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oversight
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*Special Edition: Prison Leadership*

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*Dr Jamie Bennett* is a former prison governor, now a Deputy Director leading operational security for HMPPS.

*Dr Kate Gooch* is a senior lecturer at University of Bath

*Dr Sarah Lewis* is Director of Penal Reform Solutions

*Steve Robertson* is Deputy Governor of HMP Guys Marsh

# JANUARY 2020

**Michael Spurr** is a former Chief Executive Officer of HM Prison and Probation Service

**Dr Kimmett Edgar** is Head of Research at Prison Reform Trust

**Simon Shepherd** is Director of The Butler Trust and author of 'The good book of prisons'. He is interviewed by **Dr. Jamie Bennett,** Deputy Director in HM Prison and Probation Service.

**Brendan O'Friel** is a retired former prison governor

Cover photograph courtesy

# Editorial Comment

**Each year, *Prison Service Journal* publishes articles based upon the annual Perrie Lectures. This is a longstanding and greatly valued collaboration, of which PSJ is very proud.**

The Perrie Lectures is an annual event which has the purpose of stimulating dialogue between criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector and all those with an academic, legal or practical interest in offenders and their families. It is hoped that the event will contribute towards improving the care of offenders, and advancing penal policy, in its broadest sense. These are aspirations that are shared by *Prison Service Journal*. The Lectures are named in honour of Bill Perrie, who retired from the Prison Service in 1978. He worked as a prison governor for 32 years, latterly at HMPs Hull, Long Lartin, and Birmingham. He was noted for his contribution to the development of hostels, working out schemes, and regimes for long term prisoners.

This year, the theme of the lectures was 'What does leadership mean in prisons?'. This is a theme that has been the focus of political attention during recent years. As Secretary of State, Michael Gove called for prison governors to have greater autonomy and piloted a new model of 'reform prisons' that operated with reduced central prescription. In contrast, Prisons Minister Rory Stewart sought assistance from the military in order to develop a proposal for a training college for new governors. A third approach emerged in the 2016 White Paper, *Prison Safety and Reform*, which both called for governors to be more empowered and to be more accountable through independent scrutiny and the production of performance league tables. It is in this contested climate that the Perrie Lectures invited speakers to contribute to the debate on prison leadership.

The first lecture was delivered by Dr. Jamie Bennett, a prison Governor and researcher, titled 'Against prison management'. The lecture criticized what Bennett described as being the dominant approach to prison management, which he characterized as over-using targets, audits and other measures so leaving little space for individuality, creativity and autonomy; over-emphasizing compliance with measures for their own sake without meaningful connection with the social context, and; nurturing compliant behaviour and uniformity amongst prison managers with the aim of producing identikit corporate citizens. In contrast, Bennett called for an alternative approach, which he described as starting to emerge in some corners of the prison system. The main features of this alternative approach were described as: a strong concern with the moral and social context of imprisonment; more locally-rooted institutions that are connected to and engaged with the communities they are situated within and the communities that are situated within them; optimism about the creativity and self-motivation of people and their capacity to do good, and; a more craftsman-like set of management practices that imaginatively and sensitively engage with the moral, cultural and emotional dimensions or organisational life.

Dr. Kate Gooch, senior lecturer and University of Bath, delivered the second lecture, 'The Opportunity, Challenges and Politics of Prison Leadership', which drew heavily upon her research in prisons. Gooch also rejected the over-emphasis upon performance measurement, and instead drew attention to the quality of leadership, which 'creates an environment where people are more likely to flourish rather than disintegrate, where lives are saved not lost, where people grow instead of shrink, and where people find some hope even in what can often be a hopeless situation'. An important contribution of Gooch's lecture was to draw attention to the changing role of the prison Governor, with reduced formal power and authority meaning that a traditional hierarchical and directive approach would no longer be sustainable. Instead, Governors had to develop relationship and be able to connect with people, motivate and engage them, and shape their actions. Gooch also sensitively dissects and reflects the challenges of prison leadership, revealing it as a technically and emotionally complex task.

Dr. Sarah Lewis, an independent researcher, and Steve Robertson, Deputy Governor of HMP Guys Marsh, delivered lectures that described their collaboration at HMP Guys Marsh, called the Prison Growth Project. This was initiated by Lewis, drawing upon Scandinavian practices. In particular, the project enabled those who lived and worked in the prison to participate in community activities, supporting each other and forming meaningful connections. Together, Lewis and Robertson capture the practices, values and the emotional texture of the approach they developed. As Robertson describes, in contrast to the traditional hierarchical approach: 'Leadership should not be linked to grade, rank or title, leadership is bestowed on those who have the right skills to do so, and who do not think they are in any way better than others'. The Prison Growth Project played a significant role in the

improvements delivered at HMP Guys Marsh and recognised by the independent inspectorate of prisons.

The final lecture was delivered by former Chief Executive of HM Prison and Probation Service, Michael Spurr. This focusses on what he describes as the 'three P's' — purpose, presence and perspective. In relation to purpose, Spurr rightly highlights the conflicting and contested purposes of prisons and how leaders must be able to work with ambiguity and dynamic tensions, attempting to balance and make sense of the messiness of organisational life. Presence captures the role of leaders in building relationships and role modelling the right approach. The third area, perspective, Spurr describes as people maintaining their values and having focus despite the competing pressures that they face. Spurr concludes that his prescription is also an alternative to the narrow, constraining managerial approach that over-emphasises targets and monitoring.

The edition also includes two articles that are intended to complement the Perrie Lectures. The role of prisons is the focus of Dr. Kimmett Edgar's article on the work of the Prison Reform Trust supporting active citizen panels. These panels involve facilitating collaboration between those who live and work in prisons to identify the most significant problems and develop proposals for addressing them. The second article is an interview with Simon Shepherd, Director of Butler Trust. This interview particularly focusses on 'The good book of prisons', which Shepherd produced after visiting every prison in England and Wales in order to identify what was best in each prison. These two articles intend to emphasise the role of prisoners and charitable organisations in leading and improving prisons.

This edition is the fruit of a long and productive collaboration between PSJ and Perrie Lectures. Both organisations intend to encourage debate, discussion and reflection, but also stimulate progressive actions and developments in practice. Long may that progressive partnership continue.

# Against Prison Management

*Dr Jamie Bennett is a former prison governor, now a Deputy Director leading operational security for HMPPS.*

**It is unusual, perhaps even shocking that as a prison manger I am declaring myself to be against prison management. Over the course of this article I hope it will become clear that I am not against the people who work in prisons, including prison governors, and I am not seeking to call out senior officials. I am not against HM Prison and Probation Service or a prison abolitionist. I am not against forms of organisation or the ordering of activities. I am not seeking chaos. What I am against is a form of management that has come to dominate prisons, and has had harmful consequences. I want to clearly describe these developments and their effects. But I do not want to simply be a critic, I also want to articulate an emerging alternative and more positive approach.**

## Methodology

My analysis is based not only upon my work experience, of more than two decades working in prisons and over a decade as a governor, but also upon research I have been conducting and publishing on prison management for over a decade.

The research includes the book *The working lives of prison managers*[1], based upon research conducted in two category C prisons in 2007 and 2008. This included over 60 days of observations and 60 interviews with managers at various grades and roles in the prisons. I returned to one of the original sites in 2014 and 2015 to conduct a short research project to observe the impact of changes introduced as part of the austerity programme, including Fair and Sustainable and benchmarking.[2] This involved five days of observation and sixteen interviews. A further project conducted in 2017 focussed on one of the flagship 'reform' prisons established during Michael

Gove's tenure as Justice Secretary.[3] This included ten days of observation and 16 interviews. Finally, I have reflected upon my own experiences of working in prisons, using an autoethnographic approach to explore the experience of governing a therapeutic community prison.[4]

This article is both a synthesis and evolution of this research, drawing together the themes and observations of over a decade of prison research and practice.

## Against What?

The 1980 saw dramatic changes in western societies as the post-War welfare society was eroded and replaced by the emergence of neo-liberalism. This became embedded in subsequent decades. Neo-liberalism describes a return to laissez-faire economics including facilitating the mechanisms of production and exchange, enabling mass consumption, expanding the reach and control of commercial organisations, and legitimising inequalities in wealth. This is not solely an issue of economics but has complex social, political, legal and cultural dimensions that have permeated the life of the contemporary Western world.[5] In organisations, it has been observed that a dominant form of management has evolved[6], which includes a movement towards larger organisations with hierarchical structures that attempt to monitor and control the behaviour of employees through target setting and the use of information technology. It also encompasses the use of Human Resource Management techniques such as recruitment, reward, appraisal, development, communication and consultation in order to shape the ways that employees think about their work, enlisting them as corporate citizens, a process described by Nikolas Rose as 'governing the soul'.[7]

1. Bennett, J. (2015) *The working lives of prison managers: Global change, local cultures and individual agency in the late modern prison Basingstoke:* Palgrave Macmillan
2. Bennett, J. (2015) *Managing prisons in an age of austerity* in Prison Service Journal no.222, p.15-24
3. Bennett, J. (2019) *Reform, Resistance and Managerial Clawback: The Evolution of 'Reform Prisons' in England in The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice* Vol 58 No 1., p. 45–64
4. Bennett, J. (2018) *Governing a therapeutic community prison in an age of managerialism in Therapeutic Communities: The International Journal of Therapeutic Communities* vol.39 issue 1, p.14-25
5. Bell, E. (2011) *Criminal justice and neoliberalism* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
6. Parker, M. (2002) *Against Management: Organization in the age of managerialism* Cambridge: Polity Press
7. Rose, N. (1999) *Governing the soul: The shaping of the private self* Second Edition London: Free Association Books

Together, these trends, combining tighter, centralised structures and attempts to re-engineer individual identity, have sometimes been termed as 'managerialism'.

These developments have influenced prison management. In particular, there has been the proliferation of technologies and techniques of monitoring including the introduction of performance targets and indicators, audits, and ratings systems. It is important to recognise that such changes are not merely technical, but also have significant cultural impact. In particular, they have a role in altering professional orientations and outlooks. Leonidas Cheliotis[8] has analysed the processes that have reshaped how managers think as well as how they behave. He described three processes that have encouraged greater compliance amongst prison managers First, there is an increasingly hierarchical division of labour so that managers become focused on service delivery rather than engaging in wider cultural, moral or strategic development. Second, there is intensive competition, fuelled by privatisation and performance targets. Third is the breeding of a new, up-and-coming generation of blasé professionals who are less concerned about moral aspects of imprisonment and see their work as a general management role. In a previous Perrie Lecture, Alison Liebling described that there had been a shift from a welfare orientation amongst prison managers to greater 'economic rationality'.[9]

The prison management that has emerged and that I am against is one that over-uses targets, audits and other measures so leaving little space for individuality, creativity and autonomy; over-emphasises compliance with measures for their own sake without meaningful connection with the social context, and; nurtures compliant behaviour and uniformity amongst prison managers with the aim of producing identikit corporate citizens

> I will describe six: meaninglessness; gaming the system; moral blindness; ineffectiveness; entrenching inequality, and: creating a toxic work environment.

Prisons are not alone is seeing these practices evolve. They have been seen across the public sector and across different countries. My work on prison management shows that these approaches are deeply embedded in practice, culture and individual identity. They are enduring and are resistant to attempts at reform.

**Why am I against prison management?**

So why am I against such well-established and common place set of practices? The work I, and many others, have conducted have revealed profound problems with the managerialist approach. Here, I will describe six: meaninglessness; gaming the system; moral blindness; ineffectiveness; entrenching inequality, and: creating a toxic work environment.

First, there are there are long-standing general criticisms of quantitative performance targets as being meaningless as a result of their technical flaws[10] and because the work of complex social institutions cannot be credibly reduced to performance measures.[11] Prison managers I have interviewed are not slavishly uncritical of managerial measurement and indeed many were conscious of their limitations including that they do not always reflect what is important; they are inflexible, not always reflecting the context, and; these measures did not take account of quality. More theoretically, Richard Sparks et al argued that:

> '…managerialism — with its reliance on abstract systems and categories — will typically not be too interested in the more 'dense' social relations, and the sensitivity to local historical traditions and past events, implied by the concept of 'a sense of place'.' [12]

In other words, rigid, centrally generated measures do not meaningfully capture the lived experience and

8. Cheliotis, L. (2006) *How Iron is the Iron Cage of New Penology? The Role of Human Agency in the Implementation of Criminal Justice Policy in Punishment and Society* Vol.8 No.3, p.313-340
9. Liebling, A. (2011) *Perrie Lecture: The cost to prison legitimacy of cuts* in *Prison Service Journal* No.198 p.3-11
10. Cave, M., Kogan, M. and Smith, R (eds) (1990) *Output and Performance Measurement in Government: The State of the Art* London: Kingsley; Smith, P. and Goddard, M. (2002) *Performance Management and Operational Research: A Marriage Made in Heaven? in Journal of the Operational Research Society,* Vol. 53, No. 3 p.247-55
11. Hennessy, P. (1990) *The Political and Administrative Background* in Cave, M., Kogan, M. and Smith, R. (eds) *Output and Performance Measurement in Government: The State of the Art* London: Jessica Kingsley; Fioramonti, L. (2014) *How numbers rule the world: The use and abuse of statistics in global politics* London: Zed books
12. Sparks, R., Bottoms, A. and Hay, W. (1996) *Prisons and the Problem of Order* Oxford: Clarendon Press p.78

realities of life in a particular prison. It is for this reason that former Chief Inspector of Prisons, Dame Anne Owers, described the creation of 'virtual prison' that is 'the one that exists in the governor's office, at headquarters, in the minister's red boxes — as compared with the 'actual prison' being operated on the ground'.[13] In other words, these measures are lacking in significance, value and meaning.

A second, and chronic problem of managerialism is that of gaming the system. This describes both a process whereby those subjected to a system of management resort to varying strategies and practices, including illegitimate ones, in order to meet the targets, without concern for the underlying intention of the measures. Gaming can be particularly induced by systems that incorporate a degree of self-interest either through financial rewards or the use of competitive performance tables.[14] There were clearly examples in the sites I conducted research where performance information was submitted that was not accurate.[15] For example, purposeful activity figures were submitted on a standardised form without reflecting the real time spent working; official start and finish times would be recorded rather than actual times and interruptions would not be captured. Other examples included offending behaviour programme completions being carried between accounting years in order to meet targets; there were criticisms of inaccurate recording of accidents and serious assaults in some prisons; it was stated that prisoners were moved around the prison at the end of each month in order to meet overcrowding targets (i.e. they were moved out of doubled cells); staff who had left one prison were still counted as part of the control and restraint team; and the dates on late complaint forms were amended so that they appeared to have been submitted on time. These practices were widely carried out and accepted. It was generally viewed that such practices were necessary in order to ensure that the official performance of the prison as expressed in targets was maintained. This distortion and inaccuracy has been has been described as a chronic feature of managerial practices in prisons,[16] and is a recognised feature of contemporary performance measurement across organisations.[17] HMPPS also recognises this issue and has been actively taking steps in order to improve what is described as 'data integrity' (by creating a measure).

Gaming is not just a few bad apples, it is a chronic feature of the system of managerilaism, a system that creates a world in which the requirement to comply and meet targets is stronger that normative values such as honesty, transparency and integrity.

> Gaming is not just a few bad apples, it is a chronic feature of the system of managerilaism, a system that creates a world in which the requirement to comply and meet targets is stronger that normative values such as honesty, transparency and integrity.

The third concern is that managerial approaches create moral blindness, a term that refers to a lack of awareness or insensitivity to the moral dimensions of one's life, work and relations with others. Zygmunt Bauman has argued that the conditions of the contemporary world, including managerial practices, have promoted moral blindness by placing economic calculus above moral concern.[18] In a study of criminal justice managers in the early 1990s, Andrew Rutherford described three dominant credos: punitive (a strongly held dislike of prisoners and desire to see them punished); liberal humanitarian (empathy for offenders and victims, desire to respect their rights and offer opportunities for rehabilitation, and; expedient managerialism (concerned with disposing of the task at hand as efficiently as possible).[19] Rutherford suggested that expedient managerialism was growing in influence, and subsequent research on prison managers has confirmed its progress towards ideological domination. Liebling and Crewe[20] have

13. Owers, A. (2007) *Imprisonment in the twenty-first century: a view from the inspectorate* in Jewkes, Y (ed) *Handbook on Prisons* Cullompton: Willan p.1-21: p.16-17
14. Muller, J. (2018) *The tyranny of metrics* Princeton: Princeton University Press
15. See Bennett (2015) n.1
16. Carlen, P. (2002) *Governing the Governors: Telling Tales of Managers, Mandarins and Mavericks in Criminal Justice* Vol.2, No.1, p.27-49
17. See Fioramonti (2014) n.11
18. Bauman, Z. and Donskis, L. (2013) *Moral blindness: The loss of sensitivity in liquid modernity* Cambridge: Polity Press
19. Rutherford, A. (1993) *Criminal Justice and the Pursuit of Decency* Oxford: Oxford University Press
20. Liebling, A. and Crewe, B. (2013) *Prisons beyond the New Penology: The shifting moral foundations of prison management* in Simon, J. and Sparks, R. (eds) *The Sage handbook of punishment and society* London: Sage p.283-307

described that from 2007 onwards, intensified by the pressures of austerity, economy and efficiency were prioritized above any moral mission. They described this as an era of 'managerialism-minus', characterised as combining 'economic rationalism' with 'punitive minimalism' offering a no frills form of imprisonment. This shift was apparently accepted and implemented without resistance from managers, despite any personal misgivings they felt. This illustrates how managerialism can lead to moral ambivalence, a culture of corporate passivity and compliance. As Hannah Arendt has so chillingly illustrated, such everyday willingness to comply is banal and morally dangerous.[21]

Fourth, despite the claims of ideological advocates, managerialism has not proven to be a panacea. Indeed, it is possible to point to significant failures than show that it is ineffective. In his 2013 Perrie Lecture, the then Chief Inspector of Prisons, Nick Hardwick drew the lessons from the inquiry into the failure of Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, conducted by Robert Francis.[22] In this report, Francis concluded that 'patients were routinely neglected by a Trust that was preoccupied with cost cutting, targets and processes and which lost sight of its fundamental responsibility to provide safe care'. Hardwick drew a parallel with the deteriorating conditions in prisons at that time. It is not hard to find further examples in the following years.

Evidence presented to the Justice Select Committee, in their 2017-18 inquiry into the damning inspection report at HMP Liverpool showed that monitoring and reporting systems singularly failed to highlight the problems in the prison at that time.[23] Self-reports by the prison over-estimated their progress and external management checks failed to pick up this gap. The processes of monitoring created a virtual prison distant from the reality. This is not an isolated example, it is an illustration of a chronic problem of managerialism and compliance cultures. In his evidence to the select committee, Michael Spurr described:

> *'Governors across the system have been coping with a huge amount of challenge. In one sense, they and their staff — Liverpool was the same — were in coping mode. They were saying 'we will make this work'.[24]*

This desire to quietly comply or have the appearance of doing so, no matter what the demands, is a feature of managerialism.

The over-reliance on measurement combined with the blind faith of complaint managers creates virtual prisons, or what Onora O'Neill has described as a 'fantasy of total control'.[25] In fact they offer no guarantees of success instead they potentially offer a dangerous illusion.

The fifth concern is that performance measures obscure and entrench inequality. The problems of inequality in prisons, for both staff and prisoners, have been consistently highlighted.[26] In my research, many people argued that systems of measurement and monitoring meant that there was a level playing field in which everyone had an equal opportunity. Such a view is, at best limited. While monitoring is an important element of any strategy for change, over-reliance upon this can obscure the deeper culture and structures of inequality. In my research on managers, many, particularly women and people from minority groups, have described the experience of resistance from others, being overlooked or being unable to access informal sponsorship from more senior colleagues. They have also described how this has made it more difficult to achieve targets, or the privilege of such support has made it easier for others to do so. From this perspective measurement did not create a level playing field, but instead obscured the reality behind the numbers.

> # The over-reliance on measurement combined with the blind faith of complaint managers creates virtual prisons.

21.  Arendt, H. (1963) *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil* New York: Viking Press
22.  Hardwick, N. (2011) *Perrie Lecture: Lessons for the Prison Service from the Mid-Staffs inquiry in Prison Service Journal* No.211 p.3-13
23.  Justice Select Committee of House of Commons (2018) Oral evidence:  HM Inspectorate of Prisons report on HMP Liverpool, HC 751 available at http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/justice-committee/hm-inspectorate-of-prisons-report-on-hmp-liverpool/oral/77512.pdf accessed on 02 August 2019
24.  Ibid
25.  O'Neill, O (2002) *A question of trust* (Reith Lectures 2002) available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/the-reith-lectures/transcripts/2000/ accessed on 19 May 2013
26.  Lammy, D. (2018) The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System. London: Ministry of Justice available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf accessed on 02 August 2019

Finally, managerialism contributes towards creating a toxic work environment. In particular, some have described an individualism and decline in collaboration fostered by a target-obsessed culture. An illustration of this was provided by one manager who said of targets and measures:

*'I will pursue the ones that I have an interest in because it will reflect on me, but I'm not too bothered about things like C[ontrol] and R[estraint] because I don't manage [that]…As long as I send back my correspondence when I get it, I'm not bothered whether we reach 100 per cent or 90 per cent in actual fact. I've done my bit. If it was only 75 per cent, I'd say how many letters did I get, how many have you had from me on time, 100 per cent well that's all I'm bothered about. I've got enough on my plate without worrying about everyone else's beefs'*

As well as this individualism, many people described a perception that targets were backed up by a punitive mechanism that would ensnare those that failed to achieve. This was summed up in phrases such as: ' [if] we don't deliver the right numbers, I personally get a kicking', '[If they are not met] you get absolutely hammered', 'if we don't meet them, we get our arses kicked if it's our fault', '[If they are not met managers will] throw a few fucks into them', '[I will have to] face the wrath of my boss', '[they are] used as a stick'. There was a belief that harsh sanctions would arise from non-attainment. In reality, managers who did not succeed in meeting targets were not dismissed, managed as poor performers or treated in harsh ways, and indeed many would have their reasons for non-attainment which would usually be accepted as legitimate. However, managers were concerned about this and felt that the experience of accounting for non-compliance was adversarial and this caused them anxiety about the security of their position, reputation and future career.

There is a low trust environment. National and strategic communication refer to the need for what is called management or operational grip.[27] Such a term implies more intensive exercise of hierarchical scrutiny and control. It assumes that those experiencing the grip cannot act to their full potential without such interventionist actions. It also assumes that those exercising such grip hold superior powers of insight and expertise. The notion also assumes that tighter control is the best means for achieving improved outcomes. As I have previously raised it cannot be taken for granted that such assumptions are tenable. At this juncture, I am highlighting the working culture this creates, which is one that was described by one manager in the term 'trusting is good but checking is better'. This is an environment characterised by a disdain for the motivations and capabilities of subordinates and an arrogance about the abilities of so-called superiors.

Another important element of this toxic work environment relates to well-being. Managers often experience an unswerving drive to comply with targets. This can be seen in phrases such as: 'you don't miss a [target], you just don't do it'; 'I don't like to fail things'; and 'I guard them with my life'. However, sometimes this was expressed in ways that appeared extreme. For example, one manager described how he found it 'devastating' that he had failed to meet a target despite the fact that this was caused by a large increase in the prisoner population. Another manager described that the thought of not meeting a target 'makes me feel ill thinking about it', whilst a third described that they had been burned out and had become 'fraggled' as a result of chasing a target in difficult circumstances. These intense, physiological feelings were elicited by the drive that these individuals had regarding targets. It was clear from these comments that these measures played a powerful and dominating role in how managers viewed themselves, their self-worth and it potentially affected their well-being.

It is for all of these six reasons that I am against prison management, by which I mean the over-reliance on targets, audits and other measures, the disconnection between measures and their social context, and the attempt to nurture identikit corporate managers. I am not, however, throwing up my hands in the air, giving in or having a bit of a moan. I believe that the alternative is already here and has always survived, sometimes as a guerrilla campaign, but now as a growing movement to reform prison management.

> Another important element of this toxic work environment relates to well-being. Managers often experience an unswerving drive to comply with targets.

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27. E.g. HM Prison and Probation Service (2018) *Business Plan* 2018-2019. London: Ministry of Justice. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/724911/HMPPS_Business_Plan_2018 -19.pdf accessed on 02 August 2019, p.6

## Rethinking prison organisation

In rethinking prison management, I want to draw upon the work of Martin Parker, Professor of Organisation Studies at the University of Bristol. I owe him a great intellectual debt, particularly his book *Against Management*[28], which I consciously adapted for the title of this article. I see Parker's central argument being that our dominant notion of business or management reproduce a set of assumptions about hierarchy, capitalist markets and gender amongst other issues. This is an approach I have applied in my critique of prison management. But Parker is not only against management, he is for what he calls 'organising'. By this he means a 'more open-ended and generous process' that is alert to the wider social context and responsibilities.[29] In short, Parker is arguing that there are different, less harmful, more enriching ways of organising. I want to suggest some ways in which prisons could be organised differently, and in some cases are doing so. As Parker says, 'Human beings are fantastically imaginative and creative, so why are we teaching people that market managerialism is the solution to every problem?'.[30] I am not naïve about this, like Parker, who recognises that his failure is already assured as his calls for action will never be fully adopted. So, I do not suggest that I have the right prescription, or even if I do that my ideas will be adopted. I nevertheless want to participate in the debate.

> …the introduction of management tools for measurement, monitoring, improved administration and accountability was not done for its own sake, but was done with the intention of turning the liberal intentions of senior professionals into reality

## Rethinking values

I described earlier that in a study of criminal justice managers in the early 1990s, Andrew Rutherford identified three dominant credos: punitive (a strongly held dislike of prisoners and desire to see them punished); liberal humanitarian (empathy for offenders and victims, desire to respect their rights and offer opportunities for rehabilitation, and; expedient managerialism (concerned with disposing of the task at hand as efficiently as possible).[31] Rutherford suggested that expedient managerialism was growing in influence, and subsequent research on prison managers has confirmed its progress towards ideological domination.

I want to return to the period in which managerialism started to really take hold, around the turn of the century. In particular it was translated into prisons by people such as Phil Wheatley and Martin Narey. These were people who had a deep knowledge of prisons, their social context and practiced with a sense of moral values.

At that stage, the introduction of management tools for measurement, monitoring, improved administration and accountability was not done for its own sake, but was done with the intention of turning the liberal intentions of senior professionals into reality, and preventing abuse or major organisational failures such as the escapes of the mid-1990s. Ben Crewe and Alison Liebling described this era as 'managerialism-plus' where the use of techniques of management control were 'overtly welded to better standards for prisoners and to greater control and encouragement of staff'.[32] The belief in the moral purpose was so intense that former Director General of the Prison Service, Martin Narey, went as far to say:

> '…show me a prison achieving all its KPIs and I will show you a prison which is also treating prisoners with dignity'[33]

Although never entirely disappearing, this moral purpose was in eclipse for many years, submerged by

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28.  Parker, M. (2002) *Against Management: Organization in the age of managerialism* Cambridge: Polity Press
29.  Parker, M. and Evans, M. (2019) *Shut Down The Business School* available at https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/shut-down-the-business-school/ accessed on 02 August 2019.
30.  ibid
31.  Rutherford (1993) see n.19
32.  Liebling and Crewe (2013) see n.20 p.293
33.  quoted in Liebling, A. assisted by Arnold, H. (2004) *Prisons and Their Moral Performance: A Study of Values, Quality and Prison Life* Oxford: Clarendon Press. p.68

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the management tools as if the technology took over humanity. More recently this concern with the moral ambitions of prisons has re-emerged. Most prominently, the nurturing of rehabilitative cultures has revived and promoted professional interest in the social and cultural dimensions of prison life.[34] It has encouraged greater creativity and sensitivity to the experiences of those living or working in prisons.

The revival in liberal and progressive professional values offers a greater sense of meaning for many people who work in prisons. Leaders, formal and informal, at all levels throughout the organisation are being offered the opportunity to reshape the culture and express themselves. They are able to be 'entrepreneurs of identity'[35], crafting a vision that people can believe in, sharing aspiration and energy to make a positive difference.

This rebalancing of management technologies and a sense of mission is an important development that offers a return to the aims of those turn of the century pioneers: a desire to make prisons better not only organisationally but also morally.

### Rethinking measurement and power

I want to address the issue of measurement and targets as this is so central to managerialism. It is also critical to the issue of power, where targets are centrally directed, they also reinforce hierarchical control. I am not arguing that there should not be any measures, but I am suggesting that they are both designed and deployed differently. I am suggesting that the relationship of power between central and local should be recalibrated.

Measures that are opportunistic or simplistic are of limited value and can be harmful. More meaningful measures do exist, but are complex and time consuming. I would particularly highlight the HM Inspectorate of Prisons' *Expectations*, carefully crafted from international human rights standards and assessed by a multi-disciplinary team, within a consciously

nurtured professional environment.[36] Their assessments are meaningful judgements that are underpinned by liberal-humane values. I would also highlight Measuring the Quality of Life and Staff Quality of Life surveys developed by Professor Alison Liebling at University of Cambridge.[37] These are rigorously researched and validated tools that have been deployed to assess social and occupational climates.

Many of the other measures, audits and target used though are poorly designed, inappropriately used and given greater weight than is merited. Would prisons really be less effective without the myriad of traffic-light rated measures, centrally-prescribed assurance checks and dashboards that are being generated? Many I have interviewed through my research have observed a growing assurance 'industry', by which they allude to an ever-expanding and self-absorbed machinery.

I am not arguing that there should not be any measures, but I am saying that central targets should be limited to more significant and meaningful inspections and MQPL. With a less but better quality centralised assessment, there is the opportunity for greater local creativity in identifying strategic priorities and assurance to support this. This is what happened initially in the reform prisons in the North East. These were established by Michael Gove, in an attempt to replicate the greater professional autonomy achieved in schools and hospitals through academisation and foundation trusts respectively. The reform prisons initially withdrew from centralised target-setting and in its place there was a visionary reimagining of the relationship between the prison and the local community and the contribution of prison staff and prisoners. There was an attempt to go beyond an insular focus on internal management targets, and instead to situate the prison in a wider social context including not just the criminal justice system, but also local government and business. A vision was created taking account of wide consultations, and measures started to be crafted that would support the delivery of

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34. Mann, R., Fitzalan Howard, F. and Tew, J. (2018) *What is a rehabilitative prison culture? in Prison Service Journal* No. 235 p.3-9
35. Haslam, A., Reicher, S. D. & Platlow, M (2011) *The New Psychology of Leadership: identity, influence, and power.* London: Psychology Press.
36. Available at https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/our-expectations/ accessed on 02 August 2019
37. Liebling assisted by Arnold (2004) see n.33

a locally developed strategic plan. This experiment only lasted a short period before centralised targets were reintroduced. It nevertheless offered a glimpse of how prisons might play a different and wider role in local communities, how they might develop and deliver localised strategies and governance.

The appointment of Dr. Jo Farrer as Chief Executive of HMPPS may offer an opportunity to revisit some of these ideas. In her initial published comments, Dr. Farrer has discussed how prisons might play a role connecting services that contribute towards reducing reoffending, and how there might be a different balance between trust (at least earned trust) and assurance.[38] These signals suggest that a new path may open up, one in which, like the reform prisons in the North East, there is an opportunity for greater creativity and localisation.

### Rethinking engagement and participation

Moving away from a highly centralised, prescriptive and hierarchical structure entails a rethinking of the role of those who live and work in prisons, as well as those people who have a stake including local communities.

People are individual thinking and feeling agents rather than the homogenised commodities or depersonalised organisational tools envisaged by managerialism. An alternative approach would place greater emphasis on self-determination and choice. Giving people the opportunity to participate in shaping their work environment, the goals and the methods for achieving them.

Many organisations, including prisons, have strengthened communications, consultations and rewards to nurture greater engagement by employees. This 'empowerment' approach has become increasingly favoured in both public and commercial sector management. Again, in the reform prisons of the North East, there was a concerted attempt reimagine a whole set of relationships, engagement and participation. As has been mentioned, this started with the community, opening up to other organisations, building collaborations and connections. Internally, it also meant creating a more professionally diverse workforce, by importing senior expertise in areas such as probation, psychology, finance and HR. They were given greater prominence and authority so as to broaden the skills of the team. This challenged the traditional professional hierarchies and gave a stronger role to a wider range of expertise.

In relation to employees more broadly, the reform prison envisaged a transformation in what they described as 'mindset' so that rather than being reliant upon a directive hierarchy, employees would take greater self-responsibility, acting as 'role models' and 'enablers'. A typical account of this role was offered by one executive team member, who described that they were trying to build a team in which people would:

> '[Take] a personal responsibility to work with each other and the men who live in the prison, it's not about I do it because I'm told to, it's what the purpose of what you are doing, why are you doing it and how are you doing it? What's the objective you want to achieve at the end of the day'

The intention was to create a more active and engaged staff group who would work creatively to realise the progressive aims of the prison. There was a desire to create a more enriching environment for its own sake, were people could self-actualise or 'achieve their potential', but it also had an organisational benefit by attempting to 'draw out and benefit from that discretionary effort that people exercise when they are really engaged in what they do'.

To realise this goal, managers were developed through a programme aimed at moving from the hierarchical task centred approach to one in which they would become 'The kind of leader we want them to be…we want them to be able to inspire and motivate the people that work for them'.

As with employees, there was a vision to develop prisoners as role models and enablers of change. The ambition was for this to be built upon normalised interactions including the use of first names, less confrontational interpersonal exchanges and focussing on rewarding good behaviour rather than punishing bad. It was generally recognised that involving prisoners in the governance of the prison would be positive, including formal and informal consultations about policy developments, setting up representative prison

> People are individual thinking and feeling agents rather than the homogenised commodities or depersonalised organisational tools envisaged by managerialism.

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38 'Jo Farrar, HMPPS CEO – a shared purpose' HM Prison and Probation Service Intranet article published on 24 May 2019

councils and having prisoner representatives on management committees. The desire to create a stronger sense of internal 'community' can be seen as a way of giving prisoners a stake in the institution in which they live, so as to produce legitimacy.[39]

These approaches are also adopted at HMP Grendon, a highly successful institution that operates as a series of therapeutic communities for men who have committed very serious violent and sexually violent offences.[40] Grendon has a professionally diverse workforce, including specialist officers, psychotherapists, creative therapists, psychologists and probation officers amongst others. The teams are integrated and have a shared sense of purpose. They are well trained and supported. The residents also take an active role in the therapeutic work, the resolution of conflicts and the running of the establishment. This is a long-standing example of the potential of empowered self-governance in prisons.

Although the work of the North East reform prisons were drawn to a conclusion before they had been realised, and Grendon is often marginalised as an exceptional case, these examples nevertheless offer a strategic blueprint for rethinking the role of the community, employees and prisoners.

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situations and variations in performance or delivery but a transactional leader is proactive, constantly searching for ways to develop and improve, and; transactional leaders attempts to make employees comply through the use of rewards and sanctions, and in contrast a transformational leader appeals to higher ideas and attempts to motivate and empower people to transcend individual interest in order to achieve wider benefits.

The difference can be seen in Richard Sennett's work on craftsmanship.[43] Leadership, particularly in human and social contexts such as prisons, is not simply about the efficient provision of predefined services. It is also about the desire to do a good job for its own sake. Craftsmanship, as Sennett describes, involves the relentless search for improvement, through the skilled use of tools, the sensitive organisation of labour and an appreciation of materials being used. And so in prisons, craftsman-like leadership involves the skilled use of management structures and resources, the sensitive organisation of those who live and work there and an appreciation of prisons as a social institution that has strong moral and emotional dimensions. A new management culture would see a shift from conformity and compliance to creativity and craftsmanship.

### Rethinking leadership practice

For managers, the challenge is to escape the iron cage that has been constructed. Practice has become confined within the transactional mould. What was envisaged in the reform prisons, and in concepts such as 'rehabilitative leadership'[41] is a more transformational approach. The main differences between these approaches are[42]: transactional leaders work within the culture and constraints of the organisation, while a transformational leaders seeks to develop new ideas and practices, challenging and changing the culture; transactional leaders are reactive, responding to

### Conclusion: A politics of love?

I have suggested here that I am against prison management, or at least the dominant mode that is characterised by the over-use of targets, audits and other measures so leaving little space for individuality, creativity and autonomy; the over-emphasis on compliance with measures for their own sake without meaningful connection with the social context, and; the nurturing of compliant behaviour and uniformity amongst prison managers with the aim of producing identikit corporate citizens. I have also outlined out an alternative set of practices that offer a different route.

39.  Sparks, R., Bottoms, A. and Hay, W. (1996) *Prisons and the Problem of Order* Oxford: Clarendon Press
40.  See Bennett, J. and Shuker, R. (2017) *The potential of prison-based democratic therapeutic communities* in International Journal of Prisoner Health, 13:1 pp. 19 - 24
41.  HM Prison and Probation Service (2019) *Rehabilitative Leadership – A sourcebook for prison managers.* London: HMPPS
42.  E.g. Bass, B. (1990) *From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision in Organizational Dynamics* Vol. 18, Iss.3, p.19-31
43.  Sennett, R. (2009) *The Craftsman London:* Penguin

These approaches are characterised by: a strong concern with the moral and social context of imprisonment; more locally-rooted institutions that are connected to and engaged with the communities they are situated within and the communities that are situated within them; optimism about the creativity and self-motivation of people and their capacity to do good, and; a more craftsman-like set of management practices that imaginatively and sensitively engage with the moral, cultural and emotional dimensions or organisational life.

I see this approach as having much in common with what Max Harris and Philip McKibbin have described as a 'politics of love'.[44] They were not talking about romantic love or personal relations, instead the term was used in a way that can be contrasted with other terms that you will be familiar with such as the 'politics of hate', 'politics of division' or 'politics of power'. A 'politics of love' describes a value-based approach to politics characterised by care, concern and commitment. A politics of love is not an approach that offers a ready-made answer in every situation, indeed it recognises that the world is a complex and messy place and finding solutions requires collaboration and engagement underpinned by mutuality, respect and trust. It is more a process and a set of values that should shape how we engage with those around us professionally and politically. The alternative approach to prison organisation I have sketched draws upon these ideas. It describes a set of relationships, organisational structures and practices that are underpinned by values and love.

I want to return to a quote I shared earlier, which characterises the culture of managerialism. It was a comment in which a manager described that 'trusting is good but checking is better'. This quote illustrates how managerialism corrodes social relations and values, it entrenches power, domination and alienation, and diminishes the skills and capacities of people at work. A politics of love would not suggest that there is no place for checking — openness, accountability and transparency are clearly important — nor would it suggest that blind trust is a substitute — responsibility and engagement are critical. A politics of love suggests a more collaborative and meaningful set of questions about prisons, the relationships between people, the environment that is created and the services that are offered. A politics of love might start by asking those who live and work in prisons, as well as those who are part of the wider community: 'what do we agree makes a 'good' prison and how do we work together to make things better'.

44.   Harris, M. and McKibbin, P. (2015) *The politics of love* available at  https://theaotearoaproject.wordpress.com/2015/05/20/the-politics-of-love-max-harris-and-philip-mckibbin/ accessed on 02 August 2019

# The Opportunity, Challenges and Politics of Prison Leadership

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**Introduction: Leadership Matters Most!**
One of the questions posed by the Perrie Lectures Committee in preparation for this year's lectures on prison leadership was, 'Is a different style needed to solve the current crisis?' In answer to that question, this lecture begins from the premise that the answer to today's crisis starts and ends with strong leadership at every level of the Prison Service and Ministry of Justice, and within prisons themselves. More 'management' is not the answer to today's challenges. Action plans, targets, performance measures and assurance mechanisms won't do it. HMP Liverpool and HMP and YOI Brinsford did not improve because of actions plans, but through strong and capable leadership. Simply pouring more resources into prison will not do it — although greater financial investment is needed. Relying on the recruitment of vast numbers of new officers will not do it — although more staff are needed. Leadership matters most — and it matters most in a crisis. Yes, more resources matter — the last five years have shown that you can breach a minimum threshold where there is too little investment in the prison system with a severely detrimental impact on the experience of imprisonment for all. Yes, more staff matters. Yes, developing confidence and competence in those staff matters. Yes, reducing the size of the prison population matters. But you put all that — money, people, a reduced population — in the hands of strong and competent leaders, but then distract them, limit them and hamstring them, progress will be slow. Put resources, more and better equipped staff, and a reduced population in the hands of strong and competent leaders who are given a *'licence to lead'* and change is possible. Strong leadership brings failing prisons back from the brink. Strong leadership takes prisons deemed to be 'healthy' or 'high performing' and improves them further still. Strong leadership creates an environment where people are more likely to flourish rather than disintegrate, where lives are saved not lost, where people grow instead of shrink, and where people find some hope even in what can often be a hopeless situation. It can be the difference between success and failure, and between inertia and change.

Whether for good or for ill, then, the quality of the leadership team defines a prison. John Maxwell — a well-known and well-regarded American author on leadership — once said, *'Everything rises and falls on leadership.'*[1] This is no less true in a prison than it is in any other organisation. John Conrad argued, 'A penal institution is the lengthened shadow of the man [or woman] in charge'[2] The impact and influence of a Governing Governor — but also the Deputy Governor and the senior manager team (SMT) — is more than a shadow effect! What happens at the top is often mirrored at the bottom! If the Governing Governor, Deputy Governor and SMT cannot agree and are inconsistent in their decision making, there will be inconsistency at the frontline. If there is a lack of integrity at the top, staff may follow suit. If there is a laissez-faire attitude at the top, staff adopt the same approach. If there's an overtly sexualised culture within the SMT, you shouldn't be surprised when frontline staff share that culture. But if the Governing Governor and his/her SMT actively find ways to go the extra mile for staff, staff will do the same for prisoners. If senior managers value hard work, then staff will too. If the language is important to senior managers, it will be reproduced by staff too. If giving second chances is important to senior managers, staff will be more willing to give them to.

So much of prisons research focuses on the centrality and quality of staff-prisoner relationships (and rightly so), but it misses the point that the quality of those relationships is directly influenced by the quality of the relationships between staff and managers/senior managers. Lyon argued, 'Prisons stand or fall by the people who manage them.'[3] Leaders set the tone. Leaders determine what is encouraged, praised and rewarded, or ignored, tolerated and disciplined. Leaders

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1. Maxwell, J (1999) The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: Becoming the person others will follow. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, xi.
2. Conrad, J. (1960) 'The Assistant Governor in the English Prison,' British Journal of Criminology, 10(4): 245-261, 245-246.
3. Lyon, J. (2003) 'Managing to Work in Prisons', Prison Report, London: Prison Reform Trust, 3

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are the example. In their book on military leadership in the United States, Willink and Babin comment, 'It's not what you preach, it's what you tolerate.'[4] Or, put another way: The things you walk past are the standards you set. During one research project, I was always struck by the way the Governing Governor would always stop to pick up and dispose of any litter that he noticed as we walked around the prison. It was perhaps no surprise that these subtle indicators of his expectations about cleanliness, his attempts to lead by example, and his willingness to show that cleanliness was everyone's responsibility created an environment that — even in an ageing Victorian prison — was immaculate.

But what do we mean by prison leadership, and why does it matter? Who leads, and how? Is there a difference between governing, managing and leading? Why does leadership make a difference, and in what ways and with what effects? I first began to think more specifically and systematically about these questions during a multi-site study of prison violence involving one prison that had been deemed to be failing but was on a steady journey of transformation and change, and another prison which was experiencing a series of high profile, serious incidents.[5] As those studies ended, and others began — including a longitudinal study of the opening of HMP Berwyn,[6] a study of prison homicide, and another on 'rehabilitative prisons'[7] — questions about leadership, governance, organisational resilience and organisational change continued to dominate. This lecture draws upon these studies — which has involved inter alia interviewing 120 senior managers, managers and policy makers — as well as the knowledge and experience drawn from visiting prisons, meeting with Governing Governors and senior managers, working alongside senior

> ...working alongside senior management teams, and presenting to diverse audiences of managers, senior managers and senior policy leads. This has allowed some triangulation of the original research findings, as well as generating new lines of enquiry.

management teams, and presenting to diverse audiences of managers, senior managers and senior policy leads. This has allowed some triangulation of the original research findings, as well as generating new lines of enquiry. Whilst this article does not seek to answer all of the questions posed above, it focuses on: 1) the changing role of the Governing Governor; 2) the need to move from relying solely on positional influence to personal influence; 3) the foundations of strong prison leadership; and finally, 4) the contemporary challenges of prison leadership at a time when the Prison Service is said to be experiencing 'enduring crisis in prison safety and decency'[8] — challenges that have been experienced more acutely in some prisons.

### 'Working on Shifting Sands': The Politics of Prison Leadership

Prison leadership is undoubtedly complex, but the politicised nature of prison policy means that prison senior leaders need political dexterity and skill ('leading up and out'), and an ability to provide stable, consistent direction to staff within a context of rapid policy change ('leading down and from within'). For example, during the project phase (2014-2017) and lifespan of HMP Berwyn to date (2017-), there has been three Prime Ministers (Cameron, May, Johnson), 6 Secretaries of State for Justice (Grayling, Gove, Truss, Lidington, Gauke, Buckland), and 5 Prisons Ministers (Selous, Gymiah, Stewart, Buckland, Frazer). In addition, there were two general elections, the Scottish Referendum, the EU Referendum, and the Welsh Assembly elections, which in each case created a period of purdah — momentarily pausing certain communications by civil servants. The constant reshuffling within Central Government is disruptive; each reshuffle leading to fresh briefings,

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4. Willink, J. and Babin, W. (2017) Extreme Ownership: How the US Navy Seals Lead and Win. New York: St Martin's Press, 61.
5. I am grateful to Professor James Treadwell, Staffordshire University, and David Sheldon, Kings College London, with whom I conducted the research on prison violence. The research was supported by funding from the University of Birmingham's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account.
6. This research was supported by the University of Birmingham's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account and remains ongoing.
7. This project – entitled 'The Rehabilitative Prison: An oxymoron or an opportunity to radically reform imprisonment?' is supported by the ESRC (grant number ES/R010145/2) and is conducted with Professor Yvonne Jewkes, University of Bath.
8. House of Commons Justice Committee (2019) Prison Population 2022: Planning for the Future. Sixteenth Report of Session 2017-2019. London: House of Commons, 6.

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creating 'pauses' whilst priorities are assessed and established, prompting inevitable policy change (conceptually, normatively and linguistically), and generating new priorities for financial expenditure. Such policy change can occur even when — as has been the case for the last nine years — the leading political party has remained the same. During the tenure of each Secretary of State for Justice of the Coalition and then Conservative Government, there have been references to 'rehabilitation.' Precisely how 'rehabilitation' was framed and understood, and how it was married with other possible priorities — such as public protection, crime detection (within prisons) and security — has differed each time. From plans to build 'Titan Prisons' and effectively warehouse prisoners (Grayling), to 'hope' as a 'central' concept (Gove), to autonomy (which slipped into empowerment, and then slipped from the agenda entirely) (Truss) to 'robust action to improve prison safety' (Gauke) and a drive to 'clean up our filthy prisons' (Stewart) — the pace of change has been relentless. This has implications for senior policy and operational leads within the Ministry of Justice and central HMPPS, but it also has implications for senior leaders within prisons themselves as they grapple with ways to, for example, fit what is 'right' into what is 'new', respond to closer and more intense political and external scrutiny, make sense of new Ministerial priorities and provide clear direction to a staff team whilst '*working on shifting sands*' themselves. The Governing Governor might be the most senior leader within their own prison, but they are also leading from the middle of an organisation and within a wider civil service with complex layers of management and governance.

## 'The Governor is God'?: The Changing Role of the Governing Governor

During fieldwork and interviews, I've sometimes heard staff — at various levels of seniority — reference the maxim 'The Governor is God', implying something about the power and status afforded to the 'Number 1' Governing Governor. The veracity of this statement might rightly be questioned, but the sentiment captures something of the respect held for the office of the Governing Governor as well as the considerable

> Strong leadership is essential to any organisation and a powerful force for driving change and improvement.

influence and power the Governing Governor can exert within their own prison. Fox once argued, for example, 'The governor is the keystone of the arch. Within his own prison, he is … supreme.'[9] Even as late as 1997, the Prison Service publications stated 'Prisons remain very hierarchical and almost feudal. There is a strong dependency on the role and person of the Governor … The key managerial role in the Prison Service is that of Governor.'[10] Yet, changes to both the nature of the Governing Governor role and in the management structures above them has undoubtedly altered the supremacy and sovereignty of the Governing Governor. With the advent of privatisation, co-commissioning, greater managerialism, more intense and direct scrutiny from a range of bodies (including ministers and international human rights bodies), greater (although not extensive) judicial oversight, greater partnership working, a changing workforce and a changing prisoner population, the Governing Governor role has evolved to require a range of skills beyond operational knowledge and experience alone. As Alison Liebling remarks, 'The nature of governing has become more 'business like' and more focused on targets and outcomes … Some governors have described the modern role as rather like the role of a 'chief executive'.'[11] In the 15 years since this was published, there has undoubtedly been another shift in the tone, responsibility and demands on prison leaders. In 2016, Liz Truss, then Secretary of State for Justice, stipulated:

> '*Strong leadership is essential to any organisation and a powerful force for driving change and improvement. Following our reforms, governors will have significantly greater authority and flexibility (along with greater accountability) in determining how their prisons are run, including how to prioritise and deliver services within their prisons.*'[12]

One might be forgiven for thinking that this statement from Liz Truss' White Paper on Prison Safety and Reform should actually read:

> *… governors will have significantly less authority and flexibility in determining how*

9. Fox, L. (1952) The English Prison and Borstal System. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 87.
10. HM Prison Service (1997) Prison Service Review. London: HMPS, paras. 9.14,10.9.
11. Liebling, A. (2004) Prisons and their Moral Performance. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 397.
12. Ministry of Justice (2016) Prison Safety and Reform. London: HMSO, para 37.

*their prisons are run, but more counting (not necessarily accountability).*

On one hand, Truss' emphasis on the importance of governors held the promise of more autonomy, more scope and 'greater control to innovate',[13] greater licence to develop bespoke services and approaches for their prisons, but even this promise was tied to the language of competition between governors in the form of published league tables and greater accountability to 'highlight success and lay bare failure'.[14] Little was said about the consequences for governors of either success of failure, or the extent to which wider systemic, cultural or structural difficulties could or should be taken into account when assessing 'performance'. Since Truss' tenure, there appears to have been a retreat from the notion of governor autonomy and even greater focus on 'improvements', assurance mechanisms and accountability. The demands on leaders have changed, but so have the styles and skills needed.

### 'By Order of the Governor': Moving from Positional Influence to Personal Influence

Recently, I visited a prison and was struck by the number of notices displayed in and around the gate that ended with the phrase *'By order of the Governor.'* This communicates a very specific style of leadership — 'command and control', dictatorial, authoritarian. As one senior manager reflected: *'ultimately you [as the Governing Governor] are the big decision maker and the buck stops with you. [The Governing Governor] will get buy-in because he's the number one and because it's hierarchical.'* Whilst clear lines of decision-making power and authority are not problematic, leaders are less effective when rank alone is the primary source of power. It is easy in a hierarchical organisation for this to become the default position, but it is a relatively blunt and unsophisticated use of power. Influence based on position alone is limited. It can sustain you short-term, but it is rarely effective in achieving long-term, transformational change. There will always be times where a 'command and control' approach is needed — for example, when there is an

ongoing incident — but when you rely solely on rank as a default style of leadership, people only tend to follow you when they know you are looking but may not do so when they know you aren't there, won't see, or won't check. When you rely solely on rank, there is a risk that compliance is superficial or purely instrumental. In leadership, who you are always matters more than what you are. In other words, who you are always outranks rank! If you have to rely on a title to get things done, your personal influence is limited — people are not necessarily following because they want to, but because they have to. It is respect based on fear, not on regard; but control is not leadership!

### The Foundations of Strong Prison Leadership

There are three core components of strong prison leadership: 1) leading by example; 2) leading the way ahead; 3) leading the team. First, effective leaders are credible leaders — and credibility comes less from what leaders say, than what they do. Leaders can only 'lead by example' when they consistently display strong character and competence, and where their core values and convictions align with their decision making and priorities. It is this that gives leaders their moral authority to lead, gives them the ability to influence others, and that engenders trust in those that follow. Second, effective leaders are future orientated. 'Leading the way ahead' requires vision (an ability to create the future), strategy (an ability to chart the course and explain the how, what, when and, most importantly, why), and an ability to check and adjust the course (by checking the 'health' of the prison, forensically analysing trends and closing the information gap between the SMT and staff). Being able to 'lead the way ahead' can breathe hope, purpose and focus within a context where hope can dissipate quickly, and where a clear sense of purpose and priority can be lost. Finally, effective leaders know how to build an effective, invested, secure and growing team. To do so, leaders need to be able to connect, they need to be consistent, they need to celebrate success and *'catch people doing something good,'*[15] and increase both their own leadership capacity, and that of their team.

> ...people are not necessarily following because they want to, but because they have to. It is respect based on fear, not on regard; but control is not leadership!

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13. ibid, 3.
14. Ibid.
15. Many thanks to Russ Trent, Prison Group Director for Avon and South Dorset, for this quote.

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### 1. Leading by Example

Character, competence and core values matter in terms of how they affect the willingness of individuals to follow the appointed leader, but they also impact the prison as a whole. Prisons are moral institutions. They are an expression and manifestation of moral judgement about the lawfulness (or lawlessness) of someone's behaviour. But beyond that, the 'moral performance'[16] and 'legitimacy'[17] of an individual prison (and the prison system more generally) matters in terms of the pains and harms experienced, and extent to which imprisonment exacerbates or decreases the likelihood of re-offending. The moral performance of the prison starts with the moral authority of the leaders and the moral climate they set and tolerate. Leading by example then is crucial. People will quickly discern and see the gap between what people say and what they do. They will only 'buy into' the leader who they judge to be authentic, credible and trustworthy. It is the combination of character, competence and convictions that give the senior leader moral authority and personal influence, and that determines the extent to which they are seen as trustworthy and authentic.

Character includes integrity, humility, commitment, self-discipline, hard work and resilience. This isn't an exhaustive list, but it is certainly true that integrity is critical to effective leadership. Although there may be an initial 'honeymoon' period when a new leader arrives or is promoted, teams will quickly discern any differences between what they say and who they are, or between the behaviour they demand of others and the behaviour they expect of themselves. If you lose your integrity, you lose. Full stop. People quickly see when someone lacks integrity, and this can jeopardise trust, 'safety' and the extent to which individuals are willing to 'speak the truth to power,' suggest ideas or raise critical concerns in a timely manner. Without integrity, you cannot have legitimacy or procedural justice. If leaders are not boundaried and self-disciplined, they lose the moral authority to demand the same from staff or prisoners. People also see when a leader is committed to their work, when they work hard, and when they are driven by passion. They also see when the reverse is true and take their cue

> Character includes integrity, humility, commitment, self-discipline, hard work and resilience. This isn't an exhaustive list, but it is certainly true that integrity is critical to effective leadership.

accordingly. Some individuals will continue to give their very best to their job irrespective of how the appointed leaders behave, but others certainly will not. Resilience is an overused and sometimes flippantly used word, but it is certainly true that leaders need it in abundance. When tragedies, difficulties or problems occur, leaders still need to 'dig deep' and lead their team forward, even when they least feel like and they might feel under the greatest pressure. That they can do so, is almost certainly a test of character.

Leaders need to be capable to be credible. Irrespective of the categorisation of the prison, 'operational grip', instinct and skill still play a role. 'Operational grip' is not synonymous with hyper-masculine forms of power and control — which might be more of a 'crush' than a 'grip' — nor is it synonymous with 'ratcheting up' security measures or 'locking down'. Rather, it is the ability to grasp what is really happening (not just how things appear) and respond effectively to prevent harm, prevent a recurrence of undesired behaviours, or simply move from the way things are to the way things should be. It implies an ability to not only focus on the details of daily life, but also a willingness to take decisive action and focus the attention of staff on key priorities. It is more than 'quality assurance' or 'visible leadership', but the assumption of responsibility for the 'moral performance of the prison', knowing whether or not the 'basics' are in place (e.g. Are men unlocked when they should be? Is there graffiti or pornographic material in cells?), knowing whether people are in the right places at the right time (e.g. Who is in segregation and for what reasons? Who is in segregation but also on an open ACCT?) and knowing the changes in the health and atmosphere of the prison (i.e. not just 'checking the temperature' but knowing how, when and why that temperature changes). Without 'operational grip', the inner prison world is not only poorly understood but so are the potential risks, either to prisoners, to staff, or to the public. Moreover, without 'operational grip,' it is difficult to detect changes within the prison, amongst staff or amongst prisoners. But as noted above, the changing role of the Governing Governor (and the senior managers they lead) means that operational skill is not enough to

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16.    Liebling, A. (2004) Prisons and their Moral Performance. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
17.    Sparks, K., Bottoms, A. and Hay, K. (1996) Prisons and the Problem of Order. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

function effectively. 'Competence' is required in a range of different skills, including business acumen, the ability to influence partners, the ability to manage contracts (even when leaders do not have all the 'levers' they need but any problems have a direct operational impact), and the ability to effectively engage stakeholders.

Senior leaders often differ in their style, philosophies and convictions. A leader might publicly state that they are committed to a particular approach, but their real values and convictions will be evidenced in how they make decisions, how they prioritise different goals and how they evaluate what 'really matters'. Possible modes of governing include:

1. 'Command and control' — Because I said so.
2. The Manager — Because the policy says so.
3. The Economist — Because it is 'value for money'.
4. The Bureaucrat — Because that is how we are measured.
5. The Moral Leader — Because it is the right thing to do.
6. The Servant Leader — Because people come first.
7. The Custodian — Because we need to protect the public.
8. The Academic — Because the evidence says so.
9. The Rehabilitative Leader — Because it reduces reoffending.
10. The Transformational Leader — Because there is hope for the future.

These modes of governing are not mutually exclusive, and any one leader might prioritise different approaches at different times, but it is also true that most senior leaders have a natural bias to particular values, convictions and philosophies. Some may be more risk adverse than others. Some may prioritise 'performance', while others will be more guided by what's right for their prison or for individuals within it. Some will be more bound to national policy and others more willing to flex within certain parameters or try something new entirely. Ultimately, the core values and convictions of the senior leaders will influence the moral performance, legitimacy, and culture of the prison, but they also influence the extent to which staff feel more aligned with the overall direction and strategy.

> Senior leaders often differ in their style, philosophies and convictions. A leader might publicly state that they are committed to a particular approach, but their real values and convictions will be evidenced in how they make decisions.

## 2. Leading the Way Ahead

In 1952, Florence Chadwick — an experienced long distanced swimmer who swam the English Channel in both directions — attempted the 26-mile swim from the Californian coastline to Catalina Island. After 15 hours of swimming, a thick fog descended and she was unable to see the support boats near her, never mind the coastline ahead. She swam for another hour and then stopped swimming entirely, finally being pulled into one of the support boats and taken to the shore. Florence quickly discovered that she was only one mile from the island, and later said, 'All I could see was the fog. … I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.' It was neither the exhaustion nor distance that proved the greatest obstacle, but the lack of clear vision. In a prison — as in other organisations — the same is true. It might not be the exhaustion or size of the tasks that creates the greatest obstacle, but the lack of clear vision and strategy. People need leaders who can clear the fog for them. They need leaders who can — even in the midst of greatest difficult and challenges — show them the way ahead, how to get there and why it matters. People not only need *someone* to buy into, but also *something* to buy into; they need someone to follow who knows where they are going, knows how to get there and is willing to take make bold moves. People will only go as far as your imagination as a leader can take them — if the imagination of the leader is limited so is the team. Ultimately, the willingness to lead the way ahead is a test of courage.

## 3. Leading the Team

The primary responsibility of the leader is the people they lead — not the budget, vision or strategy. Effective leadership always rests on team leadership. Andrew Carnegie, and American businessman and philanthropist, once said, 'No man [or woman] will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself, or to get all the credit for doing it.' A leader who tries to do everything themselves limits the development of their team, hinders progress, disempowers their staff,

and ultimately, runs the risk of becoming overworked and overwhelmed. As they old proverb goes, 'He that thinketh he leadeth but hath no one following is only taking a walk.' You cannot lead through emails or notices to staff, you can only lead through relationships with people. Leaders have to connect, but they need to do so based on relationships of trust. The extent to which a leader is consistent in their mood, priorities and evaluation of performance can either create or jeopardise trust. Leaders who are unstable in their mood or emotion, create a sense of insecurity in their team who then do what they can to avoid putting their 'head above the precipice' and 'speaking the truth to power' out of fear of the reaction it will provoke. Leaders whose priorities changed from morning meeting to morning meeting will tend to see knee jerk reactions but not long-term, sustained change and improvement. Unclear or changing expectations cause confusion, ambiguity and inefficiency. The reverse is also true. When there is predictability in the mood, priorities, standards and expectations of senior leaders — and what they will do when things do not go as planned — a team is more likely to view the senior leader(s) as trustworthy.

What a leader can achieve is determined by the strength and unity of his or her senior management team. Rightly or wrongly, what happens within the SMT inevitably impacts upon the rest of the prison. Disunity in the team can easily become disunity within the staff group as a whole. In this lecture, I've used the picture of a classical orchestra as an illustration. At their best, an SMT has a conductor who is directing and leading the orchestra — Indicating when to change dynamics, when to crescendo or diminuendo, when to rest and when to sound again, when more practice is required, what pieces to play. But an orchestra might also have moments where someone hasn't practiced their part, where the second violin wants to be the first (e.g. the Head of Business Assurance *really* wanted to be the Head of Residence or the Deputy Governor), where someone hasn't turned up or has turned up late for practice (or that meeting!), where someone is out of time (team members don't seem to share the same values or principles). What should sound like a beautiful piece of music can sound discordant — so it is with the

> # Leading a team well depends not only depends on the quality of the relationships within the team, but also the extent to which the senior leaders(s) give others a 'license to lead.

SMT. Insufficient attention to the dynamics of the team can leave moments of discord, disharmony and lacking in the right rhythm.

Leading a team well depends not only on the quality of the relationships within the team, but also the extent to which the senior leaders(s) give others a '*licence to lead*.' Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United State, once said, 'The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.' Knowing how to empower others and to what extent requires wisdom, discernment and an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the team. It is about knowing how much to ask for and when; how to let go and when to hold tightly; when and how to check, and what to check; how to address work and behaviour that falls below standards and expectations; and, when to ask for more. It also requires that decision making and authority is set at the most appropriate level — not all decisions need to made by the most senior leader, but certainly some do. Knowing the difference, and at what level to set the lines of authority can avoid decision making being 'pushed up' unnecessarily. Reflecting on his time as Commander of the USS *Benfold*, Dr Michael Abrashoff explained:

*When I took command of Benfold, I realised that no one, including me, is capable of making every decision. I would have to train my people to think and make judgments on their own. Empowering means defining parameters in which people are allowed to operate, and then setting them free. But how free was free? Where were the limits? I chose my line in the sand. Whenever the consequences of a decision had the potential to kill or injure someone, waste taxpayers' money, or damage the ship, I had to be consulted. Short of those contingencies, the crew was authorised to make their own decisions. Even if the decision were wrong, I would stand by my crew. Hopefully they would learn from their mistakes. And the more responsibility they were given, the more they learned.'[18]*

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18. Dr Michael Abrashoff (2002) It's your Ship: Management Techniques from the Best Damn Ship in the Navy. New York: Warner Business, 29-30.

Abrashoff reminds us that it is not just about clear expectations or simply allowing and staff to make decisions, but also responding constructively when mistakes are made. Do we stand by them and support them to learn, or do we blame them, single them out and vilify them? Do we see it as an opportunity to learn, or an opportunity to portion blame? There will almost certainly be some 'red lines' — behaviour that is unlawful or is so negligent as to constitute grounds for dismissal — but beyond that, there must be room for people to learn from their mistakes and know that they will be coached and supported to do so. If people fear making a mistake, you limit the opportunity to learn and improve at an individual and organisational level. If people believe that there is 'blame culture', poor practice is pushed down and not brought into the open. For leaders to succeed, there must be organisational courage and maturity to allow them to explore new approaches, make mistakes and learn from them. Where things don't go as planned — as is inevitable — the correct cause needs to be identified rather than assumed.

## 9 Prison Leadership Challenges

There is no doubt that leadership can be rewarding, but it is also a great responsibility, one that can weigh heavily. Leading others is an act of emotional, mental and physical labour, and it is relentless. Whilst there will be a range of challenges that are uniquely situational, there are several challenges that are common across a range of prisons. They include: the loneliness of leadership; avoiding 'survival mode' as a leader and in others; generating change in a heavily regimented and routine driven context'; succession planning; instigating change with staff who anticipate the tenure of a Governing Governor to be short; the 'virtual prison syndrome'; 'sloping shoulders syndrome'; managing what can feel like 'zero sum games'; and, avoiding the worst excesses of a managerial, performance and assurance driven culture.

### Leadership Challenge 1: 'It's lonely at the top!'

Leadership can be a lonely task. As seniority increases, there may be fewer immediate sources of support and fewer 'safe spaces' to just be yourself. In addition, criticism can become both personal and public. Leaders frequently make difficult and finely balanced decisions — decisions that may be unpopular, have unfavourable consequences for individuals, and unsettle the status quo. In such situations, sustaining momentum requires leaders to have both courage and conviction; courage to keep going in the face of criticism, and conviction that what they are doing is the right thing.

### Leadership Challenge 2: Survival Mode

Governors, senior managers, managers and staff can become overwhelmed and hopeless. I've heard people use the term 'learned helplessness'; I think a more accurate diagnosis is hopelessness. 'Learned helplessness' starts with hopelessness. But leaders always have to find the way out. That's the job of leadership. To rise up. To stand. To be counted. To dig deep. If a Governing Governor or senior manager does not lead, someone else will. As Winston Churchill once said, 'When eagles are silent, parrots start to chatter.' The silence and absence of the appointed leader always has consequences. Silence and inaction can never be neutral. Power always flows. This begs the question: who is making the decisions about what happens in your prison, what changes can or cannot be implemented? Is it the Governing Governor? Is It the POA? Is it those who live there? Where does power lie?

### Leadership Challenge 3: The Seduction of the Routine

The daily regime is a source of ontological security and comfort for both staff and prisoners. A consistent, timely and predictable regime reduces frustration, contributes to a sense of order and control, and helps ensure that everyone — staff and prisoners alike — are in the right place at the right time and for the right reasons. This habitual routine can make change difficult to achieve and embed. Yet change is essential in any organisation. As the world within and around prisons has changed, so must the solutions. The challenge for any leader in initiating change and sustaining momentum is ensuring that others are following and that those changes seep into the very fabric of the daily habits and routines. Few people eagerly embrace change — although there will always be some. Some fear it, and others will actively resist it.

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### Leadership Challenge 4: Succession Planning

The transition from one governor to another can look like the best and worst examples of the Olympic relay race. At its best, the transition is planned, smooth and fluid, ensuring that the team can — to continue the sporting analogy — run a winning relay race. At its worst, the baton is not passed at all (e.g. a new Governing Governor is not appointed for several months), is dropped (e.g. the Governing Governor has a style or approach that is fundamentally different or contradictory causing a break in momentum), or one is trying to pass to the other but to no avail (e.g. the incoming Governing Governor openly criticises their predecessor). Poor transitions lead to inertia, insecurity, a loss of focus, and loss of momentum. Lord Laming argued, 'No prison should be left without a governor for weeks or months. Nor is it sound management that Governors and senior managers change too quickly, or stay longer than their performance merits.'[19]

In all of the difficulties in succession planning, what is easily lost is the reality that the relay race is a team sport. Each person in the relay plays a part, they should each build on what has gone before, and contribute to what is to come. In the worst examples, it leads to competitive 'one-upmanship', where the incoming Governor seeks to tear down or compare his or her achievements with that of his or her predecessor. Leadership is a team sport. Far better to have a culture of honour and building others up, than tearing them down. Competitiveness also ignores the reality that it takes any organisations needs different leaders with different skills and strengths. You need both great leaders of few, great leaders of many. There is a tendency to judge leadership based on how complex or large the prison is. However, such concerns should be irrelevant. Large complex prison may suit some leaders but not all. Small prisons may suit some leaders but not all. The point is not the size of the leadership task, but the size of the leader. Within any group of senior leaders, there will be some who are great leaders of 10s, others who are great leaders of 100s, and others who may be greater leaders of 1000s. What matters is not the number of people you lead, but how you lead.

> No prison should be left without a governor for weeks or months. Nor is it sound management that Governors and senior managers change too quickly, or stay longer than their performance merits.

Far better to influence one life positively than negatively Influences the lives of many. The aspiration then should be to Increase our leadership capacity and capability — to stretch to be the best leader and have the greater positive influence on those within our stewardship — not to increase the size of our portfolio for the sake of it, or simply to feel more legitimate as a leader.

### Leadership Challenge 5: 'Tin Helmet Syndrome'

Nearly 20 years ago, Lord Laming and the Committee were told:

> *'When a new prison governor comes in and wants us to change things, we know if you just sit tight for long enough, another one will come along and want to do it differently … Governors come and go so regularly that the only stable thing in a prison is the POA, so that's where we are loyal to.'*[20]

Since the tenure of a governor can be short, some prison staff will simply put the '*tin helmets on*'. Put simply, if a staff member does not like the approach, ethos or vision of the governor, they simply bunker down and simply wait out the year or two before they leave, trying not to put their head above the precipice in the mean time. You might assume that this would be more typical behaviour amongst officers, but individuals in middle management and senior management positions have confessed to adopting the same approach.

### Leadership Challenge 6: The 'Virtual Prison' Syndrome

The virtual prison syndrome occurs when there is a gap between the prison that the Governing Governor and senior team *think* they have, and the prison that they actually have. It is the difference between what is intended and what is achieved, or the difference between rhetoric and reality. The extent to which a gap exists depends on whether or not there is visible and engaged leadership by the senior team, and by 'middle managers' (Band 5/6 managers). The health of a prison can only be ascertained by walking around it, smelling it, opening the doors, speaking to prisoners and staff,

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19. Lord Laming (2000) Modernising the Prison Service: An Independent Review by the Targeted Performance Initiative Working Group. London: Home Office, 4.
20. ibid, 11.

checking whether cells are graffiti free, whether servery areas are clean, whether the regime is consistent and timely, by not just being visible, but by being engaged, asking questions, and checking the details. It requires a tenacious desire to keep '*turning over the rocks*' and check what lies underneath, and then deal with what is found rather than simply '*put the rock back down*'.

## Leadership Challenge 7: 'Sloping Shoulders' Syndrome

The person with 'sloping shoulders' does not go unnoticed for long. 'Sloping shoulders' syndrome occurs when senior managers or members of their team shy away from taking responsibility for their actions or shy away from the hard work necessary to complete a task/project or govern effectively. When leaders and/or their team are suffering from 'sloping shoulders' syndrome, inertia and frustration quickly sets in as decisions are avoided or delayed. It may also impact the rest of the senior team who either have additional work or are left 'blindsided' by the absence of information and intelligence. Inadvertently, senior managers who demonstrate 'sloping shoulders' set a culture that make it more likely for staff to distance themselves from responsibility (e.g. not signing for checks) or where decisions are 'pushed up' out of a fear of being blamed if things go wrong.

## Leadership Challenge 8: Zero Sum Games

Whilst much can be drawn from the wider literature on leadership in, for example, business, schools, the military, the police, high-performance sport, the prison environment is sufficiently unique that it presents particular challenges, and brings common leadership problems into sharp focus when faced with life and death decisions, when trying to discern when to move and when not to (e.g. in the immediacy of an incident or when trying to maintain or restore order), when balancing risk to the public, and when managing the sometimes conflicting priorities and values of staff and prisoners. Whilst leadership resources often discuss the importance of leading a team, they rarely discuss how you balance the needs and demands of multiple audiences — leaders have to weigh the impact of the

decision for staff and prisoners, who may have different beliefs about what the 'right thing to do is in a given situation. Staff and prisoners instinctively understand the importance of the Governing Governor. When It appears that their tenure may be coming to an end — or even months before — speculation and gossip is often rife. As one individual commented, '*The one thing we want to know is, is he for staff or is he for prisoners?*' The implicit assumption is that a Governing Governor is either one or the other, and decisions that are made at a senior level may amount to 'zero sum games' seen either in favour of 'us' or 'them'. The way in which such decisions are made and on what grounds is also complicated by the reality that people are held against their will. Leaders are responsible for people who are living in extreme situations, and who may or may not survive competently, but also in an environment where there is a natural bias towards punishment and punitiveness (even amongst prisoners).

> The implicit assumption is that a Governing Governor is either one of the either, and decisions that are made at a senior level may amount to 'zero sum games' seen either in favour of 'us' or 'them'.

Leaders are still living with the organisational memory and impact of benchmarking, fair and sustainable, and competition (some are still reverberating from it!). Ultimately, then, leaders have to reconcile themselves to the reality that they will not, and cannot, always be popular. The choice, then, is: who and what dictates their decision making and priorities?

## Leadership Challenge 9: 'Hitting the Target but Missing the Point'[21]

It seems you cannot spend too much time in a prison before hearing references to 'performance', 'assurance,' action plans or targets. But perhaps the question we should be asking ourselves is: *who is assured by assurance*? Does all the industry, activity and scrutiny regarding performance and assurance actually improve the baseline performance of prisons? Do prisons improve their legitimacy, decency and 'moral performance' by counting more, or through effective leadership, sufficient resources, and competent staff? Why, despite the emphasis on performance measures and data, do we still see prisons struggling to maintain basic levels of cleanliness and decency? Liebling and Crewe describe a transition in prison management from a 'managerial-plus era' (managerialism with an explicitly values driven approach) to a 'managerial-minus era'

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21.   Many thanks to Russ Trent, Prison Group Director for Avon and South Dorset, for this quote.

(managerialism in the context of economic rationalisation).[22] Arguably, we are now in third era of managerialism, one that is structured by greater political irrationality (as noted above) and closer political scrutiny (partly a product of the introduction of a Urgent Notification process, the exposure of significant decline within some prisons, and the return to 'law and order' policies for political expediency). Greater focus on 'performance' and 'assurance' is demanded — as per the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper — but might also be seen as a natural response and defence to the intensification of political scrutiny.

The inherent danger in the emphasis on 'performance' and 'managerialism' as a response is that time and attention is not only diverted to getting the data 'right' rather than getting the prison 'right'. It is also possible for managerialism to generate, or at least encourage, a moral malaise. As an academic, I inherently recognise the importance of rich data, but I also know that numerical data only ever tells part of the story, and that it is not always possible to 'measure what matters'. Six year ago, as part of the Perrie Lectures, Nick Hardwick reminded us of the lessons that the Prison Service could learn from the Mid-Staff Inquiry. The Inquiry Chairman, Robert Francis QC, concluded:

> '… that patients were routinely neglected by a Trust that was preoccupied with cost cutting, targets and processes and which lost sight of its fundamental responsibility to provide safe care.'[23]

> 'If there is one lesson to be learnt, I suggest it is that people must always come before numbers. It is the individual experiences that lie behind statistics and benchmarks and action plans that really matter, and that is what must never be forgotten when policies are being made and implemented.'[24]

Reflecting on the relevance of Robert Francis' comments

> '… it is my contention that Robert Francis' Inquiry into Mid Staffs hospital has lessons from which the prison service, if it was prudent, could learn. I say this not to point the finger at things that are going wrong, but to try and prevent that happening.'[25]

The risk that both Robert Francis QC and Nick Hardwick alert is to is that is can be too easy to focus on numbers and not individuals, for 'performance' to matter more than people, and for leaders to stop thinking about what's 'right' and focus on what's right for the figures and targets. Focusing only on data makes it easy to forget that each number represents an individual, and that everything that is measured is experienced.

## Conclusion

Leadership is expensive, sacrificial, and relentless. But is also carries great reward and great opportunity. To conclude, I end with this reminder from Harry Truman, 33rd President of the United States of America: 'Men [and women] make history and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.' Perhaps for our purposes, this quote is more useful be rephrased as 'Men [and women] make history and not the other way around. In prisons where there is no leadership, prisons stand still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.'

22. Liebling, A. and Crewe, B. (2012) 'Prisons beyond the new penology: The shifting moral foundations of prison management,' In: Simon, J. and Sparks, R. (eds) The Sage Handbook of Punishment and Society. London: Sage, 283-.
23. Francis QC, R. (2013) Press Release: The Mid-Staffordshire NSH Foundation Trust Public Inquiry. Available online: https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s20021/HWB_MAR1413R03.pdf
24. Francis QC, R. (2013) The Mid-Staffordshire NSH Foundation Trust Public Inquiry, 35. Available online: https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06690#fullreport
25. Nick Hardwick (2014) 'Lessons for the Prison Service from the Mid Staffs Inquiry.' Prison Service Journal 211: 3-13.

# Humanity, Leadership and Hope

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**This article aims to highlight the importance of humanitarian leadership and how leaders can be nurtured (and sometimes found in the most unusual places). It aims to encourage and inspire those who work in prison to think differently about leadership, sharing a case study of how a prison grew, over the period of 2 years, and how authentic, humanitarian leadership was at the centre of the change process.**

Humanitarianism is the **active** belief in the value of human life, the essence of which lies in the capacity and willingness to make tough decisions in challenging and complex situations, characterised by rapidly changing circumstances and high levels of uncertainty. To understand humanitarian leadership within the context of prison, I firstly want to reflect on my time in Norwegian prisons and how I came to conceptualise in my own mind, what a humanitarian leader is.

### Learning from 'exceptional humanitarian leaders'

Over a three year period I researched Norwegian prison practice, examining which aspects of practice support personal growth, in a place that has been recognised by some as 'exceptional'. I carried out three photo-essay projects in three prisons; BastØy, Halden and Sandaker halfway house. The research was appreciative in nature and enabled prisoners and staff to capture through word and photography those aspects of practice that were meaningful to them. I came to learn that within each of these prisons, humanitarian leadership was present and active within everyday practice. Firstly, Tom, the Governor of BastØy prison, demonstrated an active belief in people and reinforced to me the simplicity of change through the focus on humanity and relationships. He also reiterated the point that any change starts at the top and the importance of a strong, visionary leader within any prison. Are, the Governor of Halden prison, was also active in showcasing his rehabilitative-focused prison, welcoming people in and making his walls semi-permeable to the public so that they could witness first hand the value of a safe and person-centred environment. And finally, Sandaker's Governor, Lars, was described as an individual with a big heart, who promoted equality and care within his practice. These three Governors passionately believed in rehabilitation and actively promoted this in everyday practice.

The final international Governor I wish to mention is Attila. Attila is a Hungarian Governor who dedicated the majority of his prison career establishing a positive rehabilitative environment in his prison, during his time as Governor in Eger prison. I had the pleasure of working with Attila during my time working for the Council of Europe, as a Consultant. Together we considered how a humanitarian and rehabilitative approach could be applied to a treatment programme for those individuals convicted of acts of Terrorism. During this time, we shared our experiences and reflected upon what makes a humanitarian leader within prison. Attila spoke of the importance of visibility, creativity and asking for help. With little funds, he engaged the community, charities and Non-Governmental Organisations, to support him in building trust between the prison and local community, utilising the media to capture the changing culture within his prison. He facilitated the changing narrative of prison officers and worked tirelessly to develop his prison, and those that worked and lived within it. I learnt a great deal from these four International Governors and they remain my inspiration and continue to provide support and reassurance, when things get tough.

### Applying humanitarian leadership to an English Prison: Introducing the Prison Growth Project

Six months after finishing my research in Norway, The first English Prison Growth Project started at HMP Guys Marsh. This project was research-informed and used the knowledge from the Norway research to consider how the principles of growth could be applied sensitively and responsively to an English Prison. These principles are:
- ❏ Experiencing Normality- Doing activities which mirror the outside community.
- ❏ Tasting freedom-Experiencing moments of freedom, which provide space to reflect upon ones identity.
- ❏ Finding pro-social ways of coping with the pains of prison-These strategies help prisoners to manage the inherent pains that are associated with losing one's liberty.

❏ Experiencing peace and joy-This includes physical and relational spaces and activities, which promote as a sense of inner peace.

❏ Meaningful work- This principle focuses on finding meaningful activities that are individualised and personal, leading to a more purposive life.

❏ Authentic Leadership- This features a leadership style which is visible, true and trustworthy.

❏ Connecting with nature-This principle recognises the importance of spaces and opportunities that enable people to feel connected to the world around them.

❏ Developing meaningful relationships-This principle is central to all other principles and highlights the importance of deep and positive connections with other people, including peers, staff, families and the wider community.

❏ Promoting Wellbeing- This principle focuses on the individual and their wellbeing, to build strength and resilience.



The Prison Growth Project is a community-led project which recognises the importance of hope and relationships in culture change. It embraces the voices of staff and prisoners, to collectively address the inherent problems that are faced in prison and provides a platform whereby individuals can voice their ideas and thoughts relating to growth. Over the past two and a half years, the Growth Project has carried training and events to provide staff and prisoners the opportunity to see what a rehabilitative environment **feels** like. Through this experiential approach, research was carried out to recognise the impact of the initiatives, to assess whether they successfully promoted a rehabilitative climate. The Prison Growth Project centres its values on hope, humanity and trust. It recognises that those who live and work within prisons hold the answers to prison growth and provides an opportunity for these voices to be heard and actively used, to support positive change.

## What does humanitarian leadership look like in an English Prison?

With the acknowledgement that change starts at the top, the first two individuals to consider within the context of humanitarian leadership are the Governor and Deputy Governor at HMP Guys Marsh. James (shown right) has been described as courageous, honest and caring and his determination to do things differently and his appreciation of the change process, makes him an inspirational individual. Steve (shown left) was the individual who supported the Prison



Growth Project from the start and gave it the time, investment and freedom it needed to take root and grow. His determination and focus on doing the right thing, rather than what is expected enabled changes to flourish, at a challenging time.

As these leadership qualities emerged at HMP Guys Marsh, these qualities 'feed forward' and influence those in middle manager and down, to officers and prisoners. The encouragement to take risks and do things differently provided an environment for trying out new ideas and be creative.

This leads us to Justin, a Custodial Manager who was an officer when I first arrived at HMP Guys Marsh. The reason Justin features within this piece is founded on a scenario which took place on his wing, involving a prisoners who was struggling emotionally. This prisoner went to healthcare and during his time away from the

wing, Justin cleaned his room, provided him with clean bedding and made him a cup of tea, when he returned from his appointment. Whilst this act of humanity is important in itself, Justin's active demonstration of consideration, care and compassion instilled trust in those witnessing this humanitarian gesture and represented his dedication to a rehabilitative environment. This was not evidenced by what he said, but instead, what he did. His quiet, compassionate approach signified humanity, in everyday tasks in amongst the hectic humdrum of prison life.

The next humanitarian leader outlined here is Cate (see photo), the head of Healthcare at HMP Guys Marsh and employee of CareUK. Cate believes in change and as a respected member of staff, uses her power and influence to stand up for what is right. She listens and brings people together, describing herself as a member of the 'Guys Marsh family.' She represents how those working for external organisations can integrate themselves fully within a prison environment and be part of the community, driving rehabilitation within an important department.

The final member of staff featured here is Jason, an officer who works on Gwent houseblock (seen on the right). During a time that was challenging on his wing, Jason used his initiative and organised a Strong

with the prisoners only grew, as they voiced how touched they were by this activity, which took them off the wing and deepened their sense of community and wellbeing for a few hours. Jason remains passionate about change and is soon to be awarded a Growth Award, due to his commitment to growth at HMP Guys Marsh.

Turning to the individual on the left, this is Danny. Danny was a prisoner at Guys Marsh and worked on the Growth Project for over a year. Danny played an active role in the prison, as resident artist, painting and creating warmer and more positive spaces within the prison (See Lewis and Robertson, 2019[1] for more information.) Danny's passion for change and his contagious personality generated energy and excitement due to the art that he created for prisoners and staff and his dedication to growth. Danny was provided an opportunity to be a humanitarian leader, working alongside staff and prisoners to narrow the gap between them and break down the 'them and us' culture, which hampers the Prison Service.

The final individual I want to introduce is Kam. Kam joined the Growth Project last year and was asked to design an event that would make a positive impact on the community. Kam wrote a screenplay about Spice, recruited the actors, led the rehearsals and held





Man Competition for the prisoners. The event was successful (despite the rain) and Jason's relationship

eight performances to residents, staff (and their families) and the local community. The event raised over £1000 for charity and the evaluation of the event highlighted how it brought a sense of community and

1. Lewis, S and Roberston, S. (2019). 'May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears. The importance of reciprocal hope in prison growth.' *Prison Service Journal,* 244, 17-25

motivated the audience to be part of the solution, working together to address the spice epidemic. Kam is an intelligent, reflective and inclusive individual who grew as a person and continues to grow as he approaches his release. When I first met Kam I could see his qualities as a leader and these only deepened and developed during his time at HMP Guys Marsh.

**What qualities connect humanitarian leaders?**

Reflecting on these individuals, their active drive for change and desire to make a difference within prison connects them. In order for them to thrive as human beings, they too required the right conditions, to build trust and become the best versions of themselves. The importance of understanding what brings life to prisons is also vital. To live rather than exist. This requires an understanding of the whole person; how they sense prison, how they see people and hear their voices, how they build strength and courage, how they use their heart and passion to change their environment, and how they create energy through the relinquishing of their power, for good.

There is also a need to use their knowledge, to embrace lessons from practice and academic knowledge. With these aspects in place, these virtues feed forward to staff and peers alike. Whilst these attributes certainly empower others to hold an active belief in the value of human life, the cost of not creating conditions that are conducive of growth can be witnessed in some prison practice. With no hope, staff become tired and lack energy. This influences the way problems are perceived and people are seen. Staff are more likely, in this scenario, to retreat to offices, to hear less, see less, feel less and this too, feeds forward. Ultimately, the questions remain; What conditions are being created for our leaders? Do our leaders experience those principles of growth from above and how are they nurtured, or stunted? How might assurance frameworks and managerialism impact on these conditions? How might the politicisation of prisons effect what can be achieved? By creating conditions of growth, our leaders have the freedom to be more creative, to dream more and be the change that is so desperately needed within our prison service today.

# Leadership, Humanity and Hope

**Steve Robertson** *is Deputy Governor of HMP Guys Marsh*

**Introduction**

**As organisations alter through political, strategic and cultural change, the topic of leadership is a subject that is often considered and examined, especially when that change means adjustment to policy or future direction. Moreover, the importance and focus on leadership, especially when faced with crisis in either private of public sector organisations, brings the topic more sharply to the fore. And in considering the issue of prison leadership, we often seem to grapple with the argument of style, behaviours and longevity. And these discussions have prevailed for some time, and we may agree that John Howard might have opened the debate when he said 'the first care must be to find a good man (or woman) for a gaoler, one that is honest, active and humane'.[1] However, the ongoing attention given to contemporary prison leadership, has in the main, only attracted irregular and insufficient scrutiny, whether from the determined studies of academia or indeed internally as an organisation. The evaluation and examination of leadership styles in prisons is one that requires constant vigilance, especially given the variety of demands that are obvious from the number of audiences that are attracted to or reliant on the work of the prison establishment.**

Within the flyer for the Perrie lectures this year was a short biography of Bill Perrie, the person who the lectures are named after. One line within the flyer caught my eye, and it says this. 'Throughout his career Bill was ever aware of the essential humanity of his staff and charges, his inspiration and support are greatly missed'. Furthermore, it notes Bill Perrie as a preeminent Governor of his era and in other publications[2] it refers to him, along with others, as a *humanitarian* and a leading Governor. It is obvious that Bill Perrie was indeed an exceptional person, and in my own determination to lead with a humanitarian and person-centred focus, I wonder this. Why does a leader of this type, and these qualities, now command significant and influential audiences at an annual event that seems to go from strength to strength? Are humanitarian values and ways of working the elite qualities and styles of leadership of only a handful of people, and if so why is this. Should we encourage a more liberal and benevolent style of leadership in organisations that are inundated with vulnerability and where the essential focus is about people. Moreover, we might want to ask whether these types of leaders are more successful than others. Is their influence and effectiveness simply down to the way in which they position their values and moral footing, or have we, through significant cultural and societal change, supported by a strong and unyielding punitiveness ideology, simply accepted that treatment and rehabilitative ways of working are too difficult to accomplish.

## Is there an absence of humanitarian leadership?

I feel fortunate to be studying at Cambridge, and I am currently in my second year and about to start my study which is linked to humanitarian leadership and its potential to influence in prisons. And in the variety of literature that I have read and taken from for my dissertation, I am often overwhelmed by the number of articles that contain references to humanitarianism and also liberal approaches to prison leadership[3] as other commentators have also researched and shared enthusiastically. And it is also comforting, that I can sit in the Criminology library surrounded by books, and people too, on this particular subject, and feel perhaps a little nostalgic that there has always been a fervent and ever-present committed membership who maintain and share, powerful and influential views on a type of leadership that has the welfare and benevolence of others as fundamental expectations.

In other articles, the discussion of aims statements[4], of values and standards[5], of decency agendas[6] and the variety of reports that are cited and remembered fondly by those who can remember them, remain fixed and littered in penal history. And I guess,

1. Whitfield, R. (1991) *The State of the Prisons 200 years on*. London, Routledge
2. Ibid
3. Crewe, B. and Liebling, A. (2011). *Are liberal-humanitarian penal values and practices exceptional?* In Ugelvik, T. and Dullum, J. (eds) Nordic Prison Practice and Policy-Exceptional or Not? *Nordic Prison Policy and Practice* p.175-98. p.175.
4. Bottoms, A.E. (1990). *The aims of imprisonment* in Garland, D. (ed) *Justice, Guilt and Forgiveness in the Penal System.* Edinburgh University: Centre for Theology and Public Issues
5. Liebling, A. assisted by Arnold, H. (2004). *Prisons and Their Moral Performance: A Study of Values, Quality and Prison Life* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

what stands out so much for me, is that the reports I mention, which include the enduring Woolf report[7], which ought to still demand attention, is the continuing appeal and invitation to lead differently in prisons, coupled with the need to consider how leaders view and how they own and demonstrate their own various types of leadership and behaviours.

In 1992 Joe Pilling, the then Director General, spoke fondly about a number of the humanitarian and liberal leaders of the past with a speech called 'Back to basics'[8], and the basics that he was referring to were in regards to leadership, relationships and respect. This repeated metaphor continues to play out when we discuss back to basics in our current position, but we now often refer to clean prisons and cells, clothing, security and stability and other functions, that sometimes, if we allow them to, may neglect those harmony basics linked to people, relationships and welfare. This is of course in no way a criticism, we are facing considerable challenges within our prisons. We have recognised the surge and prevalence of organised crime in prisons and the determined and formidable challenge that this represents, and we know that a significant amount of work is being done and has already been undertaken to make changes that we hope will be for the better. In addition to this challenge we must not ignore the obvious unrelenting appetite for a managerialist[9] focus that seems to command a remarkable and established grip on institutions that ought to be more centred towards adopting themes of humanity, underpinned by a person-centred approach that finds no shame in talking about welfare or the befriending of those, who without our help in prisons, would lead their lives in destructive ways. The demands of penal managerialism[10] often diverts the prison leaders' gaze away from the diverse needs of the prisoner and of their staff too. This distraction and impediment that challenges the focus of the humanitarian and welfare-oriented leader is nothing less than significant frustration and irritation. And whilst there must be an appreciation and an understanding of the need for assurance and confidence, the desire for a managerialist determination must not take us away from holding the hand of a prisoner who is scared, and nor should we delay when someone in our segregation unit calls out for help, and needs comfort. It also shouldn't prevent us in giving much needed time, space and support to those staff who are only now finding their feet, in careers that we hope can find longevity once again. Prisons are places full of incessant emotion that are in my view too often unattended to, they prevail and often damage, especially when the attentions of staff and managers are elsewhere, in places where the focus is not about prisoners.

> It also shouldn't prevent us in giving much needed time, space and support to those staff who are only now finding their feet, in careers that we hope can find longevity once again.

**Anxiety, change and purpose**

When I arrived in Guys Marsh in August 2016 the prison was quite challenging and in need of continuous attention, especially in regards to stability and of resources too. I met with an officer that I had worked with years before and when we spoke he said this to me 'Steve, all you need to know is that staff are coming to work on the strength of medication, and that some staff even park their cars in the far-flung corners of the car park so no one sees them cry before they start their shifts'. This really upset me, and resonates in my thinking even today. I was acutely aware that this was a time where I thought differently about leadership, and where my thoughts were positioned solely towards wellbeing and support for those who worked and lived in our prison. The growth project in HMP Guys Marsh was conceived following a meeting with Dr Sarah Lewis in September 2016 after seeing a tweet she posted on Twitter regarding a Norwegian prison study and the concept of growth and change in prisons. This approach to change and improvement certainly stimulated my own thinking about how we lead and manage in prisons, and a

6.    Narey, M. (2001). *Speech to the prison service conference* Nottingham, February 2001
7.    Woolf, H. and Tumim, S. (1991) *Prison Disturbances April 1990* London: HMSO
8.    Pilling, J. (1992). Back to basics: relationships in the Prison Service. *Eve Saville Memorial Lecture to the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency reprinted in Relationships in Prison. The Transcript of a Conference held July at Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln.*. Lincoln: The Bishop's House. p5-11
9.    Bennett, J. (2015) *The working lives of prison managers: Global change, local cultures and individual agency in the late modern prison* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
10.   Cheliotis, L.K. (2006). *Penal managerialism from within: Implications for theory and research in International journal of law and psychiatry* 29(5), pp.397-404.

discussion regarding the transference of this concept into an English prison ensued, and the growth project in Guys Marsh was born. Furthermore, what I wanted for Guys Marsh, was a prison that thought differently about the capacity of people to use their potential to arouse and consider the importance of relationships, and to encourage an environment that supported overall wellbeing. Moreover, it was important to be hopeful about our future and our overall improvement, and to encourage and provoke the culture of humanitarianism. Nurturing a culture that was simply about people was certainly the right option for us, as a senior team we made ourselves more visible, more helpful and supportive, more interpersonal with the staff and the men. We appreciated and acknowledged hard work, and recognised achievement at every opportunity that we had. Our key messages were underpinned by strong values, of relationships and connection, we looked forwards and learnt from the past, and above all we had hope.

Persistence and relentless efforts towards behaviours and actions that are fuelled with humanity, kindness, respect, fairness and trust[11] can and will make a huge difference in institutions that are filled mostly with masculinity[12], vulnerability and instability. But we must work smarter, if we were to consider life in prisons from the lens of the prisoner, then we would have very little belongings, hardly any responsibility, a reduced sense of identity, zero privacy, and where a significant number of those incarcerated try very hard to avoid the permeating contaminants of prison life. These pains of imprisonment[13] have endured for far too long, and will continue to harm and have an effect on any improvement aspirations. We must always recognise that most people who find themselves in our prisons usually originate from places within our communities where common themes of inequality, unemployment, poor housing and general disadvantage dominate[14],

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and where hope and optimism are stifled and remain unrealised. And this theme, as you are all aware, isn't new, for decades, those who inhabit our prisons have not been exposed to opportunity or recognition, and they remain unfamiliar with education and culture too. And the person who can lead differently in prisons and who is motivated by a humanitarian focus will not see those in custody as *bad, broken, beyond repair, or beneath them,* they will see them as people who have lacked the fortune that seems common in others, like us perhaps, or who have been starved of emotion and parental influence and who find themselves leading a life that is without direction and meaning, and where love and compassion are the scarce commodities that essentially we know are the bedrock needs of all people. The word humanitarianism is often used when we think about catastrophe, conflict and suffering. It is also associated with homelessness, poverty, unemployment and sometimes abuse too. So, it is probably worth noting the reasons why most people offend, and then ask ourselves why it is, when the word humanitarianism is used there is usually great hesitation and sometimes fear at the idea of mentioning that word and prisoners in the same sentence. This is food for thought I feel, as the problem with the 'them and us' description, the issue and use of discretion[15] and of fairness, and the significance of labelling demand regular attention and constant debate. In addition, people who lead with a humanitarian focus will also note the importance of families as agents of change[16], and create environments where their inclusion is natural, expected and always appreciated.

## Humanitarian leadership

I strongly believe that there is now an opportunity to think differently, and be more ambitious about how we lead in prisons, where there is a genuine emphasis

11. Liebling, A. (2012). *Can Human Beings Flourish in Prison*? Paper presented at The Prison Phoenix Trust, London, U.K.
12. Jewkes, Y. (2005). *Men Behind Bars: "Doing" Masculinity as an Adaptation to Imprisonment in Men and Masculinities* 8(1), pp.44-63.
13. Sykes, G.M. (2007). *The society of captives: A study of a maximum security prison.* Princeton University Press.
14. Wilson, W.J. (2012). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy.* University of Chicago Press.
15. Liebling, A. (2000). Prison officers, policing and the use of discretion in *Theoretical criminology.* 4(3), pp.333-357.
16. Farmer, M. (2017). *The importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime.* London: Ministry of Justice.

on people, and where values and rehabilitative ways of working do not become lost or diluted within measures of constant accountability. We all know that the word 'values' is often plugged and stimulated widely but it means very little without practice and active demonstration. Values need commitment, they need to be exhibited often in order for them to be observed and repeated by others. This person thinks differently all of the time and looks for opportunities to improve the chances and prospects for those in custody, and where they create environments that support the wellbeing of staff, which includes their mental health fatigue. And that this is constantly at the forefront of their thinking, and where ways of working and policies are *preventative* in nature, in order to become less reliant on processes that have been established to deal with the after effects of harm. This leader shows rather than tells, they give, and they serve[17] with an enthusiasm that encourages others who then continue to lead in a way that serves rather than takes. Furthermore, this leader is always visible, they set the right standards, the tone, and challenge appropriately when they aren't met. They aspire to build a humane environment and they challenge and eradicate vengeful behaviour and object to poor conduct. They celebrate success all of the time, and provoke the decency trait in everyone. They realise the importance and the effect a good leader can have on those who are dependent, they note the current challenge within our prisons, and appreciate the risks and advantages of inexperienced staff, they share their thoughts, they teach and nurture, they care deeply and inspire others to do great things. They serve with humility and they also find their heroes.

Leadership should not be linked to grade, rank or title, leadership is bestowed on those who have the right skills to do so, and who do not think they are in any way better than others. Leading is a privilege, but only for those who sees the good in everybody, and who treats people equally and fairly, and they recognise that setting the right examples and standards are the default attributes of any leader. Furthermore, the right leader is mindful that a selfish mindset has the potential to infect the collective culture, and in prisons this can be damaging. In addition, humanitarian leadership can only flourish when the environment, which includes the strategic direction, is conducive to its application, and when the authority for its use is acknowledged. The ambitions that we have as an organisation that are linked to achieving the aims of rehabilitative cultures are surging positively ahead, and we should be proud of the improvements that we are making. But with any change there is a risk and a danger that if these ideas are not maintained and continuously grown they will simply wither away and become just another idea. Rehabilitative cultures need to be taught, cultivated and continuously developed as time goes on, and not become a target. They need to be rooted firmly in a strategic direction that has the simple principles of humanity boldly invested throughout. The winning organisation is an environment filled with professional development and personal growth where individuals and teams learn from each other. Organisations decline quickly unless they continue to change, and even when we are at our most successful, we have to be observing consistently and position ourselves to make the right decisions about the future. Autonomy will always trump autocracy, humility will challenge any ego, and a truly collaborative singular organisation is more productive than silos.

Furthermore, prison leaders must immerse themselves more in the discussions about the use of prisons, and consider societal issues consistently in order to regain the right and informed focus on the penal debate. They must express themselves and be courageous, externally as well as internally, and use their significant influence and experience to support change that has the person who finds themselves in prison at the centre of that consideration. It is also right that they note their responsibility for, and situate themselves centrally to discuss the prevalence of the punitiveness ideology and the demise of societal focus and challenge accordingly, as the weight of other and current commentators on the subject just isn't sufficient enough. Prison leaders now and in the future must also find their voice and be the influencers for change that provoke policies that are less about control and more about 'penal

> Leading is a privilege, but only for those who sees the good in everybody, and who treats people equally and fairly, and they recognise that setting the right examples and standards are the default attributes of any leader.

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17 Greenleaf, R.K. (1970). *The servant as leader.* Cambridge, Mass: Center for Applied Studies

humanitarianism'. Where the practice of benevolent treatment and care, are delivered by multi-agency teams who work together to find the answers and resolutions to the complications of prison life, and where there is less reliance on outdated ways of working that do not match the contemporary world of the prison.

And in returning to the challenge of improving Guys Marsh, we often asked ourselves what were the main contributors that we could safely say helped us to improve. And in answering that question I can confirm that it is never just one thing, there were many changes that we made, and countless decisions that we took and sometimes got wrong. But if I was to pick a winning formula, it would be this.

1. **Trust your team** — Our staff, of all grades, ranks and functions played their part, they understood their responsibilities, they gave their best and then they gave an extra 1 per cent. We gave them responsibility and ownership, we encouraged the team to think differently and to be innovative, and trusted their decisions and choices. We trained and we taught and we developed and invested in the team. We recognised their hard work and visibly supported them. Leaders create leaders.

2. **Set and share your standards** — We were visionary, we shared openly about what it was that was important and why, and why it should be important to others. We looked beyond our own field and we discovered new things and learnt considerably from academic learning. We found that our staff wanted to learn, so we told our stories, that was important we felt, *don't keep them to yourself*. Do the right thing, and be the best you can be. The standards you walk past are the standards you set.

3. **Trust your vision** — There is a need for patience with vision and culture, change takes time. But with ingredients such as enthusiastic and committed staff, who understand the potential power of great relational skills, based around the promising keyworker policy. And also, where the

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use of authority and of discretion is monitored closely, and where the ideas that we continue to punish people just because they have a label are challenged and diminish over time. **Visions become reality**

And within that formula, I mentioned the word trust several times, and this is important. When trust is authentic and shared generously, you should then feel encouraged to relinquish your power to others in order to truly build an environment that is collaborative, appreciative and empowered. In addition to these principles of improvement, I mentioned earlier that we should find our heroes, and what this means for me is simply this. Being a leader does not mean that you know the most, or that you are more experienced. It doesn't mean that you are better than anyone, or that you should demand respect. When a leader is at their very best, they are humble when asking for views, they are inclusive and empowering, their confidence is not arrogance, and in prisons they teach and help people to flourish, and they reveal and share their humanity with enthusiastic and genuine purpose. Finding my heroes is all about identifying those people who work hard every day, and for who, their jobs mean the world to them, those members of staff, and we all know and have them, who just get it and give their best every day. Those heroes who perhaps don't recognise that their stimulating, inspiring and steadying hands often saves lives and influences change in people who only usually have people like prison staff to rely on. These are the people that deserve recognition. Officers, nurses, teachers, drug workers, probation officers and so many others. And furthermore, Guys Marsh like other prisons have experienced deaths in custody, events like these really do erode on many fronts, they stay with you, and they often come back and reminds us how difficult our job sometimes is. The staff that deal with such incidents and keep going, are also my heroes, wherever they are. Sarah is certainly my hero too, her commitment for reform and her patience with those in our prison and sometimes just listening to her, and the way in which she persists even with some of the difficulties that she has, she is certainly my hero, who are yours I wonder?

And in conclusion, a smart person once said. That what you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others. I am a rugby coach for my twin daughters' team, and I teach the team values as often as I can and I talk about legacy too. We speak openly about mentoring others and also of the influence that an unselfish attitude and approach to life can have. They sometimes listen, which is good, and I can only hope that this regular promotion of decency will have an effect on them and their lives. Legacy is an important word for us in the jobs we do, and a number of readers will have their names etched into wooden plaques in the entrance halls of their prisons, something to be very proud of. And when I get that same opportunity, for me it will be a privilege. And if my name is etched on some plaque, I will constantly think about my legacy, what have I done for others that has helped them. How many staff have I influenced to become future leaders or better people, and how many prisoners have I helped to become better citizens. The potential power of humanitarian leadership is in us all, if we apply the simple characteristics of honesty and integrity, and are authentic and morally right, we will be more resilient and in turn perform much better. If we remember to be inclusive and have a strong team who push that extra 1 per cent, if we teach and nurture, and if we are humble and compassionate. And finally, if we are unselfish and imagine that the hard work and the leadership that we commit to now, will contribute to a safer and more humane society that is seen and experienced only by those who we have taught and influenced, we can then be satisfied that not only did we do the right thing, but as the stewards and caretakers of our organisation now, we would leave a legacy that without apology, has humanity principles firmly fixed in how we work.

# Prison Leadership: Purpose, Presence and Perspective

***Michael Spurr** is a former Chief Executive Officer of HM Prison and Probation Service*

**In this article my aim is to provide a personal perspective and reflections on prison leadership. This is very much a 'practitioners' insight rather than any attempt at academic analysis, although I have benefited enormously from conversations with Munazzah Choudhary who is researching prison leadership for her PhD and has certainly helped to stimulate my thinking. But principally, I want to offer some practical thoughts about leadership in prisons from my own observations and experience.**

## Context

In my final address to Governors at the Governors' forum in November 2018, I referenced the emphasis Lord Gus O'Donnell, former Head of the Civil Service, gave to his 4 'P's when seeking to create a more effective leadership culture for the Civil Service. Those 4 'P's were: pride; passion; pace and; professionalism. All are relevant and applicable to leadership in prisons, but I offered 3 'P's of my own for Governors to specifically reflect on in their own leadership roles. These were: purpose; personal Impact/presence and; perspective. In this article, I'd like to expand on these 3 'P's and outline why each are important, indeed vital, for prison Governors in providing effective leadership to their establishments today.

I don't intend to analyse or comment on 'transformational', 'servant', 'adaptive', 'authentic', 'charismatic' or any other models or style of leadership — others are much better placed to do this. Rather, I want to concentrate on a few of the practical realities which leaders face today in an institutional prison environment. However, before turning to this I do want to make one broader point. Much of the literature on leadership deals with the personal characteristics which are important for leadership at all levels. But equally important and widely recognized in the literature is 'context'. In her literature review, Munazzah Choudhary references Bryman who makes the point that 'effective leadership by individuals is an interaction of the individual and their context'[1].

Similarly, Atonakis, Cianciob and Sternberg in 2004 argue that 'context in which leadership is enacted is a key to its understanding'[2] and I have learned that there is a whole school promoting 'contextual leadership'. From my perspective this is very good news — because it seems to me clear and unarguable that context is critical when considering prison leadership. It is leadership within a very specific controlling, coercive context and in a very political environment — as prisons, in our democracy, operate under political direction and oversight on behalf of the public. This context is very important, and it is that very specific unique context of prison that makes leadership within them so challenging, complex, fascinating and crucial to the effectiveness of the custodial environment and the experience of prisoners. Governors and prison leaders are not free to do what they want within their closed institutions but must operate in accordance with legislation and statute, subject to political direction; parliamentary scrutiny, media comment and public expectations. This context is important and needs to be understood and properly acknowledged.

## Purpose

Turning to the first of my 3 'Ps' — 'Purpose'. Prisons do of course have multiple purposes, and this in itself creates dilemmas and challenges for prison leaders. Many commentators have reflected on the multi-dimensional requirements placed on prisons, their leaders and staff and accordingly pointed out the difficulties and risks which can arise from competing objectives creating the potential for inconsistency, disharmony and conflict for both staff and prisoners. Alison Liebling's post-9/11 study of HMP Whitemoor brings this out vividly[3] — evidencing the impact which a changing political narrative and expectations have on the confidence of leaders, staff and prisoners in a long term prison where questions of risk and 'public acceptability' create tensions with the prisons' aim to provide a progressive rehabilitative and inclusive regime. This is a genuine dilemma — with confused or

1. Bryman A (1992). *Charisma and Leadership in Organisations.* London: Sage
2. Atonakis, J., Cianciob, A. and Sternberg, R. (eds) (2004) *The Nature of Leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
3. Liebling, A., Arnold, H. and Straub, C. (2011) An exploration of staff–prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor: 12 years on. Cambridge: Prison research Centre available at   https://www.prc.crim.cam.ac.uk/publications/whitemoor-report accessed on 02 August 2019

conflicting objectives highlighted consistently in reports and reviews on the operation of prisons (usually when things have gone wrong!). It was a theme in the Woolf Report following the riots of 1990[4]; in the Woodcock and Learmont reports following the escapes in 1994 and 1995[5] and was explicitly referenced in Admiral Lygo's review of the management of prisons[6] where he identified competing objectives through a lack of clarity of purpose and the blurring of policy and administration being a significant issue creating leadership complexity. In an article in 2008, Shane Bryans argues that 'the prison environment remains one of great ambiguity in terms of its purposes'[7]. He is absolutely right- this is indeed the case. It is a reality, I suggest, which prison leaders (at both national and local level) must recognise, accept and embrace in order to provide effective leadership within their prisons.

Prisons must inevitably balance competing requirements. Effective leaders recognise this and work hard to provide clarity, coherence and purpose within this context. I believe the 2003 Criminal Justice Act helps in explicitly setting out the 'Principles of Sentencing'. These are specifically defined as punishment; public protection; reduction of crime; reparation and; rehabilitation. There are clearly and rightly multiple objectives in sentencing an individual following conviction for a crime. Prisons serve the public by delivering and implementing the sentences of the courts — which by definition have multiple purposes. In particular, punishment; public protection and rehabilitation are all components of a custodial sentence for those convicted and sent to prison. They are not mutually exclusive — but can be challenging to deliver and maintain in balance and inevitably tensions and conflicts arise as a result. Such complexities are heightened by political 'emphasis' which can change regularly, influenced by ministerial pre-disposition, media coverage and public opinion. It is in this context that prison leaders must set direction and provide purpose and clarity. This means recognizing the multiple purposes of prison and calls for a holistic and measured approach to leadership which maintains these objectives in balance. It is why prison performance cannot be properly assessed by

> Prisons must inevitably balance competing requirements. Effective leaders recognise this and work hard to provide clarity, coherence and purpose within this context.

having only one or two key indicators. A 'balanced scorecard' is a good and necessary management tool — because prison leaders need to maintain a balance — keeping prisoners in custody, maintaining safety, managing risk, promoting and supporting rehabilitation — all are important and while they are inter-related, they all require attention. As Chief Inspector of Probation, Andrew Bridges spoke routinely about the three inter-locking circles required for probation delivery. These were: delivering the sentence of the court; managing/mitigating the risk of harm posed by an individual and; providing interventions and support to reduce the risk of reoffending. Prison leadership can equally be seen in this way. Holding prisoners securely to deliver the sentence of the court; holding them safely to prevent harm to themselves; others and the wider public; and working with them to support effective rehabilitation and reduce their risk of reoffending. The original Prison Service 'Statement of Purpose' did, in fact, sum this up rather well:

*'HM Prison Service serves the public by holding those committed by the courts. Our duty is to look after them with humanity and help them to lead good and useful lives in custody and after release'*

Maintaining balance is key. I recall taking responsibility for Grendon as Area Manager in 2002. On my first day three long sentenced prisoners convicted of very serious offences escaped from the sportsfield. I was an admirer of the work Grendon does. I believe in promoting rehabilitation and in the capacity for individuals to change. I am a supporter of the Therapeutic Community approach — and had indeed established a democratic TC in one of my prisons — but much to the upset of the Grendon community at the time, and to many of the staff — I led work to significantly tighten security across that prison. This was necessary — because the escape demonstrated how the prison had become unbalanced — putting at risk its very existence.

For Governors over recent years, balancing regime provision and safety — has been a challenge. Determining when to maintain activities and when its right and necessary to 'lock down' to search and respond to safety

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4.    Woolf, H. and Tumim, S. (1991) *Prison Disturbances April 1990: Report of an Inquiry* London: HMSO
5.    Woodcock, J. (1994) *Report of an Inquiry into the Escape of Six Prisoners from the Special Secure Unit at Whitemoor Prison in Cambridgeshire on Friday 9 September 1994* HMSO: London; Learmont, J. (1995) *Review of Prison Service Security in England and Wales and the escape from Parkhurst Prison on Tuesday 3 January 1995* London: HMSO.
6.    Lygo, R. (1991) Management of the Prison Service. London: Home Office.
7.     Bryans S (2008) *Prison governors: New public managers?* in Bennett J., Crewe B., and Wahidin, A. *Understanding prison staff* Cullompton: Willan p.213-230

concerns are difficult judgments to make — but absolutely necessary ones. The work to develop rehabilitative culture and rehabilitative leadership — is really impressive and massively important. It is the right approach and absolutely what the Service requires. During his time at Grendon, Jamie Bennett was able to deliver a transformative rehabilitative culture, but this was only possible for the long term population he held because it was within an appropriately secure environment — enabling the prison to effectively deliver the sentence of the court, and protect the public.

Maintaining balance and providing clarity of purpose and 'moral leadership' to staff given the complexity of the work we do is crucial — and Governors need to understand this — as not everyone does.

More than one Minister, over the years, has for example, spoken about improving 'prison discipline' without understanding how a legitimate desire for improved order or a 'tougher' more challenging regime can be misinterpreted on the ground leading to unintended consequences and on occasions abuse of prisoners. The introduction of the 'short sharp shock' for young offenders in Detention Centres in the 1980s is but one example of this. However well intentioned the policy it had unintended consequences— which reverberate still today — with some former staff now facing criminal charges for their actions at that time.

In a coercive and controlling environment — which prisons are, maintaining balance, humanity and purpose in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity is a priority for prison leaders.

### Presence

Given the complexity and ambiguity and the physical reality of the prison environment personal presence is essential if prison leaders are to be effective. Well run and effective prisons require leaders at all levels who are present and active. Absence creates a vacuum which will be filled to the detriment of staff and prisoners alike. Good prison officers recognise that 'no go' areas cannot be tolerated because staff absence means dangerous prisoner coercive control. Similarly, good leaders know their presence is required every day.

Role modelling expectations is important for any leader in any organization but it's particularly important in closed institutions where power is necessarily unbalanced. So physical presence is important — but presence means, for me, much more than just being there. It is much more than just 'being visible' — essential as that is. For me, effective leadership 'presence' in a prison requires four

> A leader's personal presence in this context is vital, and it's as important today as it's always been.

things : an understanding of prisoners; an understanding of staff; an understanding of culture across the prison and; an understanding of the routines, resourcing and regime (interventions) which impact on the lives of the community every day. The best leaders care about what they do; care about what they are achieving; care about what they will leave behind — and in this context the best prison leaders care about their staff, their prisoners, the culture in their prison, and the 3 'Rs' (routines, resourcing and regimes). Each of these is crucial to the effective performance of a prison. So presence alongside staff and prisoners, a deep understanding of the institutional dynamic and personal attentiveness to the daily routines is a pre-requisite for success.

The nature of prisons where legitimate coercion is a necessary feature means that power imbalance must be managed to prevent abuse. Prisons are places where staff are required to operate with constant and legitimate concerns about their own safety — where integrity, courage and maintaining a moral compass are all crucial requirements and where things can go wrong when legitimate authority oversight and control is absent. A leader's personal presence in this context is vital, and it's as important today as it's always been. But it has to be an informed presence — with proper appreciation and understanding of daily routines, concerns, issues and the cultural dynamic operating in the prison environment.

The scale of the task and the risks involved mean that leadership presence is vital for Governors but equally vital for leaders and managers across the prison. It has to be a team approach — creating active presence which promotes confidence and trust for staff and prisoners alike. Such a presence breaks down barriers creating openness — where information is shared and where community is created. This isn't easy, in fact it's incredibly difficult given the custodial context we've already discussed — but it is a feature of the most effective establishments.

Leadership 'absence' is by contrast, incredibly dangerous and in the extreme leads to shameful abuse — that can occur and persist notwithstanding external scrutiny. The abuse in the segregation unit at Wormwood Scrubs in the 1990's was not, for example, picked up when the prison was inspected. Neither, much more recently, was the mistreatment at Medway Secure Training Centre where Ofsted gave it a 'good' overall rating and it took a Panorama undercover investigation to expose the reality. A similar situation occurred at Whorlton Hall care home for vulnerable adults — exposed again in a Panorama undercover investigation in 2019.

On site 'presence' from an effective leadership team could have and should have identified and prevented this prolonged and systemic abuse. It isn't easy — but evidence shows we cannot rely on external scrutiny alone (important and necessary as it is) nor should we be dependent on undercover investigations. Rather prisons must develop a culture where leaders at all levels are present and are actively promoting a culture of openness and trust where information is shared, and a positive rehabilitative approach is practiced. Leadership presence — is vital but it must be informed, constantly questioning, people focused and above all honest in its application.

## Perspective

My third point is that leaders must maintain a constant focus, integrity and presence. They must balance competing priorities and provide clarity through ambiguity. They have to be able to deal with the 'slings and arrows' of fortune or 'events dear boy events' on a daily basis and remain resilient, calm in the face of adversity, and measured, confident and optimistic when the outlook is uncertain. This too is not an easy task — but it helps enormously where leaders are able to see the 'bigger picture', focus on the 'greater good' and maintain perspective. To be clear, maintaining 'perspective' isn't about a 'laissez-faire'; 'anything goes'; approach. Effective leaders set high standards, expect much, strive to improve and are constantly seeking to make things better. Setting such standards and promoting professionalism at all times is a pre-requisite for success in most organisations and prison leadership is no exception. Retaining perspective in prison leadership is particularly important given the nature of the work and the complexity and challenge presented by the people we work with, the limitations on resources and external support available and the sometimes unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved in this context. 'Keeping your head' is important both for the wellbeing of the institution; for the wellbeing of prisoners and staff; and for personal wellbeing and resilience.

This has become even more pertinent as public expectations, and external scrutiny have increased — placing increased pressure and stress on leaders and staff at all levels. This is particularly evident for establishments dealing with the tragedy of a self-inflicted death or increasingly in dealing with the public profile surrounding an inspection or serious incident. Maintaining morale, purpose and positive endeavour in the face of critical external scrutiny (even where this may be entirely legitimate) is an increasingly difficult but vitally important challenge for a leader. It becomes even more difficult when criticism feels unfair or unbalanced with unrealistic expectations or where an external commentary on an event or incident feels ill-informed or disproportionate. In such circumstances, leaders must take the situation and the issue seriously and must take action in response to events. That is a necessary responsibility. But in doing this they need to maintain a balanced and measured perspective. This isn't easy — coping when things go wrong, acting to address weaknesses, to put things right, to improve, to learn lessons is right and necessary — but it's important to retain balance and perspective throughout — not to commit to unachievable goals; to recognise human fragility; and on occasions to distinguish between unacceptable grossly negligent action and honest mistakes made by human beings under pressure.

Personal integrity is key here. Maintaining principled commitment to values in the most testing of circumstances for me exemplifies the best leaders and maintaining perspective to avoid being swayed by the pressures of the moment is a vital ingredient for success and longevity.

## Conclusion

Of course, leadership in all sectors is all about people and by their very nature prisons are people organisations with daily human interaction at the heartbeat of the institution. The specific context of a prison environment which, by its nature, is coercive and controlling creates a unique leadership challenge.

Effective leadership within a prison requires leaders not only to have a visible presence but to be 'in tune' with the realities, daily dynamic, and culture of their establishment. It means getting alongside prisoners and staff to understand their fears, issues and concerns, and it means understanding the impact that routines and resourcing has on their everyday lives and lived experience. This requires good, effective management to 'govern' the prison and to maintain a positive, active and balanced regime each day. Providing clarity of purpose, acknowledging and balancing the legitimate but often competing tensions inherent in the role of prisons is a requirement for prison leaders. They must maintain security and create a safe environment but also focus on the needs of individuals, treating prisoners with humanity, providing and promoting opportunities for rehabilitation whilst mitigating public protection risks and maintaining public confidence in delivering the sentence and orders of the court. It is a complex and demanding task and the best leaders demonstrate a commitment and care for their staff, for their prisoners and for the wider prison community whilst effectively discharging their responsibilities to the court and to the public as required by Ministers and Parliament acting at all times with purpose and personal integrity.

In an earlier article in this edition of Prison Service Journal, an argument was made 'against prison management' or more accurately, against the growth of public service managerialism. In this article, I argue that strong moral leadership with purpose, presence and perspective combined with good prison management is the antidote to excessive exuberant, expedient managerialism. It is this type of leadership that will enable hope to flourish and prisons to succeed within the political context in which they must inevitably exist.

# Active citizens promoting rehabilitative outcomes

*Dr Kimmett Edgar is Head of Research at Prison Reform Trust*

*'I passionately believe that active citizenship should be part of the learning framework in prisons to build a safer, respectful and more secure environment. The benefits would be felt across our prisons and in our outside communities. This would excite and enable prisoners to see that they can act to influence outcomes both inside and outside prison using new learning and skills.'[1]*

PJ Butler, Governor, HMP Bedford

In 2015, the Prison Reform Trust launched active citizens panels to draw on the insights of people in prison about particular areas of concern and find solutions. Each panel explored a specific topic, such as: debt, a clean environment, grooming, the prevention of violence, or race equality.

PRT begins the process by consulting the governor or SMT members to agree on a challenge for which they would value input from residents. A panel of 6 — 12 people is set up and, typically, meets for four sessions:

1. **Evidence about the problem**—how widespread is it, who is affected, and how?
2. **What are the causes of the problem?**—How do Government, prison managers, officers, residents, and others contribute?
3. **What is the prison already doing to manage the problem?**
4. **What should be done?** The panel generates solutions, discusses their proposals, and refines their recommendations for a final report which is submitted to the governor.

The governor (or SMT) then meets the panel to discuss their recommendations and agree the next steps.

Participation in a panel requires people to respect different points of view, to support their views with evidence, and to share decision-making equally among the group. It calls for patience and active listening skills. The act of backing the panel's recommendations is a demonstration of trust and hope.

In July 2019, the Prison Reform Trust published Prisoners Reforming Prisons, summarising the learning from those active citizen panels which provided input on: safety from fights and assaults; staff-prisoner relationships; and the responsible use of time.[2]

Focusing on the last theme, this article draws on relevant active citizens panels to suggest ways that activities in prison can help to develop a rehabilitative culture. At a time when prisons are uniting around this concept, these panels contribute insights directly from residents about practical changes and reforms prisons can make to advance that vision.

Ruth Mann and colleagues explain that rehabilitative culture occurs when . . .

*'All the aspects of our culture support rehabilitation; they contribute to the prison being safe, decent, hopeful and supportive of change, progression and to helping someone desist from crime. The aim is for everyone to feel safe from physical and verbal violence and abuse, for prisons to be places of decency, where everyone treats each other with respect, and people's basic needs are understood and met.'[3]*

### Meaningful activities

What counts as purposeful activities often depends on what prisons can provide. The activities might range from offending behaviour courses or creative arts to packing tea bags. 'Meaningful activities' on the other hand are those that an individual would choose for themselves, because they fit their personal interests and motivations.

Currently, many prisons do not provide sufficient opportunities to maintain a rehabilitative culture. Only one in three male prisons inspected last year were rated as good or reasonably good for activity outcomes.[4] The prisons inspectorate sets a standard of 10 hours or

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1. PJ Butler (2019) Foreword: *Prisoners Reforming Prisons: Active citizen panels' suggestions for improving prisons,* London: Prison Reform Trust.
2. Prison Reform Trust (2019) *Prisoners Reforming Prisons: Active citizen panels' suggestions for improving prisons,* London: Prison Reform Trust.
3. Ruth Mann, Flora Fitzalan Howard, and Jenny Tew (2018) "What is a rehabilitative prison culture?" Prison Service Journal, Issue 235 January 2018, pages 3-9.
4. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2019) Annual Report 2018-2019, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

more out of cell on weekdays. In 2018-19, their prisoner surveys revealed that adult male prisons met this for only one in ten people. Nearly a quarter of prisoners surveyed said they spent less than two hours out of their cells on a weekday. In local prisons, even fewer were out of the cell for more than two hours. In almost half the prisons inspected, there were not enough education, skills and work activity places to cater for all prisoners throughout the week.[5]

Measuring purposeful activity is notoriously difficult. Time out of cell is unlikely to provide a reliable proxy. In a cell, people can use time constructively, such as writing a letter to a local housing association, but that time would not be counted as purposeful. Conversely, the fact that someone is out of the cell does not guarantee that what they are doing has a clear purpose. Too often, measurements reflect a low threshold.

The Chief Inspector of Prisons observed that

*'Many prisoners took part in work that was mundane or not challenging enough to support them with the development of their employability skills or to prepare them for work after release.'[6]*

Market-driven strategies for prison jobs are important for those who will be released soon. But activities based on the job market are not the whole picture of how time in prison can bring personal meaning. A review of 'what works' in reducing reoffending found that important factors are the quality of the work and the degree of personal satisfaction an individual gains.[7]

A prisoner's perspective, drawn from a previous PRT research project, shows the importance of recognising strengths:

*'In these places, even though we find ourselves in these situations, there are brilliant writers, artists, people that have created*

*everything. Everybody somewhere inside them has got something that they're good at, but [prisons] don't look to find that in people or to help them.'[8]*

When someone's passions reinforce their skills, doing what they are best at is also what gives them most satisfaction. Certain qualities emerge when a person is in their element, such as: looking forward to the activity; being completely absorbed in the task; confidence in meeting the challenges; and the feeling that one's best skills are being put to use. Furthermore, the commitment and motivation to take part suggest that the activity can influence a person's self-image.[9]

Clinks recently published a report on mental well-being in prison. Their respondents suggested that activities that nurtured creativity, arts and exercise improved mental well-being.[10]

A resident in a closed prison ('AB'), interviewed for the Prison Service Journal, summed up the environment that is needed to promote true rehabilitation:

*'Opportunity and hope. Those two things go together. You can't have hope if you've got no opportunities. If you've got no opportunities, you've got no hope. If people feel safe and then they have opportunities, they are going to have hope.'*

AB explained:

*'If you've got an opportunity to do a plumbing course say, and if you do that plumbing course and you do well, it creates a thousand different hopes in your mind because you've just done something you know that I can take this outside and I can actually do this. You've given yourself something to work towards, look at, even to dream about and aspire to.'[11]*

> # Opportunity and hope. Those two things go together. You can't have hope if you've got no opportunities.

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5.   *Ibid.,* pages 34, 36.
6.   *Ibid.,* page 38.
7.   Harper, G. and Chitty, C. (2005) "The Impact of Corrections on Reoffending: A Review of What Works", Home Office Research Study 291, London: Home Office.
8.   Prison Reform Trust (2012) *Out for Good: Taking responsibility for resettlement,* by Kimmett Edgar, Andy Aresti and Neal Cornish, online: http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/OutforGood.pdf; accessed 22 August 2019.
9.   See Ken Robinson (2010) *The Element: How finding your passion changes everything,* London: Penguin. Also: Alison Liebling et al. (2019) "Are hope and possibility achievable in prison?" The Howard Journal, online: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/hojo.12303, accessed 2 September 2019.
10.  Clinks and VCSE (2019) "Whole prison, whole person: How a holistic approach can support good mental health in prison," online: https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/clinks_whole-prison-mh_V4.pdf; accessed 13 August 2019.
11.  Cited in Georgina Barkham-Perry (2019) "Rehabilitative culture in a closed prison," Prison Service Journal, July 2019, Issue 244, pages 29-31; online:https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%20244%20July%202019.pdf; accessed 22 August 2019.

Recalling the activities people can undertake in a cell, one thing they cannot do is develop skills in working with others in a group. Setting individual goals should not eclipse the need for social interaction.

The importance of a sense of community in prison activities was reinforced in the Prison Service Journal by a staff member, Tris Green:

*'The most important feature is having a sense of community. By this I mean people working together who want to achieve the same goals. Where people come together with shared goals and shared responsibilities they will look out for and support each other. Prisoners and staff are then more likely to work together and you see the mutual support and interest they have in each another.'*[12]

The Prison Reform Trust's report Time Well Spent profiled citizenship roles such as peer support and mentoring, Listeners, arts, and prison representatives. These activities promote a shared ethos of care, trust, affirmation, and integrity which can make a profound contribution to social order.[13]

The economist, Avner Offer, described the importance of affirmation and sociability to well-being:

*'Personal interaction ranks very high among the sources of satisfaction. It can take many forms: acknowledgement, attention, acceptance, respect, reputation, status, power, intimacy, love, friendship, kinship, sociability.'*[14]

This suggests that citizenship roles in prison can steer the community from a preoccupation with risk, blame, and suspicion to more positive and trusting relationships.

This social basis of activity is supported by the prisons inspectorate's expectations: 'Prisoners are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their rehabilitation and to contribute positively to the prison community.'[15]

Genuinely meaningful activity requires a foundation in the regime and the culture—a widely shared ethos that respects identity and promotes a sense of positive opportunity.

> Where people come together with shared goals and shared responsibilities they will look out for and support each other.

## Active citizens panels on the responsible use of time

Active citizen panels were convened to respond to a variety of themes on the use of time in prison, which included:

❏ How can this prison do better at promoting resettlement?
❏ What can be done to help women here get ready for release?
❏ Taking responsibility for rehabilitation; and
❏ How can this prison treat people more like adults than children?

The first step in an active citizen panel is to build a picture of the problem. The panel members' analyses of the problems revealed factors that may not have occurred to governors.

For example, in one prison, the members discussed what gets in the way of using time in prison constructively. They mentioned poor communication about what was available; limited opportunities; activities that did not reflect people's areas of interest; and officers who deliberately block participation.

*'There used to be a core day—work all day, association in the evening, visits on weekends. Now, three days a week you sleep in till eleven. You get into a pattern and then when you're released, you can't adjust to a working week.'*

Another group acknowledged that fights and assaults disrupt the regime. But panels also cited inactivity as a source of prison violence: i) lower wages increase the risk of conflicts over resources; ii) bang-up time raises frustrations; and iii) boredom drives drug misuse.

'There is a knock-on effect: no activities mean too much time in your cell. People do drugs because there is nothing else to do and boredom does their head in.'

A third group discussed living in a low-trust environment, which they said:

❏ stops progression
❏ makes it hard to prove you've changed
❏ undermines motivation
❏ can prevent work opportunities; and
❏ can hinder family connections.

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12. Cited in Richard Shuker: "Working in a rehabilitative culture," Prison Service Journal, July 2019, Issue 244, pages 57-63.
13. Prison Reform Trust (2011) *Time Well Spent:* by Kimmett Edgar, Jessica Jacobson and Kathy Baker, London: Prison Reform Trust.
14. Avner Offer (1997) "Between the gift and the market: the economy of regard", Economic History Review, L, 3, 1997, 450-476.
15. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2017) Expectations: Criteria for assessing the treatment of and conditions for men in prisons, Version 5, Expectation 22, London: HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, page 17.

*'You need to do things for yourself, and if you are not trusted you are treated like a child.'*

### A more rehabilitative regime

Rehabilitative culture suggests that the focus of prisons, in designing opportunities and activities, should be on enabling residents to exercise responsibility and make informed decisions about their future. Activities in prison should promote well-being; respond to and build up human dignity; and help boost self-esteem. In this way, time spent constructively inside prison can help prepare the person for the responsibilities they will face after release.

Prisoners consulted for a recent report by the PRT Prisoner Policy Network, said that there were three prerequisites in order to make good use of their time:

basic needs (a decent physical environment and safety)

psychological needs (a sense of belonging, self-confidence)

opportunities for self-fulfilment (a chance to realise your potential).[16]

Rehabilitation is often focused on training and preparing for release through housing and employment schemes. Crucial as these are, the panels suggested that underlying values also exert a powerful influence. Examples cited by panel members included: being treated as a person; being able to demonstrate trust and exercise responsibility; supporting hopes; and listening to concerns.

A group was asked what the prison's management team could do to take their report forward. The members said they wanted:

❏  commitment
❏  transparency
❏  respect
❏  trust
❏  follow through; and
❏  to work with us.

Another group described what prisons need to do to treat people as responsible adults: rewarding good behaviour as well as punishing bad behaviour; seeing each as an individual; enabling people to make decisions for themselves; and demonstrating trust by the opportunities provided.

Treating people as responsible begins in reception. One panel requested improvements to induction assessments, so that information is better targeted at specific needs (such as housing, debt or trauma). They proposed a regular update of people's needs by prison staff, so that they can work towards their goals. Groups also suggested that prisons should ask at induction what people are good at, and then provide relevant opportunities that build on those skills. One panel observed that prison jobs would be distributed more fairly if they were consistently based on people's qualifications and references.

Specific recommendations included the following:
❏  More could be done to make use of the resources people in prison can provide, for example, by facilitating peer-led classes in education.
❏  A new role of 'communication orderly' could be created to answer questions about how the prison works, and improve communication among managers, staff and prisoners. The prison should signpost the range of opportunities that are available.
❏  People would be more responsible for their finances if they received more reasonable pay and had better access to financial management advice.
❏  Businesses could be approached to provide a wider choice of employment opportunities inside prison.
❏  To support people's mental health, therapeutic job opportunities should enable people with mental health needs to hold down a job.
❏  As family ties are vital to rehabilitation, all prisons should provide access to Skype / Facetime.

In deciding on their list of recommendations, many debated whether their input would have any effect. The majority of panels took time to consider how likely it was that a specific proposal would be actioned. Limiting factors included national policies and resources. But most governors welcomed the reports from the panels and committed to take action on about three in five recommendations.

Active citizen panels fit in with a developing menu of tools for consultation, such as User Voice and the Prisoner Policy Network. These reflect well on cultural change in prisons.

As Ruth Mann and her colleagues observed:

*'The content of our policies and procedures can support or hinder rehabilitation: do we encourage people to make their own choices, support relationship development, improve self-management skills and reward pro-social involvement where ever possible? Do we consult the people in our care to make our processes as effective and smooth as possible...?'[17]*

There is an emerging understanding that providing opportunities for residents to exercise responsible citizenship[18] is both a better preparation for release and a driver of a more respectful and supportive community inside the prison. Ensuring that prisons tap into that expertise and work together to find solutions to the problems facing their community is in everyone's interest.

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16.  Prisoner Policy Network (2019) "What do you need to make the best use of your time in prison?", by Dr Lucy Wainwright, Paula Harriott, and Soruche Saajedi, London: Prison Reform Trust, page 4.
17.  Mann, Fitzalan Howard, and Tew, op. cit.
18.  Responsible citizenship is a concept being developed by PJ Butler, in HMP Bedford.

# Recognising good practice in prisons

## Interview with Simon Shepherd

*Simon Shepherd is Director of The Butler Trust and author of 'The good book of prisons'. He is interviewed by*
**Dr. Jamie Bennett,** *Deputy Director in HM Prison and Probation Service.*

**Simon Shepherd has been Director of The Butler Trust, a charity celebrating and promoting what's best in UK prisons, probation and youth justice, since 2008.**

Simon originally trained as a forensic psychologist and worked for the Prison Service for nine years, including at Glen Parva, Swinfen Hall, Featherstone, Holloway, Wandsworth and Prison Service HQ. He spent the next ten years in the drugs and alcohol field, first as Chief Executive of the European Association for Treatment of Addiction and then as head of the Federation of Drug and Alcohol Professionals. He has also served as an independent expert on the Scottish Accreditation Panel for Offender Programmes, and the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel for Offending Behaviour Programmes in England and Wales. And he has been a visiting lecturer at Kings College, London; City, University of London; and Birkbeck, University of London.

The Butler Trust was set up in 1985 to recognise and celebrate outstanding practice by those working with offenders, through an annual award scheme. The Trust is named after Richard Austen Butler (RAB), later Lord Butler of Saffron Walden, who was Home Secretary from 1957 to 1962, and introduced a series of reforms to improve the management, care and rehabilitation of offenders. During his parliamentary career, as well as being Home Secretary, Butler served as President of the Board of Education, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister.

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal is the Trust's Patron. Each year she presides over the Award Ceremony, presenting Award Winners and Commendees with their certificates.

Since its launch the Trust has widened its scope to bring first probation and then youth justice within its purview, and increasingly focuses not only on recognising excellence on the part of staff and volunteers working in correctional settings, but also on helping to further develop the work of Award Winners and Commendees, and to share good practice more widely. The good book of prisons, published in 2019, is the latest initiative of Simon Shepherd and the Butler Trust to celebrate and promote the best practices.

The interview took place in October 2019

**JB: What were the origins of The good book of prisons? Why did you want to focus on the positive aspects of prisons particularly? What were your aims? what did you hope that the book would achieve?**

**SS:** If we want prisons to be as good as they can be, in terms of the welfare and rehabilitation of prisoners, and the safety and wellbeing of staff, it's important to know where standards are falling below expectations, but we also need to know what makes a positive difference in those areas, identify those prisons that do those things well, and share that more widely. There are plenty of others better placed than we are to look at what's going wrong, and there seemed little point us trying to duplicate their efforts, but people rarely look at what's going well and try to learn from that. We also wanted to show the public at large that, in spite of what they might read and hear, and despite the very real challenges, particularly in the last few years, there really are good things going on in every jail in the country, every day of the week.

**JB: What was you're approach to gathering the data for the book?**

**SS:** I visited every closed prison in England and Wales from December 2017 to April 2019. I held three focus groups in each prison, most lasting between 40 mins and an hour, asking front-line staff, managers and prisoners, to tell me about the good things going on in their jail. In total, I held more than 300 meetings, with over 2000 people.

**JB: You must have been told or observed negative aspects too, what did you do with that data?**

**SS:** Though my focus was on the positives, it was no surprise that some of the staff and prisoners had negative things to say too; it would have been more surprising if they hadn't. In many cases their complaints concerned some of the less palatable, but unavoidable, realities of living or working in prisons. Occasionally, however, they appeared to reflect underlying issues which could potentially be addressed, and I fed those back to Governors and their senior management colleagues where appropriate.

**JB: You travelled to every prison in the country, how did you do this?**

**SS:** Well unlike John Howard, who relied on horse power when he toured all the prisons of the day back in the late 18th Century, I had the advantage of trains and taxis. It still took 17 months, and 17,000 miles, though, and quite a few overnight stays in hotels of variable quality.

**JB: Did you reflect that the process of travelling to each prison would in itself tell you something about the prison, including its accessibility for visitors?**

**SS:** It's quite surprising how difficult it is to get to many jails by public transport — and how expensive it is too. To get to Haverigg from London, for instance, takes more than 4 hours by train, at a £100 a pop, even with an advance ticket — and many prisons are a long way, and expensive taxi ride, from the nearest station. And yes, having spent so much time, and money, on the road, it really did bring home to me how difficult and costly it must be for many visitors.

**JB: Did you speak you members of the public in the places you visit? Did that reveal anything about the place of the prison in local communities?**

**SS:** I spent a lot of time in cabs, talking to taxi drivers, and they had many and varied responses when I told them what I was doing. By and large though, apart from the odd holiday camp comment, most of them had respect for prison staff and the job they do. Perhaps the most striking thing though was how little most of them knew about the jails in their area, even those drivers who often took visitors there. It really does seem to be a case of out of sight and out of mind for most people.

**JB: Did your experience of each gate and entry process vary? How were you welcomed by different prisons?**

**SS:** 102 prisons means, obviously, 102 gates — each of them different, many of them a challenge to negotiate even for someone who's been invited in by the Governor. How you're dealt with in a gate can have a profound effect.

Getting in to a high security prison, with the airport style checks, takes time, especially if you arrive just as the staff are returning from lunch — but that's not a problem in itself, it's a high security prison after all. The problem is when the gate staff deal with you in an off-hand fashion, or worse, when they ignore you altogether. I once spent 15 minutes waiting while the gate staff inside studiously ignored me, though they knew full well I was there — and I have to say that very much coloured my whole visit. And if that's how they treat an official visitor, you wonder what it must be like for family and friends. Having said that, I received a cheery and efficient welcome in many of the jails I visited, and that has just as profound an impact, but in the opposite direction.

**JB: What did your findings tell you about what prisons are doing to improve safety? What is there to be learned about this issue from your work?**

**SS:** Safety is a really interesting and nuanced issue. On the one hand, prisons clearly became markedly less safe from around 2013. Yet in spite of that, and the fact that the data at least suggested that things were continuing to get even worse during the first few months of 2018 at least, I was struck by how many staff said they felt safe, and how many prisoners said the same. It wasn't everywhere certainly, but there was also a real sense that a corner was beginning to be turned, especially in the latter half of my tour, even in those prisons which had experienced the most difficulties.

> Safety is a really interesting and nuanced issue. On the one hand, prisons clearly became markedly less safe from around 2013.

The general feeling was that the extra staff[1] were really beginning to make a difference, although there was also a clear sense that it takes time to for new recruits to learn effective de-escalation skills. Keywork[2], which was being rolled out over the period, was seen as a game changer, helping to improve relationships between prisoners and staff, as well as the management of more challenging prisoners, and enhancing intelligence. Challenge Support and Intervention Plans (CSIP)[3], which were also being introduced during my tour, were seen as a positive too; and the introduction of Violence Reduction (VR) 'reps', whose role in a number of establishments included confidentially mediating between prisoners, were singled out in a number of jails. In-cell phones were seen as a positive too, by helping to reduce one of the most significant causes of frustration for prisoners, and removing potential flashpoints in phone queues, particularly at 'bang up'.

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1. An additional 2,500 prison officers were recruited following the White Paper 'Prison Safety and Reform in 2016 see https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/565014/cm-9350-prison-safety-and-reform-_web_.pdf
2. The additional staff recruited are being deployed to duties including 'keyworker', which provides regular support to prisoners. See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/789926/manage-custodial-sentence-pf.pdf
3. A formalised tool for managing people at risk of violence

**JB: What did your findings reveal about relationships in prisons? Are there findings that you think are more widely relevant?**

**SS:** Relationships was actually one of the issues that really stood out for me. In prison after prison, in spite of the many issues jails have been experiencing with deteriorating safety and reduced regimes, both staff and prisoners told me how good relationships were between them.

As I've already said, keywork in particular was seen to have had a positive impact here. Other positives highlighted by the people I spoke to include the use of first name terms, and joint activities between prisoners and staff. Touch screen 'kiosks' for handling domestic arrangements (such as apps, menu choices, visits and canteen), were seen to help in this regard also, by taking pressure off staff, and reducing prisoners' reliance on already-busy officers to get things done.

**JB: What did you find that makes a positive difference in the lives of prisoners?**

SS: As well as a safe prison, and good relations with staff, some of the many things prisoners told me made a positive difference to their lives include: a decent physical environment and greenery; good food; peace and quiet (especially at night); in-cell phones and family visits; electronic 'kiosks'; time out of cell and a wide range of purposeful activities; education and vocational training; libraries and the gym; peer support (like Listeners[4], Prisoners' Information Desk (PID) workers, buddies and Turning Pages mentors[5]); and strong prisoner engagement (including wing representatives and prison councils).

**JB: What did you find that makes a positive difference in the lives of people who work in prisons?**

**SS:** Safety and good relations with prisoners, as well as greenery and a decent physical environment, were as important to staff as they were to prisoners.

Relations among staff, which were rated positively in most jails, were important too, and many staff described their relationships with their colleagues as having the greatest impact of all on their working lives. Unsurprisingly, the Governor was seen has having a huge influence on a jail and the experiences of staff working there — with staff valuing a No 1 who is highly visible, listens to and supports staff, and gives praise where it's due. They really valued personal touches, such as contacting all staff who've been assaulted to check their ok, sending flowers after a bereavement, and personalised Christmas and birthday cards, too. Formal staff consultation, and effective communication, including regular newsletters and briefings, were also seen as important, as was a culture of thanks, including both formal and informal methods of staff recognition (though not all schemes were equally valued).

Other positives included staff messes, especially if they were open in the mornings and at weekends, staff rest rooms and cooking facilities, and open days for family members to look round the jail and see where their loved ones work. Detailing[6] was another important area for staff, though this was more often seen as a problem than a positive, especially where there was limited operational experience in the detailing office.

**JB: How would you want the book to be used by different groups and individuals? Who are the audiences and how do you want them to respond?**

**SS:** I think there are two audiences here: people working in prisons, especially prison leaders (Governors and their Senior Management Teams, Prison Group Directors and Headquarters leads), and the wider public.

I expect that most people in the sector will turn straight to the write-up on their jail and perhaps also other jails they've worked in — but we hope they won't stop there. The individual write-ups can only ever provide a brief, and partial, snapshot of a particular jail, based on what I was told in the short time I was there. But we hope the overall findings section, which draws on all 102 visits, and pulls together the findings from each, will be of real practical value.

We wouldn't expect the wider public to actually read the book, and its contents are not aimed at them, but we always hoped we could use the book to help challenge the overarching negative narrative about jails, if only indirectly, by creating some media interest and making use of the platform that would create. And I think we've had some success in that — I did more than two dozen regional radio and TV interviews at the time of the book's launch, and we managed to get a five minute film about some of the good work going on in prisons, on the BBC One Show.

**JB: How are you disseminating the book and its content?**

**SS:** We've sent hardcopies of the book to every prison Governor and senior management team in England and Wales, as well as to senior leaders across MoJ and HMPPS, and to the Head of the Scottish and Northern Ireland Prison Services. And everyone else can read the book's contents online, and download a PDF if they want to, at www.GoodBookofPrisons.com.

**JB: What has been the response to *The good book of prisons?***

**SS:** It's been really positive. I think we've only had a couple of sarcastic comments on Twitter, but otherwise the feedback's been excellent. Most importantly though, there seems to be a real commitment from HM Prison and Probation Service to follow up on the findings, and to improve their sharing of good practice internally in future.

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4.  A support scheme in which prisoners are trained by the Samaritans see https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/prisons/listener-scheme/
5.  A reading scheme for prisoners, see https://turningpages.shannontrust.org.uk/
6.  This is the process of managing staff resources, including shift allocation and annual leave

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# Reviews

**Victims, crime and society: An introduction (2nd edition)**
By Pamela Davies, Peter Francis and Chris Greer
Publisher: Sage (2017)
ISBN: 978-2-44625-590-2 (hardback) 978-1-44625-591-9 (paperback)
Price: £89.00 (hardback) £30.99 (paperback)

This impressive book provides a comprehensive introduction and overview of the academic analysis of victims and crime.

In the introduction, the three editors and highly regarded criminologists, Pamela Davies, Peter Francis and Chris Greer, describe:

*'This is a book about victims of crime, survivors of abuse, the consequences of social harm, the nature of victimhood and the extent and impact of victimisation. It is a book concerned with the study of victims and victimisation, and is written from a critical perspective that seeks to: challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about the study of victimology; question key concepts and approaches to thinking about victims and survivors; critique ways of understanding the nature and extent of victimisation; and provide an alternative reading of many conventional approaches to responding to victims' needs and experiences'*

The book sets about achieving its aims through thirteen chapters, written by leading lights in the field. These chapters start by introducing the fundamental challenges of quantifying and defining victims and victimisation. Crime peaked in 1995, a year in which 40 per cent of adults were the victims of crime, falling to 16 per cent in 2016. Nevertheless, not all victims report the crimes that are inflicted upon them, some crimes have more profound effects upon those who experience them, and some groups suffer greater victimisation than others. It is this social context that is drawn out throughout the course of this book.

The social construction of victimhood is addressed in chapters exploring historical perspectives and theoretical issues, as well as the problems of media representation of victims and victimisation. These chapters show how the way that victims are understood has shifted in public policy, academia and the media. The contributors draw out the provocative and critical notion of a 'hierarchy of victims'. Through the lens of this analysis, those at the lower end of the hierarchy are perceived to have exposed themselves to crime or even be deserving of this, such as the homeless, drug addicts and sex workers. In contrast, idealised middle class citizens are seen as the model of deserving victims. These chapters chillingly expose how these hierarchies are manifested in media representations and public discourse. The results of this are profound for individuals, who can find their concerns dismissed and be subjected to secondary victimisation through the criminal justice system. Together, these chapters show how victimhood is deeply entangled with wider structures of power and inequality.

Further chapters offer international comparisons, which show the expansion of victims' rights and expectations, enshrined in national and international law. While the greater attention being given to supporting and helping the victims of crime are to be welcomed, these are sometimes conditional, targeted at the ideal, deserving victim. An unintended consequence of the greater visibility of victimhood is discussed, in particular how this can intensify public feelings of fear and insecurity.

What stands out about the scope of this book is that it dedicates almost half of its content drawing attention to victimisation amongst vulnerable and marginalised groups, including chapters on gender, older people, socio-economic inequality, race and religion and sexuality. Further, as well as showing how victimisation falls disproportionately upon the relatively powerless, the book concludes with a chapter that exposes the victimisation created by the crimes of the powerful, such as serious corporate frauds, safety crimes, crimes against consumers, environmental crime and state violence.

In a world where victims and victimhood carries a political payload, this book is a calm and rational contribution. That is not to say that it is politically neutral or without passion. The editors and various contributors all clearly share a perspective that crime and victimhood reflect and are entangled in social power and inequality. They also all share a commitment to promoting social justice through empirical research.

There is much to learn from this book. For students, academics and practitioners, it is a comprehensive overview and introduction to its subject. Equally importantly, there is much to admire in the commitment to informing compassionate public policy and social justice.

**Dr. Jamie Bennett,** Deputy Director, HMPPS

**Demystifying the Big House: Exploring Prison experience and media representation**
Ed by Katherine A. Foss
Publisher: Southern Illinois University Press (2018)
ISBN: 978-0809336579 (paperback)
Price: £28.00 (paperback)

Given the centrality of media to modern life, it is unsurprising that increasing academic attention has been given to the ways in which what we see on our screens shapes our identity, attitudes and behaviours. This edited collection, compiled by Katherine Foss, an associate professor in the school of journalism at Middle Tennessee University, attempts to explore the relationship between the lived experience of prison and media representation, so bridging the divide between prison ethnography and media studies. Throughout the book, Foss and her collaborators, highlight the misrepresentation of prisons in the media, as well as drawing attention to groups that are absent from popular culture. This is a publication that will primarily appeal to scholars interested in the intersections of crime, media and culture. For practitioners and casual readers, this is not an introductory text, although they will find much of interest.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, 'Media representations of prison' offers a series of readings of films and television. This section is distinguished by the particular attention given to the representations of women in prison. The chapters include L. Clare Bratten's historical account of the changing nature of the women in prison genre, from the reforming and critical accounts of 1930s and 1940s, to the subservient view of women in the 1950s led astray or redeemed by their relationships with men, through to the voyeuristic, exploitation films of the 1960s and 1970s. Bratten argues that more recent productions, such as *Orange is the New Black* have been influenced by feminism and have returned to the reforming roots of the genre. In particular, she argues that there are more rounded characters, including a diversity of race and sexual orientation, and credible back stories that contextualise the experience of women in prison, and critique the prison-industrial complex. Bratten's work echoes previous accounts of the history of prison films, which have predominantly focussed on men[1], revealing the connection between the political culture and media representation.

The chapters in this section reveal how the media can reinforce dominant ideas about crime and punishment, an argument that has been made many times previously[2]. This is, nevertheless, given some novelty in Alina Schneeweis's chapter, which exposes how the television series *Oz*, through its dramatic stylisation, served to reinforce dominant ideas about race, masculinity and sexualisation. Media does have the potential to challenge and resist dominant accounts, again an argument that has been made previously[3]. Here, Rebecca Kern argues that *Orange is the New Black* '...appears to challenge historical representations of female sexuality by incorporating new constructions of female sexual identity in prison' (p.49), in particular, by showing uncomfortable scenes of sexual violence and power, which confront viewers with the lived realities of people in prison, and the social norms and structures that shape their lives. Kern argues that this can be productive and politically enlightening: 'The power of the gaze is more than what happens while watching; it is what viewers choose to do with the information after they finish' (p. 62). In a further chapter, S. Lenise Wallace analyses the documentary series *Prison Wives,* which focussed on first-hand accounts of a group that are often invisible to the general public. The documentary series reveals the challenges of financial hardship, sexual intimacy and loneliness, their involvement in legal advocacy, and their attempts to maintain hope. Wallace describes the series as offering the women an opportunity to present their story.

The first section adopts a conventional approach by reading texts, situating them within historical social contexts and positioning them within a contested moral environment. What distinguishes the work is that it focusses not on the majority of films and shows about men's prisons, but prioritises women. For practitioners, these chapters will encourage reflection upon engagement with the media and how to frame or reframe stories so as to engage with particular values and perspectives[4].

1. Cheatwood, D. (1998) *Films About Adult, Male, Civilian Prisons: 1929-1995* in Bailey, F.Y. & Hale, D.C. (eds) *Popular Culture, Crime, and Justice* Belmont: West/Wadsworth (p.209-31); Wilson, D. and O'Sullivan, S. (2004) *Images of Incarceration: Representations of Prison in Film and Television Drama* Winchester: Waterside Press
2. E.g. Ericson, R., Baranek, P., and Chan, J. (1991) *Representing order: Crime, law and justice in the news media* Milton Keynes: Open University Press; Surette, R. (1997) *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice* Second edition Belmont: West/Wadsworth; Brown, M. (2009) *The culture of punishment: Prison, society and spectacle.* New York: New York University Press
3. Rafter, N. (2000) *Shots in the mirror: Crime films and society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press; Wilson and O'Sullivan (2004) see n.1
4. For a useful guide to engaging with the media and public, see Transform Justice (2017) *Reframing crime and justice – a handy guide* available at http://www.transformjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Reframing-crime-and-Justice-a-handy-guide_Transform-Justice.pdf accessed on 24 September 2019

The second part of the book, 'Connecting media to experience', takes varying perspectives on the relationship between reality and representation, using a mixture of qualitative research and reflective accounts. Emily Plec opens this section by comparing the experiences of death row prisoners represented in the liberal reforming series *Death Row Stories*, with the reality of a case known to the author. A particularly interesting chapter is offered by Karen Churcher, who describes the production of an inmate magazine and television channel in Angola prison, in Louisiana. Churcher captures the ways in which those involved resist the dominant culture within the prison and reconstruct more pro social forms of masculinity. This joins a small but valuable body of work on media production in prisons, including film and radio[5]. This chapter will be of interest to people working in prisons, particularly those supporting arts initiatives with prisoners. Kathryn Whiteley contributes a chapter in which women prisoners reflect upon their representation in the media and how they would want this to be different. In this important chapter, the women call for the complexities of life to be shown and that they are seen as 'more than a crime', but

instead a situated and rounded human character (p.222). Again, this is a fascinating chapter that positions people in prison as a specific audience who draw upon their own lived experience and expertise to be sophisticated consumers who can use media to explore and critique the real world they inhabit. This is an innovative contribution, although a recent UK study has been conducted screening contemporary British prison films to an audience serving sentences in a British prison[6].

The final section turns the spotlight on 'Forgotten voices in the media'. This section is concerned with the omissions of the media, including those individuals and experiences that are overlooked, marginalised or ignored. The chapters address issues including breastfeeding mothers in prison, transgender prisoners and formerly incarcerated Black men. These chapters are largely taken from ethnographic research, which seeks to sensitively represent the lived experiences of particular groups and individuals.

*Demystifying the Big House* is a fascinating and diverse collection that attempts to push the study of prisons and the media in new directions. In the final chapter, Foss highlights the critical conclusion, that:

'*...media paint a limited picture of Prison, by blaming individuals for their crimes, emphasising punishment over rehabilitation, and overall by misrepresenting the experience, while ignoring contextual factors that contribute to incarceration' (p. 330)*

This assessment clearly situates media representation in a wider context of social power and inequality. In itself, such a conclusion is not novel, but in several respects, this book takes a path that is less well travelled. In particular, it highlights that what is omitted and hidden is as important as what is revealed in media representation. The book also starts to bridge the gap between representation and the lived experience of prisoners, not only in terms of the accuracy of films or televisions, but also in the way that films and television are consumed by people in prison and what effects this has upon them. Finally, it also gives attention to prisons as a site of media production by prisoners. By taking an unconventional and disparate approach, Foss has taken some risks. That courage has paid off in this fascinating collection.

**Dr. Jamie Bennett,** Deputy Director, HMPPS

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5.    O'Neill, D. (2017) Film as a Radical Pedagogic Tool Abingdon: Routledge; Bedford, C. (2018) *Making waves behind bars: The prison radio association* Bristol: Bristol University Press

6.    This study was conducted by Jamie Bennett and Victoria Knight, and the first publications are expected in 2020.

# Obituary

## Roland Adams — Prison Governor

**Brendan O'Friel** *is a retired former prison governor*

At the end of the Second World War, the Prison Service was in serious difficulties having lost accommodation to bomb damage and being simultaneously faced with an unexpected and sharp rise in the numbers of prisoners. This was compounded by staff shortages as older Governors and Officers — who should have retired but stayed on for the duration of the war — took their pensions.

To face these challenges, the Prison Service embarked on a special recruitment process for Governors for a 'Reconstruction Period' taking advantage of the availability of ex-service candidates, most with considerable war time experience. Those recruited — over several years — were given a common seniority date of 1st January 1946 — with the proviso that seniority was to be according to age.

Roland Adams was one of the youngest to be appointed as a junior Governor during this 'Reconstruction Period'. In later years he would rather ruefully reflect that his youth was given as a reason for not promoting him as quickly as some of his older colleagues.

Adams quickly stood out as a talented and committed Governor. Colleagues particularly valued his integrity, his high personal standards together with his calm and considered approach to his work. A staunch member of the Anglican Communion, he regularly attended services in the many penal establishments at which he served. Throughout his service, he was frequently described as a 'true gentleman' — a Governor whose staff viewed him with affection and for whom many prisoners had considerable respect.

Much of his service involved working with Young Offenders. He showed a keen interest in their welfare and was particularly good at motivating staff to effectively managing their charges by example, encouragement and the occasional necessary correction.

One highlight of his career was when he was tasked with opening Onley Borstal Recall Centre in 1968. At the time, serious concerns had been raised about an existing Borstal Recall Centre based in Reading Prison. To counter public criticism, the plan was to close the two old recall centres and start afresh. Adams was required to deliver an improved regime for all those recalled to Borstal and to deliver it swiftly.

Onley was successfully opened and filled to capacity in less than three months, a considerable achievement against a background of contractors failing to complete work on time — for example the internal phone system was not operating when the first trainees arrived.

A more daunting challenge was to follow. In 1971, Adams was posted to Gartree maximum security prison, Leicestershire, his first encounter with adult prisoners. Policy and practice for dealing with very long term and difficult offenders was — at best — evolving. The increase in very long sentences such as those imposed on the Great Train Robbers together with the abolition of the death penalty created serious new problems for Governors and for policy makers. Meanwhile, the security lapses around George Blake's escape from Wormwood Scrubs and the subsequent Mountbatten report had opened a debate about whether to concentrate or disperse high security prisoners. The decision was made to create a system of 'Dispersal' prisons to which difficult prisoners serving very long sentences were to be allocated. Gartree was designated as one of the new dispersal prisons.

But Gartree had been built as a medium security prison. The perimeter and fabric of the buildings — as well as the overall design — was not fit for purpose. So for many years, considerable investment had to be provided to improve Gartree — and other dispersal prisons — including converting the original perimeter wire fences to walls capped with anti-climb devices.

These vital improvements had not been made when in December 1972; there was a major disturbance at Gartree with a great deal of damage internally. No prisoners escaped — and Roland Adams did well to stabilise the situation without fatalities. But staff and prisoners were traumatised and it took months of work to restore a regime for prisoners as staff gradually regained confidence and developed improved skills and techniques. This disturbance was one of the triggers for increased militancy by the Prison Officers Association. Consequently Adams found himself on the front line of a new crisis as industrial relations issues became a much higher priority.

Adams was promoted to Governor Class One in 1977 and posted to Pentonville Prison in London. There he had to face considerable overcrowding and

an impoverished regime. He worked hard to alleviate the worst of the conditions and to deliver improvements to the regime wherever possible.

His colleagues elected him to serve on the Committee of the Governors' representative organisation from 1977 until his retirement in 1983. This and his position as Governor of a major London Prison meant that he was involved in representing the views of his colleagues to Ministers and to Parliamentary Committees inquiring into prison conditions. He was selected to read the lesson at the Prison Service Centenary Service at Westminster Cathedral in 1978 and regularly advised Church leaders such as Cardinal Basil Hume about prison issues.

Roland Adams was born in Ealing to Frank and Marjorie Adams. His father had fought in the First World War and lost a leg during the Battle of the Somme. Despite his disability, he taught his son to row and encouraged him to be a keen sportsman. Educated at Westminster City School, Roland Adams became a scout which may have been the catalyst to developing his sense of service.

He was a scout stretcher bearer during the blitz in London and as soon as eligible joined up for war service. After initial training with the Royal Artillery in Ayrshire, he was commissioned as a Captain in the Dogras Regiment of the Indian Army. It was this experience of being responsible for his men that motivated him to join the Prison Service at the end of the war.

He served initially at Portland Borstal, a secure institution on Portland Bill, Dorset which had been severely bombed during the war. He was transferred to Hatfield Open Borstal, Yorkshire and then to North Sea Camp Open Borstal, Lincolnshire before being promoted in 1956 to Deputy Governor at Hollesley Bay Colony — a very large open Borstal in Suffolk.

While at Portland Borstal, he met and married Stella Barbara Reeves.

He was promoted to Governor Class Three in 1960 and opened the new Detention Centre at Medomsley in County Durham. From there he moved to take charge of Gaynes Hall Open Borstal Huntingdon. In 1968 he was further promoted to Governor Class Two to open the Borstal Recall Centre at Onley near Rugby.

In April 1971, he was posted to take charge of Gartree Prison in Leicestershire. A posting to Preston Prison, Lancashire followed in 1973 and in 1977 he was further promoted to take charge of Pentonville Prison, a post he held until his retirement in 1983. He was awarded the OBE in 1980.

Retiring to Wonastow in Monmouth, he became very active in local and church affairs, including being Church Warden at St Wonnows and assisting with the local scouts. He worked for the Crown Agents linking overseas groups with the Prison Service. Even in his nineties, he kept many of his Prison Service contacts and was an active supporter of the Retired Governors Association.

Stella predeceased him in 2006; he leaves a daughter Caroline and a son Roger. Roger graduated from the Royal College of Art with a Masters Degree in Architectural Design, and runs his own Architectural and Design practice — Bisset Adams.

**Roland Adams — Prison Governor — born 3rd March 1923: died 4th July 2019**

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The *Prison Service Journal* is a peer reviewed journal published by HM Prison Service of England and Wales. Its purpose is to promote discussion on issues related to the work of the Prison Service, the wider criminal justice system and associated fields. It aims to present reliable information and a range of views about these issues.

The editor is responsible for the style and content of each edition, and for managing production and the Journal's budget. The editor is supported by an editorial board — a body of volunteers all of whom have worked for the Prison Service in various capacities. The editorial board considers all articles submitted and decides the out-line and composition of each edition, although the editor retains an over-riding discretion in deciding which arti-cles are published and their precise length and language.

**From May 2011 each edition is available electronically from the website of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. This is available at http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/psj.html**

**Circulation of editions and submission of articles**

Six editions of the Journal, printed at HMP Leyhill, are published each year with a circulation of approximately 6,500 per edition. The editor welcomes articles which should be up to c.4,000 words and submitted by email to **jamie.bennett@hmps.gsi.gov.uk** or as hard copy and on disk to *Prison Service Journal*, c/o Print Shop Manager, HMP Leyhill, Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, GL12 8BT. All other correspondence may also be sent to the Editor at this address or to **jamie.bennett@hmps.gsi.gov.uk**.

Footnotes are preferred to endnotes, which must be kept to a minimum. All articles are subject to peer review and may be altered in accordance with house style. No payments are made for articles.

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