in the workplace*. HSE.

a space is being used, providing an idea of occupancy and an assessment of the adequacy of the ventilation rates, hence an indication of other aspects of air quality.^{53,54} Monitoring spaces and evaluating interventions against guidelines can ensure safe use.

The focus should be on high-risk and high-contact spaces with the poorest ventilation and the greatest risk. Prisons may have different floor plans, number and volume of rooms, orientation to environmental elements, and how the spaces are used/redesigned or adapted from their original purpose. Still, they share high-risk, high-contact spaces, where people behave predictably and follow a formally administered schedule encompassing location and timing.⁵⁵ In our aforementioned 2022 study, we identified high levels of CO₂ in most shared spaces in prisons, including healthcare settings, gyms, classrooms, staff rooms and offices. The average effective ventilation rate (Litres per second per person) across four prison gyms was around 6 for adjudication rooms, below six for prison gyms, and around four for healthcare spaces.⁵⁶ These spaces are significantly below the recommended 10 litres per second per person.⁵⁷ CO₂ levels in these spaces in each prison also reached maximums of over 2000ppm during occupancy, with a steady state of over 1000ppm, again not meeting recommendations.⁵⁸ From spaces with short durations of occupancy to residential accommodation, from workplaces and faith spaces to visitation spaces, ventilation rates were consistently identified as failing to meet guidelines. Monitoring these shared spaces to facilitate air quality improvements will provide a public health dividend, a benefit for all of society.

However, we acknowledge that improving ventilation is not the panacea to reducing the burden of health issues in prisons. As Goyes noted, 'it is impossible to enumerate exhaustively all the situations that impair the health of humans, non-humans and the eco-system'.⁵⁹ For example, when infectious and susceptible individuals interact in close proximity (typically less than 2 metres), ventilation alone may have little impact if large respiratory droplets can cross the

distance without needing air movements to carry the droplet over a larger distance. Overcrowding, prisoner health profiles, temperature, humidity, and building design are some of the critical considerations in improving prison safety and reducing social harm. Therefore, it is important to take a holistic approach to indoor air quality, addressing how people behave and how the air moves in their environment and interacts with external conditions. Critics may argue that this is a niche issue and priority investments lie elsewhere, but not addressing air quality disregards the role that physical spaces play in our daily lives and fails to address some of the fundamental challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic in reducing the risk of aerosol transmission, minimising sickness and staff absences, and protecting the most vulnerable people in our society. With the consequences of climate change, such as extreme temperatures and air pollution, already emerging, these environmental issues will intensify. Air quality and ventilation are not niche issues, they are a public health issue.

Conclusion

Clean air is fundamental to public health and vital for prison safety. We have indicated the interdependent relationship between air quality and ventilation, health, and social outcomes, but the effects are amplified by the social and physical design of prisons. Therefore, users and managers must be educated on how to optimise the safe use of these spaces. It is equally imperative to monitor shared spaces and invest in installing and maintaining adequate ventilation systems (natural or mechanical). Where fresh air cannot be easily provided, services should explore design strategies and new technologies. It is possible to improve indoor air quality and address its social harm, but it takes concerted effort and investment. Any changes are likely to incur a short-term cost, but failing to meet the challenge will inevitably increase the long-term financial and social consequences.

53. Sherman, M. (1990). Tracer-gas techniques for measuring ventilation in a single zone. *Building and Environment*, 25(4), 365–374.

54. Ha, W. et al. (2022). Use of carbon dioxide measurements to assess ventilation in an acute care hospital. *American Journal of Infection Control*, 50(2) 229–232

55. Su, C. et al. (2019). Case Investigations of Infectious Diseases Occurring in Workplaces, United States, 2006–2015. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 25(3), 397–405

56. The 'true' ventilation rate is based on room occupancy and calculated by the CO₂ degradation from peak occupancy to the CO₂ level at the end of the experiment (ambient or occupancy).

57. CIBSE (2014). Module 69: *Delivering ventilation to occupied spaces*. CIBSE.

58. SAGE (2021). EMG and SPI-B: *Application of CO₂ monitoring as an approach to managing ventilation to mitigate SARS-CoV-2 transmission*, 27 May. HM Government.

59. Goyes, D. R. (2019). *Southern green criminology: A science to end ecological discrimination*. Emerald Publishing.

Creating the Roots of Hope: Using Art to support well-being in prison

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'Art is about changing what we see in our everyday lives and representing it in such a way that it gives us hope.'



There is growing understanding of the power of art as a transformational experience that can support rehabilitation and the desistance journey of those who reside in prison.² There is also evidence art can support the development of positive overall well-being, which is also important for desistance.^{3,4} This article shares the research of the impact felt by all stakeholders

who engaged with an arts project called 'Creative Roots' that was facilitated in HMP/YOI Parc, Wales, UK from September 2022 to May 2023 by 'Das Clarks'.⁵ The research used the CHIME (Connected, Hope, Identity, Meaning, and Empowerment) recovery model for mental health as a lens to understand the narratives and the well-being of the men during and following their

1. Wiley, K. (2016). Jerry Saltz and Kehinde Wiley Explain How Art Invents New Ways of Seeing. The Cut. <https://www.thecut.com/2016/11/jerry-saltz-tiffany-new-ways-of-seeing-whitney-biennial-video-series.html>
2. Atherton, S., Knight, V. and van Barthold, B. C. (2022). Penal Arts Interventions and Hope: Outcomes of Arts-Based Projects in Prisons and Community Settings, *The Prison Journal*, 102(2), 217 – 236.
3. Link, N.W., Ward, J.T., Stansfield, R. (2019). Consequences of mental and physical health for re-entry and recidivism: Toward a health-based model of desistance, *Criminology*, 57, 544–573.
4. Wallace, D., & Wang, X. (2020). Does in-prison physical and mental health impact recidivism? *SSM - Population Health*, 11, 100569.
5. <https://www.mrandmrsclark.co.uk/>

engagement with the project.⁶ Recent research has evaluated how inclusive and transferrable the CHIME framework is for substance use, addiction, and a variety of mental health conditions and has high relevance across a high variety of recovery contexts.⁷ The CHIME framework also has high relatedness to important factors needed for positive well-being and desistance and has recently been used within an arts project in a prison setting.⁸ This research therefore chose to use the CHIME framework as a lens for analysis and discussion because it related well to previous use and the residents engaging with the project

experienced poor mental health and used substances. Additionally, the CHIME elements relate well to the needed conditions of not only recovery, but desistance and rehabilitation as will be discussed in this article.⁹

Ultimately, all residents who engaged described increased feelings and experiences of connectivity, hope, identity, meaning, and empowerment. It has given those involved an opportunity to take off the 'prisoner mask' and be more relaxed, more open, and creative, and in doing so they felt more human and reported enhanced well-being.



Understanding the connection between desistance, well-being and the use of art in prison

Desistance can be defined as a process of stopping criminal behaviour and includes theory and practice understandings of 'how and why people stop and refrain from offending' (p.95).¹⁰ The desistance journey

is not a linear one but one usually with a pattern of multiple relapses due to the 'pains of desistance'. The pains of desistance are described as the multiple challenges and needs that are faced in this difficult transition, commonly including substance use and poor mental health.¹¹

Central to much of the literature on desistance is the need for structural opportunities that provide

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6. Leamy, M., Bird, V., Le Boutillier, C., Williams, J. & Slade, M. (2011). Conceptual framework for personal recovery in mental health: systematic review and narrative synthesis, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 199(6), 445-52.
 7. Lases, M. N., Bruins, J., Scheepers, F. E., van Sambeek, N., Ng, F., Rennick-Egglestone, S., ... Castelein, S. (2024). Is personal recovery a transdiagnostic concept? Testing the fit of the CHIME framework using narrative experiences. *Journal of Mental Health*, 1-9.
 8. See Footnote 2: Atherton et al. (2022).
 9. See Footnotes 10-17; 23, 24
 10. Weaver, B., & McNeill, F. (2015). Lifelines: Desistance, Social Relations, and Reciprocity. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 42(1), 95-107.
 11. Nugent, B., and Schinkel, M. (2016). The Pains of Desistance. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 16(5) 568-584

'hooks for change' (p. 992) such as employment, education, and family relationships. These can support the development of new positive social identities that discard the old criminal identity and provide hope and increased self-esteem and confidence in a new self.^{12 13}

The cycle of returning to prison is a common struggle and the prison environment has its own challenges due to a culture of stigma, labelling, discrimination, and often a lack of positive opportunities.^{14 15} It is often difficult to feel positive and have hope and motivation for personal growth within prison settings.¹⁶ Ultimately, this contributes to negative justice capital where lack of resources, positive opportunities, and a stigmatising and discriminatory culture do not offer pro-social opportunities to develop positive social capital and rehabilitation towards desistance.¹⁷ This is important as it shapes successful desistance as not simply an individual's responsibility but also dependent on institutional and workforce provision. Therefore, appropriate and equitable access to social and justice capital opportunities is the responsibility of the institution and they should be accountable for providing such a culture and environment.^{18 19}

It is not surprising that positive well-being is central to desistance, as feeling healthy is a need for all people to be able to function effectively in daily life.^{20 21 22}

Well-being and accurately defining and measuring it is still subject to debate within the academic literature.²³ Michaelson, Mahony, and Schifferes offer a definition that 'Well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.' (p. 6)²⁴

Art, well-being, and desistance

Art can support positive physical and mental health and can be used as a preventative and promotional approach to well-being.²⁵ Art has also been found to support well-being when supporting people with neurodivergent conditions and in their recovery from substance use and mental health. Indeed, Fancourt and Finn found that art can support the development of social cohesion, positive social relationships, and reduce effects of trauma and abuse, and was particularly useful in engaging vulnerable and marginalised groups.²⁶

Art engagement within prison has been found to support the creation of positive communication and social skills, more positive social relationships with peers, between prison staff and residents, and with residents and their families.^{27 28 29 30} Art within prison settings also supports the development of positive self-

12. Giordano, P., Cernkovich, S., & Rudolph, J. (2002). Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation 1. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107 (4) 990-1064.
13. McNeill, F. (2018). Rehabilitation, corrections and society: the 2017 ICPA Distinguished Scholar Lecture. *Advancing Corrections Journal*, 5, 10-20
14. Jones, M. & Jones, D. (2021). Understanding Aspiration and Education Towards Desistance from Offending: The Role of Higher Education in Wales. *Journal of Prison Education and Re-entry*, 7(1), 23-49.
15. Best, D., Hamilton, S., Hall, L. & Bartels, L. (2021). 'Justice capital: A model for reconciling structural and agentic determinants of desistance', *Probation Journal*, 68(2), 206-223.
16. Dufour, I., Brassard, R., & Martel, J. (2015). 'An Integrative Approach to Apprehend Desistance'. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 59(5), 480-501.
17. Kemshall, H. & McCartan, K. (2022). Desistance, recovery, and justice capital: Putting it all together. HM Inspectorate of Probation: Academic Insights 2022/10. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/10/Academic-Insights-Kemshall-and-McCartan-Oct-22.pdf>
18. McCartan, K. (2022). Refining processes in policy and practice in working with people accused or convicted of a sexual offence, HM Inspectorate of Probation Academic Insights 2022/01. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/01/Academic-Insights-McCartan-v1.1.pdf>
19. Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service (2022). Offending behaviour programmes and interventions. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offending-behaviour-programmes-and-interventions>
20. Link, N.W., Ward, J.T., Stansfield, R. (2019). Consequences of mental and physical health for reentry and recidivism: Toward a health-based model of desistance. *Criminology*, 57, 544-573.
21. Wallace, D., & Wang, X. (2020). Does in-prison physical and mental health impact recidivism? *SSM - population health*, 11, 100569.
22. World Health Organisation. (2021). WHO remains firmly committed to the principles set out in the preamble to the Constitution. Online available at: <https://www.who.int/about/accountability/governance/constitution>
23. Jarden, A., & Roache, A. (2023). "What Is Wellbeing?" *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20(6), 5006.
24. Michaelson, J. Mahony, S. Schifferes, J. (2012) Measuring Wellbeing: A Guide for Practitioners; New Economics Foundation: London, UK, 2012. Available at: <https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/measuring-wellbeing.pdf>
25. See footnote 2: Atherton et al (2022).
26. Fancourt, D. & Finn, S. (2019). Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report 67 What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. World Health Organisation and Health Evidence Network.
27. Miles, A. & Strauss, P. (2008) The Academy: A Report on Outcomes for Participants, June 2006 - June 2008. Available at: <https://www.artsevidence.org.uk/evaluations/academy-report-outcomes-participants/>
28. Littman, D. M., & Sliva, S. M. (2020). Prison Arts Program Outcomes: A Scoping Review. *Journal of Correctional Education* (1974), 71(3), 54-82.
29. Menning, N. (2010). Singing with Conviction: New Zealand prisons and Māori populations. *International Journal of Community Music*, 3 (1), 111-120.
30. Palidofsky, M. (2010). If I Cry for You...Turning unspoken trauma into song and Inspiring Change: Final Report. 107 musical theatre, *International Journal of Community Music*, 3 (1), 121-128

esteem and self-confidence.³¹ All of these attributes support positive personal and pro-social development aligned to facilitating positive experiences and desistance, as outlined earlier.

Indeed, Atherton and colleagues found that their art project had significant positive effects on those who engaged with it in relation to well-being and supporting the desistance journey both within prison and within the community.³² The project found that engagement with art triggered feelings of hope and resilience and supported the building of trust and social skills. Another central element to the success and impact of the project was how the project was delivered by practitioners focused on developing respectful humanistic relationships that were non-judgmental, supportive and motivational, and where residents were called 'artists' to de-label and de-stigmatise.

Overview of the Creative Roots project

The Creative Roots Project aimed to provide a safe space for residents to take time out of their daily routine to engage in a range of mindfulness and creative activities. The main focus of the project was to provide opportunity to take part in printmaking, fine art and painting, photo journalism, and creative writing. There were additional activities which included an introduction to yoga, with a focus on mindfulness and breathing exercises. Art was also created from some of the HMP/YOI Parc prison staff and the artists that facilitated the project. Everyone who took part displayed their artwork in an exhibition inside HMP/YOI Parc in May 2023. Visitors to the exhibition were people that work in the Criminal Justice System such as prison officers, probation officers, and those that provide support services, other residents from HMP/YOI Parc, as well as the men who created the art. There was also an exhibition at the Newport Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre in June 2023 called 'Freedom and Constraints' which ran for ten days.

Methodology and approach to research

Approval for the research was gained via the Partnership In Research and Interventions Panel at HM Prison Parc and the HMPPS National Research Committee. The ethical guidelines used to inform this research were from the British Society of Criminology (2015).³³

One of the core ethical considerations for this research was the need to share power, and support real and non-tokenistic participation with a 'story-telling' approach so all involved felt listened to and heard. 'Pictorial Narrative Mapping' was used to capture the focus group narratives which are hand drawn art graphics of the discussions and stories being shared.³⁴

During the project a total of ten focus groups were facilitated; eight with 33 residents who engaged with the project, one with four people from the rehabilitation prison staff team, and one focus group with the Creative Roots project team which had six participants. Focus groups all lasted for between one hour and one hour thirty minutes and all were audio recorded. Notes were taken during all focus groups. A final set of focus group narratives were developed using the audio recordings and the focus group notes and these were then analysed.

Focus groups were informally structured primarily using the CHIME framework as a basis to discuss well-being and how the residents had experienced their well-being throughout the project.³⁵ Participants were also asked for their reflections on what had gone well with the project, and what they thought should be changed.

The approach to analyse and thematically code the focus groups was using deductive coding with the CHIME framework as the themes.³⁶ The CHIME framework has been used in research within prisons as a lens for analysing well-being and in relation to the experience of art education and learning.³⁷ Therefore, using a deductive approach with

It is often difficult to feel positive and have hope and motivation for personal growth within prison settings.

31. See Footnote 26: Littman & Sliva (2020).

32. See footnote 2: Atherton et al (2022).

33. British Society of Criminology. (2015). Statement of Ethics 2015. <https://www.britisoccrim.org/documents/BSCEthics2015.pdf>

34. Lapum, J., Liu, L., Hume, S., Wang, S., Nguyen, B. & Harding, K. (2015). Pictorial Narrative Mapping as a Qualitative Analytic Technique, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5).

35. See Footnote 6: Leamy et al. (2011).

36. Bingham, A. J. (2023). From Data Management to Actionable Findings: A Five-Phase Process of Qualitative Data Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22.

37. See Footnote 30: Atherton et al. (2022).

the CHIME themes as a lens for analysis seemed wholly appropriate.

Although a primarily deductive approach was used, the researcher was open to inductive themes presenting themselves within the focus groups. This open-minded grounded theory approach supported the inclusion of all narratives within the CHIME themes.³⁸

At the conclusion of the focus groups the audio recordings, focus group notes, and the narrative mapping illustrations were all reviewed and coded within the themes of the CHIME framework. This approach led to the immediate triangulation of the data analysis, which is something that has been identified as bringing about increased trustworthiness of the findings.³⁹



Analysis and discussion of how Creative Roots supported positive well-being

The conversations during the focus groups with residents who engaged with the project illustrated the challenging reality of living in prison. The narratives are

captured below within the CHIME model themes with illustrative support from the Narrative Map graphics. Focus group analysis from both the rehabilitation staff and the Creative Roots arts team are also captured to illustrate their experiences and observations.

38. Denscombe, M. (2014). *The Good Research Guide: For Small-scale Social Research Projects*. Fifth edition. Open University Press.

39. Glaw, X., Inder, K., Kable, A., & Hazelton, M. (2017). Visual Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Autophotography and Photo Elicitation Applied to Mental Health Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1-8.

Feeling connected and sense of community

All the residents who engaged believed that they felt greater connection to each other and the artists. The residents said the project had *'helped me make friends and feel comfortable'* and that we are *'all different but it's brought us all together.'* It was clear that positive social connections with peers and *'being with different people that are not from here is positive'* supported the residents to build *'positive relationships and I can be myself. I'm relaxed here.'* Almost all the residents stated that they *'feel respected here and treated as a human'* within the project and many stated they did not feel valued or respected in the prison most of the time.

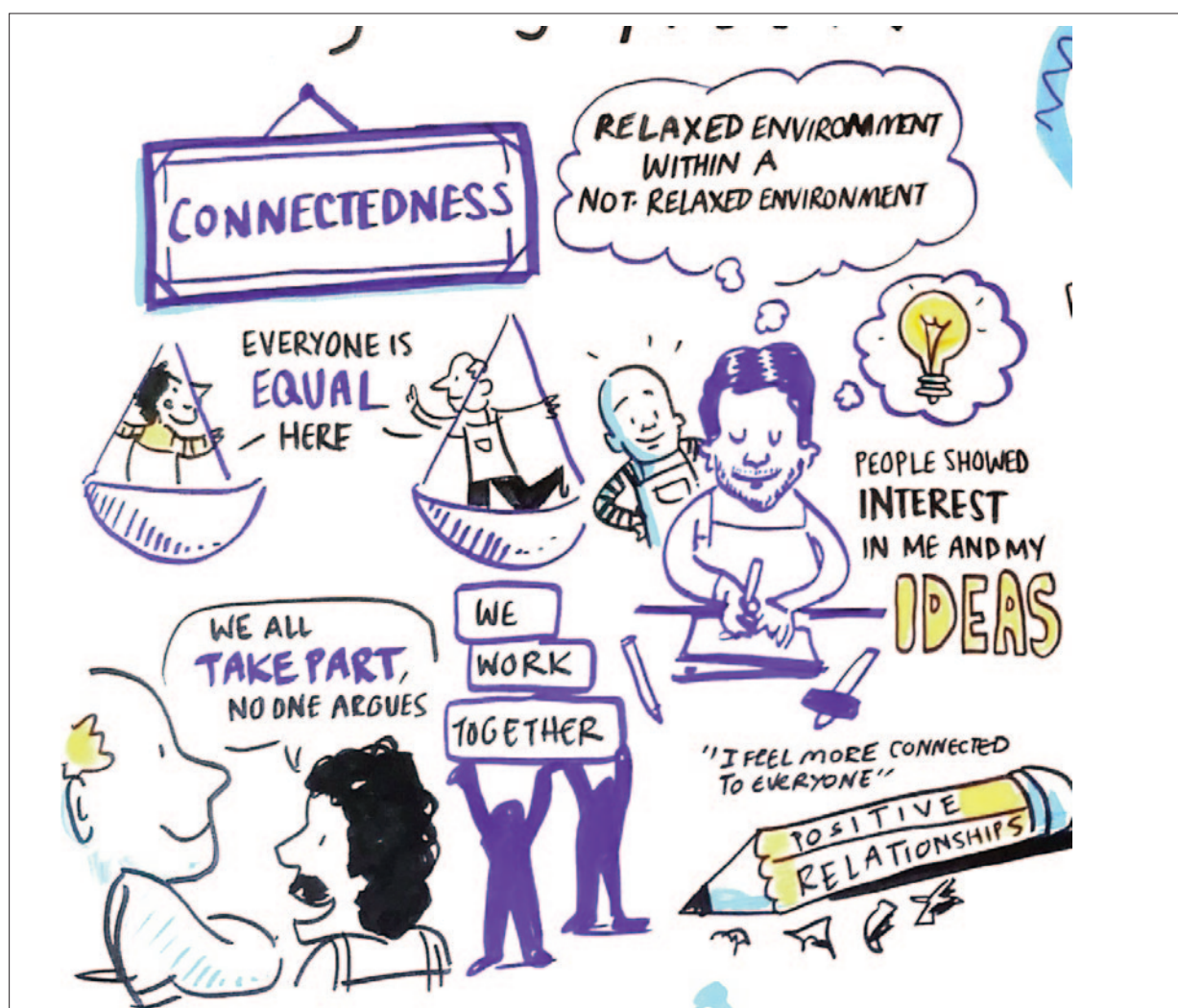
The experience of feeling part of a community and connected to others in meaningful and pro-social relationships with a shared purpose was enjoyed and appreciated. The relationships were based on mutual respect, support, and a sense of equality and non-judgment. The main theme is that the relationships developed were impactful because the residents felt they were being treated as fully human and stripped of the stigma of being seen as a criminal or prisoner.

The Creative Roots team felt the same and one artist said in relation to discussing the connectedness

and building of community during the project, *'boundaries blurred in some ways, and it was a strength and gave power to the project, the experience, it was real, we were real.'* Another nodded and reflected, *'Yes, creativity held the space and it is why they trusted us and our expertise and this allowed for deeper conversations, all whilst doing the art.'* The development of connection was further supported by the rehabilitation team with one member stating, *'a focus on positive relationships using an informal approach with credible and real practitioners that treated people that live in prison as fully human with respect and have genuine interest in them. This project did that and it clearly worked very well.'* Another member added that residents needed to be *'treated as real people, full humans, not criminals and then they can experience the possibilities of what they could become.'*

Weekly Hope and Optimism

The residents spoke of increased hope and optimism during and following the project with many explaining that they *'opened up and want to try new things'* and how because they had been *'treated*



differently, that's given me hope, hope we can be seen and treated differently to how we normally are' and that 'I don't feel like a prisoner and I feel that I won't always be.' Some residents said, *'I just feel more optimistic for the week'* and that *'it gave new meaning and hope to an otherwise quite negative world.'* These feelings created the motivation for positive behaviour change and *'I made sure I kept my behaviour tidy as I didn't want anyone to take this away from me.'* These perceptions were further supported by the rehabilitation staff and the Creative Roots artists; one artist said, 'well, they've all told us that it gives them hope from week to week, something to look forward to, they get nothing in here really. It can be a dark place to live.'

During the exhibition in prison many of the residents who participated in the project said they were *'buzzing this morning. I'm so happy, proud, and I feel full.'* The project had given the residents hope and optimism that they could achieve and complete a programme of activity and create art work; one person stated: *'Knowing I can and have done this when they tell you that you can't so often. Well look at me now!'*

Providing opportunities for engagement with art created hope in the immediacy and within the short-term duration of the project. Interestingly, it also provided hope and optimism for the longer term with a belief they could achieve in the future if they were committed.⁴⁰



40. See footnote 9: Giordano et al. (2002).

Developing elements of new identities and re-engaging with vulnerability

The way residents viewed themselves appeared to change throughout the project. Many spoke about how they could see themselves in more a positive light, 'I can be more myself here and I'm not just a criminal' others clearly enjoyed learning and stated, 'I'm treated as a pupil and as an equal not a prisoner.' Indeed, not being seen as a criminal and almost needing to act in a certain way in prison to survive is captured well by one man who said 'I can take my mask off once I'm here. I don't have to look tough or kind of, you know, you have to be a certain way out there. You can't be vulnerable out there.' For many, letting go of a prisoner identity was positive and many stated that the project had supported greater freedom and that 'It's about exploring and trying new things and not feeling embarrassed or defensive. I've just let my guard down.'

Some of those that engaged also spoke passionately about developing current identities as fathers, and before the project some men felt they could not do much with their children. However,

following learning about art techniques and creating their own art they felt they would 'be a better dad now and do this with my kids. I never thought I'd do this sort of thing. It's great.'

One Creative roots artists adds weight to the change in personal identities when they shared that, 'once they trusted us they really let go and dared to create, to really express themselves, it opened up doors I feel, in them, in how they saw themselves.'

The confidence of the participating residents also seemed to grow and some men started to develop new identities through acting in supporting roles with their peers. Some of the men felt that they could progress with a peer support role in the future as 'I've loved this, I've loved supporting people, I'd love to teach others.' So, for some, the experience of learning and supporting others created opportunity to develop and aspire to a new potential pro-social identity. The development of such positive identities are important to desistance as discussed earlier and illustrates some of the potential of art-based projects within prison and community settings.⁴¹



41. See footnote: 7, 9, 10, 11 & 13

Developing new meaning to self, socialisation, and better mental health

The project appeared to give greater meaning to the residents who took part and many felt that *'I'm bettering myself with this. It's become more than the art'*. Some of the men explained that they felt they had *'been challenged to think differently'* and that the yoga and mindfulness exercises *'helped my mental health. I'm less anxious. I can calm myself down with breathing.'* The development of breathing techniques supported the men to feel mentally more positive and one resident stated that the yoga and breathing practice has been *'like a health pill. I feel better about myself. I feel calmer. I feel more human. I feel alive.'* All residents who engaged spoke of how positive it was to do something new and that the creative process had ignited something in them and they were *'hungry to learn more and do other projects. It feels so good to*

learn and to do new things.' The want to engage with education has been found to be important to the desistance journey and the experiences of residents on this project support the wider literature.⁴²

The development of deeper meaning was also witnessed by the Creative roots team. An artist explained that *'we were told that during the project mental health was better with lower rates of self-harm and substance use. That hit hard. It made a difference to the pain they were feeling and how they dealt with it.'* Another artist agreed adding, *'so many of the men told me how the yogic breathing had helped them to calm down and be more present and be less reactive and a few even said it helped their ADHD and substance use.'* The rehabilitation team offered similar narratives and believed that *'it was so clear that many of the men had developed positive social relationships, and the breathing and yoga stuff just helped their mental health and self-control.'*



Greater Choice, Control, and Freedom

The experiences during the project contributed to residents describing they felt they had choice and control over their learning and so felt more committed to the learning. One resident openly talked of how anti-establishment he was, *'I had choice and respect so I didn't rebel. I had control over my learning'* whilst another stated *'We have choice here, I'm free to decide. I love that freedom.'*

Although linked to mental health the men who lived in prison talked of greater self-agency and control with their mental health. The learning related to breathing, meditation, yoga, and mindfulness and many stated that they found this useful for self-control and that *'the breathing and calming mind stuff. I've new skills to help my mental health and anger'* and another person agreed and said that *'It's helped my ADHD, slowed me down, helped my focus, my self-control.'*

42. See footnote 11: Jones & Jones (2021).

The Creative Roots team felt the project had real impact because, 'we treated them with respect and gave opportunity of choice and a process of decision making' and so 'we worked with them, not on them or to them, they were partners in learning, it was a different relationship to what they are used to. Dare I say they felt empowered.'

Educational opportunities offering choice and freedom as well as a therapeutic element can be useful in supporting well-being in prison. Residents who engaged with this project stated they felt more empowered and felt greater self-agency and control in their lives. These themes align well to the needed elements and outcomes for positive desistance where empowerment, choice, and self-agency are all central to successful desistance.⁴³ The Creative Roots team concluded that, 'The whole culture of lock them up and make it safe needs to be challenged and all people working in this space need to know that rehabilitation and supporting positive change doesn't work like that. There needs to be a change to focusing on positive

opportunities that offer social interactions, trying new things, talking in groups, and being treated with respect and as a full human and not just a criminal who is a risk.'

The rehabilitation team also supported the need for change, 'it's not beyond projects like this to change people's lives but it needs longevity to have any chance to do this. This was so positive, but it was a patch on a much bigger problem and issue and that is high quality education and learning opportunities are not consistently available in prison settings.' However, as one staff member reflected, 'the prison system was often seen as a blocker to such opportunities and that there is a real nervousness about supporting any type of freedom like with this project where residents could move around as it's easier to rule by lock and key and make things secure but that's not rehabilitation is it.' Another member agreed and suggested 'a complete rethink about what prisons should be doing to actually support rehabilitation because it currently isn't working.'



43. See Footnote 10: McNeill (2018).

Final Thoughts and Recommendations for Future Practice

Ultimately, everyone involved in the project felt that it supported an increase in well-being, greater connectivity, hope, identity, meaning, and empowerment. It gave those residents who engaged an opportunity to take off the 'prisoner mask' and be more relaxed, more open, and creative, and in doing so the experiences and outcomes were positive. It is not over-stating the impact of this project to propose that it provided excellent opportunities for personal growth and greater self-respect and hope and belief that change was possible.

Although this was a small-scale project in one prison it does have some useful learning and application to wider prison settings. To support positive well-being for residents in prison, and to support their desistance and rehabilitation journey, education provision should provide an environment that supports the development of informal learning. Such environments support people to feel respected, have choice, have opportunity for creativity and expression, feel safe, and ultimately feel they are being treated as humans within a community and not just criminals and prisoners. There were also powerful experiences from engaging with and then practising yoga and

mindfulness by the residents who took part in the project, with many explaining how they would use it to support their well-being, neurodiversity, and substance use.

This project also illustrated that art projects in prison can have powerful learning for artists and that it can support greater insights into the human condition, and challenge pre-conceived ideas of what a 'prisoner' is and acts like. Practitioners that work in prison also found the Creative Roots project and the approach to delivery powerful and provided clear learning on how art can support well-being of residents in prison. The approach of being respectful, genuine, with inclusive communication and the building of relationships were a foundation for supporting residents to feel hope, connected, and empowered to want to change. Ultimately the project supported the residents who engaged to feel fully human and to be 'humanised.'

Acknowledgements

My deepest thanks and gratitude to the inspiring, creative, and committed residents who engaged with this project and created such beautiful art and with who I had such powerful conversations. Art really can give the opportunity for meaningful connection, hope, choice, and freedom wherever it is supported.

Addiction, Correctional Programming, and Rehabilitation of Canada's Federally Incarcerated Indigenous Individuals: A Trauma-Informed Explanation of the Failure of 'Pathways Initiatives'

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Recently the UN announced that 'the percentage of indigenous people in conflict with the justice system is extreme and in many places those numbers may be on the rise.'¹ Canada has not been an exception to this trend. Indigenous people of Canada have been overrepresented in Canada's criminal justice system, particularly in its correctional system. The experience has been similar to Indigenous populations in the US, Australia, and New Zealand.² The extent of the problem, nevertheless, was noticed several years ago by the UN when it pointed to 'disproportionately high rate of incarceration of indigenous people...in federal and provincial prisons across Canada.'³ Canadian Human Rights Commission has also voiced its concern over this continuing problem.⁴ This has been embarrassing for a country that has been dubbed 'a leader in promoting the international human rights agenda' by Michelle Bachelet the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.⁵ Canada's Indigenous population is composed of three main groups: Inuit, First Nations, and Métis (those of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry).

Altogether, they make up only 5 per cent of Canada's population of 38 million. However, at present Indigenous men account for 32 per cent of all males in federal custody and Indigenous women for 50 per cent of all females in federal custody.⁶

Indigenous over-representation in Canada's federal prisons, which is known as the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), has been a multi-faceted problem. A key factor, however, has been their high rates of addiction (97 per cent for women indigenous prisoners, 84 per cent for men).⁷ Addiction, in turn, has been linked to a string of prison problems such as violence, overdose, and victimisation. Indigenous prisoners and nevertheless are provided with specific correctional programs to help them with their addiction. A key such program has been the 'Pathways Initiatives' (PI). It has been fundamentally about (re)introducing Indigenous persons to their traditional culture, which is believed by CSC to be of key importance in rehabilitating them ('healing'). The program, however, has been found to be ineffective by the Correctional Investigator (CI).⁸ He has stated that its overall impact on reducing over-representation is negligible. Why did the program fail?

1. The United Nations, UN Chronicle. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/discrimination-aboriginals-native-lands-canada#:~:text=With%20inflated%20proportions%20of%20their,may%20be%20on%20the%20rise>
2. Barmaki, R. (2023). Risky justice of the law: The impact of risk-assessment tools on Aboriginal offenders' overrepresentation in Canada's federal prisons. *The Prison Journal*, 103(1), 68-90.
3. The United Nations. (2015). Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Canada. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5645a16f4.html>.
4. Canadian Human Rights Commission. (2023). CHRC concerned by findings into overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prison. <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/resources/chrc-concerned-findings-overrepresentation-indigenous-people-prison>
5. The United Nation. (2019). Canada "a welcome ally" in advancing human rights around the world—Bachelet. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/06/canada-welcome-ally-advancing-human-rights-around-world-bachelet>
6. Public Safety Canada. (2023). Parliamentary committee notes: Overrepresentation (Indigenous offenders). <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/trnsprnc/brfng-mtrls/prlmntry-bndrs/20230720/12-en.aspx>
7. Zinger, I. (2023). *Office of the correctional investigator annual report 2022-2023*. <https://oci-bec.gc.ca/sites/default/files/2023-10/Annual%20Report%20EN%20%20C3%94%20C3%87%20C3%84%20Web.pdf>
8. An independent Ombudsman mandated by *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)* to investigate CSC to ensure prisoners' proper treatment. S/he reports to the Minister of Public Safety. Ivan Zinger is the current CI.

This paper provides a trauma-based answer to this question, i.e., by referencing the intergenerational traumatization of Indigenous people caused by the enduring racist and sexist colonial institutions and practices. The trauma has been indicated by social exclusion, cultural denigration, and a host of socioeconomic problems plaguing Indigenous communities (e.g. unemployment, criminality, addiction). These have often been the causes that have brought Indigenous people disproportionately into Canada's criminal justice system. The system has historically been a cornerstone of colonial settlement of Canada and traumatization of Indigenous communities.⁹ Based on this theory, this paper offers four reasons the failure of PI: CSC's (mis)construction of a pan-Indigenous culture, its inconsistent implementation of PI, its non-compliance with PI due to racism and incompatible beliefs, and its overriding focus on security and risk-assessment. I will begin the paper by providing an overview of PI, then I will outline the four reasons for its failure, and finally I will end the paper by providing some concluding remarks.

An Overview of PI

In addition to standard programs, Indigenous individuals receive special ones as mandated by CSC's legal framework - the CCRA. This is due to their specific needs caused by their traumatized lives. CSC's official approach to Indigenous persons is based on the 'Continuum of Care' model. The title is reflective of two interrelated phenomena: it is offered at all federal institutions to continually help them as they work their way out of the system, and it emphasizes the importance of a network of communal support for their eventual release. At the core of the model, however, is (re)introduction of individuals to their cultural heritage. It is believed by CSC to be the key ingredient in successful abandonment of addiction and related destructive behavior. Based on these ideas, nevertheless, two specific programs are offered to Indigenous persons that meet certain criteria: Healing Lodges and PI. PI was officially launched in 2001. The initial residential style PI units (ranges) were opened in 2002 at three medium-security institutions for males.

Indigenous people of Canada have been overrepresented in Canada's criminal justice system, particularly in its correctional system.

The aim was to provide a Healing-Lodge style environment (that are offered in communities) for Indigenous persons inside institutions. In 2006 PI expanded to seven units, and to 25 units in 2009-2010. The most recent (2022-2023) accounts for PI indicate: a budget of \$3.6M, which is 5 per cent of CSC's budget for all Indigenous initiatives; 350 beds spread across 22 federal institutions; and 260 participants and 70 on a waiting-list. Most beds (about 200) are offered in Prairie Provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) because they have the highest concentration of Indigenous prisoners.

PI is regulated by CSC's GL 702-1 — *Establishment and Operation of Pathways Initiatives*. It will be run by Indigenous Elders who are viewed as the repositories of traditional knowledge and indispensable for consultation about a variety of matters. It will be offered only to individuals who are addicts and demonstrate a genuine determination to rehabilitate. Essentially, the program aims to separate the selected individuals from the general population and to place them in designated ranges where a pro-healing environment devoid of substances exists. Mingling with the general population is viewed as a key source of forming problematic habits. Ideal participants are those 'who would stay no longer than one year prior to movement to lower security' (pp. 7).¹⁰

Participation in PI is a full-time commitment. To maintain their enrolment in PI participants must observe stringent requirements: abstinence from substances; no institutional charges; full engagement with Elders and the healing plan; participation in other programs deemed necessary; respectful behavior towards staff; and maintaining connection to community and forging a plan for the future. Participation in PI for males is based on the level of institutional security. *Maximum-security* institutions have a small number of beds allocated to preparing selected participants that are moving to medium-security PI. This is referred to as Pre-Pathways. *Medium-security* institutions are the main places where PI is most intensively delivered. They have a designated range for participants. *Minimum-security* institutions house individuals who have worked their way down from higher-security PIs and are

9. Barker, A. J., & Lowman, E. B. (2023). Settler colonialism and the criminalization of Indigenous people in Canada. In *Justice, Indigenous Peoples, and Canada: A History of Courage and Resilience* (pp. 37-60). Routledge.

10. CSC. (2013). GUIDELINES 702-1: *Establishment and operation of Pathways Initiatives*. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/lbrr/archives/cd-702-1-gl-eng.pdf>.

preparing for community release. Those doing life sentences, which in Canada is usually a maximum of 25 years of incarceration, have little chance of being selected for PI. Women's institutions, as multi security-level environments, offer PI along with other programs.

Although PI was officially launched more than twenty years ago, the effectiveness of it has come under scrutiny since 2014. This is because the CSC is a powerful organization with the tendency to retain power and control. As such, it tries to keep its operations sheltered from outsiders. Its only regular governmental appraiser is the CI. However, the continuing overrepresentation rate, and the money that is spent on prison programs, periodically prompts other oversight bodies to also assess its operations. During such times it does its best to portray everything as normal. For example, in her 2017 meeting with the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Anne Kelly, deputy commissioner of CSC at the time, briefly pointed to the modest impact of PI. She stated that individuals enrolled in PI were 'more likely to transfer to lower security' (P2).¹¹ In the CSC's annual reports about Indigenous corrections they have provided more optimistic results. In the CSC's 2019-2020 report, for example, it pointed to 'positive results' such as fewer positive urinalysis results and higher rates of discretionary releases (P26).¹² In the CSC's 2020-2021 report they stated that 47.4 per cent of those who participated in PI received parole, and another 52.6 per cent were transferred to a lower security prison.¹³ Similar upbeat results were reported by CSC's studies in

The system has historically been a cornerstone of colonial settlement of Canada and traumatization of Indigenous communities.

2022 and 2023.¹⁴ This information was gradually provided by CSC in response to the Office of Auditor General's¹⁵ recommendation in 2016 that it should examine the extent of the effectiveness of PI.¹⁶

However, CSC's optimistic results have been doubted by the Auditor General, CI, and Indigenous Elders and prisoners. Auditor General's 2016 and 2017 reports contained unflattering references to PI. The 2016 report stated that Indigenous individuals had not had timely access to PI beds, that CSC had not examined if the existing number of beds were adequate to meet their needs, and that prison caseworkers had not documented the impact of PI on prisoners' successful reintegration into the community.¹⁷ The 2017

report, which was produced with specific reference to CSC's female prisoners, also pointed to the inadequate and uneven provision of PI in female institutions.¹⁸ Next to these reports have been evaluations provided in the CI's annual reports. Three of these reports (2014-2015, 2017-2018, and 2022-2023) contain references to PI. The findings of these reports, however, have been contrary to CSC's sanguine statements. According to the latest report by CI, no independent body has systematically evaluated the program: 'there has been very

little external scrutiny on how it operates, who it serves, or even whether it works' (pp. 100).¹⁹ This is despite GL 702-1 mandate that PI should be 'reviewed on a regular basis by the Aboriginal Initiatives Directorate at National Headquarters'.²⁰ Despite the CSC's assertions of positive results, the authors research identifies failings with the PI system, for the following four fundamental reasons.

11. Parliament of Canada. (2017). *Minutes of proceedings of the standing committee on public safety and national security (Number 81 / 1st Session / 42nd Parliament)*. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/SECU/Evidence/EV9205343/SECUEV81-E.PDF>
12. CSC. (2020). Indigenous corrections accountability framework (ICAF) annual report 2019-2020. <https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/002/003/092/002003-0009-en.pdf>
13. CSC. (2021). *Indigenous corrections accountability framework (ICAF) annual report 2020-2021*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/correctional-service/corporate/library/indigenous/indigenous-accountability-report-2020-2021.html>
14. CSC. (2022). *2021-2022 Citizen advisory committees annual report*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/correctional-service/corporate/library/citizen-advisory-committees/annual-reports/2021-2022.html>; CSC. (2023). *Impacts of Indigenous intervention centre participation on institutional behaviour (2023 N° R-452)*. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2023/scc-csc/PS83-3-452-eng.pdf
15. Is appointed by Parliament of Canada and audits operations and expenditures of federal agencies.
16. CSC. (2016). *Action plan to address the recommendations of the OAG performance audit of preparing Indigenous offenders for release*. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/PACP/WebDoc/WD8148750/PACP-Sessional-ActionPlans/2016-Fall-OAG/Rpt03/37-CorrectionalServiceCanada-e.pdf>
17. Office of the Auditor General of Canada. (2016). REPORT 3: *Preparing Indigenous offenders for release— Correctional Service Canada*. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/bvg-oag/FA1-2016-2-2-eng.pdf
18. Office of the Auditor General of Canada. (2017). *Report 5: Preparing women offenders for release—Correctional Service Canada*. https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201711_05_e_42670.html
19. See footnote 7: Zinger, I. (2023b).
20. CSC. (2013). Commissioner's directive 702-1: Establishment and operation of Pathways Initiatives. <https://www.canada.ca/en/correctional-service/corporate/acts-regulations-policy/commissioners-directives/guidelines/702-1.html>

CSC's (Mis)construction of a Pan-Indigenous Culture

Although PI was officially launched more than two decades ago, its exact purpose remains unclear. Over the years CSC has indicated different goals for it. The confusion surrounding the goal of the program reflects CSC's inability to clearly define Indigenous culture and to measure its effectiveness in rehabilitating prisoners. This has to do with the diversity of Indigenous communities and beliefs. Métis culture is a fusion of 'First Nations (Cree, Saulteaux, Dene and Dakota), French-Canadian (*Canadien*), and European (Scots/Orkney)' cultural elements.²¹ A key *Canadien* influence has been a variation of Catholicism that is rooted in veneration of the Virgin and based on pilgrimages such as those to St. Laurent de Grandin. Inuit live in four Arctic regions: Inuvialuit, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Nunavut. Despite having shared cultural principles, however, these regions have their own intra-cultural differences and differences with other Indigenous communities.²² Furthermore, because of European settlers' missionary work, over the years many of them have converted to Christianity. First Nations, however, present the most formidable barrier with regards to defining Indigenous culture: 'There are over 630 First Nations communities in Canada, which represent more than 50 Nations and 50 Indigenous languages'.²³ This prohibits even the provision of a unitary representation of First Nations cultural traditions let alone 'Indigenous' in general.

CSC's approach, therefore, has been to construct a 'pan-Indigenous' culture to satisfy its bureaucratic need for a standardized approach to all cases (pp. 5).²⁴ Its presentation of Indigenous culture, within the context of PI at least, is limited to the following statements:

- ❑ 'Pathways is an Elder-driven intensive healing initiative based on the Indigenous Medicine Wheel, also known as the Four Directions Medicine Wheel'.

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- ❑ 'The Medicine Wheel represents the cycle of life from conception to return to the spirit world. It reflects that cultural teachings and ceremonies are: core aspects of Indigenous identity; critical to the healing process'.
- ❑ 'The Medicine Wheel...helps individuals achieve balance in emotional, mental, spiritual and physical realms to measure overall wellness day-to-day. The symbol of the circle holds an important place with regard to Indigenous spiritual values. Indigenous people pass culture down from generation to generation orally rather than in writing. The importance of the circle has always been manifested in art and ceremonies. Men and women nourish themselves and move in the world in a continual circular or spiral-like motion. This circle is often referred to as the medicine wheel. Human beings live, breathe and move by putting the circle into motion. Following these precepts, each person can one day learn to live in communion with their environment.'²⁵

There are several important problems with this construct. Firstly, it is mainly based on some of the cultural beliefs of only one Indigenous Nation: the Cree. Secondly, it is an incomplete depiction of those beliefs.²⁶ Thirdly, it helps to ignore the necessity of finding the appropriate Elders that culturally and linguistically match diverse groups of individuals. Consequently, often culturally mismatched Elders and prisoners encounter and communicate in English, which results in miscommunication of fundamental ideas. These problems, nevertheless, result in the ineffectiveness of PI to the point of even producing its vaguely defined goals.

CSC's Inconsistent Implementation of PI

There is a second reason for the ineffectiveness of PI. The CI has attributed PI's 'positive' results (as proclaimed by CSC) to the fact that only individuals

21. Indigenous Saskatchewan Encyclopedia.

https://teaching.usask.ca/indigenoussk/import/metis_culture_and_language.php#:~:text=Traditionally%2C%20the%20M%C3%A9tis%20were%20very,resent%20day%20Duck%20Lake

22. Searles, E. (2008). Inuit identity in the Canadian Arctic. *Ethnology*, 47(4): 239-255.

23. Government of Canada. (2024c). *First Nations*. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013791/1535470872302>

24. See footnote 7: Zinger, I. (2023b).

25. CSC. (2024b). *Correctional programming for Indigenous offenders*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/correctional-service/programs/offenders/indigenous-corrections/correctional-programming-indigenous-offenders.html>

26. Barmaki, R. (2022). On the incompatibility of 'western' and Aboriginal views of restorative justice in Canada: A claim based on an understanding of the Cree justice. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 25(1): 24-55.

who have had minimal needs for improvement have usually been admitted to it. These individuals could have easily been released from prison or transferred to the custody of an Indigenous community (as recommended by s81 of CCRA). This has been, nevertheless, attributed to CSC's high bar for admission and continued enrolment in the program. This has in fact been a key source of exclusion of many individuals with real problems who have wished to participate in the program. An important consequence of this, has been that access to PI has effectively been transformed from a legal 'right' (of all Indigenous individuals to preferential treatment due to their traumatic history) to a 'privilege' (that has been granted at the discretion of correctional staff). Based on this, the CI found that PI was in fact accommodating too small of a population to make any tangible difference. The problem has been exacerbated by the small number of beds allocated to PI to begin with. In its latest report Canada's Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights has demanded that CSC 'increase the number of spaces in the Pathways program to ensure all eligible federally sentenced Indigenous Peoples may participate' (pp. 27).²⁷ This demand is in line with the legal rights of federally incarcerated Indigenous persons to have their traumatic pasts addressed by CSC through specific programs.

The CSC's discretionary power to choose PI's participants has given rise to another difficulty. Despite stringent admission rules, often PI cells are given to unsuitable individuals to either deal with the problem of overcrowding or to get rid of troublesome prisoners. Either way, such prisoners, who are there against their own wishes and have no intention of rehabilitation, are usually a major source of disruption for PI activities. A major type of disruptive activity is drug-use, which vitiates a key element of PI and is in contravention of CSC's 'zero-tolerance' (for drug-use) admission policy to it. There has also been the problem of prisoners' opportunistic behavior to join PI. Some Indigenous persons try to join because of the perceived advantages of it such as having an easier time in a less crowded prison range or to increase their chances of early release. These prisoners, neither have any intention to rehabilitate nor believe in Indigenous

culture. Sometimes even non-Indigenous persons feign having Indigenous ancestry to access the program for its perceived benefits. This is sometimes possible given that claims of Indigenous identity in Canada is mainly on self-report basis. Due to these problems in CSC there has been a significant degree of inconsistency in the implementation PI.

CSC's Non-Compliance with PI Due to Racism and Incompatible Beliefs

The third reason for the ineffectiveness of PI is most correctional institutions are non-compliant with its key elements and do not fully recognize prisoners' healing efforts. There are two main causes for this:

Standard
procedures of CSC,
therefore, appear to
Elders only as
ancillaries of
continuing colonial
methods of
destroying
Indigenous
communities.

institutional racism, and incompatibility of CSC's and Indigenous beliefs. CSC is still imbued with a racist culture, which often results in dislike for Indigenous prisoners. CSC staff have been known to show their dislike for them by mistreating them. Prisoners' objections to staff's racist mistreatment are often countered in a variety of subtle ways by the staff such as filing institutional charges of 'verbal assaults' against them. Sometimes the dislike is expressed subtly through filing complaints about various aspects of Indigenous practices. For example, at a particular penitentiary the CSC staff

complained—under section 127.1 (1) of Canada's *Labour Code*—about the Indigenous practice of smudging as 'second hand smoke'. CSC's efforts to eradicate institutional racism have not been entirely successful. This has been particularly true with reference to PI staff. The federal government has mostly neglected the issue. The only reference to PI in Government of Canada's 2024-2025 Departmental Plan for CSC cautiously points to this problem by indicating that 'CSC will also complete the first round of new training for the Pathways initiative'.²⁸ The 2023-2024 Departmental Plan made no reference to PI at all. Neither did the Plans for the four years preceding that. Indigenous prisoners have also complained that they have been disrespected by having been denied their own traditional food and having been forced to eat CSC's Western food.²⁹ This is in line with their broader

27. The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights. (2021). *The human rights of federally-sentenced persons* (2021). https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/432/RIDR/reports/2021-06-16_FederallySentenced_e.pdf

28. Government of Canada. (2024a). 2024 - 2025 departmental plan. <https://www.canada.ca/en/correctional-service/corporate/transparency/reporting/departmental-plan/2024-2025.html>

view of the correctional system as a tool at the service of Canada's enduring colonial project of eradication of Indigenous culture.³⁰

CSC staff also depreciate Elders who run PIs. This is because Elders tend to engage in decolonizing work that challenge CSC's assumptions and methods. For instance, Elders' view of Indigenous individuals contradicts CSC's view of them. The latter views them as criminals who deserve punishment. The former views them as oppressed communities of brothers and sisters who have been ruinously severed from their culture and need to be integrated back into it. Put differently, the CSC's view is retributive while that of Elders' is restorative.³¹ Such communal view is deemed by Elders to be of utmost importance for reforming Indigenous prisoners. This is because while institutionalized they live by an antisocial 'inmate code' that promotes their selfish wishes.³² Standard procedures of CSC, therefore, appear to Elders only as ancillaries of continuing colonial methods of destroying Indigenous communities. Given their overall anti-CSC sentiments, furthermore, Elders are often ignored by CSC staff. This is in fact in contravention of CCRA, which mandates that CSC is to consult Elders when providing correctional services to Indigenous individuals. Moreover, in line with the bureaucratic demands of CSC, Elders are often expected to write formal reports about their progress with prisoners. Such reports often require the use of special forms, technical terms, or complex computer software that they are not familiar with. As a result, they find themselves allocating the time that they should give to interacting with prisoners to time-consuming administrative duties such as report writing. These trends have caused worries among concerned third parties such as the Criminal Justice Section of the Canadian Bar Association. It has complained that it remains unclear who exactly is responsible for recording Pathways progress in casework files and if Elders' reviews are actually included in the Offender Management System.³³ Additionally, Elders work as contract employees under precarious work conditions such as low pay, low job security, and lack of institutional care. These often

negatively impact their morale and quality of their performance. Due to the aforementioned obstacles, and contrary to the official mandate of CSC, in 2022-2023 only one PI program was headed by an Elder. Under such circumstances (i.e., where an Elder is lacking) participants of a PI program are expected to fill their time with other standard CSC programs. However, frequently the space in such programs is limited and Indigenous persons end up with ample idle time that they spend on unproductive pursuits.

A further reason for the undermining of the Elders by many of the CSC's staff has been their belief in the superior viability of standard correctional knowledge (e.g., programs and risk-assessment) compared to those of Indigenous people. This is because the former has been viewed to be based on scientific principles while the latter has been denied such status. Scientific knowledge has been a part of Canada's modern correctional system since its gradual emergence in mid-nineteenth century. Currently, the use of science is an unquestioned part of CSC. In fact, it has a 'Research Branch' that conducts 'applied social science research' in support of its correctional operations.³⁴ Four decades ago CSC first allowed Indigenous practices inside its institutions. This was in line with Canada's longstanding colonial views that had dismissed Indigenous culture as primitive beliefs that had to be replaced by European culture (a task for which the infamous Residential Schools had been designed). It took a hunger strike by two Indigenous prisoners in 1983 to create enough public attention for Indigenous practices to be allowed by CSC.³⁵ The hunger-strike was in line with the Indigenous prisoners' protests since the 1960s to achieve freedom from colonial rule.³⁶ Programs based on Indigenous culture, nevertheless, were not officially mandated until 1992 by CCRA and in 1995 by the Commissioner's Directive (CD) 702. These events point to a deeper problem that CSC is unable to resolve. It is the problem of incompatibility of its 'scientific' knowledge and that of the Indigenous knowledge which is fundamentally 'traditional'. This issue is of utmost significance when it comes to creating programs based on Indigenous beliefs, because such

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29. Wilson, A. (2023). Unpacking the prison food paradox: Formerly incarcerated individuals' experience of food within federal prisons in Canada. *Studies in Social Justice*, 17(2): 280-305.
 30. Venczel, E. (2023). Settler colonialism and prisons: A comparative case study of Canada, Palestine, and Australia. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 11: 1-20.
 31. Quantick, R. (2018). Elders and Indigenous healing in the correctional service of Canada: A story of relational dissonance, sacred doughnuts, and drive-thru expectations. In *Looking Back and Living Forward: Indigenous Research Rising Up* (pp. 231-244). Brill.
 32. McKendy, L., & Ricciardelli, R. (2021). The pains of imprisonment and contemporary prisoner culture in Canada. *The Prison Journal*, 101(5): 528-552.
 33. The Canadian Bar Association. (2023). Make pathways for Indigenous inmates more accessible. <https://www.cba.org/Our-Work/cbainfluence/Submissions/2023/August/Make-Pathways-for-Indigenous-inmates-more-accessib>
 34. CSC. (2024c). Research at CSC. <https://www.canada.ca/en/correctional-service/corporate/research.html>
 35. Ewert, J. (2022). Taming the moose: The colonialism of Canada's subordinated Indigenous prisoner population in the 21st century. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 30(2): 54-63.
 36. Rymhs, D. (2012). Word warriors: Indigenous political consciousness in prison. In *Cultural grammars of nation, diaspora, and indigeneity in Canada* (pp. 229-244). Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

programs often try to combine elements from incompatible paradigms. A key example, which is related to PI, is combining incompatible notions of 'progress' (as held by CSC) and 'healing' (as held by Indigenous communities).

In corrections prisoners' 'progress' denotes a linear attainment of certain competencies (cognitive, moral, educational, etc.) within a limited timeframe. Examples are avoiding violence, learning anger-management techniques, or obtaining a high-school diploma. Such virtues, are expected to be gained through personal efforts and participation in various programs. Those with high levels of such competencies are estimated to be of lower 'risk' for criminality. Such estimations are believed to be impartial and accurate because they are produced by risk-assessment scales that are believed to be 'scientific', i.e., 'empirically based, objective, transparent, and reliable' (pp. 4).³⁷ As such, these scales are the 'established markers of progress and rehabilitation for decision-makers' (pp. 104).³⁸ This is regardless of the controversial nature of such scales and claims. The scientific measurability of prisoners' 'progress', nonetheless, is essential to CSC for two main factors. Firstly, as an accepted scientific measure, it is used as a legitimate basis for various decisions made about prisoners. As required by law, officials must have legitimate evidential bases for their decisions. Appeals to 'science' does the trick as it is believed to be objective and reliable. Secondly, demonstrating prisoners' improvement is essential if officials and staff are to protect their interconnected personal and institutional interests (e.g., securing positions or bigger budgets).

'Healing' however, is a traditional Indigenous idea that represents a slow, open-ended movement along a nonlinear path that is marked by trial-and-error (a 'journey'). At its core it is a dialectic of an 'awareness' and a 'practice'. As an 'awareness' it results from (re)learning Indigenous knowledge. As such, it is the gradual illumination that a 'healthy' life takes place

when various needs of individuals are adequately and harmoniously met. Put differently, it is the awareness that a 'balanced' life (no deprivation, no excess) is key to a good life. As a 'practice' it is the actuality of providing individuals with what they need to live good lives (e.g., adequate food, shelter, jobs). As such, the healing journey requires time, guidance, resources. It may also take different amounts of time for different individuals to complete it. There are no actuarial markers of its occurrence or completion within Indigenous knowledge. For each individual it remains an 'internalized selfawareness' that they reach at their own pace (pp. 231).³⁹ A concept of 'health', furthermore, represents a more comprehensive definition of health than CCRA's narrowly conceived

notion of 'essential health'.⁴⁰ Based on the biomedical paradigm, it is a conceptualization of 'health' as absence of physical disease brought about by curing a diseased person (a patient) by responding to his/her immediate needs. These needs are defined even more narrowly, and arbitrarily, by various CSC institutions. These definitions exclude socioeconomic factors that are fundamental to the health of individuals.⁴¹ It basically amounts to 'prescribing an assortment of pills' for everything.⁴²

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CSC's Overriding Focus on Security and Risk-Assessment

There is a fourth reason for the ineffectiveness of PI. Given their penchant for security, CSC staff regularly report that the progress made on healing plans does not translate into CSC's risk-assessment tools. The institutional tendency, therefore, is to redefine and deliver Indigenous practices in line with the standard correctional programs while keeping the façade of Indigenous programming. A subtle, yet key aspect of this process is that access to such programs, like all correctional programs, becomes a matter of 'privilege' rather than 'right'. This means that Indigenous persons should be able to show that they have done enough

37. Gutierrez, L., Helmus, L.M., & Hanson, R.K. (2017). *What we know and don't know about risk assessment with offenders of Indigenous heritage*. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2017-r009/2017-r009-en.pdf>

38. See footnote 7: Zinger, I. (2023b).

39. See footnote 45: Quantick, R. (2018).

40. section 86[1a]

41. Scallan, E., Lancaster, K., & Kouyoumdjian, F. (2021). The "problem" of health: An analysis of health care provision in Canada's federal prisons. *Health*, 25(1): 3–20.

42. Anonymous Prisoner 19. (2017). Drumheller institution. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 26(1-2): 189-189.

rehabilitative work to have earned the permission to participate in these programs. Furthermore, in case of a scheduling conflict between PI and standard programs, which is often, the former is usually given less priority and put aside. As a result, PI participants often face a dilemma: they must choose between engagement in healing (for personal improvement) and participation in standard correctional programs (to improve their chances for early release). They are, after all, subject to periodic Security Classification Reviews (SCR) in which participation in PI plays little to no role. Oddly enough, this is in contravention of Commissioner's *Directive (CD) 710-6 — Review of Inmate Security Classification* that recommends that every six months there should be a SCR for each PI participant. However, the *Directive* is often carelessly carried out given CSC's staff's large caseloads and their dismissal of PI's importance as a legitimate program. This is especially so in the case of PI-staff who are expected to write more reports to ensure that participants make rapid progress in line with the initiative's guidelines. In addition to the inadequate job done by the staff on Indigenous prisoners' SCRs there is a further problem. Such evaluations are based on risk-assessment tools developed for non-Indigenous individuals (mostly heterosexual, Caucasian males). Government of Canada's 2024-2025 Departmental Plan on CSC indicates that CSC has for the first time asked University of Regina to develop a risk-assessment tool specifically for Indigenous individuals. However, there is a good

chance that the process will not be sufficient to cover the variety of Indigenous cultures.

In conclusion, this paper discussed four reasons for the failure of PI: CSC's formulation of a pan-Indigenous culture, its uneven operation of PI, its deviation from PI's principles due to prejudice and discordant beliefs, and its concentration on security. CSC should deal with these problems if it is to improve the effectiveness of PI. Firstly, it should offer a variety of PI programs that consider Indigenous communities' cultural differences. Secondly, it should try to increase the consistency of the implementation of the program across its institutions. It could do this by providing more PI ranges, assigning more suitable individuals to them, and increasing the number of its trained staff. Thirdly, it should address the lingering racism permeating its institutions. Indigenous people and their cultures should be treated with respect. CSC should also end furtive use of official procedures and technicalities by the staff for exercising racism. Additionally, it should ensure its staff's compliance with various elements of PI. This includes its underlying cultural beliefs and Elders' activities. Fourthly, it should harmonize its security concerns with the rehabilitative aims of PI. This would also require harmonizing its 'scientific' ideas and practices with Indigenous 'traditional' beliefs. Future research can investigate CSC's efforts in these regards. These suggestions may be of significance to other countries that have high rates of incarcerated Indigenous populations.

The confines of 'Invisible Walls': An exploration of life sentenced men in an open prison

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Open prisons in the United Kingdom serve as a critical component in the decompression phase of a life-sentenced prisoner's journey towards reintegration into society. These institutions provide a transitional environment that aims to ease the shift from prison to freedom. The study that this paper is based on highlights the unique challenges encountered by men serving mandatory life sentences within the open estate. It delves into the profound implications of such sentences on cognitive functioning and psychological well-being, alongside the coping mechanisms that prisoners adopt to navigate these challenges. Furthermore, the study examines the current interventions designed to facilitate reintegration and offers recommendations to enhance these practices. The findings highlight the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of the psychological, social, and institutional dynamics that underpin the successful transition and reintegration of life-sentenced prisoners. This understanding is crucial for developing effective strategies that support these individuals in their journey back into society.

The Open Estate

The open estate is designed to aid the decompression process and promote reintegration. 'Open prisons are designed to be less restrictive, providing inmates with more freedom and opportunities to engage in work, education, and

community activities. Their role is to facilitate the reintegration process by helping prisoners develop skills and social connections that are crucial for successful re-entry into society.'¹

The Study

The prison population serving lengthy sentences in prisons within England and Wales has exhibited a consistent upward trend over the course of the twenty-first century. This trend is particularly evident among life-sentenced prisoners with an increase in the number of individuals sentenced to life imprisonment, rising from 5,146 in June 2002 to 7,406 in September 2024.²

The study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the barriers or 'Invisible Walls' individuals face in the first stages of the resettlement part of their life sentence. More specifically, the study involves evaluating whether open prisons have powerful enough reintegration (decompression) practices that can counter prolonged processes of institutionalisation (compression). The study's thematic analysis delves into the prisoners' experiences revealing the challenges and support mechanisms within the open estate.

The study involves 11 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with life-sentenced prisoners at a Category D prison in England. The participants varied in sentence length and time spent in open conditions. The table below shows the participants sentence length, time in open conditions, age and relationship status. None of the participants were recall prisoners.

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1. Leverentz, A., Chen, E., & Christian, J. (2020). *Beyond Recidivism: New Approaches to Research on Prisoner Re-entry and Reintegration*. NYU Press.
 2. Ministry of Justice (2024). <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2024/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2024>.

Sentence Length		Time in Open Conditions		Age	Relationship Status	
10 years or less	0	Less than 6 months	4	25-35	2 Single	8
10-15 years	4	6-12 months	0	36-45	3 Married/Partner	1
16-21 years	7	12-24 months	3	46-55	1 Divorced	1
22+ years	0	24-36 months	2	56-65	4 Separated	1
		36+ months	2	66+	1 Widowed	0

An inductive thematic method was used to identify emergent themes and codes within the data. The process of coding was far from linear and further analysis of the data was needed as new concepts were identified. This method enables participants with direct knowledge to share their personal experiences.

Themes

During the interviews, four main areas were investigated: Employment, Relationships, Environment and Progression. Analysis of the data identified four main themes: Belonging, Institutionalisation, Normalisation and Decompression.

Belonging is an important theme as life-sentenced men feel accepted in a specific environment and/or within a specific group. However, during the transition process a prisoner's sense of belonging shifts from the prison culture to society.

Institutionalisation refers to the adaptation and dependency to prison routines and culture. Institutionalisation is a complex process, with some prisoners exhibiting adaptation and others experiencing difficulties in adjusting to the less restrictive environment.

Normalisation maintains that prisoners are entitled to all their fundamental human rights, including the provision of adequate healthcare, employment opportunities, and the ability to maintain communication with their family.³ Individual normalisation refers to the fulfilment of many social responsibilities in society, such as being a father, son, or partner. Normalisation emphasises that prisoners can still complete these tasks while they are in prison.

Decompression is the gradual reduction of prison rituals and rules for a prisoner who has been in a highly volatile/pressurised environment. The process of

decompression is a critical aspect of the transition period for prisoners to have time to develop strategies to facilitate successful reintegration.

Findings Discussions

The findings show that there is a distinct separation between life sentences and determinate sentences in this open prison. There is a designated area for housing individuals serving lengthy or indeterminate sentences. The life-sentenced prisoners frequently characterised the 'determinate' prisoners as 'troublesome' and devoid of any incentives to behave. If a determinate sentenced prisoner were returned to closed conditions, they would still be released on their Conditional Release Date (CRD). However, the consequences for life sentence

prisoners would be to go through the time-consuming parole process again.

As part of the transformative process, those who wanted to change actively distanced themselves from prisoners who exhibited anti-social behaviour due to the fear of being negatively influenced or tarnished. This distance facilitated space for the development of a socially beneficial identity. What is more, 'mandatory lifers need to negotiate their identities against a series of 'push-pull' forces which either constrain or enable the development of pro-social identities (the role of the family, employment, consumer culture, and supervision all play a significant role)'.⁴

Nonetheless, an underlying sense of fear persisted among life-sentenced prisoners. Some prisoners described being subtly influenced by power dynamics with staff members. There was an implicit threat of being transferred back to the closed estate if they did not adhere to rules and regulations.

The lifer community appeared highly cohesive due to their shared experiences, which distinguished them from the rest of the prison population.

3. Engbo, H. (2017). 'Normalisation in Nordic Prisons—From a Prison Governor's Perspective.' In: Scharff Smith, P., Ugelvik, T. (eds) *Scandinavian Penal History, Culture and Prison Practice*. Palgrave Studies in Prisons and Penology. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

4. Rusu, D. (2022). 'Life beyond murder: exploring the identity reconstruction of mandatory lifers after release'. Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences. Birmingham City University.

Belonging

The lifer community appeared highly cohesive due to their shared experiences, which distinguished them from the rest of the prison population. This sense of community appears to follow the prisoners throughout their sentence, with the prisoners describing their own 'social groups' within the prison, be this in a dispersal (Category A), Category B, C or the open estate. The transition to the open estate undeniably emphasised the feeling of belonging for life-sentenced men, although the prisoners exhibited varying responses to this transition. They still felt a part of and belonging to the lifer community although they no longer 'belong' to their previous prison culture. Initially, this recognition can be uncomfortable for some of the men, as their previous support network is removed. Furthermore, open prisons do not have the same living conditions as the closed estate such as cooking facilities or an in cell telephone. Mike states:

Yeah. And you've had, like, your comforts around you, like you've had all the people that you could go to at the end of the day and talk about your anxiety and all that kind of stuff. (Mike)

However, it was clear that the established lifer community within the open prison wanted to take new lifers under their wings, show them 'the ropes' (Shem) and offer that support which they undoubtedly felt was missing or limited when they arrived. Although similar to the closed estate with specialised wings for longer-term prisoners, the open estate seems to have a stronger sense of community. Their strong affiliation with the 'lifer community' provides them with support and assistance once they are established. Shem describes when he first arrived. He was agitated that he was not recognised as a lifer by staff:

We're different. Our mind sets are different. We've been in a long time. We have a lot more to lose. We have a lot more at stake. Therefore, that makes us different, and I feel that we should be treated appropriately. And I wasn't. I was just with the rest of the bus. Treated exactly the same, spoke to exactly the

same and I didn't like that. I thought you really don't understand. I've just done 17 and a half years behind the door and now you're talking to me and treating me like I'm doing three months. (Shem)

There is a transition from 'belonging' to the lifer community to a sense of belonging with society. The transition to the open estate and then society induces a certain level of choice as part of the process of 'responsibilisation' the prisoner is exposed to a number of vulnerabilities. The act of exploring potential options: such as education, employment location or accommodation, even if they are limited, can elicit emotions of unease and a sense of lacking control.⁵

Individuals who had resided in the open estate for a longer duration had evidently begun the process of integrating into society and were actively cultivating their familial connections, through access to ROTLs, including overnight stays with family members. They had transitioned their sense of belonging towards their family as opposed to that of the prison culture and 'lifer community'. In addition, there is a shift from the importance of material possessions in their cells to a transition to the importance of life outside of prison.

You begin to kind of detach yourself from this whole idea of being in closed conditions and you do actually start to think about going forward...obviously getting a job building relationships sort of things (George)

George explains his journey:

I just feel like its closure on a long journey...which has had so many negatives and it's been very emotional...it's time to leave all that in the past and move forward, just a new start. (George)

The comment exhibits a profound sense of relief and resolution, suggesting that George has traversed a challenging and emotionally taxing journey marked by numerous adverse experiences. The expression 'closure on a long journey' signifies that George perceives this moment as a critical juncture, enabling him to

An underlying sense of fear persisted among life-sentenced prisoners. Some prisoners described being subtly influenced by power dynamics with staff members.

5. Giddens, A. (1991). 'Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age'. Stanford.

transcend past difficulties. The focus on a 'new start' conveys a strong inclination towards renewal and an optimistic perspective on the future. This commentary encapsulates themes of transition, personal growth, and optimism, highlighting the transformative potential inherent in moving beyond past adversities.

Although allowing prisoners to go outside the prison walls does not normalise life in prison, it connects life inside the prison to life in society. George, who had recently arrived at the open prison, talked about his plans for the future and ultimately his aims whilst in the open estate:

But I think yeah, initially I just need to adapt and start thinking of the basics. I think you get the basics right and you're gonna, there's gonna be longevity in terms of me going forward, but also and also just to do this, what I've done for the last 16 years but on the outside. (George)

Those prisoners who reported having little to no contact with their families ultimately decided to remain inside the prison, despite the fact that they had access to their overnight stays and had travelled to nearby towns. During the day, they also worked within the confines of the prison. It is not quite apparent whether this was due to a potentially higher level of 'institutionalisation,' or whether these prisoners simply felt they 'belonged' to the culture of the prison and its surroundings since they lacked the support and networks of their families, similar to that as described by Irwin.⁶

The findings show that the transition to the open estate has a significant impact on individuals psychologically. Hulley, Crewe and Wright demonstrate that the coping mechanisms cultivated throughout lengthy prison sentences are, in fact, maladaptive in the real world. Certain penal scholars have proposed that life/long term sentenced prisoners construct a false identity in order to establish a sense of security. 'In effect, they sometimes seemed to be living within a world of their own, inside the prison but separate and apart from its ordinary discourse ... if their bodies were

in prison, their cognitive focus was elsewhere.'⁷ Indeed, some prisoners have psychological alterations to their personalities and identities. This may cause further apprehension for prisoners especially prisoners with limited support outside of prison. Prolonged degradation effects caused by prison rituals combined with a long prison sentence may cause psychological alteration or institutionalised behaviour traits that the individual may be unaware they exhibit. Liem and Kunst's concept of 'post incarceration syndrome' whereby men become 'over adapted' to the prison environment, can clearly affect life after their release.⁸

Institutionalisation

The 'aim' of the open estate is to 'support' in 'undoing' some of the institutionalisation developed by those who have spent lengthy periods in the closed estate. When individuals are exposed to prolonged periods of imprisonment, they may acquire adaptive strategies and behavioural patterns to effectively traverse the inherent difficulties and hierarchical framework in their current setting.

George talked about how 'lifers' are naturally institutionalised due to the time spent in prison:

There's been times when I've been waiting outside a workshop, and there's a door, and I won't even try the door. I'll just wait for someone to open it — even if it's open. (George)

Indeed, institutionalisation can induce gradual psychological changes that are hidden until a prisoner is exposed to less restrictive conditions in the open estate. Indeed, Ben detailed his relocation to the 'pods' when discussing his housing situation within open conditions. The pods are a section of self-contained units made from metal, where lifers and long-term prisoners are given priority. Although, the atmosphere was relatively tranquil and consistent in comparison to the dormant areas of the estate, his inability to establish himself was a result of the structure of the building.

6. Irwin, J. (2009). *The Felon*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

7. Zamble, E. (1992). Behavior and adaptation in long-term prison inmates: Descriptive longitudinal results. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 19(4), 409-425.

8. Liem, M., & Kunst, M. (2013). Is there a recognizable post-incarceration syndrome among released "lifers"? *Internal Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 36(3-4), 333-337.

So I had to have a brick wall around me. (Ben)

Evidently, acclimated to the confined estate and his immediate surroundings, Ben found the transition to his new surroundings challenging. He was transferred from the pods to a solitary dormitory unit located in the prison's older buildings that is made of bricks. After the relocation, Ben explained:

I felt safe, and secure — more at home. (Ben)

Overall, Ben's commentary highlights the complex interplay between physical space, personal agency, and psychological well-being within the prison system. The process of institutionalisation can provide both advantageous and detrimental outcomes for prisoners.

On one side, it has the potential to facilitate individuals' adjustment to the regulated prison environment, adherence to regulations, and cultivation of discipline. Moreover, it has the potential to foster a perception of safety and comfort inside an otherwise volatile setting. Conversely, institutionalisation may also yield adverse consequences. Imprisonment can result in psychological and emotional transformations, including the erosion of individual identity, less self-governance, and heightened reliance on the institutional framework. Closed conditions introduce a set of ritualistic processes that can be difficult to undo once experienced. Maruna, explains 'The depersonalization of a person's former identity through the 'abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self'....The prisoner undergoes a 'civil death', losing former citizen rights and liberties, but also a distinct set of ritualistic admission procedures-undressing, strip searching, and disinfecting the individual, assigning him or her a new institutional uniform...living quarters...meant to break the individual's personality, including enforced verbal acts of deference.'⁹

Three prisoners expressed that upon arrival, they were so profoundly surprised and disoriented that they requested to be taken back to closed conditions. However, it became clear the staff demonstrate the ability to handle these problems, as all individuals remain in the prison and successfully integrated into the system.

But nevertheless, it's still the same feeling of putting yourself back into a cage environment. I know, it's open space. And now when you look around and see less fences and stuff, mentally you're locked back in here. (Peter)

In contrast, Sid stated that it made little impact on how he dealt with his surroundings:

It's not about that there ain't no fence. They ain't none. There's cameras, there's doors. Whatever, but you just don't take notice of that. Because I didn't take notice of that when I was in C Cat or a B Cat, it's just part of the process, and it's all in your head anyway. (Sid)

I've always said I've
got to draw a line
between what
prison is and what
outside life is.

The extract reflects themes explored in research by Hulley, Crewe, and Wright, particularly regarding the psychological and emotional responses of prisoners to different environments.

The initial reaction of the prisoners, who were surprised and disoriented by the transition to open conditions, aligns with findings by Hulley, Crewe, and Wright,¹⁰ and that explored by

Shammas¹¹ which discuss the challenges prisoners face when adapting to a less restrictive environment. This surprise and disorientation can be attributed to the shift from a highly controlled setting to one with more freedom, which can be unsettling for individuals accustomed to strict routines and boundaries.

Peter's comment about feeling mentally 'locked back in' despite the open space highlights the psychological impact of incarceration, a theme consistent within the research. The presence of fewer physical barriers does not necessarily translate to a sense of freedom: the mental perception of being confined persists, illustrating the deep-seated psychological effects of imprisonment.

Sid's perspective, which downplays the significance of physical barriers and emphasises the mental aspect of confinement, resonates with the research's exploration of how prisoners internalise their environment. Sid's attitude suggests a cognitive adaptation to security measures, indicating that the mental processing of incarceration conditions varies

9. Maruna, S. (2011). Reentry as a rite of passage. *Punishment & Society*, 13(1), 3-28.

10. Crewe, B. (2011). Soft power in prison: Implications for staff-prisoner relationships, liberty and legitimacy. *European journal of criminology*, 8(6), 455-468.

11. Shammas, V. L. (2014). The pains of freedom: Assessing the ambiguity of Scandinavian penal exceptionalism on Norway's Prison Island. *Punishment & Society*, 16(1), 104-123.

among individuals. His approach reflects Shamus's findings that some prisoners adapt by focusing less on external constraints and more on internal coping mechanisms. Sid's comment about the process being 'all in your head' aligns with the notion that the mental adaptation to prison life varies among individuals, emphasising personal resilience and cognitive framing. This aligns with the idea that the experience of imprisonment is as much about the mind as it is about the physical environment.

Most of the prisoners stated that the experience of entering an open prison was overwhelming due to the lack of physical security. This freedom placed the responsibility of resisting temptation on themselves. As a result, they experienced apprehension and distress, as the coping strategies they had developed to endure the rigours of imprisonment were no longer effective. In order, to maintain compliance they need to cultivate new coping mechanisms.

Whilst open prisons implement measures to mitigate the adverse consequences of institutionalisation, such as education, vocational training and rehabilitative initiatives, more specifically Release on Temporary Licence, there remains the question if 'decompression' can ever be fully 'undone.'

Normalisation

It was observed, in identifying the theme of normalisation, that the prisoners frequently stated that their time in prison and environment was 'not normal.' A subset of the male individuals discussed how they had inadvertently or deliberately established a dichotomy between prison life and the outside world, refusing to fully accept the notion that their current living conditions constituted 'normalcy.'

I've always said I've got to draw a line between what prison is and what outside life is. Because I've seen that many people go down and go under because they are not going to draw that line. (Lee)

Some prisoners recognise that prison is not real life but a false environment that is designed for a number of purposes such as punishment, rehabilitation and reintegration. Lee's statement highlights the importance of psychological boundaries and mental separation between prison life and life outside.

There is an emphasis on the necessity of establishing a clear mental distinction between the experiences and mindset within prison and those in the

outside world. This suggests a strategic approach to maintaining psychological health and resilience by compartmentalising different life phases. Lee notes that many individuals struggle because they fail to make this distinction. This observation implies that the inability to separate prison experiences from outside life can lead to negative outcomes, such as emotional or psychological decline. In addition, the act of 'drawing a line' serves as a coping mechanism, allowing Lee to manage the challenges of imprisonment without letting them overwhelm his sense of self or future prospects. This approach underscores the importance of mental strategies in navigating the prison environment and preparing for reintegration into society. Overall, Lee's comment highlights the significance of mental boundaries as a tool for maintaining personal well-being and successfully transitioning between different life contexts.

So you've got that line between normal life and this life, and I think that guy, a speaker that came in the other week, he said something, but it really resonated. It was about like this isn't normal like this whole place is not normal, so don't ever treat it as your as your home or life. (Peter)

Whilst the open estate aims to support reintegration, another ambiguity develops when the process of normalisation is connected to other associated principles, primarily resocialisation. Normalised prison circumstances facilitate the reintegration into society by reducing the contrast with a free society and minimising the detrimental effects of imprisonment.¹²

Descriptions of the Category D used for the study varied, but when making comparisons with previous establishments it was evident the environment was not as aesthetically pleasing as previous prisons. However, an emphasis on resocialisation could shift the focus of the normalisation initiative from prison environment to behaviour, leading to attempts to normalise the individual as a means of promoting responsibility.¹³ The experience of the open estate is focused on what the prisoners can access, rather than their environment. Those prisoners who had undertaken regular day and overnight leave shared their stories:

Sure you have freedom, a sense of freedom, a sense of more of like, you know, happiness and cosiness for the future, you know. (Sid)

12. Crewe, B., Levins, A., Larmour, S., Laursen, J., Mjåland, K., & Schliehe, A. (2022). Nordic penal exceptionalism: A comparative, empirical analysis. *The British Journal of Criminology* 63(2), 424-443.

13. van de Rijt, J., van Ginneken, E., & Boone, M. (2023). Lost in translation: The principle of normalisation in prison policy in Norway and the Netherlands. *Punishment & Society*, 25(3), 766-783.

Open prisons seem to approach normalisation better than closed prisons. A degree of freedom of movement attests to normalisation, both within the prison perimeter as well as between prison and the outside world.

Normalisation can pertain to one's identity when prisoners are able to keep their pre-prison social status and occupational skills. Whilst some prisoners focus on the opportunity to work within the open estate, to assist in future resettlement, others hold onto the notion that it is more about becoming part of society.

George, discussed further plans for the future and ultimately his aims whilst in the open estate:

Initially I just need to adapt and start thinking of the basics. I think you get the basics right... there's gonna be longevity in terms of me going forward.
(George)

Decompression

The findings suggest that 'decompression' did exist within the Category D, in the form of access to education, employment and day and overnight releases. Sid explained the adaptation to the 'outside world' did not come with many barriers, adapting to employment, temporary release with ease. Results from these prisoners, highlighted that the 'decompression' period was in fact a lengthier process and required further intervention to support reintegration. Those that had served longer appeared to have struggled more with the sudden agency. They felt overwhelmed by the choices and the individual responsibility.

The emotional links to decompression were significant. The prisoners had to adapt to their new surroundings to gain entry back into society. Lee describes his journey toward reintegration as a series of transitions, each marked by a distinct emotional response:

Until I reached the open estate, there was a sense of anxiety, a kind of 'butterflies in my stomach.' But even then, there was excitement. And it happened again when I first experienced day release and overnight release. Finally, I began to experience the normalcy of birthdays, anniversaries, and sharing good news with my family. (Lee)

George also explains his journey:

I just feel like it's closure on a long journey. On this whole like journey, which has had so many negatives and it's been very emotional, I think it's gonna be confirmation that there's a part that's in the past and there's those like negative attachments to. That, and I think it's just gonna be a sign for her. Like, OK, it's time to leave all that in the past and move forward, just a new start.

Decompression encompasses multiple factors that can differ and are often subject to individual interpretation. Successful reintegration into society can be achieved by considering several elements that influence decompression, such as adequate support, resources, and a positive outlook. Although the transition process can be challenging as life-sentenced men have to contend with judgement, mistrust, or strained personal relationships.

The transition from closed to open prison conditions presents significant emotional challenges but also opportunities for personal growth and increased autonomy. Open prisons facilitate decompression and de-institutionalisation, though this process is complex and varies across individuals. Effective

communication and collaboration between closed and open estates are essential for successful reintegration. Initiating decompression programs early can assist prisoners in adjusting to societal norms and preparing for release. The open estate prison regime allows prisoners to assume responsibility and make decisions, granting them a level of autonomy that can foster optimism for the future. Social integration initiatives, such as Resettlement Day Release (RDR) and Resettlement Overnight Release (ROR), help prisoners establish connections with the community, aiding in the formation of social bonds and networks of assistance, and cultivating a sense of inclusion beyond the prison setting. Research indicates that open prisons can significantly reduce recidivism and aid reintegration by providing a normalised environment that helps prisoners maintain or regain social roles and responsibilities. However, it is crucial to recognise that institutionalisation is multifaceted, and the efficacy of open prisons in addressing it may fluctuate. Factors such as the duration of a prisoner's sentence, individual

The study
underscores the
intricate and
perceived fragile
nature of the open
prison experience.

needs, and the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs undertaken can all influence the extent to which open prisons mitigate institutionalisation.

Introducing these recommendations is crucial for improving prisoner reintegration. It is essential to prioritise institutionalisation processes to ensure that all prisoners have access to comprehensive decompression programs, which are vital for helping them adjust to the natural environment and societal norms post-incarceration. Addressing institutionalisation is inherently complex and necessitates the collaboration and sustained commitment of multiple stakeholders. The period leading up to the release of life-sentenced prisoners presents an optimal opportunity to address institutionalisation traits. This can be achieved by providing access to Progressive Regimes/Resettlement

Units or similar communities, which offer less structured regimes, greater autonomy, opportunities for independent living, and reduced security restrictions. Additionally, the study underscores the intricate and perceived fragile nature of the open prison experience. It is imperative for the prison system to recognise the complexities associated with long-term imprisonment, including the dynamics between staff and prisoners, subcultural influences, perceived status among prisoners, and their impact on reintegration. Recognising these challenges is essential for addressing the unique characteristics of imprisonment for those nearing the end of life sentences. These recommendations aim to enhance the efficacy of the open prison system in promoting successful reintegration and mitigating the adverse effects of long-term institutionalisation.

Interview with Helen Judge: Area Executive Director North East England

In 2023, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) introduced the Area Executive Model as part of the broader One HMPPS programme, with the vision of creating a more cohesive and effective prison and probation system. A central aspect of this vision was to change the relationship with headquarters, allowing more resources and decision-making power to be transferred to frontline staff. By appointing Area Executive Directors (AEDs), this approach also fosters greater collaboration between prisons, probation, and their partners in each of the seven areas: North East, North West, Midlands, Wales, South East, South West and London.

Helen Judge, Area Executive Director for the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber has been at the forefront of implementing this new structure with six other colleagues each directing one area across England and Wales. Dr Ruth Armstrong has been working alongside these leaders over their first year in post. In this interview Helen and Ruth discuss how the One HMPPS model vision is playing out in practice, the challenges and the opportunities presented, and how closer partnership working between prisons, probation and other key services can lead to better outcomes for both the workforce and the people they serve.¹

Ruth: Thank you for agreeing to this interview Helen. Can you begin by telling us a little about yourself, your career path into this role, and what motivates you to do this work?

Helen: Throughout my career, I've always been motivated by a desire to make a difference in the lives of the most disadvantaged people in society. Whether it's people who have committed offences or victims, those involved in the criminal justice system often face significant disadvantages, and I care deeply about supporting them and enabling them to contribute to their communities.

I've worked in various roles over my career, including policy positions in the Home Office and

Ministry of Justice, where I focused on offender management, sentencing, and youth justice, but I wanted to move closer to operational roles, and that's what led me to this position. The criminal justice system offers both incredible challenges and opportunities, that's what brings me alive. There's a complexity in the work, but also a real chance to create meaningful change, both for individuals and the communities they return to.

Ruth: What is the vision of One HMPPS, and what does that mean for you in your role?

Helen: The vision for One HMPPS is about reducing reoffending and protecting the public by improving performance, enhancing partnership work between prisons and probation and with wider partners, and ensuring we lead a national service that is in service of the frontline and the outcomes we are striving for. My role is to drive those priorities in the North East, Yorkshire and Humber, to ensure we're supporting frontline staff while also learning from them to influence national policy and practice. It's a two-way process.

The Area Executive Director role is pivotal because it gives us the chance to shape priorities on our own geographical patch within a national framework which is itself informed by frontline insights. This relationship is incredibly important, particularly in a time where we are facing significant pressures like population crises, staffing challenges and financial constraints. The areas and roles are big enough to try new things, share practice, forge relationships with counterparts across all sectors and play a part in the leadership of HMPPS. And the devolution brings us closer to the localities and regions in which people live and work and that partners care about.

Ruth: A big part of the original vision was about changing the relationship between headquarters and the frontline. What does this shift mean in practice for supporting frontline staff?

1. With special thanks to Helen and her team, especially Jake Thirkell for helpful discussions and his support with Ruth's visit to the area. Thanks also to Marcella Goligher and the teams working under her in HMP Humber including the HOPE unit for their work to progress IPP prisoners serving indeterminate sentences, and the multi-agency teams working through the gate to support people as they transition from prison to life post-release. The evidence of area specific partnership working in HMP Humber and how this supports frontline practice was hopeful indeed.

Helen: This is about making the centre more responsive to the needs of the frontline within a national framework. We don't operate in isolation, we are a national service spending public money in an environment where there is lots of risk, and we need some consistent standards, policies and practices. But there is scope to try different things at area level and share the learning; we can support regional and local partnership working, and we can take the lessons back to the centre. We are making some area choices for instance about how we spend money to improve our estates, cut out process to increase time spent on the frontline and support local partnerships to improve employment outcomes. Part of this is about creating a culture where staff feel confident, competent and empowered to use their judgement and professional discretion. At the same time, we all have to be willing to let go of certain controls that don't directly contribute to reducing reoffending or protecting the public. If we can't demonstrate that a particular process serves those aims, then we need to ask ourselves: why are we doing it?

Ruth: What are some of your personal priorities?

I want to improve the way we work with people to change their behaviour. Get back to the core of our job to reduce reoffending and protect the public. That will help us stay safe and secure and get better outcomes for communities. We know the things that make most difference: a home, a job, the relationships we have with other people and the way we think about ourselves. One of the most important ways to enable change is through relational practice, which means that staff have constructive, boundaried, psychologically informed relationships with people in prisons and on probation. They are not afraid to ask questions and challenge bad choices, and they are positive about what can be achieved, they do what they say they will and they understand where people are coming from, for instance: their risks and triggers, the trauma they might have faced and their neurodivergence. In the end this is all about supporting and developing our people. This goes across all our work, and I have a working group focused on confident and competent staff development to support it. It includes ensuring that we foster a culture in which staff themselves feel respected, supported, empowered and safe.

The Area Executive Director role is pivotal because it gives us the chance to shape priorities on our own geographical patch within a national framework.

We are also doing several tangible things to improve resettlement and community support, with a strong focus on employment and housing. We are developing more one stop approaches in which different criminal justice and social service partners spend time on the same site to provide advice and a launchpad to a more positive future: departure lounges for prison leavers and community hubs for people on probation for example. In prisons, I want to maximise purposeful activity — work, education and wider enrichment and connect that to the opportunities in the labour market on release. There is lots that probation and prisons can learn from each other here. We are trying to ensure the investment we have made in employment and skills in prisons works for probation too and that we can make the most of Community Payback to build employability. And probation have done lots of work already on relational practice that prisons can learn from.

Ruth: I recently learned about the Back to Basics initiative in your area. Can you tell us more about this initiative? What impact has it had so far?

Helen: In my meetings with frontline staff, they have made it clear they want to practise their craft and be trusted to do so. Some staff have expressed that too much process can take them away from that. The Back to

Basics initiative is a response to that problem. It is literally intended to help staff get back to doing the fundamental work that makes the difference.

It started in Sunderland probation and has been driven by staff themselves. They've been empowered to identify which processes are getting in the way of their work and suggest improvements. Staff have mapped out their workflows and highlighted where they can reduce unnecessary steps without compromising on safety or effectiveness.

The home visit risk assessment process is one example of where this initiative has already made a tangible difference. What used to take up a huge amount of time for probation officers has been massively streamlined, freeing them up to do more home visits and focus on building relationships with those they supervise. We're seeing other ideas come through, too—from prison and probation staff—about how we can streamline process in other areas. This initiative is now being rolled out across the

region, and we're looking to introduce it in some of our prisons as well.

Ruth: What do you think gets in the way of staff doing their best work?

Helen: I might say time, but the problem with that is it lets us off the hook a little. So, it's not just time—it's about how you use the time you've got. Time and workload are massive constraints, but I think if staff feel confident and curious, and there's a culture in which those qualities are encouraged and supported, they'll use whatever time they have in the most creative and impactful way. There are lots of examples of brilliant staff across the Service doing that.

We haven't always created a culture that makes it easy for staff to focus on what's most important—getting the basics right, building relationships with people, using their professional judgment, and thinking about the individual rather than just the process. The best processes do help us make informed decisions, assess and manage risk of harm to self and others for example, but sometimes we are all about the process and we don't step back and consider what it's there for, what the information is telling us and what we might do about it. And sometimes we can change processes ourselves, but we don't realise that. I think data is very important too. We have to use it to inform our work, ask ourselves what it's telling us and how it should shape our decisions rather than admiring what it looks like.

Ruth: What can you do to build staff confidence and give them time to focus on relational practice?

Helen: That's a combination of things that includes leadership, culture, training, support, clear, accessible systems that cut out duplication, improved processes and sharing learning. There's a big time element to this, of course, but I think we need to foster a culture where relational practice is at the heart of what we do—it requires briefings, and training around psychologically informed and trauma-informed practice, checklists of steps we can take, supporting

and encouraging our middle managers to talk about it. Encouraging curiosity during briefings and meetings is one way to build that culture—asking why incidents are happening, why people are behaving the way they do, and making connections.

It's also important to celebrate the skills of both new staff and those with more experience. New staff bring different perspectives and ideas, but need the opportunity to learn from those with greater experience. I saw only the other day in one of my prisons a senior officer de-escalate a challenging situation using experience and relational skills and teach a new recruit how he did it. I've seen some incredible practice for example in care and separation, or segregation units, on Drug Recovery Wings and in Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPE units) in which staff have come to understand the people they are working with and support them to stay calm and stable.²

We can support regional and local partnership working, and we can take the lessons back to the centre.

Ruth: How does the regional approach help to strengthen partnership working and take a systems thinking approach to getting the kinds of outcomes we care about in our criminal justice system?

Helen: I think there's some great partnership working across the criminal justice system that seeks to take a systems approach. It looks at all the different elements of why somebody is offending and asks what we collectively, as a criminal justice service and with other partners can do about that. Some of our work with people who have mental health needs, integrated offender management, and women who have committed offences are all characterised by a systems approach. These are complex cases where there are lots of partners and organisations involved, and we come together to support these individuals to reduce their reoffending. We still have plenty of work to do, but there are good examples.

In Yorkshire, we have a strong reducing reoffending partnership chaired by the Deputy Mayor for West Yorkshire that brings together probation, prisons, police, health services, DWP, the voluntary sector and police and crime commissioners across

2. PIPEs are part of the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) pathway in prisons and in Probation Approved Premises in the community. They are designed to support the transition and progression of prisoners and people on probation at significant stages of their sentence and beyond.

Yorkshire. It's about thinking collectively about offending and how to address it. In my mind, it's not just about specific programmes for each offending type, but about thinking at the level of the locality—what are its biggest needs? What does the data tell us about crime and the social profile? And how can we, as partners, work together to tackle it? Could some people be diverted from the CJS altogether for instance? What can we offer through community orders for example and how can we use all our convening power to get prison leavers into jobs and housing? It's all about taking a data informed, practice informed, systems thinking approach to make sure we're focusing on the most important issues at the right level, together. This is where a regional approach can be a real benefit.

Ruth: What have you been observing and enjoying in your region since taking on this role?

Helen: The best part of the job, by far, is going out to meet staff in both prisons and probation. I've been continually impressed by the craft, skill, and commitment they bring to their work. Whether it's prison officers using their experience to de-escalate challenging situations or probation officers building trust, reducing risk of harm and supporting victims of crime, it is clear that these professionals are deeply invested in supporting the kind of changes that reduce reoffending.

One tangible example of good practice I've seen is in our Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme. In this initiative, we have probation, police and prison teams working together to manage some of the most prolific offenders, often co-located. The teamwork has been extraordinary. Seeing these partnerships in action really shows the potential for this model to deliver better outcomes.

I've seen so many great examples where prison and probation partnerships have made a real difference. For instance, in our work on organised crime, particularly in the North East, we've again seen excellent partnership working between prisons, probation, and the police. This collaboration has allowed us to identify those involved in organised crime and manage associated risks as they prepare for release, ensuring that they don't slip back into criminal networks.

Another area where this partnership is crucial is in resettlement, particularly for women in the criminal

justice system. We're seeing a lot of good work in how we prepare them for release, ensuring their needs around housing, finances, and healthcare are addressed. This kind of preparation is so important in stopping people from being recalled or reoffending once they leave custody.

But of course, there are still challenges. One of the main ones is around resources—having the time and capacity to really focus on this work when caseloads are high and resources are stretched. Despite these challenges, where we see practitioners coming together, the impact is undeniable, particularly in helping individuals transition from custody to community and reducing reoffending.

Ruth: If you had a magic wand and could change one thing about the prison and probation service in your region, what would it be?

Helen: I would love to see us reach a point where we have fewer people in the system because we've done such a good job at preventing reoffending. But in the meantime, the one thing I would change is the amount of time staff have to spend with individuals. Relationships are the cornerstone of effective offender management, and we need to make sure all our colleagues have the time and space to build those relationships.

Conclusion:

One year into the implementation of the Area Executive Model, there remains a strong commitment to appraising and refining this new model to better support front line staff and improve outcomes. The vision of changing the relationship with headquarters and decentralising power to the frontline is starting to show results, but there is more work to be done. Helen's reflections underline the need for a cultural shift that prioritises relational practice over bureaucracy and encourages professional discretion among staff. As the area leadership model develops, it will be essential to continue reviewing these changes and building the regional leadership skills to ensure they meet the needs of both staff and service users. Through regional initiatives like Back to Basics, the One HMPPS programme is striving to deliver a more flexible and responsive service where staff are empowered to define and deliver their best work.

Keeping individuals, and communities, safe and supported.

Interview with Martin Jones CBE

*Martin Jones is the Chief Inspector of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. He is interviewed by **Professor Lynn Saunders**, Professor Applied Criminology University of Derby and former prison governor.*

Martin Jones CBE joined HM Inspector of Probation as His Majesty's Chief Inspector on the 1st of March 2024. Martin joined the inspectorate after nine years in his role as Chief Executive of the Parole Board. At the Parole Board, Martin was awarded CBE for services to victim's, transparency and diversity in the parole system. Prior to that he served as Deputy Director for sentencing policy from 2012 to 2015, and as Head of Crime for the HM Courts and Tribunal service from 2008 to 2011.

The interview took place in October 2024.

What made you want to apply for this post?

I had been in charge of the Parole Board for 8 1/2 years, which was an exciting place to work, deciding whether to release people that have committed some really serious offences. But, it was a heavy workload, with a lot of media and public interest, and if I'm being honest, I thought I needed a change. But I've always worked in Justice so I was looking for something in this area. Given the fact that the Probation Service works alongside parole, and that the Probation Service is key to keeping people safe, and that they are facing huge challenges, the role appealed to me. Because the Probation Service is such a critical part of the Justice system, I would actually say based on my 30 odd years of experience working around Whitehall, and in the Ministry of Justice, it can sometimes be a bit of neglected part of the system. What I mean by this is the work they do is sometimes behind closed doors and hidden away from the frontline. People who receive long custodial sentences and go to prison are always front-page news. The Probation Service is doing a really complicated, difficult job, and maybe sometimes they don't get the credit that they deserve. But also given what's been happening over the last 10 years in Probation, I also think these complex issues need to be sorted out, and I see my role as Chief Inspector of Probation as shining on light on what I think some of the issues and problems are, and hopefully paving the way for some kind of improvement.

You have spoken publicly about the pressures facing the Probation Service. Can you say a bit more about what you have found in your first few months in the job?

Yes, I'm a bit of a data geek and I'm always looking at the data, and thinking what does the data tell us? As you know, when I go out to a probation region and look at the performance, one of the things I look at is how many staff does the probation unit have compared to what they should have? I visit probation areas where they've got 50 per cent of the probation officers they need to do the job properly. That's clearly going to impact on the quality of delivery. High levels of sick absence also understandably puts people under pressure. People carrying too many cases can't really make the difference. Probation caseloads at the moment are 240,000 and then you look at the staffing levels, and it is very challenging to deliver the sort of change that we would want them to, and they are capable of delivering. I think as part of the government's Sentencing Review it has to look at what can be achieved within the current staffing envelope so that it can focus on delivering a good service rather than stretching itself too thin.

You've talked quite a bit about the challenges that probation staff are facing, and you've mentioned how these can be addressed. Can you summarise what you think should come out of the Probation Services' remit?

I think there's a few things. First, is the length of licence periods in England and Wales which have got longer and longer over time. I think this creates challenges for people being released from prison on the basis that licences are so excessively long that you can't see the end of the tunnel. What incentive is there to try and get your life back on the straight and narrow? If you go back 25 to 30 years, there used to be a certain proportion of your sentence where you were released on licence in the community, and eligible for recall when you were supervised and then your sentence

ended. The other area where I think we could make some progress is around short custodial sentences. I know the government is looking at what the options are and I'm really interested in looking at the statistics. The number of people the Probation Service is currently preparing for release is about a third of their caseload. It's about 80,000 people that they're planning for release primarily because of that short sentence cohort. Looking at things like accommodation and the risk management plan, so relieving some of that double handling. I've also posed a question in the area of young adults in the probation system. The Probation Inspectorate did a report earlier this year and we spoke to children who were moving from being a 17 year old boy involved in the youth justice system, into adult probation. Some young people described it as like falling off a cliff. So what if we tried to pilot the idea of a youth justice service where if they have a relationship with somebody to keep working with them, rather than handing them over for the last year to the adult Probation Service. This way we are more likely to be able to keep that young person away from the revolving door of the criminal justice system. It's my experience as a young man, many, many, years ago that aged 18 you do not suddenly change as a person. Your former abilities remain, the same risk factors remain, so would it matter if the youth justice service could retain the cases for a bit longer?

Is that some extent shifting the problem in terms of resources to the local authority who are also under pressure for resources though?

Yes, I think that's a real issue. One of the issues I would observe when going out conducting inspections is that it feels like sometimes the Probation Service have been left holding the baby. You see problems with accommodation upon leaving custody, and problems with local drug treatment, and mental health support. The Probation Service is trying to sort that out because the local authority are not able to live up to their part of the bargain. The comparison I would make with youth justice at the moment is the statutory levers to pull in relation to partnership arrangements. Oddly enough the other part of my role is inspecting youth justice services. There is much better leadership at a local level and they are able to pull levers to ensure that children get the services they need. I don't think those levers are there in the same way with the adult population.

Is that an argument to decentralise the management of probation?

This is a question that's been vexing me for some time as Chief Inspector. When I go out on an inspection, we see a Probation Service that is still recovering from two major reorganisations having taken place within the last nine years. I don't think people have properly appreciated the underlying damage it has caused to the service. I don't think the Probation Service, where it currently sits, should go through a major reorganisation in the short term. I think this will cause further disruption to the service, but I totally agree that the best way of delivering better probation services is through local autonomy, empowering local managers to make decisions, linking

up with local authorities, local mayors, and local agencies to deliver what is needed. I think what that means is, and I will draw the comparison between prisons, there is the need for national systems and controls but in reality, you still want a prison governor that can get on and do the job to decide what's right for the prison and provide the leadership that's needed. I think that's even more important for local probation because every area is different, and the gap is different. Challenges around recruitment are different. For example, the difference between

a local authority bordering on London, where you've got the London drag effect, versus the challenges you have working in a much more rural area. So, my view would be the direction should be back towards more local autonomy.

You said publicly that you welcome the recruitment of 1000 new probation officers that's recently been announced, but what can be done to retain existing experienced staff?

I think that is the thing that's worrying me most about what is currently going on with probation. It's always good making up analogies for sort of thing, but at the moment it feels like we're running the tap really hard to try and recruit probation officers, but there's a hole at the bottom of our bucket. We're losing experienced people in particular quite fast, so actually despite the fact that there's a huge amount of effort, resource, and hard work gone to recruit additional probation staff the overall numbers have not dramatically improved. I think there are a few things that need to be done. First, I think we need to have an

an honest look at who we are recruiting. I've been out on probation inspections, and I think they are incredibly good at bringing relatively young people directly from university to be trainee probation officers. I think there's some superstars of the future amongst those officers and they do a fantastic job. But my worry, knowing about modern employment, is how many of those people are going to be with us in three to five years? How many of those people will say this is a really difficult stressful job, and decide to move on and get another job? I think there's something about what the overall employment offer is. When you speak to people that have been around a while, they say that you've got to catch people to ensure that they stay. In a really competitive jobs market, how can the Probation Service have the right employment offer in place to retain people other than for the love of the job? Ultimately, people have to pay the bills and their mortgages. I think there's a whole piece of work we need to look at in relation to why retention is working better in some places than others, and ensure that people recognise they are doing fantastic work. The other thing is to identify areas for employer improvement and where I, as Chief Inspector, can assist in raising those standards.

You've already talked about producing reports that say a particular area service requires improvement or is inadequate. How does this effect the motivation of staff? Is there anything the inspectorate could do to help support teams that are facing these rather difficult verdicts on their performance?

Actually, I do. There are a few things we're actively looking into at the moment. We're looking to publish region by region reports identifying effective practice. When we go on any inspection we see some fantastic best practice, but it's buried within an individual report. So we don't share it in a nationalised form. Some best practice, for example, is when we went out to Essex in the summer. We saw some really fantastic work taking place dealing with the needs of the female population on probation. Now people in South Essex know that we've raised it and we've published our report. But if I'm currently sitting in Hull I am not reading a report from Southend. So how do we escalate that sort thing that encourages people to read about best practice? A lot of themes we see are pretty consistent, staffing,

excessive caseload and problems with assessing risk. I guess my view is that when I'm seeing that locally, what are the blockers and enablers at a national level to understand why we're seeing that.

So is the benefit of a national system that you've got someone with an overview rather having a local system so best practice can be shared across the country rather than across the local area is that one of the benefits?

Well I think it potentially is. I guess the only thing that I would say that would undermine that argument is that 75 per cent of youth justice services that we inspected were either good or outstanding, and that contrasts with the facts as of today. I think I have published 18 probation inspection reports, all of whom have either been inadequate or requires improvement. But if I am in the youth justice service somewhere in the country and I've got a real problem with a particular area I can go to the HMIP website and say which areas are outstanding in this area, and I can go to visit that local authority up the road a few miles away, or set up a Teams call and ask to look at their processes and procedures. We need to get to a position where we have a better spread of performance. Some of the areas I have seen have got the potential to be good, if not outstanding.

So what relationships do you have with the Prisons Inspectorate? Because they do something similar to that don't they? As you know my background is prisons. We always used to look at inspectorate reports from similar prisons to see why they were doing things better than us, or sometimes vice versa, isn't that an argument for sharing best practice? Why is it not especially prevalent in probation?

I think that's part of the issue if I'm honest. People are so localised dealing with their own individual problems so are not able to lift their eyes and look above that. I think that's the reason why the inspectorate could do more and try to make it easier for people to do that. We did a piece highlighting best practice earlier this year and we're thinking about how to share information better. But we've not pulled these out and that's an area I think we could do much, much better and make it easier for people. In respect of HMI

How many of those people will say this is a really difficult stressful job, and decide to move on and get another job?

Prisons, I see Charlie Taylor probably once every three or four weeks and we do joint inspections. I do think there's a lot more we can learn through performance of HMPPS through our dual lenses and ensure that we understand where the rubbing points are, and where things are working better and drawing that out.

We both know that the government plans to reduce prison numbers is having a massive impact on the probation service. As you said there is huge challenge about how people are coping but how much are you going to take that into account when you carry out your inspections?

My public position on the SDS 40 changes is that it was inevitable that the government was going to implement an early release scheme relatively shortly after the election. The question for me was how they were going to pull it all together. My immediate concern was that the change could come within two to three weeks and that would have been a disaster. I think this would have caused huge problems for both prisons and probation. I think having eight or nine weeks for the first set of releases and 12 to 14 weeks for the second set of releases has meant that it gave them a fighting chance to do the job well. Of course there's always going to be niggles, but I think my overall view is that the Probation Service rose to the challenge and that there were people performing heroics, probably working too late into the night to ensure that plans were as well made as they could be. But the underlying point is absolutely true, which is what you're really doing layering on extra cases on top of excessive caseloads and the service is hugely under pressure. We are recalibrating the way in which we do our inspections to take account of that fact.

Just a final question from me Martin. What do you think your weaknesses are?

I'm far too optimistic, I'm like a relentless optimist and I always think that whatever the size of the problem we can sort it and we can fix it. Generally speaking, I'm of the view that it's much better to be positive than 'oh God the world's ending we can't do anything about it'. That's the same approach I bring to the Chief Inspector of Probation role. When I look at the level of performance I'm seeing I'm thinking 'gosh it can be better'. But I'm thinking hopefully I will be able to be able to help the service improve, by actually highlighting areas where some decisions need to be made but also bringing out the importance of the job that the probation officer does and the value that they bring. Most people that end up in the criminal justice system aren't there because they're fundamentally evil, it's because of speaking what has happened to them that's led to a downfall in their lives. You can fix some of those underlying problems. They can be safely managed in a way that means there are fewer victims in the future and that communities are therefore safer.

Well thank you very much for your time, Martin I really appreciate it, and good luck with the role sounds like you are massively positive and enthusiastic which is obviously great starting point so good luck for the future.

Talk to me in two years' time and see whether I still feel the same!

It would be good to do that. Thanks again.

Book reviews

Sound, order and survival in prison: The Rhythms and routines of HMP Midtown

by Dr Kate Herrity

ISBN: 978-1-5292-2945-5

Publisher: Bristol University Press

Price: £80.00 (hardback) £27.99 (e-publication)

Reviewer: Dr Jamie Bennett is a Prison Group Director and Research Associate at the Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford, UK.

This innovative and sensitive book explores the soundscape of a prison, based on extensive research by Kate Herrity, currently a fellow at Kings College, University of Cambridge. Although I worked in prisons for over 20 years, I didn't consciously think about sound until I first encountered Dr Herrity almost a decade ago, at a prison where I was governor. Prior to that, I had largely treated the everyday sounds of prison life as an indistinct 'white noise'. After learning of her research, I took a moment to listen to the sounds around me and have subsequently been more mindful of the soundscape. This book realises the potential of sound as a tool to access the social world of prisons and to sensitize actors, including people like me working in the system, to the significance of sound.

The book is based on a year-long fieldwork in 'HMP Midtown', the anonymised name for a city centre prison holding 300 men, mostly in a single wing. The prison largely holds people attending the local courts and serving short sentences. The average stay is 46 days. The research for this book was ethnographic, involving many hours being in and around the

prison and its people, listening, interacting, and observing. The methodology is described as 'auscultation', a term that is drawn from the medical lexicon and refers to the process of listening as part of medical diagnosis, such as using a stethoscope to check heart and breathing. In this study, the process of listening is used as an instrument to explore and understand the social world of prisons.

Sound is, of course, all around us. The opening pages of this book describe a soundscape that to insiders will be all too familiar: 'Keys, jangle of chain, thunk of lock bites, clunk of lock, creak of gate' (p.1). While the texture of sound alters from place to place within the prison, Herrity describing that from outside the wing, there is a 'lively symphony of radios, tellies, voices', while in administrative areas there is the 'the more familiar thrum of office life; jovial voices, ringing phones, tapping keyboards' (p.1). This absorbing description immediately and authentically draws the reader into the life of the prison.

This book deploys sound to explore aspects of the social world of prisons including power, vulnerability, relationships and order. There is too much intriguing and enlightening material to cover in this review, but there are a couple of examples that really stood out. First, the way that sound conveys an emotional texture. The noisy intensity of the visits hall, including the voices of women and children, otherwise absent in the prison, contains within it all of the emotions of family life condensed into a confined space for an hour or two — the love and companionship but also the strain and stigma for families. As the visits end, the eerie silence and 'ghostly remnants' (p.24) left behind evoke the

painfulness of separation. The sounds of the crowds at the local football stadium bridges space at time; a shared experience with those in the community, while also accentuating physical separation. Through these examples, Herrity explores the permeability of prison walls and the continuing, if constrained place within the community.

Another example that stands out is the exploration of the dynamics of power. The book describes how prisoners use the ritual of shouting out of windows at night as a masculine display and a way of establishing hierarchy, for example by taunting and threatening the vulnerable. For some people in prison, the quietness and solitude of the cell can be a refuge away from the power struggles of everyday prison life. The exercise of power by prison officers can be conscious but is also mundane. The institutional thoughtlessness of clanging gates, heavy footsteps and raised voices in the middle of the night are used as examples of how power is exercised, and imposed, in ways that are often unconscious to those wielding it. Yet wherever there is power, there is also resistance and Herrity provides the example of protest. The rhythm of the banging of cell doors conveys different emotions and messages, including the rapid rhythmic 'bangbangbang' (p.115) conveying frustration and irritation, while the slow rhythmic 'bang bang bang' (p.116) expresses focussed and intense displeasure. Banging can also be collective and euphoric, erupting around the wing to celebrate sporting success. In these various ways, Herrity argues that banging can be 'a means of redressing unequal power relations by imposing an effect on others through noise' (p.117). For those

who live and work in the prison, the familiar, everyday sound of the prison is part of the routine — unlock, movements of prisoners to work, cleaning and domestic management, the serving of meals. All have a different sound and aural quality. Herrity describes that: 'The soundscape could carry and shape 'the feel' of the day, providing an invaluable barometer for wellbeing and stability' (p.66) and that officers 'listened for anomalies or disruptions to the usual rhythmic ebb and flow, for movement out of speed and out of place' (p. 77). Collectively, these observations reveal the ways in which sound integral to issues of power, order, and resistance.

Given my history as a prison manager, my thoughts somewhat inevitably turned to the practical application of Herrity's work. How

could a better understanding of sound be put to use? Sound could, for example be better deployed in the architecture of prisons, as it has in urban planning and design, to accentuate natural sounds, reduce traffic noise and insulate private spaces.¹ Distinct spaces are created for those with particular needs, such as the current emergence of 'neurodiversity units',² or the more established older prisoner units,³ how could sound be incorporated into the design of these units such as reducing disruptive noise or creating soothing sounds. Prison officers could be trained to hone their senses, including hearing, as part of their 'jailcraft'.⁴ These questions reflect the success of Herrity's work in encouraging engagement with the significance of sound in everyday life. Herrity's work, however, does much more

than this. Like all the best ethnographic research, it offers the reader access to hidden experiences, revealing them with richness and complexity, and invites critical engagement with difficult questions about institutions and society. The text is not a narrow and esoteric book about sound, but rather it uses sound to examine and illuminate the social dynamics within prisons and between prison and the community.

This is an innovative and insightful book. For practitioners, Herrity invites the reader to engage with the senses to experience and understand the prison world. As Herrity herself observes, the art of listening takes on added potency in prisons, 'a place where people so frequently feel unheard' (p.4).

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Islam in Prison. Finding Faith, Freedom and Fraternity

By Lamia Irfan, Mallory Schnewwly Purdie, Muzammil Quraishi, Matthew Wilkinson

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For decades, prisons have been viewed as breeding grounds for extremism. Despite increased attention to religion in prisons over the past 30 years, most research has focused on the radicalisation of inmates and the corrosive impact of extreme Islamism. *Islam in Prison: Finding Faith, Freedom, and Fraternity* offers a refreshing departure from this narrative. Skilfully written and thoroughly researched, it deftly challenges the cliché that prisons are hotbeds for extremism by presenting a balanced and accurate portrayal of Islam within prison. This book provides a compelling account of how Muslim prisoners' worldviews are typically characterised by mainstream Islam and that Islam in prison can foster positive attitudes towards rehabilitation. Based on the largest international study of Islam in prison conducted between 2018 and 2021, this book offers a 'one stop shop' of the topic. Grounded in extensive research undertaken by the Understanding Conversion to Islam in Prison (UCIP) programme, the authors employ a robust methodology, weaving together perspectives from a diverse range of individuals in the prison system. Though the comparative analysis leans heavily on English and Swiss

prisons over French ones, the overall sample remains comprehensive.

Starting with gripping case studies of three prisoners, the book sets the stage for chapters that lead onto core research questions. Vibrant illustrations enrich the text, particularly benefiting visual learners. Chapter 1 provides essential background information on Islam and a broad socio-demographic portrait of their characteristic sample of 279 Muslim prisoners. It offers an excellent overview of Islam, breaking down complex terminology and contextualising it within current events. The chapter introduces the concept of Islamist extremism, exploring the 'them vs. us' mentality and addressing the over-representation of Muslims in prison populations.

Chapter 2 marks the transition to the data-driven portion of the book, providing a detailed exploration of what Islam looks like within the prison context. The authors skilfully integrate quotes from their research participants, adding a personal touch that brings the data to life. The use of informative textboxes is another strength of this chapter, offering readers concise and relevant information that complements the main text.

Chapter 3 explains why prisoners choose Islam, starting with a clear explanation of the conversion process. The authors categorise Muslim prisoners into five types, providing clarity on their varied motivations. They compare the experiences of male and female Muslim prisoners and contrast the cynical views from prison officers with prisoners' genuine accounts of spiritual awakening. The chapter acknowledges the study's limitations (p103) and consistently

supports explanations with robust data (p105).

Chapters 4 to 6 address the third research question: what types of Islam(-ism) are followed in prison? The authors introduce their tripartite model of Islamic worldviews, categorising it into mainstream, Islamism, and Islamist extremism. This model is clearly presented, setting the stage for more in-depth exploration in the subsequent chapters. The authors explain their data collection methods clearly (p111), using the appendix to detail exactly how UCIP ascertained the worldviews of Muslim prisoners. In my opinion, while this chapter challenges mainstream views of extremists in prison, it overlooks the concept of disguised compliance.¹

Chapter 5 offers a refreshing perspective on mainstream Islam in prison, highlighting how it provides structure, community, and spiritual support to inmates. Despite occasional font issues, the chapter stands out for its positive portrayal and use of quotes to bring prisoners' experiences to the forefront. Chapter 6 tackles Islamism and Islamist extremism in prison, offering a balanced perspective that helps readers grasp different perspectives of the issue. On page 143, the authors address what I believe to be the main limitation of their study: the possibility that some prisoners who might identify as Islamist or extremist chose not to participate in the research. The study found only one prisoner classified as a violent Islamist extremist, but I wonder if the results were skewed because others in this classification declined to participate. Despite this, the authors incorporate additional data and insights to support their findings. They consider the reasons some prisoners gave for not

1. See Acheson, I. and Paul, A. (2021). Hiding in plain sight? Disguised compliance by terrorist offenders. European Policy Centre. Discussion Paper 09. [Online] Available at: https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2021/Disguised_compliance_by_terrorist_offenders.pdf (Accessed: 10/11/2021).

engaging in the research and include ethnographic observations of prison events. Moreover, the chapter hints at the crime-terror nexus in prison (pages 145-148), providing insights into the broader implications of Islamist extremism within the prison estate.

Chapter 7 uses detailed case studies drawn from the data to explore the risks and opportunities of choosing to follow Islam in prison. This approach effectively keeps the reader engaged and provides varied, interesting, and detailed examples. The chapter cleverly ties together previous discussions on the different types of Muslim prisoners and Islamic worldviews. The case studies illustrate various experiences and outcomes, including one instance of radicalization (p164). The chapter compares the experiences of Muslim prisoners in the UK, Switzerland, and France, though it relies more heavily on English data. It also highlights the fear some prisoners have of openly practicing Islam (p176-177).

Chapter 8 is the first of two chapters addressing the fifth research question, focusing on the role of Muslim prison chaplaincy. It is clear that this theme, hinted at in previous chapters, emerged strongly during data collection. The chapter provides guiding principles for best chaplaincy practices to support the rehabilitation of Muslim prisoners, including interfaith experiences and services. It offers a fascinating comparison of Muslim chaplaincy across different countries, including the provision of dedicated spaces / mosques. Notably, it discusses the tendency of Muslim chaplains to avoid contemporary issues and reiterates that prisoners with Islamist extremist views represent a small proportion of the total Muslim prison population.

Chapter 9 explains the balance needed between a naïve and suspicious response in managing Muslim prisoners. It highlights the crucial issue of insufficient training for staff, noting that some were surprised by the finding that most prisoners hold mainstream Islamic views. This underscores the importance of training so prison officers can differentiate between common Muslim practices and Islamist extremism. The chapter offers practical principles for engagement, mindful of the authors' outsider status and the challenging role of prison officers. These principles are clear and jargon-free, making them highly useful for prison staff to implement. In my view, this chapter, and indeed the entire book, would be highly beneficial for prison officers to read.

Chapter 10 provides a comprehensive conclusion, beginning with an outline of each preceding chapter. The authors adeptly weave their arguments together, presenting the concepts of 'The Virtuous Cycle of Rehabilitation' (p252) and 'Avoiding the Vicious Cycle of Extremism' (p253). They contend that their data suggests no Muslim prisoner is beyond redemption. With the support of skilled and compassionate prison chaplains, the more prisoners who experience the Cycle of Rehabilitation, the less likely they are to be drawn into the Vicious Cycle of Extremism. They compare the prison systems of different countries and identify 'gaps that need to be plugged' such as improving the chaplaincy provisions for female Muslim prisoners. These gaps will be addressed in their follow-up research programme, PRIMO (Prison-based Interventions for Muslim Offenders), which will focus on four key areas of need identified by the UCIP study.

Overall, I really enjoyed reading this book. It provides a thorough and balanced exploration of Islam in prison. The book is grounded in extensive research and the authors utilise data from a wide range of methods, making the methodology suitable for replication in an even larger study. It effectively challenges the stereotype that prisons are incubators of extremism, presenting a more complex and varied picture. The use of case studies, quotes, and constant comparative analysis across different countries adds depth and richness to the discussion and enhance the reader's understanding of the complexities and nuances of practicing Islam in prisons. It serves as an excellent resource for anyone interested in the intersection of Islam and the prison system.

However, the potential for skewed data due to non-participation in this study remains a concern. While the majority of prisoners in the study appeared to make genuine efforts to reform, the possibility of disguised compliance or non-participation by extremists is an important consideration. Despite the authors alluding to this limitation, I feel it would have added more transparency to the study to know how many Muslim prisoners in the sampled prisons chose not to participate. Nevertheless, I find *Islam in Prison* to be an insightful and comprehensive examination of a very critical issue, offering both theoretical perspectives and practical guidance. It provides valuable, jargon-busting recommendations for chaplaincy and prison management, making it an essential read for those involved in the prison system and interested in the role of Islam within it.

'Star Men' in English Convict Prisons, 1879-1948

By Ben Bethell

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Reviewer: Joe Hale is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Nottingham Trent University.

Ben Bethell's 'Star Men in English Convict Prisons, 1879-1948' is a well-researched and thought-provoking examination of a unique class of prisoners during a period of significant penal change. The end of transportation to Australia in 1868 (and to America before that, ending in 1775) raised new concerns about managing England's growing prison population. The prison-building drive between 1842 and 1877 led to the erection of numerous new local and convict prisons. However, concerns about the 'contamination' or criminogenic effect of incarceration emerged as the recidivist population began to outgrow first-time offenders. Convicts were perceived as inflicting wisdom, advice, or 'evil thoughts' on one another during their associations; Hulks and transportation vessels, and later convict and local prisons, were recognised as 'schools (or, perhaps, ships?) of crime'. Despite the introduction of separate and silent systems alongside the sentence of Penal Servitude, significant concern and confusion persisted regarding the impact of these systems and the effect of 'contamination'.

The introduction of the Star Class in 1879, made up of 'gentlemen convicts' with no prior convictions, aimed to separate first-time offenders, who were perceived as being at most risk from contamination by habitual or recidivist offenders and the 'residue'

and 'filth' (p.31) they 'would have been best for them all to forget' (p.149). Criminals within this unique class were perceived as either 'deliberate and in cold blood or led astray by others' (p.36). This dichotomy reflects a broader societal debate on the nature of criminality and the appropriate response to it during the late 19th century, with views suggesting certain criminals should be pitied rather than despised. Many convicts were driven to crime by desperation rather than inherent depravity; they were victims of circumstance. These individuals had often led otherwise normal lives, and their criminal acts were seen as moments of weakness rather than manifestations of depravity. Prison commissioners therefore viewed the protection of this class as essential to prevent the spread of 'contamination', though as Bethell articulates, this term became conflated with both the spread of criminal thought and disease or mental health (invalid convicts) within a custodial setting.

The 'gentlemen convict' was perceived as belonging to a more 'respectable class of convict' (p.39). While this group of first-time offenders maintained a higher status within their prison compared to the 'normal' convict, those convicted of unnatural offences sodomy, indecency, or homicide could also find their way into the Star Class ranks for their protection. While policy at the time stated that Star Men would receive no preferential treatment compared to their 'normal' peers, Bethell explains that, over time, the opportunities afforded to them often stemmed from their inability to complete the gruelling work of penal labour due to their often educated backgrounds and careers prior to imprisonment rendering them 'incapable' of such harsh labours. The Kimberley Commission in 1895 perceived it as pointless to send such men to conduct penal labour that would likely be

detrimental upon their release. The print shop, therefore, became a highly sought-after position for men within this class—but were Star Men afforded other benefits?

Parkhurst, Portland, Dover, and Chatham (among others) were all recipients of the Star Class. Despite the uniformity reinforced by successive Prison Commissioners, the regimes and opportunities available to those within their detention varied. Chapters 4 and 5 cover the experiences of Star Men across the convict prison estate, with a particular emphasis on Chatham, Maidstone, and later Dover (which became a Star Class-only prison—to the 'delight' of tabloid newspapers, where Dover became known as the 'prison hotel' (p.180)). Convicts here could expect to engage with tasks considered more suitable and less physically demanding for individuals of a Star Man status. Clerical work, printing, educational roles, gardening and horticulture or library work all formulated part of their daily routine. While in other prisons, officers were perceived as becoming 'corrupt' by bringing in newspapers or other 'luxuries' for the Star Class working groups. They were seen as undermining the legitimacy of the convict system, creating significant discrepancies in the treatment and experiences of Star Men and the normal convict. It is unsurprising that Star Men received preferential treatment at times for certain works over the 'ordinary convict', despite the latter bearing a different skill set. After all, 'discipline depended upon affording occupation' (p.112).

The use of the Star Class was perceived by Paterson as the 'prison administrator's overriding moral duty' (p.176), enabling more tailored approaches to the rehabilitation and training of different types of prisoners. With daily regimes accounting for 15 hours of the day out of cell, one might be forgiven for thinking

prisons were 'better' some 100 years ago. It is interesting to see the use of Camp Hill on the Isle of Wight transition between types of prison before becoming a Star Class prison from 1946. This prison represented something like today's Open Category D prisons, with limited fences, open space, and, comparatively, an abundance of opportunities, as it was reported, 'listless, hopeless men had grown alert and cheerful... within a few weeks of their arrival' (p.183).

Bethell concludes the book by referencing the unanticipated creation of both a class and, in the case of Maidstone prison opening in 1909, an establishment for a particular type of 'gentleman' convict. These men were often (though not exclusively) not low-level offenders but rather comprised of white-collar criminals, those who had committed uxoricide (the killing of one's wife) and violent and sexual offenders bound together by their first-time offending status and previously 'good character' references. They benefited from improved prison labour opportunities, diet, open spaces, and what might otherwise

be perceived as 'rehabilitative' opportunities; Star Men were perceived as being 'capable of reform, or not criminal in the first place' (p.201). While concerns around 'contamination' are pertinent throughout the book, there is limited consideration given to whether such respectable 'gentlemen' had a similar effect upon one another. The assumption that punishing recidivists in increasingly punitive ways would coerce their 'rehabilitation' stands in stark contrast with the tailored 'experience' provided to Star Men, who were presumed unlikely to reoffend due to their status. Rather, it was suggested that the exposure of the Star Class in certain convict prisons to their 'normal criminal counterparts' suggested that exposure to their 'normal criminal' counterparts was punishment enough.

'Star Men in English Convict Prisons' provides a glimpse into the development of a separate class of prisoners through changing times, the abolition of transportation, the rise of local and convict prisons, changing philosophies around punishment and reformation, and

the impact of two World Wars, culminating in the Mountbatten report in 1967 and the classification system operational in the English and Welsh system today. Bethell's ability to weave historical context with detailed case studies and broader societal debates makes this book an essential read for anyone interested in the history of penal policy and the treatment of prisoners in England and Wales. While Bethell acknowledges it would be incorrect to draw direct correlations between his work and the state of prisons in England and Wales today, it is almost impossible not to recognise similar regimes involving separation, confinement, and classification of prisoners alongside the often-deplorable environments in which they reside. There likely remains further research to be done on the lives of those involved within the Star Class, their experiences as Star Men, and their life trajectories post-release—whether being a Star Man had the desired outcome and 'reformed' the 'gentleman' would make for a fascinating research project and one this reviewer would most wholly welcome.

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