

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

March 2011 No 194



Editorial Comment

Although this edition of *Prison Service Journal* contains an eclectic range of articles, through these emerge a number of familiar themes exploring the intersection of theory and practice. It is through these junctures that *PSJ* finds its distinctive voice and role.

The edition starts with a historical article by Dr. Alyson Brown that compares the prison system under the leadership of two different administrators. The first was Alexander Paterson, a Commissioner of Prisons for almost a quarter of a century and whose name is associated with a series of liberal humanitarian reforms that shaped what many consider to be a golden age of the modern prison system. The second is the lesser known Charles Rich, a prison governor for a quarter of a century and considered to be a more traditional figure with a concern for order. In this article, Dr. Brown goes beyond these simplistic pictures and presents a more complex picture of contested, unstable and changing penal philosophies in the first half of the 20th century.

This is followed by three articles that consider aspects of the imprisonment of women. Dr Karen Evans and Professor Sandra Walklate provide a critical account of the official responses to the Corston Report, which set out proposals for radical changes in shape of the criminal justice system for women. They argue that the aspirations of Corston have been eroded in the dominant criminal justice ideology. However, they suggest that economic realities rather than political arguments may more effectively force the kind of decarceration and reform advocated by Corston. The second article by Elizabeth Gurien explores the ways in which women who kill are represented in the media, in particular about how these representations are deeply gendered and distorting. Thirdly, there is an article providing an evaluation of a project at HMP Askham Grange where women were able to have overnight visits with their families. This evaluation describes how this enabled women not only to have a more realistic and enriching experience but they were also able to take a more active role in parenting of their children. Whilst they are not intended to provide a comprehensive

overview, these articles do explore some of the theoretical, political and practical issues that are encountered in the imprisonment of women.

The remaining three articles focus on specific groups and issues within the prison system and have important implications for practice. Professor Martin Gill contributes a piece that sets out to explore the motives of those committing fraud. This reveals the range of motives and this points the way towards what may be done to address those issues. Dr Paul Gray and Dr Sam White provide an account of the impact of the collapse of the Inside Out Trust, which had at one stage provided 100 restorative justice workshops in prisons. Whilst many case studies provide evidence about successes, it is equally important, as in this case, to reflect upon failures and to understand how to better manage the consequences. Adrian Hayes and Professor Jenny Shaw discuss services for older prisoners, a subject that has garnered increasing attention over recent years as the number of older prisoners has increased and the need to provide services has grown. They highlight how the Inspectorate of Prisons has been keeping this issue on the agenda and appear to be having positive effects.

This edition closes with an interview with Aubrey Fox, who currently leads on the Bronx Community Solutions project for the New York Centre for Court Innovation, and is also currently working with the Young Foundation in the UK to establish a Centre for Criminal Justice Innovation. In this interview, he discusses his work in both New York and the UK and reflects on innovative practices from the United States of America that may influence the future direction of government policy and respond to the agenda set out in the Green Paper *Breaking the Cycle*.

The articles in this edition weave between policy and practice and attempt to draw these together. This continues the work of *PSJ* in supporting and developing an approach to prison work as a craft, rather than a technical or mechanical process, where professionals are reflective about their practice and aspire to achieve high quality and ethical standards.