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# Contents

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## 2 Editorial Comment

## 3 Exploring Body Worn Cameras; Prison Officer Perceptions of Safety and Accountability Laura Polley and Richard Smith

## 11 Avoiding 'starburst': The need to identify common metrics of evaluating strengths-based programmes in prison David Best, Lorana Bartels, Graham Beck and Amy Musgrove

## 17 Bereavement Behind Bars: Prison and the Grieving Process Dr Katie Hunt

## 24 Motivation for Higher Education in Prison Dr Helen Lepp Friesen

## 31 'It's Just Not Worth it': How Juvenile Offenders Begin to Desist from Crime, a Thematic Analysis Alice Austin

### Editorial Board

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University of Dundee  
**Flora Fitzalan Howard**  
HMPPS  
**Dr Munazzah Choudhary**  
HMPPS  
**Jackson Joseph**  
HMP Leyhill

# May 2021

- 39 Harm reduction or a catalyst for new harms?**  
The impact of smoke-free prison policy on prisoners and the prison regime  
Dr Paul Gray and Dr Rob Ralphs

*Dr Paul Gray is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Dr Rob Ralphs is a Reader in Criminology at Manchester Metropolitan University.*

- 46 Book Review**  
**Prison: A Survival Guide**  
Felicity Adams

*Felicity Adams is a PhD candidate at Keele University.*

- 47 Book Review**  
**The Prison Doctor**  
Peter Quinn

*Peter Quinn is a retired Prison Governor and recently was a Visiting Fellow, at Bristol Law School, University of the West of England, Bristol.*

- 49 Book Review**  
**Black Women Prison Employees: The Intersectionality of Gender and Race**  
Dr Jamie Bennett

*Dr Jamie Bennett is a Deputy Director in HMPPS.*

- 50 Book Review**  
**Breakfast at Bronzefield**  
Professor Karen Harrison

*Dr Karen Harrison is a Professor of Law and Penal Justice at Lincoln Law School.*

- 51 Book Review**  
**Solitary. Alone We Are Nothing**  
Professor Karen Harrison

- 52 Book Review**  
**Your Honour, Can I Tell You My Story?**  
Olivia Tickle

*Olivia Tickle is a Psychology Graduate and Prison Offender Manager (POM) at HMYOI Aylesbury.*

- 54 Interview with David Lammy MP**

*David Lammy MP is the Shadow Secretary of State for Justice.*

- 58 Obituary**  
**John Dring — Prison Governor**  
Brendan O’Friel

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# Editorial Comment

There are a diverse range of issues addressed in this edition of *Prison Service Journal*, ranging from security and safety, to organisational change and rehabilitation. Each of the articles is based upon research and expert analysis. They offer a rich selection for those with an interest in prisons, and in particular for those working in the prison system.

The edition opens with an article by Laura Polley, a Lecturer in Criminology at University of Suffolk and Richard Smith, a Superintendent in the Metropolitan Police Service. The article draws upon research regarding prison officers' perceptions of body worn video cameras (BWVC). There is a growing body of knowledge about the use of BWVC, which demonstrates that used in the right way, they can be an aid to reducing violence, reducing complaints and increasing legitimacy. This research highlights that there may be cultural barriers to using BWVC in the most effective way, including scepticism about effectiveness and suspicion about the intentions of introducing BWVC. The article is a useful contribution which helps to understand some of the concerns and obstacles to more effective use of BWVC. The research, conducted by an academic who has worked in prisons and a police officer who undertakes research, is an excellent illustration of the potential for collaboration between academia and practice.

The second article by David Best and others focusses on strength based interventions including peer support, drug recovery and family connections. Best and colleagues argue that if these programmes are solely evaluated using 'hard' institutional measures, then they can often have a short lived and superficial impact. Instead, the authors suggest that measures need to reflect the more profound cultural changes that programmes can generate as it is through such transformations that sustainable benefits can be achieved. The article adds to literature that critiques managerial practices and seeks to expand the ambition of evaluation in prisons.

In a significant and timely contribution, Katie Hunt sensitively explores the experience of people suffering bereavement and grief while in prison. This article would be relevant at any time, but given the scale of loss brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, this is particularly salient. The experiences and processes described in the article are stark and distressing. Yet, this is not a polemical piece, instead it is a carefully judged assessment and call for attention and resources to be directed to those experiencing loss and grief.

In their respective articles, Helen Lepp and Alice Austin focus on personal growth and change. Lepp examines the motivations of students and teachers engaged in an educational programme in a Canadian prison. The article reinforces the findings of Dame Sally Coates, that 'If education is the engine of social mobility, it is also the engine of prisoner rehabilitation'<sup>1</sup>. Austin offers the results of a small scale qualitative study exploring children involved with Youth Offending Teams, who then stop committing crime. The findings may be useful to practitioners working with children and developing practice and strategies to enable them to make good choices about their futures.

The final article by Paul Gray and Rob Ralphs considers the impact of the smoking ban in prisons. In particular, they pay attention to the potential displacement from cigarettes to other substances and the creation of illicit markets. The article is not an argument for reversing the ban on smoking, but is instead intended to highlight the ways in which positive and progressive change can have unintended or collateral effects. This article prompts reflection on the process of planning and managing change in prisons.

As well as the main articles, this edition includes a number of book reviews. Several of these are autobiographies written by people who live and work in prisons. This is a growing field that clearly has commercial and popular appeal. Although the reviews in this edition are generally positive about the individual texts, this is a field that warrants closer critical attention. How were the texts written and what are the ethics of writing about other people in prison? What claim do these texts have to authority, authenticity and credibility? What are the editorial and commissioning processes that select and produce these texts? What does the consumption of these texts by readers reveal about the place of prison in society?

Finally, this edition closes with an interview with David Lammy MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for Justice and author of the Lammy Review<sup>2</sup>, an independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system. The interview covers race in the criminal justice system, reform of prisons and sentencing, and the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

This edition offers a wide range of material, intended to stimulate reflection and debate about contemporary penal practices and values.

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1. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-potential-a-review-of-education-in-prison>

2. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lammy-review-final-report>

# Exploring Body Worn Cameras: Prison Officer Perceptions of Safety and Accountability

*Laura Polley is a Lecturer in Criminology, University of Suffolk and Richard Smith is a Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service*

## Introduction

Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate of Prisons (HMCI<sup>1</sup>) annual report, published in 2018,<sup>1</sup> considers that the current state of prisons in England and Wales is a direct result of the large decline (27 per cent) in staffing levels between 2010 and 2015. This equates to 6,609 prison officers leaving the Prison Service without being replaced<sup>2</sup>. Since these reductions, assaults between prisoners and towards staff have continued rising, whilst inspections have revealed unsanitary conditions. Most specific to this study, is HMCI's concerns regarding the safety of local prisons that hold those who are on remand or recently sentenced. Levels of violence in local prisons are considerably higher due to the constant churn of new prisoners, inevitably worsening issues of gang violence and harmful group behaviour<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, local prisons are inherently overcrowded, traditionally designed as single cell prisons, the majority are now expected to share cells to continue serving the courts effectively<sup>4</sup>.

An overarching aim of using Body Worn Camera's (BWC's) in prisons is to promote positive relationships between prisoners and staff, whilst ensuring that evidence is captured first-hand. Reducing the opportunity for assaults on staff and increasing the likelihood of appropriate sanctions were clear catalysts for the introduction of BWC's. BWC implementation in prisons began in 2017 and are now a recognised part of prison officers Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Within prisons, a 'discretionary' filming technique is

adopted, affording officers the decision of when and where to activate their BWC — PSI 04/2017 recommends BWC activation during all reportable incidents. A pilot evaluation<sup>5</sup> of BWC's across 23 prisons in England has found that overall, staff perceptions of their implementation is positive, with 79 per cent reporting that BWC's had a positive impact. However, this evaluation also found a negative impact from BWC use in regards to their effects on staff/prisoner relationships. Additionally, this evaluation highlighted that prison officers felt fearful of reprimand following the monitoring of BWC footage by managers. Although most participants within this evaluation described feeling physically safer, there was a perceived vulnerability and mistrust of management viewing BWC footage.

## Perceptions of Safety

The recent implementation of BWC's in prisons is a strategic attempt to increase safety and reduce violence in prisons. All prisons governed by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are required to use BWC's during reportable incidents, particularly those involving the use of force on a prisoner, to gather an accurate reflection of the events taking place before, during and after the incident<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, BWC's are used as a de-escalation tool, assisting in conflict resolution. This tactic is framed around the 'Five Minute Intervention' model, a technique used by trained officers to transform everyday conversations into rehabilitative interventions, challenging criminogenic behaviour and encouraging positive outlooks<sup>7</sup>.

1. HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons. 2018. Annual report for 2017-18. HC1245
2. Institute for Government. 2019. Performance Tracker 2019: Prisons. Table 3 and 4. Retrieved from: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/performance-tracker-2019/prisons>
3. Maitra, D.R. 2020, "If You're Down With a Gang Inside, You Can Lead a Nice Life": Prison Gangs in the Age of Austerity", *Youth Justice*, vol. 20, no. 1-2, pp. 128-145.
4. Prison Reform Trust (2015) Bromley Briefings Summer 2015, Prison Reform Trust, London
5. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (2020) Body Worn Video Camera (BWVC) Pilot Evaluation. Conducted by Laura Pope, Dr Helen Wakeling, George Box, Sharon Avis, Dr Rosie Travers, Dr Ruth Mann and Rachel George. Ministry of Justice Analytical Series 2020.
6. PSI 04/2017. Body Worn Video Camera's. Security Management. National Security Framework
7. Justice Committee. 2016. Prison Safety. Sixth report of session 2015-16. House of Commons

Dissecting BWC use in prisons from a practical perspective, HMPPS adopts a 'discretionary' process when utilising BWC's. They are individually controlled and their use ultimately lies with the prison officer wearing the BWC. This discretion within the utility of BWC's has been found by Ariel<sup>8</sup> as potentially harmful. In a multi-site randomised control study of BWC use within UK Police Service, it was found that in trials where BWC use was discretionary, use of force increased by 71 per cent. It was suggested that selective activation during a heightened interaction can escalate aggression levels in a suspect, which is then mirrored by the officer in an attempt to re-gain control of the situation.

BWC's use in public services has received global controversy. Despite seeking to promote transparency, accountability and safety of the public and police officers in the United States (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK), there are contradictory positions on the utility of BWC's. Whilst their use reduces violence, discrimination and corruption, BWC's carry risks of violating privacy and increasing hostility amongst the public towards police officers<sup>9</sup>. Recent research highlights the importance of internal acceptance of the new technology for the benefits of BWC's to be experienced<sup>10</sup>. These factors are directly affected by officers' initial perceptions of BWC's; including the planning and implementation processes adopted by senior management, administrative policy regarding their use, as well as their own and their colleagues' experiences of this technology in the field. Mostly, research describes positive officer perceptions of BWC's post-implementation, with a high level of acceptance and buy in from frontline staff<sup>11</sup>. Research conducted by Ariel in 2016 found that using BWC's did not significantly reduce use of force incidents. However, this

**BWC's carry risks of  
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study noted that 'compliance' and 'discretion' — officers turning their BWC off during their shift increased use of force on some occasions. In trial groups of police officers who adopted continuous filming, use of force decreased by 37 per cent, however officers did not have the discretion to turn their BWC's off<sup>12</sup>.

### **Maintaining Accountability**

The implementation of BWC's arguably breeds hostility and distrust in those entrusted in keeping society safe and secure. This highlights the importance of improved accountability through the implementation of BWC across public services. Research suggests that police officers are concerned about the potential for trust to be eroded between officers and their senior managers<sup>13</sup>. This heightened suspicion and mistrust is widely noted in the modern-day culture of surveillance, whereby intrusive techniques and preventative approaches supersede traditional methods of crime control<sup>14</sup>. Overall, research supports that those with first-hand experience of BWC's are supportive of their use in law enforcement, paying attention to their ability to reduce citizen complaints and increase safety. However, those with little or no experience using BWC's tended to remain sceptical of their potential benefits.

London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) began trialling BWC's in May 2014. This trial equipped Emergency Response Teams across 10 London boroughs with BWC's. Teams within each borough were randomly assigned to wear BWC's or to not wear BWC's. This study of BWC implementation within the MPS found that using BWC's significantly reduces complaints relating to interactions with members of the public<sup>15</sup>. This was particularly so in respect of allegations

8. Ariel, B., Sutherland, A., Henstock, D., Young, J., Drover, P., Sykes, J., Henderson, R. (2016). Report: Increases in police use of force in the presence of body-worn cameras are driven by officer discretion: A protocol-based subgroup analysis of ten randomized experiments. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 12(3), 453-463
9. Freund, K. 2015, "When cameras are rolling: privacy implications of body-mounted cameras on police", *Columbia Journal of Law & Social Affairs*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 91-133.
10. Katz, C. M., Kurtenbach, M., Choate, D. E., White, M. D. (2015) Evaluating the impact of police officer body-worn cameras, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Smart Policing Initiative.
11. Roy, A. 2014. *On-officer video cameras: Examining the effects of police department policy and assignment on camera use and activation* (Unpublished master's thesis). Arizona State University, Tempe.
12. Ariel, B., Sutherland, A., Henstock, D., Young, J., Drover, P., Sykes, J., Henderson, R. (2016). Report: Increases in police use of force in the presence of body-worn cameras are driven by officer discretion: A protocol-based subgroup analysis of ten randomized experiments. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 12(3), 453-463
13. Freund, K. 2015, "When cameras are rolling: privacy implications of body-mounted cameras on police", *Columbia Journal of Law & Social Affairs*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 91-133.
14. Zedner, L. (2007) Pre-Crime and Post-Criminology? *Theoretical Criminology*, 11(2), 261-281
15. Grossmith, L. Owens, C. Finn, W. Mann, D. Davies, T and Baika, L, 2015, *Police, Camera, Evidence: London's cluster randomised controlled trial of Body Worn Video*. College of Policing and the Mayor's Office for Police And Crime (MOPAC).



of oppressive behaviour and incivility. The probability of an officer from the control group — whom was not wearing a BWC — receiving an allegation or complaint regarding their behaviour was 2.55 times higher than for an officer in the treatment group who was wearing a BWC. Additionally, the pilot evaluation of BWC's in prisons found that staff were supportive of BWC's positive effects regarding evidence-collecting and securing adjudication results following incidents of misconduct across the prison population. However, some participants within this study expressed that BWC implementation in prisons could have been more transparent, and that a swift roll-out fuelled suspicions amongst staff regarding the aims of BWC implementation.

## Methodology

This research intends to identify the use of BWC's within prisons. At the time of data collection, BWC's had been implemented for approximately 24 months as PPE for all operational staff. Further, this study seeks to explore staff perceptions of BWC's in the prison they work in, focussing upon safety and staff accountability. This research also seeks to highlight any barriers to using BWC's, considering the potential for resistance, particularly when discussing a new implementation of technology.

### Primary Research Question

- 1: *'Are Body Worn Camera's used by operational staff on a regular basis?'*

### Secondary Research Questions

- 2: *'What are staff perceptions of their personal safety when wearing Body Worn Camera's?'*
- 3: *'What are staff perceptions of their accountability when wearing Body Worn Camera's?'*
- 4: *'Are there any barriers to wearing/using Body Worn Camera's?'*
- 5: *'Is there a resistance to wearing Body Worn Camera's amongst staff?'*

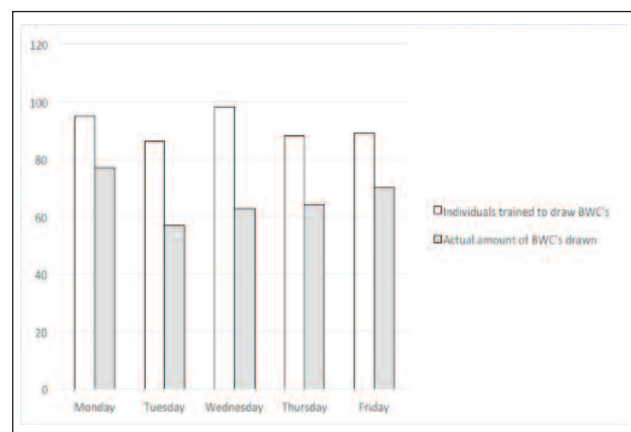
This study considers the impact of BWC's on perceptions of Prison Officer safety and accountability. Empirical research, supported by HMPPS, was conducted in a local prison (Prison A) between January — April 2019. A cross-sectional study was completed, considering the 'newness' of BWC's, as well as assuming they will become a permanent fixture across the modern-day prison estate. This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, using predominantly qualitative methods to retrieve rich data sets. Quantitative methods will present statistics highlighting

the use of BWC's in Prison A, to better frame the collection of opinions and perceptions from staff regarding their effectiveness.

Operational staff at all ranks were recruited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Using a random sampling technique, the 224 (approximately) staff at the establishment were represented by a sample of 10. Once participants gave their consent to be involved in the study, they partook in a semi-structured interview to gather data surrounding their perceptions of BWC's particularly in respect of safety and accountability in their role. Interviews were analysed using Thematic Analysis, offering the flexibility required to maintain an exploratory approach. Participants were fully briefed on the aims of the research and gave informed consent to take part. All participants received a debriefing, outlining support agencies such as the Employee Assistance Programme to approach for advice and guidance around wellbeing in the workplace.

## Findings and Discussion

To answer Research Question 1: *'Are Body Worn Camera's used by operational staff on a regular basis?'* statistics demonstrated that there is a difference between the number of individuals trained to draw BWC's and the number of BWC's drawn daily. This suggests that although staff are trained to wear BWC's, there is a proportion of staff who do not wear them, contrary to policy expectations.



**Figure 1:** Comparing rates of individuals trained to draw BWC's with the number of BWC's drawn

Statistics were also obtained regarding the amount of 'use of force' incidents where a BWC had been deployed. The graph below maps the use of BWC's during incidents from April 2018 — April 2019. This graph shows that the use of BWC's in use of force incidents has steadily increased over time. This suggests that staff are becoming more likely to deploy BWC's during use of force incidents.

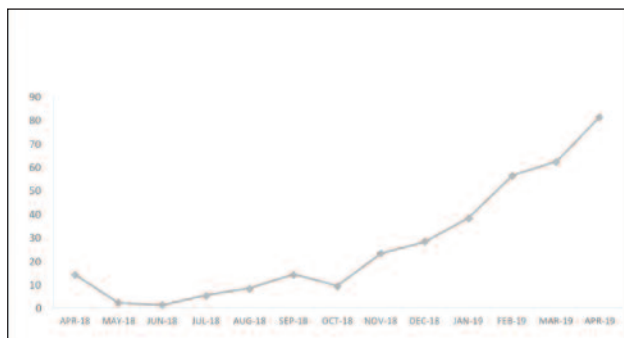


Figure 2: Use of force incidents where a BWC is activated

## Staff Perceptions of their Personal Safety

### Positive Perceptions of Personal Safety

Firstly, the theme ‘BWC’s improve safety in prisons’ was identified, referring to BWC’s as ‘protecting staff and prisoners from harm’ and ‘improving staff safety’. Participants in this study hold a belief that their personal safety has improved with the implementation of BWC’s, even though the use of this equipment is discretionary. The clear finding is that staff are using BWC’s in the belief that it will reduce violent incidents and therefore the potential for assaults on both staff and prisoners. The potential of BWC to reduce violence has been demonstrated in the work of Farrar and Ariel<sup>16</sup>, who identified a 59 per cent reduction in use of force incidents within 12 months of implementing BWC’s, in a policing context, however, this was when filming was continuous and mandatory rather than at the discretion of the operator.

This high level of acceptance and buy-in from frontline staff regarding BWC implementation supports previous research regarding implementing BWC’s in a US police department<sup>17</sup>. However, Ariel’s<sup>18</sup> multi-site study of BWC’s in the police service found that discretionary filming may have a provocative impact, holding the potential not only to be ineffective at reducing violence, but resulting in the escalation of incidents. The findings identified by Ariel are not consistent with the sentiment articulated by participants who took part in this study. This presents

The clear finding is that staff are using BWC’s in the belief that it will reduce violent incidents

an interesting perspective in terms of the *perception* of the participants who took part in this study, versus the *reality* of the outcomes identified by Ariel.

Whilst the contention here is that the use of BWC may cause prisoners to more carefully consider their actions whilst on camera, questions remain as to whether perceptions regarding the utility of discretionary filming are accurate. The HMPPS policy of discretionary BWC use suggests an implied power dynamic that staff have over prisoners, whereby the decision to record is an overt intervention, intended to resolve issues of violence and unruly behaviour. This could subsequently be counter-productive, due to the use of the camera being seen as staff perceiving a threat and actively seeking a resolution — with the unintended consequence of the incident then further escalating. Ariel found that continuous filming is effective due to its civilising influence on all parties. Having BWC’s constantly recording diminishes power imbalances between staff and prisoners by ensuring all parties are equally surveyed, thus BWC’s are not utilised as a power resource.

### Negative Perceptions of Personal Safety

The second distinct theme is ‘BWC’s do not improve perceptions of safety’. Within this, participants voiced opinions such as ‘Does not feel safer unlocking with a BWC’, referring to unlocking a landing of prisoners and ‘Does not reduce assaults, the same as CCTV did not’. This suggests that staff feel BWC’s are not effective at reducing violence or assaults on prison staff. This links to ‘BWC’s are not effective at de-escalation’. Within this, participants discussed how ‘BWC’s are only effective at de-escalating minor incidents’ and ‘BWC’s don’t improve compliance, they just speed up gaining compliance’.

The theme ‘BWC’s instigate more violence’ is also present, including codes such as ‘Deploying BWC’s escalates prisoners’ aggression levels’ and ‘Prisoners acting up to BWC’s’. Instead of de-escalating and assisting with gaining compliance, prisoners can become more aggressive when a camera is switched on, perceiving this action as escalating rather than de-

16. Farrar, W. A. and Ariel, B. 2013. “Self-awareness to being watched and socially desirable behavior: A field experiment on the effect of body-worn cameras and police use of force” Police Foundation, Washington, DC (2013)
17. Katz, C. M., Kurtenbach, M., Choate, D. E., White, M. D. (2015) Evaluating the impact of police officer body-worn cameras, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Smart Policing Initiative.
18. Ariel, B., Sutherland, A., Henstock, D., Young, J., Drover, P., Sykes, J., Henderson, R. (2016). Report: Increases in police use of force in the presence of body-worn cameras are driven by officer discretion: A protocol-based subgroup analysis of ten randomized experiments. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 12(3), 453-463



escalating. This supports Ariel's findings which noted that discretionary filming — the model adopted within HMPPS — can inflame a situation and thus provoke an incident. Ariel's findings suggest that this process of 'selective activation' aggraves a heightened situation, thus adopting 'discretionary filming' has the potential to cause violent incidents within prisons. This links to 'BWC's create barriers between staff and prisoners'. This barrier could be a result of 'prisoners acting up to the camera' as well as 'Wearing a BWC can lead to robotic communication which escalates incidents'. The latter refers to staff speaking to prisoners differently when a BWC camera is deployed. These findings challenge that of Farrar and Ariel who reported both perceptions of safety improvements and reportable statistics of a reduction in use of force incidents only where BWC filming was continuous. It could be suggested that this difference in findings can be explained through the distinct differences between continuous and discretionary filming. In prisons, staff activate their BWC's at their own discretion, deciding when to start and end the recording. Whereas BWC's used in the police service can adopt a continuous filming approach, which Ariel found civilises interactions between the police and the public.

Generally, police officers are public servants, offering support and assistance to citizens and answering calls for help. However, prison staff are seen as punitive enforcers who generally manage and look after some of society's most challenging and complex people.

### **Staff Perceptions of their Accountability**

Two distinct themes emerged from the data. Opposing each other, were themes of 'negative accountability' and 'feeling positive about increased staff accountability'. It came to light that some staff felt that BWC's increased accountability in a negative way, whereas others perceived BWC's to increase staff accountability in a positive way. Previous research found that officer acceptance of BWC's was directly related to the implementation processes adopted by senior management<sup>19</sup>. It could be suggested from this research

that a transparent implementation with a focus on officer buy-in would be necessary to enhance prison officer's views surrounding accountability.

### **Negative Accountability**

The theme of 'negative accountability' can be linked to 'BWC's improve accountability perhaps too much'. This relates to staff perceptions that BWC's could be used to discipline or reprimand staff for their conduct. As one participant argued; 'BWC's are also going to get prison officers in trouble' highlights concerns staff have regarding BWC footage. This might

be through saying something deemed as wrong or inappropriate, or conducting themselves in a manner which could be deemed as questionable. This links directly to 'using BWC footage to reprimand staff'. Within this, participants discussed 'Recalling punitive sanctions when swearing on camera' and 'There is far more pressing issues than saying the word f\*\*\*'. This quote highlights that staff believe punitive sanctions for swearing on camera are unnecessary and swearing on camera itself is a low priority when dealing with violent incidents in prison. Additionally, staff also recall 'Punitive sanctions used when staff genuinely forget to turn on their camera'. Staff perceptions around their

reprimand following BWC footage can be linked to the recent HMPPS pilot evaluation of BWC implementation. Within this, participants demonstrated a fear of reprimand or punishment for how they behaved on camera, with one participant discussing managers watching BWC footage 'just to catch them out'.

### **Positive Accountability**

As well as perceptions of 'negative accountability' regarding BWC's, the second prominent theme within this section of analysis was 'feeling positive about increased staff accountability'. The coded data demonstrated that 'feeling more accountable in a positive way' was a perception held by staff. This highlights how being more accountable for your actions enables reflection and allows you to think about

'BWC's create barriers between staff and prisoners'. This barrier could be a result of 'prisoners acting up to the camera' as well as 'Wearing a BWC can lead to robotic communication which escalates incidents'

19. Gaub, J.E., Choate, D.E., Todak, N., Katz, C.M. & White, M.D. 2016, "Officer Perceptions of Body-Worn Cameras Before and After Deployment: A Study of Three Departments", *Police Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 275-302.

how to effectively manage a situation, suggesting that it is a positive thing that BWC footage is reviewed. This links to 'feeling positive about management checks on footage'. Some Prison Officers hold the belief that reviewing footage would only occur with justification to do so, maintaining confidence that management checks on footage would not negatively affect them. This positive perception of staff accountability links to 'improving professional conduct in staff'. This includes perceptions such as 'Improving professionalism during incidents' and 'Deterring staff from using unnecessary force'. This participant perceives increased accountability in a positive light, as staff act more professional when a BWC is activated, and staff 'think more about what they are doing'. In relation to this, 'BWC footages creates an accurate picture of incidents', discussing the accuracy of visual and audio recordings and the positive effects this has in investigations. A participant highlighted the positive outcomes associated with audio and visual accuracy of BWC's:

*'It's a line I use a lot 'by the way the camera is on, and this will tell a better truth than you or I, what choices would you like to make?' and that has a, tends to have a dramatic impact.'*

This demonstrates that BWC's allow an accurate picture of incidents to be recorded, holding both staff and prisoners accountable for their actions. Additionally, this suggests that staff feel confident regarding this accurate picture of an incident, relating back to the theme 'feeling positive about increased staff accountability'. Not only are staff more accountable for their conduct, staff perceive BWC's to 'protect staff from false allegations' and 'disciplinary action' as observed:

*'...and if a situation does become violent it can also protect me from false allegations.'*

This demonstrates that some staff perceive BWC's as positive due to the protection it affords them from malicious allegations — feeling positive about being more accountable when using a BWC. This is supportive of Farrar and Ariel's work which identified that an 87.5 per cent reduction in complaints made by members of the public in the 12 months after BWC implementation. Additionally, the study exploring BWC

implementation in MPS found that emergency response teams who were assigned BWC's generally received less complaints. This magnifies the findings of Ariel's multi-site study that state continuous BWC filming, and notifying the public of such reminds all involved to adhere to the 'rules of conduct' and as such, civilises interactions. Applying these findings to the prison environment, prison officers feel protected from malicious allegations when incidents are recorded, demonstrating support for continuous filming.

### Barriers to using BWC's

Two key themes were identified. Firstly, local barriers included perceptions surrounding 'collecting/returning BWC's out of shift times' and 'location of BWC's as a barrier to their use'. These can be described as physical barriers to drawing a camera due to time constraints experienced by prison staff. The category 'collecting/returning BWC's outside of shift times' included opinions that 'It takes too long to go and get a BWC and return it at the end of a shift' and 'Staff are expected to collect a BWC in their own time'. - 'Locations of BWC's as a barrier to their use' were discussing, including 'BWC location is reducing their deployment'. This demonstrates that the location of BWC's that is where they are collected from and returned to

acts as a barrier to their use. Another set of local barriers to BWC use can be taken from 'lack of knowledge surrounding BWC guidelines' and 'lack of informative training to use BWC's'. The former surrounding a lack of knowledge, includes perceptions such as 'Uncertainty about using BWC's when prisoners are not dressed'. This suggests that staff are not confident to use BWC's in certain situations, as they lack the appropriate knowledge surrounding when a BWC can be used. This links to a 'lack of informative training to use BWC's'. This links to HMPPS' pilot evaluation, which found that positivity around BWC's improved in staff who had more experience and knowledge of them, suggesting that informative training and using them during incidents improves perceptions of BWC's.

The second theme regarding barriers to BWC use is more general and could be applied to other prisons. The first category within this theme is 'BWC's create barriers between staff and managers.' Within this,

This positive perception of staff accountability links to 'improving professional conduct in staff'. This includes perceptions such as 'Improving professionalism during incidents'

participants discussed 'Feeling that managers do not trust staff in their decision-making' and 'Feeling that their integrity is insulted by being made to wear a BWC' were present. This demonstrates that staff perceive the introduction of BWC's as negative. Participants held the opinion that managers should trust the decision-making of prison officers. This echoes the findings of the HMPPS pilot evaluation which suggested that some staff felt fearful that managers (and the general public) may judge their behaviour on camera.

An additional barrier to general BWC use can be taken from the category 'poor attachments of BWC's act as a barrier to their use', referring to the physical device and how it attaches to a member of staff. This includes perceptions that 'BWC's do not stay attached to shirts' and discussions around the 'limits to where BWC's can be attached — only white shirts.' A participant described their experience of wearing a BWC:

*'There have been times where I've ended up in a restraint and my camera has dropped from the 4's landing to the 2's landing... There's not always room to clip it onto your uniform unless you are wearing a white shirt with no jumper or jacket over the top there is nowhere really to clip it on.'*

This suggests that staff feel BWC's are poorly designed. They do not stay attached to shirts, especially during incidents where force is used. Additionally, staff feel they are limited to where they can attach cameras to. These points act as barriers to BWC use, particularly in the winter months when staff are wearing jumpers over their white shirts.

### **Staff Resistance to BWC's**

Two key themes were identified. Firstly, the theme of staff being 'supportive of BWC's' and secondly 'resistance to BWC's is more prevalent in staff with longer service'. The first theme to be discussed — 'supportive of BWC's' included discussions that 'staff are becoming more willing and confident to use BWC's'. A participant described this increase of confidence in BWC's:

*'I think that in the beginning the perception of the BWC's were negative. I feel that staff felt it would be used against them more than a*

*tool to assist them and protect them. But as time went on and usage has become mandatory part of the uniform I feel that staff are more willing and more confident in wearing them.'*

This demonstrates that when BWC's were a new implementation, there were negative perceptions of them and staff were resistant to this change. However, staff have gained confidence in their use and have since become more supportive of BWC's in a prison setting. This supports the findings from HMPPS's pilot evaluation of BWC implementation which found that as time went on, staff became more positive about the BWC implementation across the 23 prisons.

Additionally, 'newer staff only know the prison service with BWC's, so there is more consistent use' was identified through the data analysis. This highlights that newer staff cannot recall working without BWC's, therefore there is little resistance from them to use BWC's. This links to the second theme 'resistance to BWC's is more prevalent in staff with longer service' whereby staff who can remember working in the prison before the BWC implementation show more resistance to their mandatory use. This suggests that staff with

longer service feel that BWC's have created a barrier between staff and management, breaking trust in 'shop floor staff'. This perception of BWC's shows that there is the potential for resistance against BWC use from staff who have served in the prison service before the BWC implementation. Exploring barriers between staff and managers further, 'managers do not wear BWC's' is relevant. Within this, participants 'Highlighted a lack of management using BWC's' and 'Referring to managers not wearing BWC's but enforcing their use — 'double standards',' suggests that there is a negative culture surrounding BWC use, particularly by managers. This staff perception may fuel resistance to BWC use and explain why some members of staff perceive BWC's as a tool used by managers to reprimand or discipline staff.

### **Conclusions**

The primary aim of this study was to explore the use of BWC's, and to identify whether operational staff were wearing them within the prison in question. This study found that the majority of prison staff are

An additional barrier to general BWC use can be taken from the category 'poor attachments of BWC's act as a barrier to their use

wearing BWC's, however on a daily basis, statistics suggest that not everyone who is trained to use BWC's are drawing them. This finding is different to that of BWC use in the MPS. The BWC trial in the MPS began in 2015 and since then, every officer has been individually assigned a BWC, thereby mandating use by every operational police officer in London. Within the interviews conducted on prison staff, it was suggested that *'there aren't enough of them'* referring to the amount of BWC's available to draw within the establishment. It could be suggested that the rate of prison officers wearing BWC's would increase if the system of individually assigning a camera to everyone was adopted to mirror that of London's MPS. Additionally, this study found that the rate of BWC usage during 'use of force' incidents was increasing steadily over time. Referring to the study conducted in relation to the MPS's BWC implementation, where it was found that BWC did not increase arrest rates, but instead did the opposite. Comparing this to a prison

environment, it could be suggested that these rising statistics do not mean there are more 'use of force' incidents, instead staff are becoming more willing to use BWC's during incidents.

In conclusion, this study is very much coherent with previous research. Most staff believe that to a degree, their safety is improved by wearing a BWC. Additionally, most staff are supportive of the improved accountability that BWC's offer them, particularly in regard to protecting their professional standards. Although there is little resistance to BWC's from staff, there are notable barriers to their use. To extend this research, it could be argued that expanding the sample to include multiple prisons may result in gathering more findings, particularly surrounding perceptions of safety which may differ in other establishments. Additionally, this study focussed on data from a qualitative approach. Further research may benefit from studying statistical data surrounding BWC use to draw comparisons with use of force statistics and rates of staff assaults.



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# Avoiding ‘starburst’:

## The need to identify common metrics of evaluating strengths-based programmes in prison

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### Introduction

The notions of strengths-based working in health and justice are not new and areas as diverse as positive psychology and criminology, mental health and addictions recovery, and therapeutic jurisprudence and restorative approaches in the justice field all share a common set of principles and values that may offer some insights into questions of evaluation, effectiveness and measurement. The first part of this paper will examine the shared foundations of strengths-based approaches and this will inform a second section examining common principles in these models. Part Three will then provide three illustrative examples of strengths-based programmes in prisons in the United Kingdom (UK), before the final section, Part Four, outlines a two-tier model of strengths-measurement that will help to avoid ‘starburst’, that is, where the benefit is so short-lived that it has no lasting impact on the wellbeing of the prison or its constituents.

### The foundations of strengths-based models in criminology and criminal justice

There are a number of ‘movements’ in criminology that can broadly be described as strengths-based — these include restorative justice (which is focused on repairing the harm caused by crime), therapeutic jurisprudence (which uses the legal system to seek to

enhance the well-being of its participants, especially offenders), positive criminology (which focuses on individuals’ encounters with positive influences which distance them from deviance and crime) and the recovery approaches in addictions and in mental health. It is important to note that these are not mutually exclusive categories and what is critical is the relational focus described by Llewellyn and colleagues<sup>1</sup>. The common features of such strengths-based models are that they are interpersonal, future-focused and intrinsically social in their aims, with the longer-term goals of culture change and developing sustainable community capital.

The positive psychology and criminology component of these initiatives is particularly important for their implementation in prison, as it is the generation of hope<sup>2,3,4</sup> and its subsequent spread across groups that is central to both their adoption and their success. As the examples cited below highlight, a key component of strengths-based projects is their impact on relationships and their capacity to generate a radius of trust<sup>5</sup> that can involve not only the building of existing relationships, but the creation of new ones. In Putnam’s work<sup>6</sup> on social capital, he differentiated between bonding capital (the strength of ties within an established group) and bridging capital (which refers to links between different levels within groups and organisations), on the one hand, and linking capital (that is, creating ties to new groups), on the other. One potential indicator of the effectiveness of a strengths-based initiative in prisons is around its impact on the

1. Llewellyn, J., Archibald, B., Claimont, D., & Crocker, D. (2014) ‘Imagining success for a restorative approach to justice: Implications for measurement and evaluation’, *Dalhousie Law Journal*, 36(2), pp. 281-316.
2. Best, D. (2019) *Pathways to Desistance and Recovery: The Role of the Social Contagion of Hope*. Bristol: Policy Press.
3. Burnett, R., & Maruna, S. (2004) ‘So “prison works”, does it? The criminal careers of 130 men released from prison under Home Secretary, Michael Howard’, *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 43, pp. 390-404.
4. LeBel, T., Burnett, R., Maruna, S., & Bushway, S. (2008) ‘The “chicken and egg” of subjective and social factors in desistance from crime’, *European Journal of Criminology*, 5(2), pp. 131-159.
5. Fukuyama, F. (2001). ‘Social capital, civil society and development’. *Third World Quarterly*, 22(1), pp. 7-20.
6. Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

quality and number of ties, not only between prisoners (bonding capital), but between prisoners and officers (bridging capital), and between both of these groups and other potential populations, including family members and the general public (linking capital). For a strengths-based approach to succeed, there is an integral relationship component that is built on trust and the growth of relationships.

The other implication of this notion of spread or growth of impact is what has been called ‘hyperdyadic contagion’, which refers to the spread of behaviours, beliefs and emotions through social networks and groups. Why is this important to strengths-based approaches? If the only positive impact of initiatives is a short-term gain among those participating, with no longer-term benefits on other groups or the culture of the organisation (prison), then this is a fundamental restriction on their effectiveness.

### The principles of strengths-based working

Llewellyn, Archibald, Clairmont and Crocker reviewed the challenges for evaluations and effectiveness studies on restorative justice and argued that doing so effectively requires programmes to be considered ‘in relational terms [which] goes beyond the individualistic vision of the mainstream media as it now stands’<sup>8</sup>. The authors identified core principles of a restorative approach that are intrinsic to its measurement and evaluation, namely, that it:

- ❑ is relationship-focused;
- ❑ is comprehensive / holistic and contextual / flexible;
- ❑ should fulfil the criteria of subsidiarity, inclusion and participation;
- ❑ should be dialogical or communicative; should be democratic / deliberative; and
- ❑ should be forward-focused, solution-focused and remedial.

Llewellyn and colleagues went on to argue that it is a weakness that few measures of restorative approaches include community dimensions, such as community empowerment, and this is part of a broader limitation, which fails to address the mechanisms of change brought about by restorative approaches. The authors concluded by arguing that ‘[a] relational approach to evaluation reveals that measuring the success of restorative justice will require more than the identification and articulation of new goals, outcomes and appropriate indicators’<sup>9</sup>. From this, we extrapolate a central principle that all

strengths-based approaches start from a relational perspective and so evaluations of such approaches cannot fall back on atomistic models, which ignore the collective and examine only the individual.

A very similar set of principles has been established for addictions recovery, as articulated in an evidence review for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration by Sheedy and Whitter<sup>10</sup>. They concluded that recovery-oriented systems are required to fulfil the following seventeen principles:

1. Person-centred;
2. Inclusive of family and other ally involvement;
3. Individualized and comprehensive services across the lifespan;
4. Systems anchored in the community;
5. Continuity of care;
6. Partnership-consultant relationships;
7. Strength-based;
8. Culturally responsive;
9. Responsiveness to personal belief systems;
10. Commitment to peer recovery support services;
11. Integrated services;
12. System-wide education and training;
13. Inclusion of the voices and experiences of recovering individuals and their families;
14. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation;
15. Evidence-driven;
16. Research-based;
17. Adequately and flexibly funded.

Overall, these principles call for a holistic, multi-faceted, inclusive and responsive approach, that is intrinsically social and relational, and that is driven by hope and is embedded in the life of the community. However, there is also a clear commitment to an evidence base and to the principles of learning and science.

### Three examples of strengths-based working in UK prisons

In this section, we illustrate our conception of strengths-based work with three examples drawn from recent practice in UK prisons. These examples are chosen only as a matter of convenience, as the first author has been actively involved in all of them, albeit in different roles. There are no claims for the uniqueness or representativeness of any of these and the focus below is not on how successful or effective they are, but rather on what makes them strengths-based case studies and what lessons can accordingly be learned about sustainability.

7. Christakis, N., & Fowler, J. (2010) *Connected: The Amazing Power of Social Networks and How They Shape our Lives*. London: Harper Press.  
 8. See n.1 p.284  
 9. See n.1 p.314  
 10. Sheedy, C.K., & Whitter, M. (eds.) (2009) *Guiding Principles and Elements of Recovery-oriented Systems of Care: What Do We Know From the Research?* Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



### The Kirkham Family Connectors (KFC)

**Programme:** Best, Musgrove and Hall<sup>11</sup> and Hall et al<sup>12</sup> piloted a model to actively engage family members (in training sessions with prisoners) in strengths-based planning, to assertively link prisoners into pro-social activities on release. Essentially, the programme involves three training sessions of 2-3 hours each, involving 6-8 prisoners and their family members, who were trained to develop strengths-based, future-focused plans to engage in a diverse range of prosocial activities and groups. Three waves of piloting were undertaken at HMP Kirkham, a Category D local prison, with strong qualitative endorsements from all three stakeholder groups — staff, prisoners and family members. This was supplemented by some quantitative support for the programme's impact, which showed high levels of engagement and commitment, and growing positive relationships between all of the programme participants (including prison officers, who were not a part of the original design, but some of whom requested to be involved), though the limitations of this evidence base is recognised, in that no long-term outcome studies have been undertaken to date. In addition, there was increased demand for participation from prisoners across each wave of the pilot, which may well be indicative of a growing 'radius of trust'<sup>13</sup>, and clear evidence of a 'social contagion of hope'<sup>14</sup>, in that there were clear indications of relational changes in the interactions between the three groups, or at least those subsets of the three groups who were involved in the programme. There was also some success in terms of co-production, with both peer mentors and probation officers being actively involved in the development and delivery of the second and third waves of the programme. Although the initiative is currently being implemented in Hassalts prison in Belgium, the project was never externally funded and is

not currently being implemented in any UK prison, in spite of considerable support and engagement from all the participants, thereby pointing to the 'starburst' effect in action.

**Asset-based community development and peer education:** Based at HMP Wymott, this is both a prison-led and a PhD student programme of research in two phases. The first of these involved undertaking an asset mapping exercise<sup>15</sup>, to identify the strengths and resources available in the prison. This led to an audit of the skills and abilities in the prisoner cohort that resulting in peer-delivered education in the prison, with a total of 11 different peer-delivered classes in domains as diverse as conversational Chinese and knitting taking

place across the prison and the establishment of a peer-based governance group to oversee this process. While there is an evaluation of the asset-based community development (ABCD) component of this work underway<sup>16</sup>, there are two key features of the initiative that are hard to capture within a standard evaluation framework. The first is that the peer-led education activities continue to grow and evolve in ways that are difficult to measure and evaluate; and second, the alignment and dynamic interaction with the rehabilitative culture of the prison makes this particularly complex.

As there are a range of partnership and strengths-based activities ongoing in the prison (such as a homework club, visits from therapy dogs, inter alia), attributing culture change or contagion to one programme is questionable. The success of the ABCD exercise is not about the maps that are produced, but about the spirit of empowerment and the development of peer education that it both tapped into and contributed to. In addition, the programme helped to support the emergence of community connectors<sup>17</sup> and organise their endeavours, although we recognise that this may have happened in any case, without the research team's involvement.

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11. Best, D., Musgrove, A., & Hall, L. (2018) 'The bridge between social identity and community capital on the path to recovery and desistance', *Probation Journal*, 65(4), pp. 394-406.

12. Hall, L., Best, D., Ogden-Webb, C., Dixon, J., & Heslop, R. (2018) 'Building bridges to the community: The Kirkham Family Connectors (KFC) Prison Programme', *Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 57(4), pp. 518-536.

13. See n.5

14. See n.2

15. McKnight, J., & Block, P. (2010). *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighbourhoods*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.

16. Probation journal - submitted for review - Musgrove, A. and Best, D. (under review) Building communities in prisons: An Asset-Based Community Development approach to community building in two prisons in the North West of England. Probation Journal AND Musgrove, A. and Best, D. (in preparation) Building communities by mapping the assets and strengths within a secure environment: An Asset-Based Community Development model.

17. Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993) *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilising a Community's Assets*. Skokie, IL: ACTA Publications.

**Drug Recovery Programme:** This project involved the delivery of a diverse and well-resourced programme of activities and interventions targeting the creation of a drug recovery programme<sup>18</sup>. The particular aspect of the programme of relevance here is the introduction of recovery and strengths-focused outcome assessments and recovery care plans, using an established psychometric tool, the REC-CAP<sup>19</sup>. The analysis of the first phase of outcome data shows significant positive changes in multiple recovery domains, but the gestation and implementation phase of this study took around 18-24 months and this may well coincide with a very gradual evolution in the effective engagement of both healthcare and prison staff. While some healthcare staff embraced the project from its inception, there were almost no indications of active engagement from prison officers until into the second year, suggesting that it took some time for relevant changes in the prison culture to take effect, and to overcome a perceived compartmentalisation, as result of which the programme was initially perceived as a healthcare issue. There was also a process evaluation showing high levels of satisfaction with the training and instruments among both the initial cohort of peers and professionals who took part. Unfortunately, technical issues meant that implementation was delayed and the trained and highly motivated peer cohort had scattered by the time the project was actually rolled out, meaning that it was only healthcare staff who were actually involved in the delivery of the programme. Had this been a one-year programme, this pilot would have failed on two counts — the first, an implementation failure, the second associated with a very slow process of culture change by staff in the prison. This has not, however, been evidenced and is based only on anecdotal evidence.

Anecdotaly, we are aware of a fear of a 'starburst' effect, namely, short-lived and limited change.

### What might a two-tier model of strengths-measurement look like?

The key point to be argued in this paper is that positive ratings of evaluations are not sufficient, although there is an inevitable strength in numbers. If we are to start to think about a metric to assess the impact and benefit of strengths-based programmes,

then 'reach' must be one of the core criteria. This does not mean that large numbers of people have to receive the training or intervention, but it does mean that many (prisoners, staff, partners, stakeholders, etc) have to be influenced by it in a demonstrably positive way.

Second, that impact has to be enduring in some way. Anecdotaly, we are aware of a fear of a 'starburst' effect, namely, short-lived and limited change. As will be argued below, this is in part about building and developing capacity, where the active growth of institutional capacity and what Hamilton et al<sup>20</sup> have referred to as justice capital are key to this concept. What this refers to is the set of resources and supports available to help an individual to effectively rehabilitate in a justice setting. This will include access to positive relationships with peers and professionals (and outside organisations), but will also include access to purposeful activities and opportunities for personal growth and development. The concept of justice capital

rests on the idea that it would be possible to develop a metric at an institutional level that assesses its range of activities and opportunities to support change and rehabilitation. These initiatives would not only have to have some kind of enduring and wide-spread impact, they would also have to be coordinated in some way and matched against

the evolving and varied needs of the prison population.

Central to this argument is that any evaluation of strengths-based interventions or programmes must balance the 'hard' outcome indicators (eg, changes in the number of prison assaults or recidivism; rates of self-harm and suicide) that are relevant to prison commissioners and policy-makers with those that support the principles and philosophies of relational and community models. As outlined above, some of these aims are consistent with the ideas of justice capital and are based on the idea that co-ordinated access to strengths-based opportunities must be scalable and sustainable, to avoid the effects of 'starburst'. This can start us on principles that we would advance, including:

### Strengths markers

- ❑ **Co-production:** This is based on the idea that active engagement of stakeholders is an essential

18. King, D., Best, D., & Wheatley, M. (eds) (2019) Recovery in Prison (special issue), *Prison Service Journal*.

19. Cano, I., Best, D., Edwards, M., & Lehman, J. (2017) 'Recovery capital pathways: Mapping the components of recovery wellbeing', *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 181(1), pp. 11-19.

20. Hamilton, S., Maslen, S., Best, D., Freeman, J., O'Donnell, M., Reibel, T., Mutch, R., & Watkins, R (2020) 'Putting "justice" in recovery capital: Yarning about hopes and futures with young people in detention', *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcsd.v9i2.1256> (early online).

component of strengths-based work and also plays into the capacity-building discussed below. While this will primarily apply to prisoners, there are a range of other stakeholder groups that should be engaged, including prison officers, family members and relevant community groups and organisations. This should also be at every stage of the process.

- ❑ **Sustainability:** Far too many strengths-based interventions are short-term and delivered by external agencies for funding or research purposes, with the risk of letting down those they engage. Linked to co-production is the central principle of sustainability, with clear plans required for continuation beyond the initial scope of the project. This will necessitate some kind of capacity-building endeavour involving prisoners, families and/or prison staff in training and implementation.
- ❑ **Benefits to multiple groups:** This is part of the concern about scalability, that it is not enough to merely provide support to one small group of prisoners or staff without any mechanism for scaling up or establishing whether there are 'contagion' or ripple effects to other parts of the organisation; writing in the context of an Australian prison yoga program, Hopkins, Bartels and Oxman, noted that 'as early adopters speak to other prisoners about the benefits of the program, interest will grow among those who may initially be wary of something 'weird''<sup>21</sup>.
- ❑ **Justice capital:** This is assessing how the initiative increases the capacity of the institution to support the personal growth, wellbeing and rehabilitative potential of prisoners, and their capacity to build positive links and relationships with others both within and outside the prison walls.
- ❑ **Commitment to ongoing evaluation and research:** There needs to be a relationship between the markers identified above and broader organisational impacts, both in terms of correlations, but also in terms of a clear model for establishing mechanisms of change.

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## Objective outcome indicators

While the above are strategic objectives that need to be built up over time, there are a series of more proximal indicators that at least need to be considered in this process as markers of the health and hygiene of the prison. These include, but are not limited to:

- ❑ self-report of wellbeing, including measures of impact on the prison climate and environment, including scales for measuring the quality of prison life<sup>22</sup>;
- ❑ prison indicators of harm and poor outcomes — self-harm, violence (against both prisoners and staff), days added on (or reduced), adjudications, complaints;

- ❑ staff measures — retention, absenteeism; and

- ❑ external inspection — reports from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), especially the 'healthy prison test', the Independent Monitoring Boards and the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are all relevant here.

We suggest that, if strengths-based approaches are to be seen as more than simply froth or as a pleasant distraction from the harsh realities of prison life, then they need to have a genuine impact on the things that matter to the wellbeing of the prison. In addition, they require a clear underlying rationale for why they should have an impact and in what

ways. For example, the Family Connectors programme at Kirkham worked through generating hope and a radius of trust that rippled to populations significantly beyond the 25 prisoners who were participants in the pilot projects, but was nevertheless unable to be sustained beyond its initial flourishing. In order to prevent such stars flaming out, researchers, prison administrators and policy-makers need to commit to robust data collection against the metrics that have traditionally been used to measure prison performance, as well as adopting new modes of measurement.

## Conclusion

Strengths-based initiatives are widely trumpeted in every prison in the UK, as indicative of their

21. Hopkins, A., Bartels, L., & Oxman, L. (2019), 'Lessons in flexibility: Introducing a prison yoga program in Australia', *International Journal of Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 8(4), pp. 47-61. P.58

22. Liebling, A., Crewe, B., & Hulley, S. (2011) 'Conceptualising and Measuring the Quality of Prison Life' in Gadd, D., Karstedt, S. and Messner, S.F. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Research Methods*. London: Sage Publishing, pp. 358-372.

commitment to purposeful activity and rehabilitation, and these are two of the four 'expectations' laid down by HMIP<sup>23</sup> against which prisons are inspected. The current paper is not suggesting that this is not a good thing, but that we need to develop a metric for understanding both what we want from such projects and how they can be evaluated and assessed against a range of outcome indicators.

Although untested, what is laid out in this paper is a set of suggested indicators — both proximal and distal — for examining the impact of strengths-based working in prisons. This would allow governors, prisoners and others to address the question of whether it is better to have, for example, a running club or a debating society. Our tentative conclusion would be that prisons should have both, as these will bring different benefits to each other and, critically, different

outcomes than, for example, an anger management or substance abuse programme.

As long as these activities have a short-term and 'bonus' quality about them, their impact and effectiveness will be understated and they will remain at the periphery of priorities and planning. This means they are not only vulnerable to the starburst phenomenon outlined in this paper, but will continue to be construed as a 'nice to have' and therefore inevitably dispensable component of prison life, rather than integral to the full flourishing of its residents and providing an opportunity to return more fully actualized citizens to the community. This would be a disastrous conclusion, as we believe that strengths-based activities are central to rehabilitation, trust and relationship-building in prisons.

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23. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) (2017) Expectations. London: HMIP.

# Bereavement Behind Bars: Prison and the Grieving Process

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**Prisoners experience bereavement at a much higher rate than the general population and are likely to have suffered a 'catalogue of losses' both prior to and as part of their sentence.<sup>2</sup> Bereavements and other traumas, including imprisonment, typically trigger a grief response which, if not acknowledged and supported, can lead to disenfranchised grief.<sup>3</sup> Disenfranchised grief (on which see more below) refers to a hidden sorrow arising from a loss that is not acknowledged by society. The griever or their loss may not be validated by those around them. Feelings of mourning are therefore compounded by a sense of alienation and wrongness, a sense that we are alone and unsupported in our suffering, and perhaps ought not to feel as we do. This can have severe mental and physical health consequences and can impact on reoffending risk.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, there are very few services targeted towards helping inmates with grief, compared to, say, rehabilitation programmes for addiction, domestic violence, or offending behaviour.**

Death does not occur in a vacuum, but in a social framework that can determine the way a mourner experiences and navigates their loss.<sup>5</sup> Over the past century, we have significantly expanded our understanding of the way people respond to the death of a loved one, but the loss is not always considered in context.<sup>6</sup> This article demonstrates that the prison environment is not conducive to healthy mourning, and employs J. William Worden's 'tasks of mourning'<sup>7</sup> and Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut's 'dual process

model'<sup>8</sup> to show how the prison environment obstructs the grief process. It discusses the consequences of disenfranchised grief in prison, both for offenders themselves and their communities, demonstrating the need for sound pastoral care for people who are bereaved behind bars.

These findings come from a larger empirical, qualitative study on inequalities in access to prison chaplaincy and pastoral care. Data collection comprised of interviews and focus groups, and took place from March 2017 to October 2018. The 21 participants were prison chaplains, pastoral carers, bereavement counsellors and criminal justice professionals. Interviews were conducted on the telephone, by Skype through email and in person, including on-site during field visits to adult male prisons.

## Bereavement Behind Bars

The contemporary English prison is an extraordinarily demanding environment in which to live and work, and the plethora of practical, emotional and social challenges facing prisoners is well documented.<sup>9</sup> Overcrowding, underfunding and staff reductions leave institutions ill equipped to meet the complex mental and physical health needs of the people they confine.<sup>10</sup> Offenders confront a multitude of obstacles that limit them in every way, from higher aspirations of personal growth and fulfilment to the most basic human necessities of hygiene, safety and nourishment. My interviewees were unanimous in their view that this high-stimulus environment exacerbates mental illness.

1. Vaswani, N. (2015) 'A catalogue of losses: Implications for the care and reintegration of young men in custody', *Prison Service Journal*, 220
2. Maschi, T., Gibson, S., Zgoba, K.M. & Morgen, K. (2011) 'Trauma and life event stressors among young and older adult prisoners', *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 17(2)
3. Doka, K.J. (1989) *Disenfranchised Grief: Recognizing the Hidden Sorrow*. Lexington Books, New York
4. Wilson, M. (2010) "'This is not just about death – it's about how we deal with the rest of our lives": Coping with bereavement in prison', *Prison Service Journal*, 190
5. Lillie, A.K., Corcoran, M., Hunt, K., Wrigley, A. & Read, S. (2018) 'Encountering offenders in community palliative care settings: challenges for care provision', *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, 24(8)
6. Rees, D. (1997) *Death and Bereavement: The Psychological, Religious and Cultural Interfaces*. London: Whurr
7. Worden, J.W. (2009) *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 4th edn. Springer, New York
8. Stroebe, M. & Schut, H. (1999) 'The dual process model of coping with bereavement: rationale and description', *Death Studies*, 23(3)
9. Prison Reform Trust (2017) *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile: Autumn 2017*. London: Prison Reform Trust.  
<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Autumn%202017%20factfile.pdf>
10. Indeed, staff shortages have led to a serious deterioration in standards in prisons and the subsequent management and support of bereaved prisoners (Wilson, M., Johnston, H. & Walker, L. (2020). "'It was like an animal in pain": Institutional thoughtlessness and bereavement in prison', *Criminology & Criminal Justice*).



*It is a psychologically desperate place to be [...] If you have minor psych problems, you'll have bigger ones. — Participant 7, prison pastoral carer*

Beyond the privation of liberty by which incarceration is defined, a custodial sentence entails the forfeitures of: autonomy, personal security, purposeful activity, material possessions, livelihood, life years, self-esteem, heterosexual contact, dignity and reputation, and even happiness. The grieving prisoner is in this sense doubly bereaved, first by imprisonment — 'a kind of bereavement for oneself'<sup>11</sup> — and then by the loss of a loved one. These losses intersect, with civic loss (the revocation of civil rights by a government, typically following a criminal conviction) consistently perceived as compounding the experience of bereavement.<sup>12</sup> Prisoners are deprived, in short, of what it is to be human:

*These places can be corrosive of your humanity. — Participant 15, prison chaplain*

In addition to the hardships specific to the carceral environment, which Gresham Sykes famously called 'the pains of imprisonment'<sup>13</sup>, a growing body of evidence demonstrates that, even before they enter a prison, offenders are likely to have experienced distressing life events that may be a factor in their criminal behaviour. Studies consistently show that offenders suffer bereavements at significantly higher rates than the general population and are more likely to have endured traumatic or multiple losses, often early in life.<sup>14</sup> For instance, around 90 per cent of 16-20-year olds at the Young Offender Institution in Vaswani's research had suffered at least one bereavement.<sup>15</sup>

*It's a rare day that I don't have some kind of dealing with bereavement, whether it's breaking bad news or taking someone to chapel to light a candle for someone they've lost, or just sitting and talking with them. — Participant 12, prison chaplain*

Histories of addiction, child abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, forced prostitution, homelessness, unemployment and poverty are all far more common among people with convictions than others, and impact on offending.<sup>16</sup> Many inmates carry with them the burden of multiple losses throughout their journey to prison and experience them even more acutely whilst inside.<sup>17</sup> Thus, a bereavement experienced in prison must be recognised in the context of the cumulative effect of additional losses encountered over the life course.<sup>18</sup>

## The Tasks of Mourning

The death of somebody we love is one of the most challenging periods of any individual's life, but it is much harder for prisoners, whose ability to cope is compromised by their incarceration. According to Worden, 'after one sustains a loss, there are certain 'tasks of mourning' that must be accomplished for the process of mourning to be completed'<sup>19</sup>: to accept the reality of the loss; to work through the pain of grief; to adjust to a world without the deceased; and to emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life. Each of these is made more difficult for those serving a custodial sentence.

The first task is to recognise the reality of the loss. The disadvantages that prisoners experience arise even before death occurs, as their incarceration prevents them from sharing in the professional and family support available at the end of a life. Anticipatory grief begins early; the distance that prison creates between offenders and their loved ones means that prisoners must contemplate losses before they have happened.<sup>20</sup> For various reasons, prisoners are often restricted from contacting their dying relatives in the community.<sup>21</sup> Acceptance may be difficult, especially when there has been no opportunity to say goodbye. Without this, the shock is heightened, raising the possibility of a more complex grief process.<sup>22</sup>

*Clients who have been unable to visit their loved one prior to death or attend the funeral*

11. Jewkes, Y. (2005) 'Loss, liminality and the life sentence: managing identity through a disrupted life course' in Liebling, A. & Maruna, S. (Eds.) *The Effects of Imprisonment*. Devon: Willan Publishing
12. Lillie, AK., Corcoran, M., Read, S., Santatzoglou, S., Wrigley, A. & Hunt, K. (2016) 'Supporting death, dying and bereavement in the English criminal justice system: An exploratory qualitative study', *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 52(6)
13. Sykes, G. (1958) *The Society of Captives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
14. See, for example, Hester, R. & Taylor, W. (2011) 'Responding to bereavement, grief and loss: Charting the troubled relationship between research and practice in youth offending services', *Mortality*, 16(3)
15. Vaswani, N. (2014) 'The ripples of death: Exploring the bereavement experiences and mental health of young men in custody,' *The Howard Journal*, 53(4)
16. Maschi, T. et al, *op cit.*,
17. Vaswani, N. (2015), *op cit.*
18. Wilson, M., Johnston, H. & Walker, L. (2020). "'It was like an animal in pain': Institutional thoughtlessness and bereavement in prison', *Criminology & Criminal Justice*
19. Worden, JW., *op cit*
20. Vaswani, N. (2014), *op cit.*
21. Lillie, AK. et al (2018), *op cit.*
22. Ferszt, G. (2002) 'Grief experiences of women in prison following the death of a loved one', *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, 10(3)



*feel disconnected, sometimes unable to accept that it has actually happened. — Participant 18, prison bereavement counsellor*

Typically, a prison chaplain will deliver the news of a death in private, but at times, the information may be passed on by a staff member unknown to the offender or in an open environment.<sup>23</sup> This communication can affect the person adversely for years to come, with survivors often remembering exactly what was said.<sup>24</sup> The prisoner will normally want to establish more details of the death and be with their family, but the compromise must be telephone calls, during which they may receive only limited details.<sup>25</sup> The recently bereaved are likely to want a lot of communication with their friends and family, so policy changes allowing for more frequent and more private visits and phone calls may help prisoners to feel reassured about how others are coping, and get support for themselves.

Mourning usually begins with a sense of numbness and disbelief; while the numbness is short-lived, the denial can last many months.<sup>26</sup> The reality of the death may not 'sink in' until the individual has attended the chapel of rest or the funeral, important rituals for gaining a sense of closure.<sup>27</sup> Participation is not always possible for those whose liberty is limited by the criminal justice system, because 'their victim may be a member of the family, or the police don't want them in the area or all sorts of different reasons. In some of the busier prisons, they don't go because there are no staff to take them, and that's always a tragedy' (Participant 15, prison chaplain). Prisoners have commented on the humiliating experience of attending a funeral in handcuffs with a police escort, with many preferring not to attend at all than to arrive in chains.<sup>28</sup> It is also common for prisoners to be excluded from the service by their families, with the result that they may not know even know the location of the grave.<sup>29</sup>

*Going to the funeral or bedside of somebody that you truly love and are truly connected to*

*is hugely helpful. — Participant 15, prison chaplain*

During a prison visit as part of fieldwork, staff explained that, although there are many stages to an application for day release, they are processed quickly, and approval can even be granted on the same day, so that it is rare that a prisoner will be unable to attend because of paperwork delays. Requests are more commonly rejected because the deceased was not a close relative; Prison Service Instruction 13/2015 on Release on Temporary Licence allows prisoners 'to visit close relatives who are terminally ill or to attend funerals of close relatives' and lists approved relationships.<sup>30</sup> One prisoner, overhearing this conversation, commented that being prevented from attending the funeral of someone who did not meet

the criteria is 'a double kick in the teeth', and staff acknowledged that this rejection often manifests in behaviour. Determining eligibility by familial relationship overlooks the fact that prisoners may have extended networks that have played significant roles in their upbringing, and close emotional ties to others.

*Prisons now are saying, 'We can't afford for two officers to be out all day just to take somebody to a funeral', so*

*that has virtually stopped now. I can't remember the last time we had a client who had attended a funeral whilst in prison. — Participant 17, prison bereavement counsellor*

Being unable to attend the funeral or pay respects at the chapel of rest can be a major hurdle in coming to terms with the finality of the loss and denies bereaved prisoners a socially acceptable outlet for their grief.<sup>31</sup> This brings us to Worden's second task; the loss needs to be repeatedly thought through, even 'pained through' for equilibrium to be re-established. Mourning is a healthy response to the death of a loved one, and survivors must have the opportunity to grieve, but several factors make this difficult in prison, including

Mourning usually begins with a sense of numbness and disbelief; while the numbness is short-lived, the denial can last many months.

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23. Masterton, J. (2014) 'A confined encounter: the lived experience of bereavement in prison', *Bereavement Care*, 33(2)
24. Jervis, J. (2018) 'Mourning in custody: Dealing with sudden death' in Read, S., Santatzoglou, S. & Wrigley, A. (Eds.) *Loss, Dying and Bereavement in the Criminal Justice System*. London: Routledge
25. Potter, M. (1999) 'Inside' grief', *Bereavement Care*, 18(2).
26. Rees, D., *op cit*
27. Doka, KJ. (1989), *op cit*.
28. Schetky, DH. (1998) 'Mourning in prison: Mission impossible?' *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law*, 26
29. Lane, R. (2015) *Disenfranchised and Imprisoned Grief and Loss within the Prison Context*. (Unpublished PhD thesis). University of Chester
30. Ministry of Justice (2015) *Release on Temporary Licence*. Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 13/2015. London: Ministry of Justice
31. Potter, M., *op cit*

lack of privacy, fear of reprisals, and the pressure of hegemonic masculinity.

*For a lot of offenders, there's been no opportunity to talk about bereavement, either recent or past and, of course, once they're in an HMP situation, it's all about saving face, it's all about bravado, not showing any signs of weakness. — Participant 17, prison bereavement counsellor*

It is difficult to complete the task of mourning when one rarely has a moment to oneself. The lack of privacy and the pervasive rules governing daily life limit inmates' ability to process their feelings.<sup>32</sup> Some prisoners yearn for a private place where they can be alone with their thoughts, while others find the atmosphere too constricting to reflect on the loss at all.<sup>33</sup> Paradoxically related to the lack of privacy is loneliness; prisoners are never alone but very often lonely.<sup>34</sup> Although inmates have constant company, they are typically socially isolated, whereas it is generally accepted that people are more able to endure bereavement when traditional social networks are available.<sup>35</sup> Confinement stops the bereaved from spending time with their family and friends or employing distraction techniques, both of which are important coping strategies.<sup>36</sup> Separation from the usual sources of support complicates grief, as feelings of loss can intensify when the mourner feels alone with them.<sup>37</sup>

*I've had half of the jail in this chapel in floods of tears. I'm more worried about the guys who don't open up, and bottle it up, because when they bottle it up it just comes out in all sorts of awful ways. — Participant 12, prison chaplain*

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Tearfulness, panic attacks and angry outbursts are common responses to bereavement, particularly for disenfranchised grievers, but difficult to express in secure environments without negative consequences.<sup>38</sup> Emotional displays can be interpreted by prison officers either as a disciplinary problem or as a manifestation of mental illness, which can lead to the inmate being punished or put on suicide watch; Lane saw first-hand that those who reacted violently were much more likely to be segregated for 23 hours a day, reducing harm to others but exacerbating their own troubles.<sup>39</sup> Rationalised by staff on safeguarding grounds, these measures are felt by inmates to be punitive and controlling, an additional mortification at an already painful time.<sup>40</sup> With acts of misconduct potentially increasing the length of one's sentence, emotional reactions must be suppressed in favour of maintaining control and demonstrating stoicism. Prisoners may opt, where possible, to conceal the news of a death from staff to avoid attracting unwanted attention.<sup>41</sup>

*Female prisoners are more likely to talk things through with other prisoners. But, in a male prison, where it's very much a dog-eat-dog environment, they're unlikely to be inclined to do that. — Participant 11, prison chaplain*

Another disincentive to healthy grieving is peer pressure. The need to mask vulnerability is keenly felt by both sexes, but this is one way in which the experience of the grieving prisoner is gendered, as the expectation to appear tough is particularly intense for men and boys.<sup>42</sup> Male prisoners are subject to a strict social code that includes 'not losing control; not crying openly; not being afraid, dependent, insecure, anxious or passive; not expressing loneliness or sadness; not touching other men and not showing weakness'.<sup>43</sup> As Toch puts

32. Vaswani, N. (2014), *op cit*

33. Harner, HM., Hentz, PM. & Evangelista, MC. (2011) 'Grief interrupted: the experience of loss among incarcerated women', *Qualitative Health Research*, 21(4)

34. Wilson, M. (2011) 'Exploring the efficacy of a bereavement support group for male category C prisoners', *Bereavement Care*, 30(3)

35. Duwe, G. & Johnson, BJ. (2016) 'The effects of prison visits from community volunteers on offender recidivism', *The Prison Journal*, 96(2)

36. Wilson, M. (2010), *op cit*

37. Ferszt, G., *op cit*

38. Doka, KJ. (2002). *Disenfranchised Grief: New Directions, Challenges and Strategies for Practice*. Research Press, Illinois

39. Lane, R., *op cit*

40. Masterton, J., *op cit*

41. Schetky, DH., *op cit*

42. Crewe, B. (2014). 'Not looking hard enough': masculinity, emotion and prison research *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(4)

43. Hendry, C. (2009) 'Incarceration and the tasks of grief: A narrative review', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(2)

it, 'the coping strategy par excellence is to assume the status of the Manly Man'.<sup>44</sup> The 'macho' prison culture prevents the bereaved from working through their loss or confiding in others. Grief, if expressed at all, is likely to be conveyed through maladaptive behaviour. In a fraught, hypermasculine environment where 'vulnerability is exploited brutally and ruthlessly' (Participant 11, prison chaplain), one must conform to a narrow, toxic idea of how to be a man, or risk becoming a target. Bereaved male prisoners tend not to seek help even when they are in severe emotional distress or at crisis point.<sup>45</sup>

*To survive in prison, there's this perception that you need to be seen by all the other prisoners as quite tough and not somebody to mess with. [...] If men were encouraged by society to ask for that kind of help and have a cry now and again, the prison would probably be half-empty. — Participant 9, probation officer*

For some, what Freud calls 'grief work'<sup>46</sup> is deemed too difficult to focus on while in prison, and offenders may deliberately avoid confronting their losses to protect themselves from further hurt. Stevenson and McCutchen describe how bereaved offenders often 'deny their emotions because by denying them they believe they can avoid painful emotional episodes', with the result that these feelings become internalised.<sup>47</sup> This coping strategy may be a useful means of self-preservation, but failure to grieve can be very damaging in the long term.<sup>48</sup>

Worden's third task is for the individual to become accustomed to life without their loved one. In any bereavement, it takes time to realise what life is like without the deceased and adapt not just to the loss of the person but, often, to new responsibilities and a

changed sense of self. Naturally, a person who is removed from the life and family he has known will struggle to accept the new order of things. In many cases, it will not be until the individual reintegrates into his home life that he fully appreciates his loss. For prisoners, however, this world remains 'frozen in time' until release.<sup>49</sup>

This idea of suspended grief is particularly relevant to the final task of mourning, in which the bereaved reinvests in other relationships while keeping the memory of the deceased alive. Prison inhibits an individual's ability first to commemorate and find an

enduring connection to the dead, and then to move on. Although incarceration prevents inmates from visiting graves and reminiscing with family and friends — rites taken for granted on the outside — some are still able to mark anniversaries in their own way in prison. Vaswani found that those who took the approach of consciously remembering their loved one seemed more adjusted.<sup>50</sup>

Those who experience bereavement in the criminal justice system may struggle to invest in relationships, as there is limited opportunity for contact with family or pursuing new friendships. Relational ties to those outside are very important but maintaining them in prison can be difficult. The formation of

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new relationships is another beneficial step that is often deferred until release.<sup>51</sup> Research has found inmates to be wary of developing friendships in prison and to have difficulty offloading to one another.<sup>52</sup> Some feel that to become emotionally attached will only cause more pain, as they fear that their vulnerability will be exploited, or that they will have to endure a second loss upon the transfer, release or death of the new friend.<sup>53</sup> The sex offenders I met during fieldwork found the prospect of release daunting because they would lose the valuable friendships that they had established with

44. Toch, H. (1975) *Men in Crisis: Human Breakdown in Prison*. Chicago: Aldine.

45. Vaswani, N. (2014), *op cit*

46. Freud, S. (1917) 'Mourning and melancholia', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*. London: Hogarth

47. Stevenson, RG. & McCutchen, R. (2006) 'When meaning has lost its way: life and loss "behind bars"', *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, 14(2)

48. Wilson, M. (2010), *op cit*

49. Harner, HM. et al, *op cit*

50. Vaswani, N. (2014), *op cit*

51. Potter, M., *op cit*

52. See, for example, Lane, *op cit*

53. Ferszt, G., *op cit*

people who cared about them without judgement. Schetky explains that 'when there is no opportunity to invest in new relationships, inmates may cling to their lost ones'.<sup>54</sup>

### The Dual Process Model

Contemporary researchers have begun to challenge established grief theories, and new models are emerging. Healing from bereavement does not occur as a straight, linear path towards restored happiness. An alternative to the conventional phasal model was put forward by Dutch academics Stroebe and Schut<sup>55</sup> and is considered here both as a contrast to Worden's framework and to demonstrate a further impediment imposed by incarceration. According to the dual process model, the bereaved individual oscillates between traditional grief work, and practical tasks or distractions. The alteration can happen over minutes (as in the fluctuation between emotional and pragmatic responses in the immediate aftermath of a death), days, or months. Whereas Worden recommends allowing oneself to hurt and mourn, Stroebe and Schut 'argue the additional necessity to take time off from the pain of grief'. The central claim of the dual process model is dosage; 'the grieving individual at times confronts, at other times avoids, the different tasks of grieving'. There is a healthy 'to and fro' between loss-oriented activities like crying, thinking about the deceased and going over events on the one hand, and restoration-oriented activities like taking part in hobbies, work productivity and domestic responsibilities on the other. Oscillation is necessary for optimal adjustment, so when griever tend to distract themselves and keep busy, they should be encouraged instead to express their feelings, and vice versa. The important difference is that the tasks of mourning model pertains to the individual's emotional journey, whereas the dual process model relates to the behavioural manifestations of that pain and healing. This perhaps makes it a more suitable lens through which to view prisoners' grief, as their behaviour is more easily monitored and altered than their mental states.

*A lot of them can't control their own emotions, they can't control anything, really,*

*in their lives. — Participant 14, Prison pastoral carer*

How successfully can this model be followed in prison? Inmates are in a closely controlled environment, with few opportunities for restorative activities. This severely limits the freedom to balance one's time between reflection and distraction, and a prisoner may not have access to, or may refuse, suitable support. The phasal and oscillatory models are by no means incompatible. Perhaps a more holistic perspective, informed by both theories, presents the richest understanding; a broadly linear progression through different stages but, within each stage, frequent alternations between grieving and getting on. Failure to find a balanced response can complicate grief.

### Unresolved or Disenfranchised Grief

When the normal grieving process is suppressed or delayed, atypical grief reactions arise. 'Unresolved grief' is a category of intense, protracted grief that occurs when a person does not complete mourning in a healthy way. It is possible to have incomplete healing from a bereavement just as one might have incomplete healing from a wound.<sup>56</sup> The individual often feels stuck in their grief, struggles

to come to terms with or fully mourn their loss, and may never find closure. The risk of this is higher for those in the criminal justice system due to their predisposition to vulnerability, the barriers to grieving and the ongoing exposure to life stressors in a prison environment.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, Schetky believes 'unresolved grief is almost the norm in prison populations but is likely to be masked by other behaviours, particularly disruptive ones'.<sup>58</sup>

Similar to unresolved grief is the more specific idea of disenfranchised grief. Whereas unresolved grief could follow any loss, 'disenfranchised grief' is defined by Kenneth Doka as 'grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported'.<sup>59</sup> It is grief that falls outside of the grieving rules. Healthcare professionals have described how the incarcerated relatives of people who die in the general

54. Schetky, DH., *op cit*

55. Stroebe, M. & Schut, H., *op cit*

56. Worden, JW., *op cit*

57. Durcan, G. (2008) *From the Inside: Experiences of Prison Mental Health Care*. London: Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health.

58. Schetky, DH., *op cit*

59. Doka, KJ. (1989), *op cit*.



population are overlooked because they are not routinely included in the bereavement support mechanisms of hospitals and hospices.<sup>60</sup> As marginalised and vulnerable people who are often excluded from rituals, separated from social networks and unable to mourn openly, prisoners are disenfranchised grievers whose loss is typically invisible or ignored.

*In prison, they're completely disenfranchised, they can't express that grief. Often, they're not allowed to go to funerals as well, so they can't get through that process. So, often they've got all these issues stacked up. — Participant 12, prison chaplain*

This intensifies bereavement and adds to the challenges that confront a prisoner upon release. Normal grief symptoms become acute and persistent and begin to interfere with functioning. This can have serious health consequences that present all the characteristics of a disease, with symptoms including sleep disorders, raised blood pressure, heart problems, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal ideation.<sup>61</sup> These patterns can become so fixed that any chance of recovery is remote. The task, then, is to learn how to identify bereavement and facilitate healing during a custodial sentence to reduce the chance of disenfranchised grief.

### Conclusion

Grief is a great leveller, and the pain of losing a loved one is likely to be familiar and relatable to prison staff as well as other inmates. Nevertheless, prisoners perceive some staff as feeling awkward or having limited skills to work empathically,<sup>62</sup> and support remains fragmented, as the 'management' of

bereavement is treated as secondary to security concerns.<sup>63</sup> Prison protocol often takes precedence over any ritual behaviours considered vital at a time of significant loss<sup>64</sup>. Bereavement is not a mental illness or a behavioural problem to be treated or managed. A profound emotional response to the loss of someone we care about is entirely natural. We might say that grief is the price we pay for love, and worth paying.

Every prisoner has a right to grieve, but the complexities of incarceration pose a challenge for criminal justice professionals as they strive to meet the needs of offenders without compromising order and security. We have seen how institutional barriers hamper the healthy processing of grief and often dramatically reduce a prisoner's chances of resolving his losses in a healthy way. These disruptions have significant implications for successful reintegration back into the community, and can manifest as offending behaviours.<sup>65</sup>

To locate this problem within its wider policy context, the more that is understood about bereavement behind bars, the stronger the position for supporting prisoners through their grief, so that fewer people are released from prison with mental health and pastoral care needs. The diversity and the gravity of the challenges confronting bereaved prisoners is evident, but the solutions to these obstacles are less clear. Empirical research has exposed a disturbing lack of effective bereavement interventions, as well as a shortage of time, knowledge, and resources among staff to meet the demands of grieving offenders.<sup>66</sup> This affects the level of support a prisoner expects from the institution, which may result in him displaying the only degree of agency he can — maladaptive and avoidant coping. There is an urgent need to implement resources to support grieving prisoners, both for their own benefit and as a matter of public health and safety.

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60. Lillie, AK. et al (2018), *op cit*.

61. Rees, D., *op cit*

62. Wilson, M. (2010), *op cit*

63. Lillie, AK. (2018) 'Loss at the end of life: Palliative care in prisons' in Read, S., Santatzoglou, S. & Wrigley, A. (Eds.) *Loss, Dying and Bereavement in the Criminal Justice System*. London: Routledge

64. Aday, R. & Wahidin, A. (2016) 'Older prisoners' experiences of death, dying and grief behind bars', *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 55(3)

65. Leach, RM., Burgess, T. & Holmwood, C. (2008) 'Could recidivism in prisoners be linked to traumatic grief? A review of the evidence', *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 4

66. See, for example, Hester, R. & Taylor, W., *op cit*

# Motivation for Higher Education in Prison

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## Introduction

Since the mid-nineties, Adams State University (ASU) in Colorado has been offering long-distance courses to students around the United States. In 2002, they added resources to their correspondence print-based Prison College Program and now offer up to 65 classes per semester. ASU faculty teach the wide range of courses from Freshman Composition, to Business to Kinesiology. With an enrolment of around 1000, students reside in prisons all across the country, including Alaska and Hawaii.

Based on a small pilot study, this article draws on interviews with five teachers who teach classes through the Prison College Program at Adams State University (ASU) in Colorado, and two students who took ASU distance classes during their time in prison. In this study, I asked students and teachers what their motivation was to take university classes while in prison and/or teach students in prison.

Arranged in four parts, this paper first looks at the literature on motivation for education in prisons. Second, I describe the research design and methodology of the study. Third, I present my findings from my research. In the final part, I explain how this study contributes to the broader body of literature concerning the motivation for carceral higher education.

## Literature on Motivation for Higher Education in prison

Print-based education provides an opportunity for prisoners to advance their education while incarcerated; it also provides an opportunity for teachers to explore and experience an alternative style of teaching with a different population from the customary university student.

There are many reasons why students take classes while in prison and why teachers choose to teach students in prison. In this section, I look at the literature on motivation.

## Motivation

More research is available on practitioners choosing to teach students in prison than why students take classes while in prison. Motivations for educators and administrators cited in the literature included reducing recidivism, participating in social justice, improving future employability, reducing violence in prison for a safer prison environment, and rehabilitation.

## Reduce recidivism

Research on recidivism as a measure for correctional education success is a controversial issue.<sup>1</sup> The logic behind prisons is that people are in prison because they have been convicted of a crime, which they either committed, and if they did not, then they were wrongfully convicted. Those that did commit a crime are put in prison to rehabilitate and keep the general population safe from crime, which is their right. Extenuating circumstances complicate this simple logic.

In 2007, the American government passed the Second Chance Act, whose mandate included the improvement of educational opportunities in U.S. correctional institutions.<sup>2</sup> In 2010, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, with help from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, awarded the RAND Corporation funding to study the effectiveness of correctional education programs. That report published in 2013 explored whether the education initiatives were achieving the hoped-for goals.<sup>3</sup> The result of the meta-analysis was encouraging, showing that correctional education led to more successful re-entry upon release; it did indeed reduce recidivism cost-effectively and increased employment post-release.<sup>4</sup>

For some researchers seeing education as the impetus for reducing recidivism is not looking at the whole picture. Gould<sup>5</sup> critiques the much-cited 2013 RAND study by Davis et al, as being myopic on its

1. Gehring, T. (2000) 'Recidivism as a measure of correctional education program success', *Journal of Correctional Education*, 51(2), pp. 197–205.
2. Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J. L., Saunders, J., & Miles, J. N. (2013, August 22) 'Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults', *RAND Corporation*. Available at: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR266.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html). (Accessed May 20, 2020). (Accessed April 30, 2020).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Gould, M. R. (2018) 'Rethinking our metrics: Research in the field of higher education in prison', *Prison Journal*, 98(4), pp. 387–404. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885518776375> (Accessed May 29, 2020).



position that recidivism is the ideal outcome of 'rehabilitation' because the success or failure of an individual upon prison release depends on so many other factors besides just education. Community support, personal motivation, psychological health are all factors when considering recidivism. Long term prisoner Lyle May writes about the incarcerated experience. He says: 'Higher education is largely able to keep people from returning to prison because it effectively addresses criminality unlike any other program in prison. Students learn critical thinking, communication and social skills, ethics, time management, goal setting, perspective taking, organization, and accountability for one's actions or inaction.'<sup>6</sup> Education that promotes the skills that May talks about is effective in curbing recidivism because of these acquired skills.

### **Social Justice**

Braggins and Talbot state that 'Although contributing to the reduction of recidivism is of key importance, prison education is about more than just this. It is also important to deliver education in prison because it is the right thing to do' (p. 12).<sup>7</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Article 26 supports the social justice motivation:

'Everyone has the right to education' and 'Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.'<sup>8</sup>

Offering educational opportunities in prison is about the human right of the incarcerated. Education provides incarcerated people with an identity other than a numbered object. The education system identifies the prisoners as students, as learners on the road to developing their potential. 'Prison education might be said to challenge everything that prison institutionalisation is about: control, minimising personal freedom and choice, elimination of decision-

making, and reduction of self-esteem. Prison education, in parallel with the values of adult education, encourages negotiation and choice, tries to build self-confidence and self-worth and develop critical thinking. In some ways then, it might be said to liberate' (p. 160).<sup>9</sup> Education then fulfills the mandate of the UDHR.

### **Improved employability**

Reduced recidivism and improved employability are interconnected since access to suitable employment reduces the need for procuring finances via unlawful means. 'Prison education can therefore help students to gain qualifications in order to be more attractive to employers; it can, through self-reflection and guidance, assist in personal development; and learning can be encouraged for sheer enjoyment' (p. 163).<sup>10</sup> At times

the motivation is preparation for employment, and the enjoyment of learning new skills and attaining a goal comes as a bonus. Cho and Tyler found that despite there being 'a positive effect on post-release earnings and employment, we do not find any evidence supporting claims that participating in ABE classes reduce recidivism' (p. 1001).<sup>11</sup> High school completion falls under the purview of Adult Basic Education, and perhaps for that

reason is seen as something to complete rather than useful to achieve future employment.

### **Reduce violence during incarceration for a safer environment**

Pompoco et al found that prisoners that earned a GED or completed higher education classes 'were less likely than nonprogram inmates to engage in violence during incarceration, whereas completing vocational training and apprenticeship programs had no such effect on any type of inmate misconduct examined' (p. 515).<sup>12</sup> Completing classes provided overall safety for

Prison education  
can therefore help  
students to gain  
qualifications in  
order to be more  
attractive to  
employers.

6. May, L. C. (2020, March 18) 'Resilience and resistance: Fighting for Higher Education in prison', *Inside Higher Education*. Available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/03/18/prisoner-describes-his-and-other-inmates-struggles-access-higher-education-opinion> (Accessed May 6, 2020).
7. Braggins, J., & Talbot, J. (2006) 'Wings of learning: The role of the prison officer in supporting prison education', *Prison Service Journal*, 168(168), pp. 33–38. Available at: <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/wings-of-learning.pdf> (Accessed May 6, 2020).
8. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (n.d.). United Nations. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (Accessed May 7, 2020).
9. Bayliss, P. (2003) 'Learning behind bars: Time to liberate prison education', *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 35(2), 157–172. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2003.11661480>
10. Ibid.
11. Cho, R. M., & Tyler, J. H. (2013) 'Does prison-based adult basic education improve postrelease outcomes for male prisoners in Florida?' *Crime and Delinquency*, 59(7), pp. 915–1005.
12. Pompoco, A., Wooldredge, J., Lugo, M., Sullivan, C., & Latessa, E. J. (2017) 'Reducing inmate misconduct and prison returns with facility education programs'. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 16(2), pp. 515–547. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12290>

prisoners themselves as well as a safer environment overall, including for the staff and fellow prisoners.<sup>13</sup>

### Rehabilitation

Anne Reus states that prisons are about punishment, rehabilitation, and deterrence. Still, changing behaviour will not be successful if we don't consider the person as a human being that has a unique history.<sup>14</sup> Although under-researched, higher education in prisons is suggested and conjectured as one of the key rehabilitative methods of incarceration.<sup>15</sup> 'Significant funds have been invested in prisons in recent years to introduce interventions that may broadly be described as 'reformative'. Investment in literacy and numeracy provision has been one.'<sup>16</sup> Higher education in prison not only has the capacity 'to transform the lives of those who are personally involved with it, but ultimately, to undermine the social and ideological underpinnings of the very practice of incarceration' (p. 353).<sup>17</sup>

### Methods

It is difficult to gain access to a vulnerable prison population, and if researchers do acquire permission, prisoners are hesitant to become involved.<sup>18</sup> Hence the dearth of qualitative research about the experience of higher education in prison. The current study is a small pilot study designed to examine teachers' and students' experiences in the Prison College Program at ASU. The main objective of this part of the study was to explore the motivation for taking or teaching classes through the Prison College Program. The method of data collection in this study was semi-structured open-ended interview questions using convenience sampling.<sup>19</sup> I conducted the interviews on the phone using regular audio cell service or video calling through zoom. The

'Significant funds have been invested in prisons in recent years to introduce interventions that may broadly be described as 'reformative'.

interviews were in between 30 and 50 minutes. My questions focused on the teaching and learning experience, including what motivated students to take classes and why teachers chose to teach in the Prison College Program. My participants in this study were five teachers who taught either face to face, print-based, or both mediums through the host university Adams State University and two students who graduated from ASU and had been released from prison. Both Adams State University and The University of Winnipeg granted ethics approval for this study. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then coded and thematically organized into categories and relevant themes.

Creswell<sup>20</sup> states that a phenomenological study describes a shared experience that the participants have in common. The participants in my research had taught, were teaching, or had been a student in the Prison College Program through Adams State University. In the thematic analysis of the data, I do not claim complete objectivity and acknowledge the impact of my own experiences as teacher and researcher. Still, as much as it is possible, I attempted to look at the data without preconceived ideas or notions about themes or categories. Like Hughes,<sup>21</sup> I offer my study as rigorous and yet 'unavoidably subjective' (p. 10). Participant names and the classes they taught or took are not revealed here to protect

participant identity.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

Much of the research on prison education is from policymaker perspectives or practitioners, but not so often from the perspective of the student.<sup>22</sup> What do the students think about higher education in prison? What is their motivation for taking classes? Do they think about reducing recidivism or rehabilitation when

13 Ibid.

14. Reuss, A. (2003) 'Taking a long hard look at imprisonment', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42(5), pp. 426–436.

15. Bayless, 2013; Reuss, 2003; Irwin, T. (2008) 'The 'inside' story: practitioner perspectives on teaching in prison', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 47(5), pp. 512–528. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2008.00536.x>

16. Braggins, J., & Talbot, J. (2006) 'Wings of learning: The role of the prison officer in supporting prison education', *Prison Service Journal*, 168(168), pp. 33–38. Available at: <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/wings-of-learning.pdf> (Accessed May 6, 2020).

17. Lewen, J. (2014) 'Prison higher education and social transformation', *St. Louis University Public Law Review*, 33, pp. 353–361.

18. Irwin, T. (2008) 'The 'inside' story: practitioner perspectives on teaching in prison', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 47(5), pp. 512–528. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2008.00536.x>

19. Creswell, J., & Creswell, D. (2018) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Fifth edn. Los Angeles: Sage.

20. Creswell, J. (2007) *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five approaches*, 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

21. Hughes, E. (2012) *Education in Prison: Studying Through Distance Learning*. Routledge.

22. Irwin, T. (2008) 'The 'inside' story: practitioner perspectives on teaching in prison', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 47(5), pp. 512–528. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2008.00536.x>

they sign up for a university class in prison? For the students I talked with, the motivation for them taking classes while in prison included learning skills to gain viable and legal employment upon release, although convicted of a crime, the opportunity to show the penal system the nature of their real character, affordable education to reach a personal goal, and the flexibility to take classes when offered.

Why would teachers choose to teach students in prison? Teacher motivation included engagement in social justice work, extraordinary enjoyment and preference for working with the prison population, flexible work schedule, and stimulating professional engagement after retirement. I am presenting the teacher and student perception at the time they talked to me. I also acknowledge the immense pain that victims of crime have suffered.

## **Student Motivation**

### ***Legal employment***

Although researchers were of differing opinions when it came to the impetus for higher education to reduce recidivism, the students I interviewed did indeed choose to take classes in prison to gain legal employment skills. Student #1 said:

*My motivation for taking classes is because, at the time that I got incarcerated, I told myself that when I get out, I want to be a success. I want to make my money legally. And I feel that the best opportunity for me or any other person who has been incarcerated previously is entrepreneurship. So I wanted to learn as much as possible about business. So I thought a business degree would serve me well.*

Student #1 found that what he learned applied to real life. Learning practical skills increased motivation and drive for doing well: 'You're out there in the world applying what you learned, so we did research papers and projects. The projects were really good. They drove me to really learn the application of the skills I was learning in real life.'

### ***Flexible schedule***

Wilson says: 'There is little wonder that many (re)construct prison education primarily as somewhere to get warm, be a human being or get away from the

cockroaches as well as a centre for learning.'<sup>23</sup> (p. 191). Although the students I interviewed completed their coursework via print-based distance learning, they indicated having access to a place where they could go to do their coursework. For print-based education, having both a physical and psychological place to escape from the daily routine of 'cockroaches' was immensely valuable to students. Student #2 appreciated being able to study at his own pace without the hindrance of class attendance at a specific time. About his classes, he said: 'They worked great. I was able to set a pace and then stay on pace. I was really vigorous in my pursuit to get the stuff done, so you know. Study at your own pace.'

Student #2 stated that everything worked well for him:

*ASU was great. They provided me with all the things that I needed, but I had such an intense schedule that I was trying to maintain that I didn't have time. So saying, the teachers all that stuff was really great and the classes, the coursework was all geared towards what I was trying to do. That was very important because I was on a mission. (Laughs.) To get the courses done. Learn and get it done. Move on to the next thing so. For me personally, it was alright that I didn't have defined classes and going at it in a defined pace.*

Although Student #1 did appreciate the flexible schedule, he did value deadlines: 'I liked about the Adams State University courses is that you had a certain time allotment that you had to turn in the homework within.'

## **Affordability**

Classes at Adams State University are not free, but they are very affordable. A print-based course runs \$220 per credit hour.<sup>24</sup> Since the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, passed in 1994, Pell grants are no longer available to incarcerated students.<sup>25</sup> Incarcerated students rely on private funds from family or friends to pay for their education. ASU attracts many incarcerated students because the tuition is relatively inexpensive, and a correspondence print-based format is conducive to the unique challenge of incarceration. Student #1 stated: 'Well, first of all, the pricing was great.'

23. Wilson, A. (2007) 'I go to get away from the cockroaches: Educentricity and the politics of education in prisons', *Journal of Correctional Education*, 58(2), pp. 185–203.

24. Prison College Program FAQs. Available at: <https://www.adams.edu/academics/print-based/faqs/>. (Accessed June 1, 2020).

25. Ibid.

### ***Demonstrate to the penal system his real character***

About his motivation for taking university classes, Student #2 said: 'I'll show you who I am,' meaning he would show the correctional institution who he really was. The incidents that changed Student #2's life became the motivating force for taking university classes:

*So being charged with this crime that I know I didn't commit uhm and kind of hitting rock bottom with that and then reaching out and meeting God were the two driving factors over the next 12 years of my life that led me, you know, that empowered me and led me to do the things that I did. So the motivation was there because I was just hellbent, pardon the pun, uh on showing, you know, these DAs they lied. They did a bunch of evidence. They tried to make me to something I wasn't — for a conviction, and so that just was a fire under my ass to, excuse my language, but it really fired me up to, uh, you know, to shut these guys down. This is not who I am. That's not who I am. I'll show you who I am.*

Student #2 attributes his strength to an encounter with God:

*He gave me the strength to beat, you know, all of these insurmountable odds that were stacked against me being a convicted murderer, or I mean, you know first charged murderer and then, later on, I was convicted of a lesser crime, but it was still, I was convicted of second-degree murder, so but that still weighed heavily mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and God gave me a bunch of strength to overcome all that and those two things were what really what propelled me over the next two years to get an education.*

Student #2 does admit the unfortunate nature of having taken another life, which he says he did not intend to, but 'so much positive stuff came out of it and really not that much negative stuff for me personally. So you know, it was pretty awesome. Yeah, I was able to make great use of the time, and like I said, I came out a lot better for it.'

### **Teacher Motivation**

Students in prison are not the usual on-campus students; teachers shared numerous motivations for their work with incarcerated students, which included

engagement in social justice work, extraordinary enjoyment and preference for working with the prison population, previous prison experience, flexible and practical work schedule, and stimulating professional engagement after retirement.

### **Social Justice**

Of the motivations cited in the literature, social justice was the most prominent motivation for teachers to choose to work with incarcerated students. Teacher #1 states:

*A lot of my research around social justice issues uh, issues going all the way back to when I was a developmental teacher in the public schools looking at the numbers of identified gifted and talented students who drop out, the percentages who are incarcerated likely. I knew that kind of information, and that was probably one of the reasons for some of the students for being in prison, to begin with had been not fitting well in the K12 system that we have here, and I think I have just always had a lot of concern or appreciation for marginalized people. So I think a lot of things overlaid and I uhm (pause) yeah I just I read books like the New Jim Crow, and I became yeah very aware of and did research about how racism is being perpetuated through the prison systems in the US.*

Teacher #2 concurs:

*It's like 90 some odd per cent of the prisoners are coming out, and let's send them out armed with education. You know, let's give them a chance in life, and I'm just so I'm such a proponent for prison programs and I think there should be many many more. And I think that all the trouble it is, the benefits far outweigh everything.*

### **Extraordinary enjoyment**

Teachers talked about their teaching experience generating authentic joy. Teacher #3 said: 'For fun. I just did it for fun actually, uhm, then I just kind of stuck around because they always needed someone.' Teacher #4 used the exact words to describe her experience:

*It was fun. I mean it was really fun, and they [the students] were very very engaged because a lot of these guys, by virtue of being*



*in the prison system, they know a lot about the law. And they were all, you know, they would bring in their appeals to me because they're all doing appeals and all of them are in some stage of that. And uhm you know they're smart, smart guys.*

Teacher #5 enjoyed working in the Prison College Program so much that she eventually just taught those classes. 'I don't teach on campus anymore. I much prefer working with incarcerated students, so it's my main teaching gig.'

### **Previous experience working in prison**

The teachers in my study were interested in teaching in prison based on previous experience in prison. Teacher #4 had previously had a very good experience volunteering in a prison:

*The second major reason for choosing incarcerated students is because back in the early 90s — 1990-1994, I volunteered for a federal women's prison and ended up creating a holistic health program uh for incarcerated women and for the staff.*

Teacher #3 had been working with the incarcerated population most of his career starting with living in a halfway house as a young adult:

*I mean for me; I've been around prisoners for a long time. Like so after college I lived with people — it was kind of a halfway house and it wasn't. Basically, put students and people coming out of prison in the same kind of setting, a living setting, and so I ended up doing that even though I was the only student, I helped uh you know fix the house, get the house ready. So I have been working in around criminal justice issues for a very long period of time, you know.*

### **Practical**

Teaching correspondence courses can be a practical alternative to face to face on-campus classes, whether those reasons are for mobility or scheduling

issues. About her motivation for teaching in the Prison College Program, Teacher #5 'said:

*So partly it was a practical matter. I experimented with online but hated it but then decided that print-based; I actually do like old fashioned. It's a completely different approach to teaching class because you have to write. You have to envision the entire class.*

For Teacher #1 abrupt retirement and leaving her professional life behind did not sound attractive. Therefore, she 'did sort of a transitional retirement from the English Department and became the uh the liaison, the advocate the VP for equity and inclusion at my university and that was half-time under a grant.' Transitioning to a part-time schedule allowed her time to invest in part-time teaching in the Prison College Program.

### **Stimulating professional engagement**

Teachers found the teaching and learning environment exceptionally stimulating and engaging.

About engagement with students, Teacher #3 said:

*It's an enthusiast audience for us as teachers. You're not going to have passive students. You know you might go on campus, and you might teach, you know, whatever. Intro to Philosophy or whatever, and you might have a bunch of passive students that don't really want to be there. You go into prison and you're not. And that actually kind of builds the confidence of the students. But also the confidence of the instructor. Wow. People are interested in something I am interested in. Think about how that'll change you like in your teaching.*

Similarly, Teacher #1 evidenced transformative learning that impacted not only the students but her life as well:

*It is a privilege to teach them, and their experiences in many cases have led them to have a tremendous amount of insight and empathy and imagination, and many of them*

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*are devoted to reading before they take my class, you know survival brought them to reading. So some of those first ideas that oh this would be doing that population good. I still believe that, but in different ways.*

Teacher #4, who was teaching in prison for the first time, also experienced personal transformation:

*It really uh heightens and highlights you know freedom vs. being trapped. There's all these themes that are going through the experience that really have nothing to do with [the class], which is supposedly what I taught.*

Engaging with challenging topics in a new way and working with students that were motivated to learn led Teacher #4 to realize that she cared about her students: 'That part is a little difficult because you actually start to care about people. I think that's the nature of teaching, isn't it?' As much as this study was about higher education in prison, it was just as much about the transformation of not only the students, but the teachers through the process of engaging in prison education.

## Conclusion

In my study, I looked at diverse teacher and student motivation for teaching or taking classes through the Prison College Program at ASU. My findings suggest that students are motivated to take classes while in prison because an affordable education will help them gain legal employment upon release, the classes offered

fit into a flexible schedule, and getting an education demonstrated a quality of character. Teachers were motivated to teach students in prison for social justice reasons. Previous experience working in prisons motivated some to teach in prison in their retirement, especially because of the practicality. Both teachers and students shared the same motivation when it came to flexibility in schedules.

This study obviously has many limitations. First, the sample size is very small, and therefore, it is difficult to draw conclusions to a wider population. Second, the sample of students that participated were only men, therefore making generalizations not possible. Previously, I acknowledged the difficulty in recruiting students because memories of the past can be triggering. Thirdly, the research for this study was at one university. There are many universities that offer college and university classes in prison, so there are many views on these issues.

Although my study has limitations, it still contributes to the body of knowledge about higher education in prison, especially because it gives voice to previously incarcerated students. Some researchers maintain that incarcerated people may not be a reliable source since their stories may not be credible, or they may be told to gain sympathy; for this reason, the prisoner's voice has mostly remained unrecognized and silent.<sup>26</sup> Listening to the voice of previously incarcerated students was an honour. I believed their narratives. I believed that they spoke with honesty because there was nothing to gain from either honesty or dishonesty. I was honoured to speak with highly motivated teachers that were passionate about their work and their contribution to social justice in our society.

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26. Irwin, T. (2008) 'The 'inside' story: practitioner perspectives on teaching in prison', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 47(5), pp. 512–528. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2311.2008.00536.x>



# 'It's Just Not Worth it': How Juvenile Offenders Begin to Desist from Crime, a Thematic Analysis

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**Desistance is the long-term cessation of offending behaviour. Desistance has been conceptualised as a process that includes setbacks and lapses. By understanding desistance, we can make efforts to support offenders to move away from crime and reduce re-offending. Existing research focuses on adult ex-offender's retrospective accounts of how they stopped offending. Research neglects both the beginning of the desistance process and the juvenile offender population. Furthermore, it has been suggested that understanding the role of the Youth Justice System (YJS) and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) in this process could enhance desistance.**

## Juvenile Offenders

Society believes that children and adults have different cognitive and behavioural processes<sup>1</sup>. Hence, we have distinct adult and youth justice systems (YJS). The Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour (2010)<sup>2</sup> suggest that, unlike adults, children are still developing, so responses to their offending should reflect this. They advocate a YJS based on restoration, prevention and integration.

The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) led to the creation of the Youth Justice Board (YJB), a non-departmental public body which oversees England and Wales' YJS<sup>3</sup>. The Act also introduced Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) in every county, multi-agency teams consisting of police, social workers, child and

adolescent mental health services (CAMHs), youth workers and educational psychologists. They are responsible for the assessment and supervision of offenders under the age of 18 years who are serving part, or all, of their sentence in the community.

Within the literature, the term 'young offender' refers to those aged 18-21 years who have committed a crime, while 'juvenile offender' refers to those under 18 years old who have committed a crime. The current research will refer to YOTs and the YJS, who call their 10-17 year old cohort 'young offenders' but to remain consistent with existing research, I shall refer to this age group as 'juvenile offenders' and 'juveniles'.

Within 12 months of being cautioned or convicted, 42.2 per cent of juveniles re-offended, committing an average of 3.79 further offences each<sup>4</sup>. Over the last two decades, crime, particularly youth crime, has fallen<sup>5</sup>. This reduction in the number of children in the CJS has resulted in a smaller, more challenging caseload of juvenile offenders<sup>6</sup>. These cohorts have a wide range of needs that should be addressed to encourage desistance, thus, approaches to working with this cohort must be tailored and flexible<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, local authorities should have the freedom to adopt more integrated ways to promote individualised and local solutions to offending<sup>8</sup>. To support this, the Inspectorate of Probation called for more research on what may work to reduce this and suggested that this should incorporate juveniles' views of their offending<sup>9</sup>. The present research aimed to do this.

1. Lacey, L. (2012). 'Youth Justice in England and Wales: Exploring young offenders' perceptions of restorative and procedural justice in the referral order process' (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/596/>
2. Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour. (2010). *Time for a fresh start*. London: Police Foundation/Nuffield Foundation.
3. King, J. (2016). *Young people's reflections on engaging with youth offending services. A psycho-social exploration* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from [http://repository.tavistockandportman.ac.uk/view/divisions/res/2016.html#group\\_K](http://repository.tavistockandportman.ac.uk/view/divisions/res/2016.html#group_K)
4. Youth Justice Board. (2018). *Youth justice statistics 2016/17 England and Wales*. Statistics bulletin. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-annual-statistics-2016-to-2017>
5. Taylor, C. (2016). *Review of the youth justice system in England and Wales*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-youth-justice-system>
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Taylor, C. (2016). *Review of the youth justice system in England and Wales*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-youth-justice-system>
9. HM Inspectorate of Probation (2016). *Desistance and young people: An inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation*. Retrieved from [https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/05/Desistance\\_and\\_young\\_people.pdf](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/05/Desistance_and_young_people.pdf)

## Defining Desistance

Desistance is the long-term cessation of offending<sup>10</sup>. In theory, the idea of desistance — to abstain from offending — is clear<sup>11</sup>. However, it is difficult to know when behaviour has stopped completely, making it challenging to agree on how desistance should be defined, operationalised and measured. Having such varied definitions of desistance can make it hard to compare findings across studies if the one employed is not explicitly stated<sup>12</sup>.

There are conflicting conceptualisations of measuring desistance regarding behaviour. Despite one's best intentions, changing behaviour is difficult and may involve periods of reverting to previous behaviours<sup>13</sup>. Hence, it is difficult to distinguish between complete desistance and lulls in offending. Some suggest several years should pass before behaviour can be referred to as desistance, while others believe you can never know if someone has genuinely desisted until they have died<sup>14</sup>. Also, desistance research often relies on official reconviction data to determine whether someone is successful in desisting from crime. However, this may not be reliable as it is possible that individuals are not caught and are not honest about this in subsequent self-report<sup>15</sup>. It has also been questioned whether someone is desisting if they have stopped breaking laws but continue to engage in harmful behaviour — for example, if they do not return

Despite one's best intentions, changing behaviour is difficult and may involve periods of reverting to previous behaviours.

borrowed money to friends<sup>16</sup>. Similarly, it has been suggested that a distinction could be made between desistance as a complete termination of activity, as committing less serious crimes (desistance as diminished seriousness), and as less frequent criminal acts (desistance as diminished frequency)<sup>17</sup>.

Growing up includes multiple transitions rather than a one-off change<sup>18</sup>. Instead of seeing desistance as an end state that can be objectively measured, it can be understood as a process. Rather than when the behaviour stops, we should look at how — for example, by examining the events that produced the termination<sup>19</sup>. Desistance has been conceptualised as akin to recovery from substance addiction, involving setbacks and changes in motivation, rather than a straightforward progression towards abstinence<sup>20</sup>. Due to its dynamic and non-linear nature, desistance is seen as an inherently individual process<sup>21</sup>. The present research aimed to explore desistance in a way that takes into account its unique and individualised nature.

## Theories and Research into Desistance

There are two broad categories for theories of desistance that informed the current research: structural theories and agency theories. It is largely accepted within the current literature that desistance is likely a combination or integration of factors from structural and agency theories<sup>22</sup>.

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**Structural theories.** The earliest theories suggest that desistance is natural due to maturation. The ‘age-crime curve’ is now well-established and suggests offending starts in early-to-mid adolescence, peaks during late adolescence and then gradually declines until it stops for most people — around the age of 25<sup>23</sup>. This decline was believed to be because of a natural reduction in criminality and the preference for crime<sup>24</sup>. Others suggest desistance occurs by default because of individuals experiencing pivotal events which they called ‘life-course events’ or ‘turning points’, for example, getting married<sup>25</sup>. These events are seen to create an opportunity for individuals to ‘knife-off’ their past. However, opportunities for turning points, such as securing employment or housing, are less accessible to juveniles or could exacerbate anti-social behaviour.

**Agency theories.** Clarke and Cornish<sup>26</sup> argue that desisters decide to give up crime. This may be due to the burnout of offending, the deterrent effects of the Criminal Justice System (CJS), or a rational consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of crime<sup>27</sup>. Juveniles are described as impulsive and spontaneous meaning that agency theories, which emphasise choice and motivation, are less applicable to their desistance.

Existing literature focuses on those who have successfully stopped offending for an extended period and little research attempts to understand how it starts. If we understand the beginning of the process, more can be done to support offenders to begin to stop<sup>28</sup>. As little is known about juvenile desistance, this research aimed to explore the how the process begins.

## Method

### Participants

Six participants were recruited through two different YOTs and all were males. Participants were between 13-18 years old (M = 15.67 years, SD = 2.16). Five were white British and one was Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME). Three were in education while the others were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Participants were diverse regarding

their sentences, offences and previous involvement with the YJS.

In this research, desistance was defined as a current period of non-offending. YOT staff were asked to identify any juvenile who had ceased offending. As mentioned, defining desistance is often contested within the literature. To avoid approaching the sample with pre-conceived ideas of what desistance looked like, YOT staff were encouraged to be open-minded with desistance meaning that ‘ceased offending’ could be recently, in days, or for a significant period of time such as months. It could also be a shift in attitude or offending such as offending less frequently.

Participants were subject to a variety of interventions; three had a Referral Order; two were on a Youth Rehabilitation Order and one participant was on a Youth Conditional Caution.

Interviews lasted 15 to 37 minutes (M = 22 minutes). Although a general outline of the areas to be discussed was given, it was emphasised that the interview would take the lead from the participant and their experiences. A semi-structured interview guide was used to cover broad topics from the desistance literature but allow new insights to arise. This was developed with staff from one YOT who helped to formulate the wording of questions to ensure this was appropriate for juveniles understanding.

## Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone and then transcribed verbatim. As some features of spoken language can be important for interpreting data<sup>29</sup>, filler words and emphasis (indicated by underline) were included during transcription.

Thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying patterns within data, was used to analyse transcripts. Noticeable patterns in a dataset constitute a theme which is then used to address and interpret the research question<sup>30</sup>.

## Results

Five themes were identified regarding how juvenile offenders begin to desist and the role that the YJS and

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YOT play in this. These were; staying away from trouble, changing relationships, learning to control anger, taking steps towards employment and engaging with the YOT. These themes and their sub-themes are discussed below.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the themes and sub-themes.

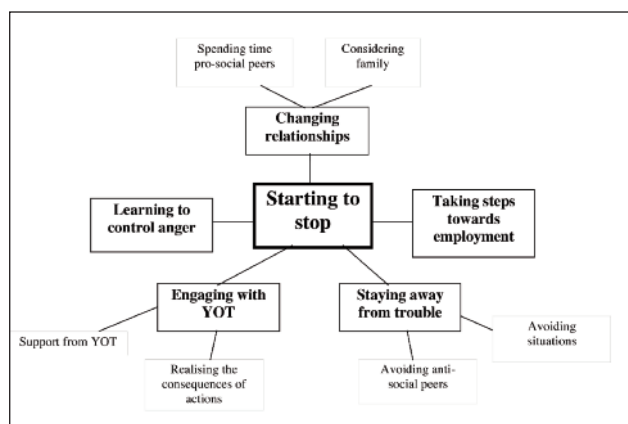


Figure 1: Diagram of the five themes and their sub-themes

## Staying Away from Trouble

**Avoiding anti-social peers.** Avoiding anti-social peers was mentioned in almost every participant's interview when asked how they were trying to stop offending. A decision was made to 'stop hanging around' with peers they had previously offended with. Max stopped seeing the peer he co-offended with as he became aware of the 'peer pressure' he felt when with him:

*He always used to get me into trouble... I shouldn't of let him talk me into it.*

Similarly, Steve described his offence as 'a kid showing off in front of his friends'.

Some participants simply stopped seeing friends. Jack reassessed his friendship group after seeing his friend get shot, explaining:

*I stopped hanging around with them from then cause I went I ain't getting shot.*

For others, avoiding peers was less straightforward. For Jack, his anti-social peers were his only friends, so some initiative was required to keep away from them:

*What I do if they come round now is just say I'm grounded.*

However, despite his best efforts, Jack admitted that there were times when he does go out and can lapse into offending. Jack stressed that, compared to

the thousands of pounds worth of items he used to steal every day, the crimes he continues to commit are less serious and less frequent:

*Yeah I admit it yeah I do go out the occasional time and if I'm like in a like little corner shop and I want a drink got no money yeah I will steal it... but I'm nowhere near as bad as what I used to be.*

**Avoiding situations.** Five of the six participants mentioned staying away from certain situations in order to desist. Steve, whose offence involved retaliating to provocation which led to an assault, was hoping to prevent himself from re-offending by 'avoiding situations in the first place'. Alex describes his efforts to avoid confrontation:

*I try and keep out of fights now whereas before...let's just say I would've probably been like one of the first ones in.*

Later on, he describes walking away from fights when he hears them by finding friends to go elsewhere with as a way of protection from re-offending. Alex's offence was a consequence of his school having a 'rival school', so his method was:

*I keep away from areas that I know that I have... issues with people.*

Alex relies on social media to receive intelligence regarding the location of pupils from the rival school. Alex now uses this information to avoid these areas whereas he admitted that he previously would have deliberately gone to a location where the rival school were known to be.

As well as local locations, Liam began to desist by avoiding a whole city, having relocated from the city in which is committed his offences. Liam and Max had stopped going out all night. Max had stopped spending time on the streets as he recognised this often resulted in one of his peers suggesting committing an offence:

*I used to love it I'd go out on the streets all the time but it used to get me in trouble... like someone says like come do a bladdy blah and then they drag you into it and it's like ah come on then let's do it.*

Some participants' planned to move out or move away. Liam was hoping to secure accommodation and move out of his mother's house. He stated this would help him to maintain his desistance. Max felt he should move away from the area in order to maintain a lawful life.

## Changing Relationships

**Spending time with pro-social and supportive peers.** Following a decision to stop spending time with peers that had a negative influence on themselves, participants described spending more time with pro-social and supportive peers. As Jack puts it:

*You hang around with people that get arrested all the time you're just gonna get arrested all the time with them if you hang around with people that don't get arrested that do the right thing you're fine.*

Participants described a reassurance that the groups of friends they were spending time with now would help aid their desistance by preventing them from re-offending and offering safety in numbers. When thinking about the possibility of fighting, Steve stated:

*My friends would just push them away... and just stick up for me...they wouldn't actually try fighting.*

Similarly, Alex felt that staying with his new group of pro-social peers offered him protection, explaining that:

*Where we have quite a large group of friends, if a fight did break out they'd all try and split it up anyway...so it's not like I'd be on my own.*

Alex's friends also reminded him of his previous involvement with YOT in situations which could escalate. He commented that they stepped in to advise him to steer clear of further arrests.

Where some participants felt comfort in a large group of friends, others had decided the opposite was better for them, preferring to keep friendships to a minimum. Jack commented:

*I only really hang around with this one person.*

Likewise, Max cut contact with the majority of his friends following a decision to stop offending when he found out he was going to become a father:

*I don't talk to none of my friends no more either I stopped hanging around with all of*

*them but um some of them ain't even done anything wrong some of them are just genuinely nice friends I just stopped hanging around with all of them...*

**Considering one's family.** A minority of participants mentioned their efforts to repair relationships with family as important for beginning to desist. Dave, whose victim was his grandmother, spoke about how he is beginning to regain her trust. Similarly, Jack had reassessed his behaviour towards his grandmother, by whom he is cared for, after conversations with other family members. He had begun to improve the way he behaves with her, 'a lot':

*I was just horrible to my nan and um my mum had a talk to me about it and then my uncle had a talk to me about it...I respect my nan...all the things she does for me I shouldn't be horrible to her.*

As mentioned, Max's experience of becoming a father meant that now he had his daughter to consider, he was motivated to maintain his desistance for her sake. She acted as a reason to stay out of trouble and avoid imprisonment so that he could be a father to her.

*I think ... my little girl, I think that is the reason that's made me sort things out.. ain't no other reason to it.*

When you get to  
the point where you  
don't know what  
you're doing you  
cannot remember  
anything you're  
just, just  
extremely angry.

## Learning to Control Anger

All six participants mentioned learning to control their anger as a way they were trying to move away from offending. Steve stated:

*I wanna try control my anger so I don't lose my temper as much.*

Steve described experiencing 'blackouts', which he said he experienced during his offence. He defined these as:

*When you get to the point where you don't know what you're doing you cannot remember anything you're just, just extremely angry.*



Steve explained that he is currently working on this with his YOT worker during their appointments:

*It's mainly just general talking, trying to find a way to control my anger and to find out the points of where I start to have enough and then to just try walk away before it gets to that point, like recognising the signs of me losing my temper.*

Similarly, Jack had been working on his anger during his supervision sessions. Jack's YOT worker had found a new outlet for his anger:

*I started doing boxing... so I can control my anger and it has been working.*

### **Taking Steps towards Employment**

No participants spontaneously mentioned employment or education as being important for moving away from crime. When asked about a job, participants had vague ideas — for example, Alex would do 'probably anything with sport'. For now, participants were taking the initial steps towards employment in the future such as choosing relevant BTEC options for their career interest.

Alex continually reminded himself of the impact on his employability if he were to re-offend. Jack had considered joining the Navy like his uncle. His uncle spoke to him about the likelihood of him getting into the Navy if he continued his behaviour which prompted him to stop smoking cannabis.

Max wanted a job to 'keep my mind off things' and 'keeping my mind motivated'. Similarly, Liam said that boredom was a trigger for his past offending and is a current trigger for temptations to offend. He agreed that having a job could occupy his time instead.

### **Engaging with the YOT**

Support from the YOT. Participants acknowledged the work their case manager had done beyond their intervention. For example, Alex commented that he had 'got a lot of support' as his YOT worker had liaised with his school regarding Alex's preferred communication methods to prevent his behaviour escalating in class. Steve's comment about his YOT worker demonstrated the rapport she had built with him:

*She knows the right things to say if that makes sense.*

This personalised approach was also appreciated by Alex. When asked if the YOT could have helped him in any other way, he replied:

*I think they got it so it's specific to me so they know how to help me.*

Realising the consequences of actions. A common theme in participants' narratives was clarity around understanding the consequences of one's actions. For Jack, family members who were homeless and had substance misuse issues helped him to understand the reality of his continued behaviour:

*I used to not care...if I got in trouble with the police I tell em to piss off...I had a talk with my mum she said if you carry on doing what you're doing you're gonna turn out like me and I said mum I ain't turning out like you and she went that's what's gonna happen if you carry on being like this...It's just...chucking your life away*

The YJS was often mentioned as a push away from offending. All five participants who had been to court commented that it was 'scary'. Jack described his close shave with prison:

*It was either 9 months referral order and a 250 pound fine or it was a month in prison and I weren't doing that, 9 months go quicker than a month in prison, my mum was in there for 18 months and she said the days felt like weeks.*

Similarly, Max was surprised he did not receive a custodial sentence for his offence:

*I was quite shocked actually when they gave me this one I didn't think I'd get [a referral order] again, I thought I was going to prison to be honest.*

For other participants, like Dave, the threat of prison was enough:

*This judge said if I offend again um if I end up in court again...he will put me in*

*prison...if I do another stupid thing...I would be going straight to prison...I probably won't cope in prison.*

Others commented on the likelihood of being caught if they re-offended, which they had learnt from their experiences of being arrested or convicted. Steve's offence was captured on closed-circuit television monitoring (CCTV) which had led to a realisation of the prevalence of cameras and the likelihood of getting caught offending:

*You cannot get away with anything...the fact that there's so many cameras out there in the UK...so you can't get away with anything...it's better just to call the police on someone so they can get caught not you.*

Similarly, Jack had come to realise that the likelihood of being able to avoid sanctioning if you did something unlawful was slim, and commented that reality was not like the video games he played:

*See it's not like GTA [Grand Theft Auto] and Call of Duty and all them games you go around killing people, robbing people, robbing stuff and all that it's nothing like that... It's not like in the game where if you get the police you hide somewhere you lose em.*

Jack also mentioned how the police were now aware of the tactics he used to lose them in a chase or conceal drugs when he was stopped. Therefore, he saw the likelihood of being caught as high and concluded that 'it's just not worth it'.

Participants mentioned the work they had done with YOT as helping them to understand what would happen if they continued offending. Liam's YOT worker had gone through the difference between the juvenile and adult CJS sanctions which had made him realise, as a recently turned 18 year old, the harsher punishments he could expect if he continued to offend. Alex, who was found in possession of a knife, read case studies with his YOT worker of incidents where fights escalated resulting in a fatal stabbing. He used these cases as a reminder of what could have happened when he was carrying the knife and what may happen if he re-offends.

Steve had previously been a victim of crime himself. The realisation that he had put someone else

through what he had experienced made him appreciate the seriousness of his actions.

## Discussion

The current research supports conceptualisations of desistance as a process. Participants reported feeling tempted to offend and sometimes lapsing into criminal behaviour. Furthermore, no participant described his experience of desistance as a one-off event. Instead, they discussed steps they were taking to behave lawfully. This illustrates the zig-zag and non-linear nature of desistance. Interestingly, the current research also lends support to the subjective view of desistance and its definition. Max had completely stopped offending and

any behaviour he engaged in while offending — for example, using drugs. Whereas, Jack admitted to stealing occasionally, but emphasised that this was not to the extent he had previously stolen, in terms of both the frequency and amount. In this sense, Max's desistance can be seen as a complete termination of activity while Jack's is diminished seriousness and frequency.

The themes identified suggest desistance for these juveniles was similar to rational

choice theories where a conscious reassessment of the advantages and disadvantages of crime takes place due to some sort of shock or an increase in fear of punishment. Most participants mentioned their involvement with the YJS as a prompt to appraise their current offence as a close call with prison or fear further, harsher punishment. Even the participant who had been in custody twice reassessed his behaviour due to the idea of going to an adult prison now he is 18 years old. Overall, participants had begun to see further offending as 'not worth it' (Jack) and came to realise, 'it's all about decision making really and making the right choices' (Liam). This supports findings that adult offenders rationally desist to avoid further perceived harsh punishment. In this way, juvenile desistance appears similar to adults.

All participants mentioned continuous conscious decision-making in order to begin desistance which portrays the juveniles as active agents in their desistance process. The most pertinent example of this was the choice to 'stop hanging around' anti-social peers in favour of pro-social, protective peers. Deliberate decisions were made to avoid situations juveniles were aware could lead to offending which

Participants  
mentioned the  
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often involved creative attempts — for example, creating planned excuses like being grounded. Although it is not surprising that juvenile's stop spending time with deviant peers to stop offending<sup>31</sup>, the present research was unique as it uncovered how juveniles do this instead of simply identifying it as a way to stop offending.

The finding that participants engaged in careful decision-making regarding their offending behaviour contradicts self-control views of criminality. Juvenile's offending is attributed to them being impulsive — meaning that theories of choice and motivation are inapplicable to their desistance<sup>32</sup>. Although participants often referred to their crimes as impulsive, their decision to stop was the opposite, as discussed. Most participants saw their offending as linked to anger and so had taken steps to manage this in other ways, such as through boxing or talking to their YOT worker, to avoid anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, the reference to temptations to offend and occasional lapses into offending demonstrates that opportunities to offend were still present for these juveniles. This would suggest that juveniles are applying self-control and rationality to remain crime-free.

Only one participant's desistance process provided support for Laub and Sampson's theory that life events serve as turning points away from crime<sup>33</sup>. For Max, fatherhood had prompted him to stop offending and maintain his desistance. This lack of emphasis on turning points differs from adult resistance research. As no participants were employed, this illustrates the idea that this theory may not apply to juvenile desistance because of their age meaning they have limited exposure to opportunities for turning points<sup>34</sup>.

With regards to the role that the YJS and YOTs played, this came across in two ways. First, juvenile's experience of the YJS or working with their YOT worker had improved their awareness with regards to consequences either in terms of further punishment, the potential for serious harm or the impact on their future prospects for employment. Second, juveniles valued their YOT worker tailoring interventions to the factors they had identified as needing to change in order to desist — for example, addressing their anger.

This reflects a person-centred and individualised approach to working with juveniles. It is well established that good working relationships enhance engagement<sup>35</sup> and previous research found supportive relationships between YOT staff and juveniles as being important for reducing re-offending<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, the present research suggests that a good therapeutic relationship centred on the juvenile's needs is beneficial for desistance. The themes identified with regards to YOTs support the observation that caseloads are challenging and complex<sup>37</sup> and that, just as desistance has been illustrated to be individual, interventions aimed at addressing offending should be person-centred, holistic and flexible<sup>38</sup>.

While this research shone light on an area previously neglected in the literature and gave juveniles a voice in doing so, it is important to note some limitations. First, despite efforts to build rapport, reinforce confidentiality and adopt an informal approach to interviews, it cannot be overlooked that my presence as an interviewer and researcher may well have influenced responses. It is possible that juveniles over stated their desistance in an effort to present as socially desirable or due to some concern that responses would affect progress on interventions with the YOT. Furthermore, by focusing on juveniles experience to ensure rich data from the target populations perspective is obtained, other opinions as to how they began to desist could have been missed. To address these limitations, future research should include the views of YOT professionals, teachers and parents/carers when considering how juveniles begin to desist and what supports this.

## Final Thoughts

In order to support juvenile desistance in an increasingly complex cohort, we need to understand how the process begins and evolves. By utilising resources effectively in a targeted approach to areas that support desistance as detailed by juveniles themselves, society can prevent future victims and minimise further financial burdens on the criminal justice system.

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# Harm reduction or a catalyst for new harms?

## The impact of smoke-free prison policy on prisoners and the prison regime

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### Introduction

A 2015 Public Health England report identified that the prevalence of smoking among prisoners at the time was roughly four times that of the general population, thereby exposing prison staff, non-smoking prisoners, and visitors to the negative health consequences of second-hand smoke (SHS)<sup>1</sup>. Around the same time, a Ministry of Justice study of SHS in English prisons recommended that NOMS should give consideration to implementing measures for the reduction or elimination of SHS across the prison estate<sup>2</sup>. These concerns around SHS were further supported by a 2016 study of air quality in four English prisons<sup>3</sup>. When compared to non-smoking areas, the levels of airborne particulate matter (a measure of SHS) in smoking areas was between two and nine times higher than the World Health Organisation's recommended daily average. With these studies in mind, it was perhaps inevitable that in 2017 the Ministry of Justice began rolling out a smoke-free prison policy (hereafter referred to as the smoking ban) across England and Wales. By the end of 2017, half of the prisons in England and Wales had implemented the ban, and by the middle of 2018, the ban had been introduced

across all prisons. This article presents the findings from the first piece of qualitative research to be undertaken following the implementation of the smoking ban in England and Wales. It investigates the impact of the ban on prisoners' smoking practices, the changes to the tobacco and synthetic cannabinoid markets, and the implications of these changes for prisoner health and the wider prison regime.

### Background

Prior to 2018, prison smoking bans had already been introduced in Canada<sup>4</sup>, New Zealand<sup>5</sup>, and some US states<sup>6</sup>; often with mixed results. For example, a US study found that over three quarters of prisoners continued to smoke after a ban had been introduced<sup>7</sup>, while in Canada, the smoking ban was reversed following prison riots<sup>8</sup>. However, contrary to media reports of violence and unrest following the introduction of the smoking ban in English prisons<sup>9</sup>, the European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services concluded that there were no incidents in prisons in England and Wales that were a direct result of the smoking ban<sup>10</sup>; a conclusion that was supported by others<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, the evaluation of the Scottish

1. Jones, D. (2015) *Reducing Smoking in Prisons: Management of tobacco use and nicotine withdrawal*. London: Public Health England.
2. Semple, S., Galea, K., Walsh, P. & Tuckett-Jones, B. (2015) *Report on Second-Hand Smoke in Prisons: Final Report*. London: National Offender Management Service.
3. Jayes, L.R., Ratschen, E., Murray, R.L., Dymond-White, S. & Britton, J. (2016) 'Second-hand smoke in four English prisons: an air quality monitoring study', *BMC Public Health*, 16(119), pp. 1-8.
4. Collier, R. (2013) 'Prison smoking bans: clearing the air', *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 185(10), p. 474.
5. Beaglehole, R. & Bonita, R. (2017) 'Eliminating the scourge of tobacco for a fairer and healthier world: New Zealand leads the way', *The Lancet Public Health*, 22(1), pp. 12-13.
6. Cropsey, K.L. & Kristeller, J.L. (2003) 'Motivational factors related to quitting smoking among prisoners during a smoking ban', *Addictive Behaviors*, 28(6), pp. 1081-1093.
7. Cropsey, K. L. & Kristeller, J. L. (2005) 'The effects of a prison smoking ban on smoking behavior and withdrawal symptoms', *Addictive Behaviors*, 30(3), pp. 589-594.
8. McNabola, A. & Gill, L.W. (2009) 'The control of environmental tobacco smoke: a policy review', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 6(2), pp. 741-758.
9. Evans, M. (2017) 'High security prisons on alert after telling inmates they must give up smoking by September', *The Telegraph*, 5 May; Gardner, A. & Warburton, D. (2017) 'Prison trashed in nine-hour riot after cigarette ban - and warders warn of more problems to come', *The Mirror*, 26 August.
10. European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (2018) *Her Majesty's prison estate is now smoke free*. The Hague: Europris.
11. ASH (2018) *Briefing: The implementation of smoke free prisons in England and Wales*. London: Action on Smoking & Health; Robinson, A., Sweeting, H. & Hunt, K. (2018) 'UK news media representations of smoking, smoking policies and tobacco bans in prisons', *Tobacco Control*, 27(6), pp. 1-9; O'Moore, É. (2018) 'Successfully delivering smoke free prisons across England and Wales', *Public Health Matters*, 18 July.



smoking ban found that, following a largely trouble-free implementation, support for the ban increased among both prisoners and staff post implementation<sup>12</sup>. Added to this, studies investigating the health benefits associated with smoking bans in the US and New Zealand found a reduction in the levels of airborne particulate matter of between 50 and 80 per cent<sup>13</sup>.

When it comes to evaluating the introduction of the smoking ban in prisons in England and Wales, there is a dearth of qualitative research exploring the impact of the ban. The two qualitative studies that have investigated the smoking ban were both undertaken prior to the implementation of the ban. The first, by Woodall and Tattersfield<sup>14</sup>, was undertaken in a category-C prison in England. Three focus groups were undertaken with 18 prisoners and 15 staff. This study predicted that the prohibition of smoking would reduce prisoners' repertoire of coping strategies. Indeed, smoking was regarded as an effective coping mechanism to deal with the stresses of prison confinement; by having a calming effect that de-escalated anxiety, and as a means to mitigate the tedium of being locked in cells for extended periods. As such, it was predicted that the ban would lead to the development of a black market in tobacco which, as a consequence of market forces, would increase the cost of tobacco. The second study, by Dugdale and her colleagues<sup>15</sup>, aimed to expand upon the findings of Woodall and Tattersfield by gathering data across four prisons in the north of England. A total of eight focus groups were conducted with 47 prisoners. In line with Woodall and Tattersfield's study, prisoners predicted

I think it [the smoking ban] is good because nobody should have to smell other people's smoke or inhale other people's smoke.

that prices for tobacco products within the prison would increase once the smoking ban was implemented. It was also noted that the potentially extortionate prices that might be charged for tobacco could lead to increased prisoner debt and/or an increased popularity of synthetic cannabinoids, more commonly known as 'Spice'.

Bearing in mind these anticipated problems and issues, it was essential that research be carried out post-smoking ban to explore the impact of the ban on prisoners' smoking practices, the changes in the tobacco and 'Spice' markets, and the implications of these changes for prisoner health and the wider prison regime. Between March and June 2018, 24 semi-structured face-to-face interviews were undertaken in a category-B prison in the north of England that had implemented the smoking ban in late 2017<sup>16</sup>. The interviews were conducted with 11 prisoners and 13 prison staff<sup>17</sup>. In addition to the interviews, two focus groups were undertaken; one with four prison staff, and one with five staff and five prisoners<sup>18</sup>. In total, 16 prisoners and 22 prison staff were included in the research. All the interviews were analysed in NVivo<sup>19</sup> using a template analysis approach<sup>20</sup>

### **The impact of the smoking ban on prisoners' smoking behaviour**

As noted above, contrary to media reports of violence and unrest following the introduction of the smoking ban in English prisons<sup>21</sup>, there were no incidents in prisons in England and Wales that were a

12. Sweeting, H., Demou, E., Brown, A. & Hunt, K. (2020) 'Prisoners and prison staff express increased support for prison smoking bans following implementation across Scotland: results from the Tobacco In Prisons study'. *Tobacco Control*.
13. Hammond, S.K. & Emmons, K.M. (2005) 'Inmate exposure to secondhand smoke in correctional facilities and the impact of smoking restrictions', *Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology*, 15(3), pp. 205-211; Proescholdbell, S.K., Foley, K.L., Johnson, J. & Malek, S.H. (2008) 'Indoor air quality in prisons before and after implementation of a smoking ban law', *Tobacco Control*, 17(2), pp. 123-127; Thornley, S., Dirks, K.N., Edwards, R., Woodward, A. & Marshall, R. (2012) 'Indoor air pollution levels were halved as a result of a national tobacco ban in a New Zealand prison', *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, 15(2), pp. 343-347.
14. Woodall, J. & Tattersfield, A. (2018) 'Perspectives on implementing smoke-free prison policies in England and Wales', *Health Promotion International*, 33, pp. 1066-1073.
15. Dugdale, S., Semper, H., Povey, R., Elison-Davies, S., Davies, G. & Ward, J. (2019) 'Offenders' perceptions of the UK prison smoking ban', *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPH-06-2018-0034>
16. Ethical approval for the project was granted by Manchester Metropolitan University's Faculty Research and Ethics Governance Committee (February 2018, reference A&H1718-44).
17. The staff that were interviewed included operational staff, recovery workers, programme staff, offender management unit staff, gym staff, nurses from the Integrated Substance Misuse Service (ISMS), and visits staff.
18. All of the interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and fully transcribed.
19. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software package.
20. Brooks, J. & King, N. (2014) *Doing template analysis: Evaluating an end-of-life care service*. SAGE Research Methods Cases.
21. Evans, M. (2017) op cit.; Gardner, A. & Warburton, D. (2017) op cit.



direct result of the smoking ban<sup>22</sup>. Indeed, as was the case in Scotland<sup>23</sup>, this study found support for the ban among both prisoners and staff.

*I think it [the smoking ban] is good because nobody should have to smell other people's smoke or inhale other people's smoke. If you don't smoke, you shouldn't have to breathe in somebody else's smoke. (Prisoner)*

*The smoking ban's a good thing. ... There's a lot of people that we're working with that say they want to stop smoking. ... I think that it [the ban] helps them with this. (Recovery Worker)*

Furthermore, while this qualitative study was not able to assess the impact of the smoking ban on SHS, bearing in mind the steep reduction in the levels of airborne particulate matter found in the US and New Zealand<sup>24</sup>, it is highly likely that the smoking ban will have reduced the problem of SHS within prisons in England and Wales. However, despite these positive outcomes, as was the case in the US<sup>25</sup>, prisoners in our study reported continuing to smoke following the implementation of the ban; albeit not tobacco. In line with the findings from Scotland<sup>26</sup>, our study found that the ban led to prisoners smoking alternatives, such as tea. Indeed in Australia, not only did prisoners start smoking 'teabacco', but they used it to smoke nicotine patches that had been made available as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) following the introduction of a smoking ban<sup>27</sup>. The abuse of NRT had already been identified during the piloting phase of the smoking ban in England and Wales, with prisoners in HMP Cardiff found to be smoking NRT with tea leaves post-ban<sup>28</sup>.

*If you want to sit and still smoke, you will. People smoke [nicotine] patches. They put it [the patch] on a cup of hot water and peel it off — it takes the back of the strip off. They pull that part up, ... take the teabag and a bit*

*of [paper from a] bible, roll that, smoke that. It [the smoking ban] has not stopped people smoking. OK, it stops them smoking tobacco [but] it's not stopped anyone smoking. (Prisoner)*

### The impact of the smoking ban on the tobacco market in prisons

For those prisoners still wanting to smoke tobacco, the smoking ban has resulted in the creation of a black market for tobacco; something that was foreseen in research undertaken prior to the implementation of the ban. For example, in Woodall and Tattersfield's study<sup>29</sup>, both staff and prisoners predicted that a black market for tobacco would be created as a result of the smoking ban, with the cost of tobacco expected to increase because of high demand and low supply; views that were echoed in Dugdale et al.'s larger study<sup>30</sup>. What was not anticipated, however, was the sheer size of the increase. Our study found a small 30g pouch of rolling tobacco to be worth around £500.

*Because of the tobacco thing [the smoking ban], it's £500 for an ounce of burn, which costs a tanner out there [in the community]. (Prisoner)*

*Tobacco's very expensive. You're probably talking around £25, £30 for just a single roll-up. A lot of people just can't afford it [tobacco]. (Recovery Worker)*

*It [the smoking ban] has pushed tobacco underground and now people are paying out of their fucking ears for a roll-up. (Prisoner)*

The current extortionate price of tobacco has implications for prisoners in terms of debt. As Woodall and Tattersfield found, both staff and prisoners forecast a ban resulting in increased loaning of tobacco with an expectation of 'paying back' with high interest<sup>31</sup>. Similarly, the prisoners in Dugdale et al.'s study<sup>32</sup>

22. ASH (2018) op cit.; European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (2018) op cit.; O'Moore (2018) op cit.; Robinson et al. (2018) op cit.

23. Sweeting et al. (2020) op cit.

24. Hammond & Emmons (2005) op cit. Proescholdbell et al. (2008) op cit.; Thornley et al. (2012) op cit.

25. Cropsey & Kristeller (2005) op cit.

26. Brown, A., Sweeting, H., Logan, G., Demou, E. & Hunt, K. (2018) 'Prison Staff and Prisoner Views on a Prison Smoking Ban: Evidence From the Tobacco in Prisons Study', *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 21(8), pp. 1027-1035.

27. Puljevi, C., Coomber, R., Kinner, S. A., de Andrade, D., Mitchell, C., White, A., Cresswell, S. L. & Bowman, J. (2018) 'Teabacco': Smoking of nicotine-infused tea as an unintended consequence of prison smoking bans', *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 37(7), pp. 912-921.

28. Independent Monitoring Board (2018a) *Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Cardiff: 1st September 2016 - 31st August 2017*. Cardiff: The Independent Monitoring Board.

29. Woodall & Tattersfield (2018) op cit.

30. Dugdale et al. (2019) op cit.

31. Woodall & Tattersfield (2018) op cit.

32. Dugdale et al. (2019) op cit.

predicted that the high cost of tobacco following the ban would lead to increased prisoner debt. These concerns appear to have been realised with both prisoners and staff in our study reporting increased prisoner debt and an escalation in the problems associated with it.

*By taking tobacco away they've made things worse. It's another opening for cons to make money, another element of bullying coming in, and all the rest of it. (Prisoner)*

*The tobacco price is spiralling out of control. There are people getting so debted-up now just for a little bit of burn. (Recovery Worker)*

### **The impact of the smoking ban on the use of 'Spice' in prisons**

In 2015, a thematic review by HM Inspectorate of Prisons identified how 'Spice' was becoming ever more prevalent in prisons<sup>33</sup>. Around the same time, reports from both the Centre for Social Justice<sup>34</sup> and HM Inspectorate of Prisons<sup>35</sup> concluded that a smoking ban would reduce the potential for the smoking of 'Spice', thereby decreasing its overall use. This does not appear to have been the case, with the HM Inspectorate of Prisons annual report for 2018-19 noting that the use of 'Spice' continues to remain a 'major problem'<sup>36</sup>. While this qualitative study was not able to quantitatively measure the extent of the displacement from tobacco use to 'Spice' use, many of the staff and prisoners in our study reported that the smoking ban had led to an increase in the number of prisoners using 'Spice'; something that had already been identified during the piloting phase of the smoking ban in England and Wales<sup>37</sup>.

*Since the smoking ban was introduced we have had quite a rise in NPS [Spice] usage. The price of tobacco has pushed it more towards NPS [Spice]. (Recovery Worker)*

*It [tobacco] is more expensive than drugs. It [the smoking ban] has caused a bigger problem than what was already there. ... People are using more Spice because it's cheaper than tobacco. (Prisoner)*

*You can't be paying £500 for a pouch of tobacco. So, it just takes people to Spice. (Prisoner)*

## **The extortionate price of tobacco and the comparative low cost of paper-based 'Spice' are both significant drivers when it comes to accounting for the shift from tobacco to 'Spice'**

At the time of our study, the dominant method of smuggling 'Spice' into the prison had shifted from 'Spice' being brought in on inert plant matter<sup>38</sup>, to 'Spice' entering the prison sprayed on or soaked into paper. The prisoners in our study frequently talked about paper-based 'Spice' and the resulting market. For example, it was described to us that an A4-sized piece of paper that had been soaked or sprayed with 'Spice' would then be cut into individual ID-card sized pieces that sold for around £25 each. Bearing in mind the cost of

a single roll-up of tobacco post-ban being £25 to £30, it was evident that paper-based 'Spice' had become much better value for money than tobacco.

*[INT: How many hits would you get out of an ID card size?] You should get twenty something spliffs. (Prisoner)*

While the extortionate price of tobacco and the comparative low cost of paper-based 'Spice' are both significant drivers when it comes to accounting for the shift from tobacco to 'Spice', we would argue that

33. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *Changing patterns of substance misuse in adult prisons and service responses. A thematic review*. London (UK): Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.
34. The Centre for Social Justice (2015) *Drugs in Prison*. London: The Centre for Social Justice.
35. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *Changing patterns of substance misuse in adult prisons and services responses: A thematic review*. London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons.
36. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2019) HM chief inspector of prisons for England and Wales: annual report 2018-19. London (UK): Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, p.25.
37. Independent Monitoring Board (2016) *HMP Dartmoor Annual Report 2016: 1 October 2015 - 30 September 2016*. London: The Independent Monitoring Board; Independent Monitoring Board (2018a) op cit.
38. Ralphs, R., Williams, L., Askew, R. & Norton, A. (2017) 'Adding Spice to the Porridge: The development of a synthetic cannabinoid market in an English prison', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 40(2017), pp. 57-69.

another significant driver is the functional purpose served by 'Spice'. Previous research found that smoking helped prisoners manage stress, de-escalate anxiety, and alleviate boredom; especially when locked in their cells for extended periods of time<sup>39</sup>. With tobacco now unaffordable to many prisoners, 'Spice' has become the obvious replacement. For example, in line with recent research investigating the use of 'Spice' in prisons<sup>40</sup>, the prisoners in our study identified the ability of 'Spice' to 'release pressure', 'kill time' and 'reduce boredom' as primary motivators for use.

*Being banged up 23 hours a day, you're lucky if you get an hour here and there for association. You've got all these pressures ... and how are you going to release that pressure? Spice. (Prisoner)*

*It [Spice] makes time fly. It's a time killer. It can be a Monday morning ... [and] before you know what day of the week it is, it's Wednesday. (Prisoner)*

*It [Spice] takes you away from the boredom. ... We are constantly banged up, there is hardly any association [and] obviously we are missing our family. (Prisoner)*

### **The impact of the smoking ban on prisoner health and prison regimes**

Following the implementation of the smoking ban in England and Wales, nicotine patches and e-cigarettes were made available to all prisoners as part of NRT. Indeed, the evaluation of the Scottish smoking ban identified e-cigarettes as being central to making the smoking ban a success<sup>41</sup>. While some of the prisoners in our study chose to smoke their nicotine patches with 'teabacco', smoking paper-based 'Spice' with

'teabacco' appeared to be less popular. Instead, and in line with recent research<sup>42</sup>, our study found that prisoners preferred to use their e-cigarettes to vape paper-based 'Spice'.

*[INT: Following the smoking ban, how are people now smoking Spice?] They've got the vapes. People snap the top off the capsules and then the element just heats up so they just put it [a piece of paper-based Spice] on that. (Prisoner)*

*The element [on the vape pens] is about that big [half a centimetre square]. So, all you need to do, you snap the top bit off that, put a tiny bit of paper [Spice] over that [and] that's one hit. (Recovery Worker)*

However, as a result of prisoners vaping paper-based 'Spice' rather than diluting it with tobacco in a 'joint', they are now getting a much more concentrated 'hit'. This shift towards taking 'Spice' on its own is contrary to clinical guidance provided by NEPTUNE<sup>43</sup> which clearly states that 'synthetic cannabinoids should not be taken on their own, but always with a 'mixer' (e.g. tobacco or dried herbs)'. In line with the HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2017-18 annual report<sup>44</sup>, and Independent Monitoring Board reports from HMP Dartmoor<sup>45</sup> and HMP Leicester<sup>46</sup>, both prisoners and staff in our study reported witnessing an increase in 'Spice'-related emergencies as a direct result of the smoking ban and the subsequent vaping of paper-based 'Spice'.

*Since the smoking ban, people aren't putting little sprinkles [of Spice] in a joint. [Instead] you're getting an instant hit. It's destroying people. You're seeing a lot more Spice attacks. (Prisoner)*

*You're now getting a stronger dose in one big blast so it's a lot more dangerous. It's more*

39. Woodall & Tattersfield (2018) op cit.; Butler, T., Richmond, R., Belcher, J., Wilhelm, K. & Wodak, A. (2007) 'Should smoking be banned in prisons?', *Tobacco Control*, 16(5), pp. 291-293; Richmond, R., Butler, T., Wilhelm, K., Wodak, A., Cunningham, M. & Anderson, I. (2009) 'Tobacco in prisons: a focus group study', *Tobacco Control*, 18(3), pp. 176-182.

40. McBride, G. (2016) *High Stakes: An Inquiry into the Drugs Crisis in English Prisons*. London: Volteface publications; User Voice (2016) Spice: The bird killer - what prisoners think about the use of spice and other legal highs in prison, <http://www.uservoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/User-Voice-Spice-The-Bird-Killer-Report-Low-Res.pdf>; Ralphs et al. (2017) op cit.

41. Brown et al. (2018) op cit.

42. Norman, C., Walker, G., McKirdy, B., McDonald, C., Fletcher, D., Antonides, L.H., Sutcliffe, O.B., Nic Daéid, N. & McKenzie, C. (2020) 'Detection and quantitation of synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists in infused papers from prisons in a constantly evolving illicit market', *Drug Testing and Analysis*, 2020(12), pp. 538-554.

43. Abdulrahim, D. and Bowden-Jones, O. (2016) *Harms of Synthetic Cannabinoid Receptor Agonists (SCRAs) and Their Management*. NEPTUNE, Novel Psychoactive Treatment UK Network, p. 10.

44. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2018) HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales: Annual Report 2017-18. London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

45. Independent Monitoring Board (2016) op cit.

46. Independent Monitoring Board (2018b) *Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leicester: 1st February 2017-31st January 2018*. London: The Independent Monitoring Board.

*risky now than it was before [the introduction of the smoking ban]. (Recovery Worker)*

*Because they're not mixing it [Spice] with tobacco ... it's sending them under a lot more than it used to [before the introduction of the smoking ban]. (Operational Staff)*

While 'Spice'-related medical emergencies are obviously detrimental to those directly involved, the increase in emergencies is also having a profound negative impact on both prison staff and the wider prison regime. For example, when the staff and prisoners in our study were asked whether they felt the smoking ban had made a difference to the prison's regime, respondents highlighted a range of issues, such as staff being occupied dealing with emergencies, staff safety, the drain on prison resources, and a lack of association for prisoners.

*The rise in NPS [Spice] has a massive impact on a daily basis because it ties so many staff up for hours on end. ... It can range from two or three to 16 or 17 incidents per day, which has a massive impact on the staff; dealing with situations and the related paperwork. (Recovery Worker)*

*It [the smoking ban] is having a major effect on staffing levels in the prison because, you know, you might have two or three ambulances going out because someone's gone under the influence of Spice. The knock-on effect is that could be two or three members of staff that are having to go with that person. So, for example, if you've got six members of staff going out, then you're six members of staff down in the prison, so then you might have to cut wings down from three staff to two staff which is affecting staff safety. (Programme Staff)*

*It [Spice-related emergencies] is not a one-off fucking thing anymore. It's continuous. The drain I've seen on resources. They haven't got the staff for it. They're having to pull them off everything else to go and fucking manage it. (Prisoner)*

*Because they haven't got the staff, they're banging us [up] a lot more. ... Last time I was here [serving a sentence in this prison], I don't ever recall being locked up on association night. Now it's every couple of nights a week, every weekend, doors locked. (Prisoner)*

## Discussion

This article has highlighted how the introduction of a smoking ban in England and Wales has impacted upon prisoners' smoking behaviours, but not necessarily in ways that reduce harm. While the ban will undoubtedly reduce the problem of SHS within prisons in England and Wales, there have been a number of unintended (but not unanticipated) negative consequences of the smoking ban. This research found that many prisoners have simply shifted from smoking tobacco to smoking 'teabacco' with 'deconstructed' nicotine patches. Alongside this, the ban has resulted in the creation of a black market with tobacco now unaffordable to the vast majority of prisoners. The increased price of tobacco has resulted in increasing numbers of prisoners using paper-based 'Spice'; partly because of its low price (when compared to tobacco), and partly because of its ability to serve the same functional purpose as tobacco (e.g. to 'release pressure', 'kill time' and 'reduce boredom'). However, the use of e-cigarettes to vape paper-based 'Spice' has led to an increase in 'Spice'-related medical emergencies, which have in turn had a detrimental impact on prison regimes; primarily in terms of the increased demand on staff and resources, and the resulting restrictions placed on prisoner association.

It is important to note that restrictions on association cannot be attributed solely to the smoking ban. For example, prior to the implementation of the ban, the Ministry of Justice identified that prisoners needed to 'spend more time on purposeful activity and less time in their cells'<sup>47</sup>, and the Chief Inspector of Prisons found that 'half of the prisons ... inspected had too few activity places for their populations' and 'in many cases' prisoners were spending up to 22 hours a day locked in their cells<sup>48</sup>. The introduction of the ban and the resulting increase in 'Spice'-related medical emergencies has, however, exacerbated this problem, making it increasingly difficult for an 'already strained prison system'<sup>49</sup> to deliver what the Ministry of Justice term 'full and purposeful regimes'<sup>50</sup>: an issue that has

47. Ministry of Justice (2016) *Prison Safety and Reform*. London: Ministry of Justice. p.7.

48. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2018) op cit. p.8.

49. Vandam, L., Borle, P., Montanari, L., Surmont, T., Pirona, A., Hedrich, D., Gallegos, A., Singleton, N., Mounteney, J. & Griffiths, P. (2018) *New psychoactive substances in prison*. Luxembourg: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. p.12.

50. Ministry of Justice (2016) op cit. p.41.

been intensified by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions<sup>51</sup>.

While the 2019 Prison Drugs Strategy acknowledges that the demand for 'Spice' in prison could be reduced through the provision of 'positive and productive activities'<sup>52</sup>, the challenge facing many prisons is finding the staff and/or resources to deliver such activities. Yet this is a challenge that needs to be tackled. For example, the prisoners in a 2009 Australian study wanted substitute behavioural activities to reduce the stress and boredom of not smoking<sup>53</sup>, while prisoners in Dugdale et al.'s 2019 English study stated that more exercise equipment and options for additional television channels would reduce the boredom which triggered their smoking behaviour<sup>54</sup>. It is telling that the successful implementation of a prison smoking ban in New Zealand in 2011 was attributed to, not only comprehensive smoking cessation services, but also an increase in available activities for prisoners, including exercise initiatives, cultural activities and art classes<sup>55</sup>.

Although an increase in positive and productive activities is desirable, the lack of available staff and/or resources to deliver such activities — combined with the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions<sup>56</sup> — means that (in

the short-term at least) these activities are unlikely to be deliverable. Bearing in mind these constraints in relation to reducing the demand for 'Spice', we propose the focus should be on the remaining two aims of the 2019 Prison Drugs Strategy: restricting supply and supporting prisoners' recovery<sup>57</sup>. In relation to the former, despite the recent HM Chief Inspector of Prisons annual report identifying frequent 'failings in the strategic management of security and drug supply reduction', a number of prisons are making effective use of technology to identify and prevent the trafficking of 'Spice' and other drugs (including machines that scan mail, and the introduction of body scanners)<sup>58</sup>. It is clear that there is best practice to be shared when it comes to reducing the supply of 'Spice'. In relation to the latter, bearing in mind the 'obvious linkage between excessive time locked in cells and mental health issues, self-harm and drug abuse'<sup>59</sup>, it is unsurprising that there is a 'high demand' for mental health and substance use treatment services<sup>60</sup>. For those prisons facing the challenges related to the use of 'Spice', it is imperative that prisoners have adequate access to mental health assessments and treatment. Furthermore, it is crucial that prison drug strategies include a tailored treatment response to 'Spice'.

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51. UK Parliament (2020) *Coronavirus (Covid-19): The impact on prisons*. [https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmjust/299/29905.htm#\\_idTextAnchor006](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmjust/299/29905.htm#_idTextAnchor006); HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2020) HM chief inspector of prisons for England and Wales: annual report 2019–20. London (UK): Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.
  52. HM Prison & Probation Service (2019) *Prison Drugs Strategy*. London: Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. p.3.
  53. Richmond et al. (2009) op cit.
  54. Dugdale et al. (2019) op cit.
  55. Collinson, L., Wilson, N., Edwards, R., Thomson, G. & Thornley, S. (2012) 'New Zealand's smokefree prison policy appears to be working well: One year on', *Journal of the New Zealand Medical Association*, 125, pp. 164-168.
  56. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2020) op cit.
  57. HM Prison & Probation Service (2019) op cit.
  58. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2020) op cit. p.37.
  59. Ibid. p.15.
  60. Ibid. p.46.



# Reviews

## Book Review

### **Prison: A Survival Guide**

By Carl Cattermole

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(paperback)

Price: £8.99 (paperback)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Boris Johnson promoted a “serious about fighting crime” narrative, and simultaneously the expansion of the penal system.<sup>1</sup> Calls to expand the carceral web have since intensified during the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> These approaches often appeal to those who have been programmed to uncritically accept the penal equation “crime plus responsibility equals punishment”.<sup>3</sup> However, as Carl Cattermole illustrates in his book, *Prison: A Survival Guide*, these accounts often erase the multi-layered suffering endured by people within these institutional settings and lack any practical guidance for anyone faced with a “stretch” (p. 181).

*Prison: A Survival Guide* is a raw, comprehensive, and accessible four-part guide to navigating and surviving one of the core symbols of the carceral nation: the prison. The author, Carl Cattermole who was formerly incarcerated, re-positions lived experience to the centre of contemporary penal discourse. His text responds to the need to equip those currently inhabiting the penal system in Britain with a practical and critical account of incarceration that is formed in light of his lived knowledge of incarceration, which presents as a kind of penal literacy. These insights are interspersed with a range of perspectives from the experts such as formerly and

presently incarcerated people, combined with reflections from family members whose loved ones are currently incarcerated. Cattermole resists the parameters of more traditional penal discourse by injecting reality back into the centre of the conversation. In doing so, he unceremoniously unveils “what the prison really is: a mix of technical legal systematic bullshit mixed with emotions that are really hard to understand” (p. 12). This is a sombre, yet witty account of penal survival. Fundamental to Cattermole’s book, is his appeal to the reader to progress the conversation beyond sorrow and dismay and into “proactive action” (p. 176).

In Part 1 of the book, titled “The Basics”, Cattermole provides the reader with a 101 on the day-to-day; covering areas such as day one, relationships with cellmates, staff, race, and religion, food, and the Incentive Earned Privileges system (IEP). In this section, the author details “nicking”—the process whereby insiders are subject to the internal penal adjudication process for minor charges (p. 39). Importantly, he highlights incarcerated people’s lack of access to legal aid to support them in manoeuvring this process. This scarce access to justice arises despite the detrimental impact of a potential guilty verdict on people’s liberty, and as Cattermole highlights earlier on in the text, the reality that the collective literacy age of around half of all incarcerated people is 11 years old (p. 40, p. 10). Cattermole sheds important light on many of the underdiscussed fundamentals of life in the penal system in Britain.

In Part 2 of the book, “Taking Care of Yourself”, Cattermole discusses health, sex, drugs, alcohol,

art, education, and even tattoos within the prison. Here, Cattermole passes the mic to his friends—Julia Howard, Lisa Selby, Darcey Hartley, Jon Gulliver, Sarah Jane Baker—to provide a multidimensional insight into incarceration in terms of sexual intimacy, parenthood in prison, having a partner in prison, being an incarcerated child, and gender identity on the inside. Sarah Jane Baker’s account on being LGBTQ+ in prison is particularly effective in highlighting both the increased contemporary focus on incarcerated transgender women and the comparative neglect of transgender men in the penal system. Meanwhile, Julia Howard discusses the difficulties of caring for children in prison and the strength she derived from regular contact with her children (p. 120–125). She highlights the work by Birth Companions who support pregnant women and new mothers who are incarcerated. All of these rich insights enhance the diverse and universal reach of this book.

In Part 3 of the book, “What’s Next?”, Cattermole looks to the future and “returning to the real world” post-incarceration. As part of his suggestions to transform the mainstream acceptance of incarceration, he compels the reader to examine the underlying meaning of the language used by the Ministry of Justice, the media and MPs on all sides of politics. He questions “what is a ‘reform’ if it really means building a USA-style private ‘super prison’ over the hills and far away” (p. 176). As part of these smaller steps to proactive action, Cattermole also emphasises the importance of establishing community and for us all to be engaging with a variety of networks on the pathway to transformative change (p.178). By

1. “PM to create 10,000 new prison places and extend stop-and-search”, BBC News, last modified August 19th, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49309112>.

2. See: Adams, Felicity and Emmerich, Fabienne. 2021. ‘Caring, not carceral expansion!’ Punishment, Prisons and Detention EG Working Group Newsletter, European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control, March 2021 Issue 13, pp1–4.

3. Norrie, Alan. 1996. The Finding of Fault in the Criminal Law. *The Modern Law Review*. 59: 540–556.

urging the reader to interrogate seemingly progressive “reformist” approaches and by reinforcing the value of community in the context of the prison estate in Britain, Cattermole develops the abolitionist terrain established by the likes of Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson-Gilmore.

Subsequently, in Part 4 of the book: “Resources” Cattermole shifts his focus to actualising these smaller, yet transformative future steps. Initially he does this by sharing a valuable set of contacts to support currently and formerly incarcerated people who are engaged with the criminal legal system at various stages. These include (to name but a few) the Bent Bars Project, a letter-writing project which provides support to LGBTQ+ incarcerated people; The Empty Cages Collective, a small anarchist group dedicated to ending oppression in all forms who have engaged with the prison system in varying capacities; and Community Action on Prison Expansion (CAPE), a collective of grassroots coalitions opposing prison expansion across England, Wales and Scotland.

The author contributes to a growing and diverse body of scholarship within the criminological and socio-legal research terrain by centring lived-experience accounts of incarceration. Cattermole and the recent additions by scholars such as Baker (2017) and Sanchez (2019) aim to “bring readers into the lived reality of our prison system – its effects, its contradictions, and its failure to rehabilitate offenders or promote public safety”.<sup>4</sup> By bringing together a range of traditionally marginalised discourses about incarceration, *Prison: A Survival Guide* constitutes a rich and distinct addition to this contemporary research landscape. Cattermole provides a valuable critique of the penal system in Britain that is underpinned by an abolitionist

spirit in tandem with a penal survival praxis, which is primarily designed to support presently and formerly incarcerated people in navigating the penal system. As such, the book constitutes a refreshing, trustworthy and supportive ally for those faced with a prison sentence, or for those with loved ones who are engaged with the penal system.

By setting the record straight on the multitude of reductive and click-bait media narratives of incarceration, Cattermole ensures that the value of the text extends beyond those directly engaged with the criminal legal system. Within his account, he turns his attention to a different, but an interconnected cog in the carceral system – the court system. He persuasively advocates an avenue for further research: *Court: A Survival Guide* (p. 3). Fundamentally, Cattermole’s considered combination of varying forms of knowledge equips the reader with a deeper appreciation of the complexity of incarceration, and as such the text is a vital source for all. Simultaneously, the book prompts readers from all backgrounds to confront the violence of the carceral state and to search for alternatives in an increasingly punitive age punctuated by loss, suffering, and violence.

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### **The Prison Doctor**

By Angela Brown

Publisher: HQ (an imprint of Harper Collins) 2019

ISBN:978-0-00-831144-5

Price: £8.99 (Paperback).

For many years, literature on prison health care was relatively sparse and under former Home Office policy, was generally shrouded in secrecy and

discouraged. An exception was the pseudonymous Dr Theodore Dalrymple whose unhelpful, jaundiced view of prisoners frequently appeared in sections of the press. Vivien Stern, in *Bricks of Shame*<sup>1</sup>, records a prison doctor being rebuked for writing about prison hygiene in *The Times*. External access to the then *Prison Medical Journal* was denied. When Professor Joe Sim published his *Medical Power in Prisons*<sup>2</sup> he noted that research in this area had often led to litigation against individuals and he had needed to pass his drafts to lawyers as a safeguard.

Secrecy led to suspicion of poor quality medical provision in prisons and indeed, there was evidence to support this. There were, of course, doctors, nurses and hospital officers (roughly the equivalent to medical orderlies in the military) who were models of professional practice. It was Dr Shan Biswas who, in the 1990s, advocated the founding of a College of Prison Medicine to recognise the unique nature of medical practice within prisons and to share best practice with colleagues. Thankfully matters are different today and the Royal College of General Practitioners Secure Environment Group has taken Biswas’s aspirations perhaps further than he could have hoped. Since the abolition of the inward-looking, self-protecting Prison Medical Service, there has been the opportunity for prison doctors and nurses to contribute to the public debate. Dr Angela Brown’s book is a welcome addition to the field.

Not being an academic text, nor pretending to be, she charts her career from being a GP in a comfortable Buckinghamshire practice through prison doctoring at HMP Huntercombe, Wormwood Scrubs and Bronzefield. She left 20

4. Sanchez, Angel E. 2019. In Spite of Prison: Developments in the Law. Harvard Law Review 132: 1650-1683

1. Stern, V. (1993) *Bricks of shame: Britain's prisons* London: Penguin

2. Sim, J. (1990) *Medical power in prisons: Prison medical service in England 1774-1988* London: McGraw Hill

years of general practice in the face of NHS reforms that she feared would change her personal holistic, almost pastoral, approach to her job, in favour of tick boxes. But why prisons? An article she wrote for *Pulse* magazine, explaining her departure, attracted Prison Service attention and she was invited to apply. HMP Huntercombe presented her with a challenge and she believed that, though a different sort of medical environment, she might just make a difference.

She rapidly discovered that the reasons for seeking medical help were not always straightforward. How could she have suspected, from general practice, that repeated complaints about patients' painful feet were attempts to be 'prescribed' their own shoes? Many appointments were attempts to cajole her into prescribing extra drugs. Angela Burns soon became attuned to these manipulations. After five years and amidst rumours of closure, she left to face a qualitatively different challenge at HMP Wormwood Scrubs. And what a challenge it was. Suicides, attempted suicides, hostage taking, serious life threatening and disfiguring assaults, accompanied by intractable problems of rats and cockroaches. Dr Brown paints a vivid picture of a health care regime just about managing to get by. She emphasises the necessity for and general success of teamwork within the health care function and beyond and the reliance of staff, of all grades, to look to each other for mutual support. They were all part of the same family. Strangely, amidst the mayhem of daily life, she found appearing in Coroners' Courts one of her more stressful duties.

Amanda Brown's sympathy for the plight of many of her patients shines through but her compassion never obscures objectivity or

professionalism. It must have been a shock to be required to work alongside a locum doctor described as a bully who treated prisoners with contempt. He lasted only a few months but there is a clear warning as to the care needed in recruiting people for a job calling for endless patience and sensitivity. There are one or two nods to a dynamic many readers will find familiar: the sometimes prickly relationship between Security and Health Care. How can a hospital escort be provided at the weekend when staffing is cut to the bone? How to explain to the prisoner with the hospital appointment that because his escort arrived late, he can't be seen for another six weeks? She describes sometimes having to fight to get prisoners transferred to hospital at all.

It was at Wormwood Scrubs that Dr Brown started to feel disaffected from her social life in Buckinghamshire where her friends' first world problems seemed so remote from her daily experience. She found her values changing. As elsewhere, she credits her husband for his unfailing support. The impact of prison work upon family members often goes unrecognised and it is pleasing to see her crediting her family here. One senses that after her time at Scrubs, Dr Brown was simply becoming exhausted. She was given the opportunity of transferring to HMP Bronzfield, working a three-day week and her first experience of female prisoner patients. Amanda Brown's account of her work in the two previous establishments is permeated with pen pictures of many of the prisoners and staff she encountered. The Bronzfield section is almost entirely that. Again, for the general reader, this provides a vivid account of some of the tragic backstories and also those not so tragic. Drugs, childhood abuse, domestic abuse,

prostitution on the one hand and the glamorous lifestyle of being married to a Mafioso on the other. Often, as at Scrubs, she finds that it is not just the delivery of health care that is important to the prisoner but little things like not being judged and, whether strictly ethical or not, the occasional hug.

Her book's one shortcoming is nevertheless likely to appeal to the general reader. Much of the action is telescoped. Seven years at the Scrubs is condensed into 138 pages and thus drama appears to characterise of almost every minute. Likewise, she makes frequent reference to various notorious prisoners, perhaps for effect but not because they have been her patients. The book might also have benefited from rather more careful editing. Why an introduction with a graphic account of a woman giving birth to a child alone in a cell at Bronzfield? Dr Brown was called to the emergency and the child survived (unlike a similar case at the prison under investigation as I write<sup>3</sup>). Questions as to the adequacy of pre-natal medical care might have been addressed. We learn that, at Wormwood Scrubs, Dr Brown is 'no longer intimidated by prison officers, whatever their rank' but on the following page she says that she is. Further, Huntercombe is described as holding 15-18 year olds, 18-21 year olds and also an escapee from a maximum security prison. Unlikely.

The book will give the general reader a rare insight into the perhaps arcane world of prison medicine. When leaving her treatment room, one prisoner announced 'You've got a good heart, Dr Brown.' This is quite clear from her book.

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3. See BBC News (04 October 2019) *HMP Bronzfield: Newborn baby dies at women's prison* available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-surrey-49935191> accessed on 08 June 2020

## Black Women Prison Employees: The Intersectionality of Gender and Race

By Marcia Morgan

Publisher: Edwin Mellen Press (2018)

ISBN: 978-1495507083

Price: \$199.99

Criminal justice worker and academic Marcia Morgan, has produced a powerful book that illuminates the experiences of Black women working in the prison system in England and Wales. Much of the research on prison staff focusses on the experience of the predominant group — white men<sup>1</sup>. While some attention has been directed towards the experience of women<sup>2</sup> and staff from minority ethnic groups<sup>3</sup>, the novelty of Morgan's work is that it focusses on the intersection of race and gender. In total, seventeen Black women took part in the study, covering a range of roles and also encompassing public and privately-run prisons, and headquarters.

Morgan's book attempts to use the stories of Black and Asian women working in prison services and offers:

*...an invitation to those who do not know what it feels like to be a black woman located on the margins of their organisation because of gender and racial inequality. [it is] an opportunity to see through the lens of this group of employees and walk their footsteps through their challenges and experiences.*

The book uses the experience of these women as an guide to

exploring crucial aspects on their experiences including: the process in which Black women are acculturated into the world of prison employee; the participants' perception of themselves and their relationship dynamics with others within the organisation; the participants' negotiation of the organisational dynamics, and; the mobilisation and impact of psychosocial defenses on Black women. The analysis draws heavily upon both psychodynamic approaches to understanding organizational and individual behavior, and critical race theory.

The interviews with these women show that they often feel that they are an 'outsider within', not fully accepted by their peers and often experiencing discomfort with the organizational culture. Morgan describes a culture of suspicion and mistrust in prisons, which is often directed towards 'suspect' groups, including particular racial and ethnic groups. She describes that prisons are dominated by a white masculine culture in which the presence of Black women professionals is disruptive. Examples of how this played out included the mistrust directed towards one interviewee when she communicated in a different language with a prisoner. A further example was where one interviewee witnessed inappropriate use of force, which she considered to be racially motivated. The subsequent investigation not only concluded that the allegation was not proven but recommended that the complainant received further training. Such events caused some Black women to feel pressured into assimilating and remaining passive in the face of situations and actions that they felt uncomfortable about. Organisational attempts to transform

the institution, for example through the appointment of diversity managers, Morgan describes, are often ineffective as these posts are located on the margins of organisational power structures, with the post holders possessing neither race and gender privilege nor positional status.

One fascinating element of Morgan's study is to describe how some, including herself, masked their vulnerability and projected a façade of the 'Strong Black Woman' (SBW). The characteristics of this identity included self-reliance; independence; strength; assertiveness, and; perseverance. Morgan describes that this identity is deeply rooted in social and historic response to persecution, marginalisation and adversity. The SBW identity is interwoven through Black women's psychosocial experience, that is, the preoccupation of always being battle-ready to overcome personal challenges, as well as having the strength to support others through their battles. This highlights the complex inner world and external relationships Black women encounter within the workplace, a space that is sometimes experienced as a hostile environment.

Although Morgan's book is written in a gentle and empathic way, drawing upon the real experiences of people, the messages it carries are hard hitting. This book is an important contribution to the literature on occupational cultures in prisons. It is also a book that deserves careful consideration by practitioners who genuinely want to contribute towards tackling inequality in prison work.

*Dr Jamie Bennett is a Deputy Director HM Prison and Probation Service.*

1. For example Liebling, A., Price, D. and Shefer, G. (2011) *The Prison Officer* Second edition Abingdon: Willan; Crawley, E. (2004) *Doing Prison Work: The Public and Private Lives of Prison Officers* Cullompton: Willan
2. Crewe, B. (2006) *Male prisoners' perceptions of female officers in an English prison in Punishment and Society* Vol.8 No.4 p.395-421; Tait, S. (2008) *Prison officers and gender* in Bennett, J., Crewe, B. and Wahidin, A. (eds) *Understanding Prison Staff* Cullompton: Willan p. 65-91
3. Bhui, H. and Fossi, J. (2008) *The experiences of black and minority ethnic prison staff* in Bennett, J., Crewe, B. and Wahidin, A. (eds) *Understanding Prison Staff* Cullompton: Willan p. 49-64; Bennett, J. (2015) *The working lives of prison managers: Global change, local cultures and individual agency in the late modern prison* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan



## Breakfast at Bronzefield

By Sophie Campbell

Publisher: Sophie Campbell Books  
2020

ISBN: 978-1-9163506-0-1

Price: £8.27 (Paperback)

*Breakfast at Bronzefield*, is a lived experience narrative of one woman's time in HMP Bronzefield and HMP Downview, during 2017 and 2018. As explained in the Preface, the reason for writing the book is to 'expose the abuses that occur inside female prisons, but also to demonstrate that women can achieve great things despite having gone to prison' (Preface). Interestingly the author describes herself as being an atypical prisoner in the sense that she went to a public school, had a University education, was not a drug addict and prior to incarceration had somewhere to live and was employed. In contrast to how she would be treated on the 'outside' this difference meant that she felt she was looked down on by many prisoners and prison officers, largely because she didn't fit the unwarranted stereotype that female prisoners are uneducated and inarticulate. A key theme of this book is how such stereotypes shape the prison system, including the provision of education, mental health, drug use, race and family relationships.

The book is divided into three parts: the first recounts Sophie's (not her real name) time on remand, the second her sentence and the third her release. Part 1 is made up of 11 chapters with many focusing on important aspects/themes of life inside a women's jail. Chapter 4, for example, deals with the *Invisible War* on sexual assaults in prison, with the author suggesting how in many cases where a complaint of sexual assault had been made, the prison (Bronzefield) would not investigate or pass the matter to the police. The most that was done was that the suspect would be placed in

segregation and then following this punishment, either be placed on another wing or moved to another establishment. In a similar vein, chapter 5, deals with intimate relationships between female prisoners, with the 'sexually permissive atmosphere' (p. 57) in both Bronzefield and Downview, often allowing coercive abuse to be hidden and defined as a consenting relationship. The chapter also considered those women who were prepared to engage in sexual activity with a minority of corrupt officers (both male and female) so that they could have access to luxuries such as tobacco, alcohol, drugs or a mobile phone. Another interesting chapter, *Zombie Nation*, talks about mental health and the mental health unit at Bronzefield. While the author describes some of the women as 'really far gone' (p.86), she also describes others, including herself, who 'learnt how easy it was to play the mental health card when prison psychiatrists were conditioned to expect almost all females prisoners to be suffering from some sort of illness' (p. 86). Other useful chapters include those on segregation (Chp 6) and work in prisons (Chp 10).

Part two of the book recounts Sophie's time in prison as a sentenced offender and sees her move to HMP Downview, where, for a time, she worked in the prison library. Initially, she hoped that this establishment would be better than the last, but as her sentence progresses, this hope is not realised. While Downview had more job opportunities, there were less places available and on the occasion that she joined a debating workshop with students from Oxford, her title 'Cats are better than dogs?' (p. 198), was so simple because the students did not believe that the women could cope with anything harder. The fact that

the vast majority of education courses and opportunities are for those who had a poor education history is also mentioned, as too are the gendered bias for women to be trained in areas such as cleaning and beauty. One difference noted between the two prisons, however, was 'Downview really opened my eyes to the way a woman's race affected how she was treated. You couldn't just be yourself; you had to conform to racial stereotypes' (p.190). The stereotype here for a black women prisoner was 'overweight, aggressive, uncouth' with these women 'treated extremely well' (p. 191). Race and how the colour of your skin affected prison life is dealt with in chapter 19, although the author does point out that

*... bar a few incidences at Downview, I seriously doubt if I had been white — and I should say white middle class as opposed to white working class — whether my experiences would have been any different (p. 218).*

This is attributed to the fact that by not conforming to the black stereotype she was seen by many of the officers and other prisoners as a 'non-authentic black person' (p. 219). Racism, including some examples of how Sophie experienced it, is also dealt with in Chapter 20.

While the majority of the book is critical, Sophie is positive about Toastmasters International<sup>1</sup>, which ran public speaking workshops at Bronzefield. Despite her enthusiasm and positivity, she only participated for three weeks, however, due to being moved to segregation. This was not Sophie's first visit to the segregation unit, with there being several occasions reported in both

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1. For more information see: <https://www.toastmasters.org/>



Bronzefield and Downview, largely due to assaults and violence against both officers and the other women. On some occasions, Sophie would purposely act out in order to be moved, either to give herself a break from the wing or because 'the showers were exceptionally clean' (p. 245)!

The final part of the book deals with Sophie's release from prison, although the latter chapters of part two start to look at this as well. In particular it deals with the first seven months from June to December 2018. The account is critical, not just of the agencies involved, including resettlement (which did not find her housing) and probation (who were unable to offer her anything of practical use) but also of the lack of support her family (particularly her father) gave her. In fact, the six days that she had to live with her father are described as the time when she was most at risk of returning to prison. The success that Sophie finds is therefore down to her own efforts, although she does admit that she didn't tell the recruitment agency about her conviction, later lied to her probation officer about what one of her first jobs actually entailed and managed to get bumped up the housing list due to her supervision requirements. Once more financially secure, Sophie applied for and was accepted to do a degree at University and states in one of the later chapters that her plan is to follow this up with a Masters. While this 'story' has a happy ending, it is acknowledged that for most women prisoners their paths are very different, often due to a lack of educational qualifications, secure housing and the ability or confidence to move away from destructive relationships and/or family members.

As a lived experience narrative, this book is interesting and valuable. One thing that sets it apart from some other lived

narratives is the fact that the text is littered with prison statistics and references to research. This extra information provides added value to the book and makes it useful to students and those trying to learn about prison life.

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### **Solitary. Alone We Are Nothing**

By Gladys Ambort

Publisher: Waterside Press

ISBN: 978-1-909976-61-0

Price: £20.00 (Paperback)

In a change from the books that I normally review for the *Prison Service Journal*, *Solitary. Alone We Are Nothing*, is an account of prison conditions for political prisoners in Argentina during the late 1970's. The period in question 1975 — 1978 saw great political turmoil in Argentina with the President Isabel Martinez de Peron (third wife of President Juan Peron) deposed by a military right-wing coup (coup d'état) on 24 March 1976. A military committee was put in place to replace the government, led by Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla, who in 1985 was prosecuted for large-scale human rights abuses and crimes against humanity, including kidnappings, forced disappearances, widespread torture and extrajudicial murder of activists and political opponents. Gladys Ambort was one of these political prisoners. In 1975, at the age of 17, she was imprisoned for being a left-wing political activist. The book is therefore an account of the three years that she spent in prisons in Argentina, before being exiled to France.

The book is divided into four parts, with a prologue (arrival in Paris) and an introduction preceding these. The introduction largely explains Gladys' life before arrest

and the political activism which she was involved in as a college student. While she was part of a left-wing political party called Vanguardia Comunista and did endeavour to spread its communist views, she was denounced by one of her college Professors and subsequently arrested and preventatively detained, without trial, for possessing communist literature. The main claim against her, as with other political activists at the time, was that she was a threat to the military right-wing rule.

Part One, which is by far the largest section of the book, then details the four prisons which Gladys spent the next three years of her life. This time of imprisonment began on 2 May 1975 when she was initially arrested and detained in a cell at the Police Headquarters at Rio Cuarto. The book describes the conditions of the cell and how she had to curl up and sleep on cold cement floors, although positively notes that, unlike others, she was not physically tortured. Despite the evidence against her being flimsy and her husband (who was also arrested with her) being released, Gladys' detention was continued and she was moved to the Convent of the Congregation of Bon Pasteur, in June 1975. The Convent, run by nuns was used as a women's prison and being the only political prisoner Gladys' time here was comparably stable. She got on with many of the nuns and while confined in the Convent was in contact with her family and had weekly visits to the prison in which her husband was incarcerated. While at the convent Gladys wanted to be among other political prisoners, although when this 'wish' was granted it was potentially the start of her mental destruction.

The move to her third prison in Cordoba took place on 13 December 1975. The wing in which she was placed was exclusively for

political prisoners and Gladys quickly discovered that she was the only person there from her own political party. This meant that she had to join 'The Fringe' a small group of prisoners who did not fit with the two main parties and thus she was housed on the first floor of the wing and deemed to be inferior. While this presented challenges this was nothing to the change of regime in the prison after March 1976 when the military took over the government and a reign of torture, killings and humiliations began. At this point, the prison is described as a 'theatre of atrocities' (p. 96). There was also a long period of isolation when all communication between prisoners and the outside world was ceased. A time which Gladys found incredibly difficult, because it was her family's love and support which she felt were keeping her sane while in prison. In December 1976, Gladys was moved to her fourth and final prison — Villa Devoto in Buenos Aires. At the time Devoto prison was heralded as a 'showpiece for foreign observers' (p. 91) and it does appear that physically the conditions were better than Cordoba prison, including being able to share cells rather than being locked up for considerable periods on her own. However, we are also told how there was a ban on watches, the women had arrived with bandaged eyes, there was no outside noise and very few windows, so it was very hard for them to obtain any reference to time and place. Despite all these challenges Gladys was still managing to survive.

This changed however on 21 February 1977 when she was accused of scratching a table in the visiting room and as a punishment spent 15 ½ days in solitary confinement. It is this experience (retold in part two of the book) which the title of the book refers

to and it is this period of her incarceration which took Gladys the longest to recover from. Her suffering can be seen in the quote below:

Apart from the four walls, the small window above, the door, and the metal plate nailed to the wall, which served as a bed, there was nothing in this cell. I never heard the sound of voices. I was forbidden to speak to the guard, or to look at her. When she opened the door for me to take the mattress in or out, to go to the toilet, or to pick up a meal, she forced me to do everything head bowed and very quickly. My senses were deprived of any stimulation. I had been left alone: alone, faced with myself, this person I could not even see. No face in front of me, not even an object to reflect mine. Nothing, nothing, nothing. There was nothing to do, nothing to listen to, nothing to look at. And since I did not know how long I would stay there, I could not even project myself forward in time towards the end of my torture (pp. 124-5).

Part three of the book then explains the consequent desolation felt by Gladys and explains how while in solitary confinement she was visited by delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross. In 1978 Argentina hosted the football World Cup and as part of these preparations they had to demonstrate respect for human rights and the upholding of democracy. As part of this several political prisoners were either being released or allowed their freedom on the condition that they left the country. On 2 December 1977, Gladys found out through seeing her name in a newspaper that her (third) application to leave the country had been successful and that she would be exiled to France. This took place on 8 January 1978, and while part four details this release it also documents how the experience of

solitary confinement had broken her.

The book as I have tried to show is a very sobering account of one women's experience as a political prisoner in Argentina at a time of political turmoil. Under that though, it is yet another reminder to us how damaging solitary confinement can be and I believe another example of why such punishment tactics should not be used in modern society. The book should therefore be of interest to academics, students of law, criminology and political science, those working in prisons and perhaps more importantly those who decide what punishments should be given within our current prison estate.

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### **Your Honour, Can I Tell You My Story?**

By Andi Brierley

Publisher: Waterside Press 2019

ISBN: 978-1-909976-64-1

Price: £19.95

This book has been published at a time where Offender Management within the Prison Service has undergone the most modern transformation in the last decade. The national implementation of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model across England and Wales has placed rehabilitative culture at the heart of offender management which has reshaped the paradigm of reducing re-offending. Best practice has been rolled into one framework, particularly drawing on advocating and operationalising a more trauma informed approach. With that, as a Prison Offender Manager (POM) (a role constructed within OMiC), working for Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution (HMYOI) Aylesbury, I

have learnt first-hand that in order to understand and reduce offender behaviour it is crucial to explore the criminal narrative. It is therefore welcomed that Andi Brierley, has created an introspective autobiographical account of his experience of care and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), including him becoming a Specialist Professional for the Youth Offending Service (YOS). A key question posed by the author is, how can an individual understand their problematic offending behaviour if they are unaware of the link between that and their childhood?

I had to work out how I was going to go from being a prisoner to an achiever. I aspired to be something in life. Walking out of prison aged 23 the big question was could I turn things around. Was I, Andi Brierly, capable of such a thing? (p.197).

Today Andi Brierly is a Youth Justice Specialist, published author, father figure and husband. Andi has offered his own exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to professionally help others address Toxic Stress, Addiction and Child Criminal Exploitation, combined with 14 years expert knowledge working for Youth Justice.

This book is written in chronological order from what the author can remember as a child until the present day. The authenticity of the authors narrative carries through twenty-three chapters and allows trust to be developed in his readers. Respectively chapters explore early exposure to violence, abandonment, heroin addiction, group offending, prison survival, barriers between professionals and lastly, individual difference as an ex-prisoner working for the YOS. This developmental and reflective

approach seeks to directly engage the public and practitioners with life experience of care authorities and the criminal justice system, offering a sense of what it is like to become entangled in the wider issues of the environment and barriers to support and rehabilitation.

'One night before I dropped asleep I was so off my face I sat and talked to myself. 'What's your future going to look like you loser?'" (p 175). The most capturing and admiring feature of this book is the authors openness and readiness to show vulnerability. This is exhibited throughout this book although particularly in chapters A Life of Crime and The Drugs Chain. The author appears to advise that no matter how moral and decent your own values are, this will not always be enough to break away from the persuasion of negative peers and behaviour. This despite the fact of being consciously aware of it as a problem. An all too familiar scenario for prison and probation staff readers, argued by the author through life experience is that childhood and personal circumstances play a key role in the development of criminal behaviour. Without early recognition, this inevitably sets forth what appears to be a snowball effect of barriers to trust and support. The chapter *A Taste of Custody*, for example, demonstrates how Andi hid from his true self as a common method of survival, until time found him confused and stuck. Given the commonality of custody as a result of breaking the law, is it provoking to pause and wonder how many others use this as a coping mechanism.

Notable references are given throughout chapters to social services when it was felt additional intervention could have changed the circumstances that followed. This initially set out the context of

what seemed to be feelings of disillusionment; however it becomes clear in the closing chapters that the author is enlightened, strong and keen for the opportunity to coach others. The latter as a basis for moving onto the final chapter. The author argues that the criminal justice system is reactive rather than preventive, creating a 'justice hammer' that puts young offenders at a risk of re-traumatization rather than healing. Certainly, OMiC is a post-sentencing model. However, this book readily describes what may not be the answer, rather than what might be, prompting follow up research on what preventative strategies can be offered by the YOS.

In conclusion, this book has supported much research on the impact of early trauma on adult experience and tapped into the well-known nurture vs nature debate in psychological philosophy. Therefore, not only does this book provide instant practitioner usefulness but further consolidates empirical research in a field where such offerings of real-life experience are rare. It comes at a time where practitioner interest is formed on how OMiC arrangements in prison and the community will work and supports new incentives for reflective practice within Offender Management. Not only is this book familiar and comfortable for prison staff readers, it is also introductory and captivating for the public on a topic that is often discussed privately within establishments and offers due recognition to the achievements accomplished by a member of our civil service.

*Olivia Tickle is a Psychology Graduate and Prison Offender Manager (POM) at HMYOI Aylesbury.*

# Interview with David Lammy MP

*David Lammy MP is the Shadow Secretary of State for Justice.*

**David Lammy has been the Labour MP for Tottenham since 2000. In April 2020, David was appointed the Shadow Secretary of State for Justice.**

Lammy was born in Tottenham in 1972, one of five children raised by a single mother. He was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1994, practised as a barrister in England and the United States and became the first black Briton to study a Masters in Law at Harvard Law School, graduating in 1997.

While in Parliament, Lammy served for eight years (2002-10) as a Minister in the last Labour government, including as Culture Minister and Higher Education Minister, and was appointed to the Privy Council in 2008. In January 2016, the then Prime Minister David Cameron asked Lammy to lead an independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system. The Lammy Review<sup>1</sup> was published in September 2017, and included 35 wide-ranging policy recommendations for Government and the criminal justice sector.

This interview took place in November 2020.

**PSJ: Could you describe your background and your route into politics?**

**DL:** I grew up in Tottenham in the 1970s and 80s. There weren't many Black role models. These were the days of Alf Garnett and Jim Davidson, when we were often mocked or figures of fun. This was also the era of Aled Jones making the Top Ten with 'Walking in the Air', and I got a break because my family went to church and I got into the choir. That led to me being accepted into the Peterborough Cathedral Choir and going to the school there. It was what I call my 'Billy Elliot' moment. It was tough, in the boarding school I was the only Black kid and there were 700 white children. There was racism, but in the end I flourished and that was my opportunity. From there I went on to study law at SOAS in London and then on to Harvard Law School.

Once I started working, I realised I wanted to change the world, not just go from case to case. I was asking myself big questions — why has this person

ended up in jail? What's the story behind this? Really the story was something I understood about poverty, education, employment, role models and access to opportunities. That is why I went into politics. I'm very fortunate that as a Member of Parliament I represent my home.

**PSJ: You have had a long standing interest in criminal justice, why has this been a particular issue that you focussed on?**

**DL:** Having grown up in a community like Tottenham, I have many friends and family members who have been caught up in crime and have served time. It's often a throw of the dice. I've said before that if I didn't get my break, I might have ended up in the same position that many others did. I've always had an interest in criminal justice throughout my life and career and it is very important to my constituents.

**PSJ: You have been shadow Secretary of State for Justice since April 2020, where are you in relation to developing an overarching policy on prisons?**

**DL:** The last general election was only a matter of months ago. There has been an immediate agenda to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. The impact of this has been to cause a backlog in our courts and the lockdown of our prisons for 23 hours a day. I am worried about access to education, particularly for young people and others in our prisons. I'm worried about prisoners' mental health and well-being. Looking forward, I'd particularly like to see a reduction of the number of women in prison. Also, while we need state of art prisons to replace Victorian prisons, that doesn't mean we should be increasing the number of prison places. I disagree with the government on this point. We have one of the highest prison populations in Europe and we've got one of the highest recidivism rates in Europe. It is clear to me that our prison policy is not working and the probation reforms have collapsed. These are the issues that the next Labour government would scrutinize.

I also disagree with the government on short sentences. It doesn't make sense to send people to prison for short sentences. We need to be clear that we

1. Lammy, D. (2017) The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lammy-review-final-report>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.



want to rehabilitate and support people, not just punish them in an ineffective way.

**PSJ: How would you describe the purpose of imprisonment?**

**DL:** The purpose is, of course, to punish, but we also have to reform and rehabilitate offenders. I'm a big believer in redemption. It is an opportunity for those who have committed a crime to reflect on what they have done and the role they played. It is also an opportunity for those leading prisons to prepare them for release back into their communities. 75 per cent of ex-prisoners reoffend within nine years of release<sup>2</sup> that is a real problem. Something isn't working.

**PSJ: In September 2020, you stated: 'We are concerned about short sentences because we know that short sentences don't work and they lead to that pipeline of prisoners going back and back, and round and round, in the criminal justice system'<sup>3</sup>. Given your concern about this, what are your ideas for reducing short term sentences or making them more purposeful?**

**DL:** There is a wide consensus across the criminal justice system that short prison sentences are ineffective. They clog up the system often with offenders who have committed relatively minor crimes. We need a probation service that can deal with these cases through community sentences and technology such as electronic tags. There are better ways to deal with that group of people.

The government has produced its own report on short sentences showing that short prison sentences are associated with an increase in reoffending compared to community orders or suspended sentences<sup>4</sup>. So the government's own work shows that short sentences don't work. Yet a quarter of people are sentenced to prison are sentenced to six months or less<sup>5</sup>. That is one of the reasons we have such an inflated prison system.

The vast majority of women are not in prison for crimes of violence. There are also real issues around the mental health of prisoners, and we've seen this during the lockdown.

**PSJ: You have also expressed concern about the imprisonment of women. You have described that: 'We remain very concerned at women in prison. I have to say personally I am yet to meet a woman who is in prison not because of a man who has abused her, who has pimped her, who has made her run drugs'<sup>6</sup>. Again, what are the solutions to these problems? Is it reducing the use of imprisonment or changing what happens inside?**

**DL:** There has been a frequent use of short sentences for women. There has to be a recognition that when you imprison women you are often also condemning their children through the criminal justice system to the care system. The vast majority of women are not in prison for crimes of violence. There are also real issues around the mental health of prisoners, and we've seen this during the lockdown. They need socialisation and interaction. I am concerned that we've seen a spike in self-harm amongst women in prison during the last year.

**PSJ: You have previously discussed some of the factors that contribute towards crime, including family breakdown, individualised culture<sup>7</sup>, and unemployment<sup>8</sup>. How would you propose to be**

**tough on these causes of crime?**

**DL:** One of the issues we need to look at is the youth justice system. I spent a long time looking at this as part of my Review. Rather than pushing people down the criminal justice pipeline, I recommended that particularly with first or second offences, we looked more widely at issues such as anger management, drug misuse, domestic violence, education, special needs and other issues that might be behind offending behaviour. By dealing with that and cracking those problems, we can hopefully avoid that person becoming an adult prisoner.

2. These figures are taken from Ministry of Justice data produced in 2010 cited at <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/04/jail-less-effective-community-service>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.
3. See <https://labourlist.org/2020/09/david-lammy-sets-out-labours-plan-for-criminal-justice-reform/>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.
4. Eaton, G and Mews, A. (2019) The impact of short custodial sentences, community orders and suspended sentence orders on reoffending. London: Ministry of Justice. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-of-short-custodial-sentences-community-orders-and-suspended-sentence-orders-on-reoffending>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.
5. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-june-2020>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.
6. See <https://labourlist.org/2020/09/david-lammy-sets-out-labours-plan-for-criminal-justice-reform/>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.
7. See <https://www.thebookseller.com/feature/david-lammy-solving-riots-338916>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.
8. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-14895665>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.



The other issue I identified was about probation and pre-sentence reports. Probation officers used to go into the home and produce very thorough reports for our judges. They are now not able to do this. Instead they are rushed, or not even being written. It is very hard to get a full picture of what is happening without that detailed work.

**PSJ: In 2017 you published your landmark report on the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System. Despite making up just 14 per cent of the population, BAME men and women make up 25 per cent of prisoners, while over 40 per cent of young people in custody are from BAME backgrounds. What drives this disproportionality?**

**DL:** That has gotten worse. The majority of young people in custody are now Black, Asian or from a minority ethnic community<sup>9</sup>. I came up with 35 recommendations right across the criminal justice system. It is driven by factors that come even before the criminal justice system such as access to special educational needs services, the care system, housing and policing. Many young Black men grow up in housing estates, which have fallen into the grip of criminal gangs. There have then been issues with policing, including the use of stop and search powers. Then we get into the criminal justice system, from charging decisions, juries, how our prison system is working. My Review identified 35 recommendations and if the government implemented them, we could make a real difference to disproportionality in our country.

**PSJ: Within prisons, you described the evidence of differential treatment including problems not being identified, poorer relationships with staff and less access to jobs and offending behaviour programmes. What would you recommend prisons do to address these problems?**

**DL:** I have visited a number of prisons. Most recently, Nottingham and Huntercombe, and I am seeing prison governors and prison staff working with prisoners. They are looking at my Review and working more closely than they did before. They are looking at access to services such as release on temporary licence, how they are dealing with conflict and violence, who is getting access to education. They are scrutinizing the data. I am pleased that work is happening. The big question is whether that is making a difference? Are prison governors acting upon the data and is it making a difference to the experience of Black, Asian and

minority ethnic prisoners? That is patchy across the country and some places are not changing quickly enough.

**PSJ: Have you seen examples of effective scrutiny, where organisations meaningfully identify and take action on disproportionality?**

**DL:** I will return to my Review five years on. I want to wait until that point before I say how things have or have not improved. I am also aware that the coronavirus pandemic has affected how prisons are running. For example there is less release on temporary licence and less access to education. The amount of time that people are locked up has also meant less opportunity for conflict. I want to wait before I make a judgement on progress.

**PSJ: Have you seen initiatives where trust is effectively built between minority communities and criminal justice institutions?**

**DL:** There is a great approach being taken in my own constituency called 'Project Future'<sup>10</sup>. It is an effective wrap around service that helps with mental health and well-being, employment and therapy. It does cost but it has been successful and we are looking at how we can extend that project. There have also been some good projects in prison, including work at Pentonville around race, employment and mentoring. The Criminal Justice Alliance and organisations such as Clinks are also well-established charities doing excellent work.

**PSJ: You also described that the lack of diversity among prison officers, including prison leadership, helps perpetuate a culture of 'us and them' with BAME prisoners. How would you recommend criminal justice organisations improve recruitment, selection and promotion?**

**DL:** There have to be targets. We have to bring forward people. There are officers but they have to be supported, encouraged and promoted to become governors. It makes a real difference to prisoners. It is unacceptable that prisons are languishing so far behind other parts of the public sector. Prisons are less diverse than schools, health or police. I cannot understand why that is the case. The Unlocked scheme has brought in a new cadre of people, and greater diversity. That is a very good scheme. There is more that needs to be done to ensure that there are governors, deputy governors and people in management positions across the system. We are not seeing enough of that, which is why I have recommended targets.

**PSJ: As you know, in 2020, prisons had to respond rapidly to the threat from the coronavirus**

9. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2018-to-2019>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.

10. See <https://mac-uk.org/project/project-future/>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.

**pandemic. This required regimes to be curtailed in order to reduce transmission risk. What are your views on the actions taken in England and Welsh prisons?**

**DL:** I've been blown away by the work done by prison staff. They have adapted quickly to the crisis and they have saved lives. They have been the hidden heroes of the crisis, often forgotten despite the work they do on the frontline. The decisions made at the early stages were important, but I am concerned about the impact of people being locked up for 23 hours a day. I am concerned about some of the reports by the Inspectorate of Prisons into youth prisons, particularly the lack of access basic facilities. I am concerned that will mean that when they come out they will commit more crime. I'm worried about the mental health of prisons. Having said that, I do applaud staff for the way they responded, for creating a framework to operate by, and for having saved lives.

**PSJ:** In the past, the Labour Party have opposed private prisons. The 2019 manifesto proposed to bring private prisons back into the public sector and that there would be no more private prisons<sup>11</sup>. What is your current position on the role of the private sector in the prison system?

**DL:** Areas of privatisation in the criminal justice system have been nothing short of failure. We've seen the part-privatisation of the probation service and it has been an unmitigated disaster. The G4S have been selected to run the mega-prison at Wellingborough when they ran Birmingham prison into a state of crisis

and a contract failure. There won't be a knee-jerk to privatisation if I am Secretary of State for Justice. Having said that, I haven't yet had the opportunity to go to a private prison, so I do need to do that in order to make an assessment of where we are.

**PSJ:** Again, in the 2019 Manifesto, the Labour Party proposed to invest in over 2000 new prison officers. What do you see as the role of prison officers and why are more needed?

**DL:** Prison officers were cut back to the bone and we had serious unrest as a consequence. The government have finally moved to increase the number of officers, which we welcome. There's a lot to do in order to ensure we have a professional cadre of officers who are properly rewarded and fit for the 21st century. I continue to have very good conversations with the POA, the Prison Governors' Association and others about what we might do to support progress should we come back to power in 2024.

**PSJ:** What is next for you?

**DL:** I'm very much enjoying this role. We have to work through the coronavirus crisis. We are having this interview the day after it was announced that very good progress has been made with developing a vaccine. It is important that front line workers get access to that vaccine including in courts and prisons. It is also important that prisoners get access to the vaccine along with the rest of the population. That will enable us to move through this crisis. That is the agenda for the coming months.

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11. See <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Real-Change-Labour-Manifesto-2019.pdf>. Accessed on 07 February 2021.

# Obituary

## John Dring — Prison Governor

*Brendan O’Friel is a retired prison governor and founding member of the Prison Governors Association.*

The last thirty years of the twentieth century proved to be extremely turbulent for the Prison Service in England and Wales. Riots, escapes and staff industrial action beset the Service. Rising prisoner numbers since 1946 had left Governors and staff struggling with acute problems as they tried to run greatly overcrowded establishments with totally inadequate accommodation and facilities. This was the background to the career of John Dring, one of a generation of Prison Governors who steered the Service through these extraordinarily difficult times.

Dring was a quiet, thoughtful person but with the strength and determination required to meet all manner of challenges. He had deeply held values that shaped his life and his work. A particular difficulty was the unprofessional behaviour of a small minority of staff. From his early years, if he identified such bad behaviour by staff towards prisoners or young offenders, he made it very clear that this was unacceptable and that each individual should be treated with dignity. Such an approach helped set the tone in establishments in which he worked. He quickly developed into a kind but firm, fair and open minded Governor, always ready to listen to both staff and prisoners and to give credit where it was due.

Dring had a talent for encouraging initiatives that improved penal establishments especially developing positive regimes that provided prisoners with better and more demanding activities. Through improving their education and skills, such regimes helped reduce re-offending on release. This was especially the case when he was in charge of Aylesbury. He took over an establishment in a very poor condition and transformed it into a much safer prison where positive activity was encouraged to flourish.

He had a considerable passion for music and opera and was delighted when others — including prisoners — had the opportunity to develop and share that interest. This was an interest he carried into retirement.

Dring was born in Oxford to Walter and Annie Dring. Walter was the last owner of a long established family business originally running horse-drawn carts, and latterly coaches, between Oxford, Headington and London.

He was educated at Southfield Grammar School where he joined the Air Training Corps. After unsuccessfully pursuing an external degree from London University, he joined the RAF. Quickly realising that to progress, a degree was important, he left the RAF and returned to London University obtaining a Sociology degree.

In September 1969, he married Jennifer Butt also from Oxford. Jenny and he had known each other for a number of years.

After exploring several career options, in 1970 he was appointed to be an Assistant Governor Class Two in the Prison Service. After eight months training at Wakefield Staff College, he was posted to Manchester’s Strangeways Prison to work with young offenders in the Borstal Allocation Centre. This large Victorian prison gave him valuable early experience of the problems Governors faced from the pressures of overcrowding and poor conditions in which prisoners had to live and staff had to work.

A posting to the recently opened Wellingborough Borstal, Northamptonshire followed in 1975. While this was a great contrast from the Victorian buildings of Strangeways, problems still abounded. Here he was introduced to the complex relationship between Governors and the Prison Officers Association, some of whose national officers worked at Wellingborough. This experience would be invaluable when he came to work at HQ in 1983. After two years he was promoted to Assistant Governor Class One and was posted to the Prison Officer Training School at Leyhill in Gloucestershire as a tutor. He was at Leyhill at the time of the Queen’s visit in 1978 to mark the centenary of the Service.

In 1981, he was posted to Leicester Prison as Deputy Governor. He had been advised that he needed wider experience before he would be considered for further promotion. Leicester was a small but challenging local prison with a Special Security Wing which contained a small number of very difficult prisoners. Leicester was also recovering from the disastrous escape from an escort two years earlier that led to murders and a critical inquiry into security procedures. Small, but full of challenges, Leicester provided Dring with the wider experience he needed.

Further promotion to Governor Class Three followed in 1983. He was posted to P6 Division in Headquarters to grapple with the complex national staffing and industrial relations problems, solving which had become a major priority for the Service. Consequently he was involved in the preparatory work for the important Fresh Start initiative which, in 1987, transformed many penal establishments.

He was given his first command at the relatively new establishment, Featherstone Prison, near Wolverhampton in late 1985 on promotion to Governor Class Two.

After two years, he was transferred to take charge of Aylesbury Young Offenders prison. This housed young offenders serving very long sentences in a curious mix of Victorian and more modern accommodation. Some of his best work as a Governor was transforming Aylesbury. The Phoenix Trust — an organisation he was to work with over many years — also contributed to the many improvements he achieved.

He was promoted to Governor One in 1990, and posted to the newly developing Prison Service College at Newbold Revel near Rugby. He held the post at a time of particular turbulence and change following the 1991 Woolf Report which required considerable improvements and innovation to be delivered across the Service. This was followed by further unwelcome disruption: a fresh surge in prisoner numbers following the impact of the political slogan 'Prison Works'. Dring worked carefully through each new problem as best he could and produced the first Prison Service Training Plan.

Further promotion to Assistant Director at Headquarters followed in 1996 requiring him to

supervise groups of establishments, a task he undertook with success.

Unfortunately just as she was promoted to Head of Department in her school, Jenny developed significant health problems so Dring took early retirement in 2000 to provide support for her. For the next decade or so, he was heavily committed to providing care for Jenny, especially in the period leading to her final illness and death, a task he undertook with remarkable fortitude and cheerfulness. Jenny died in January 2013.

In retirement, Dring was involved with a number of charities including Kids VIP- of which he became Chair — and the Prison Phoenix Trust.

A measure of his reputation was that the Service asked him to join a mentoring panel to provide support for Governors. He also contributed for a number of years to Assessment Centre work for the Police and Fire Services. Between 2003 — 2019, he was a valued member of the Grendon Advisory Board.

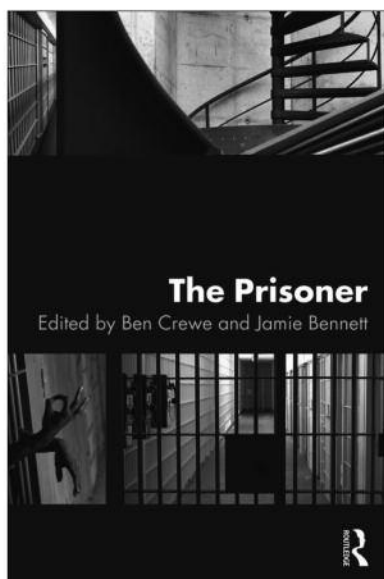
In 2017 he was diagnosed with Motor Neuron Disease with increasing restrictions on his activities. In 2018 he married Midori Fachiri. He and Midori had bonded through their mutual love of opera. Midori's two adult daughters also became close to him.

He remained cheerful and positive over his remaining years, still showing a keen interest in the work of the Service. Midori cared for him devotedly until the end as MND grew worse.

In addition to Midori, he leaves two children. Simon is a Senior Executive in a technology start-up and Sarah who is taking a break from a career in IT Management to be a 'stay at home' mum.

John Dring died on 30th January 2021 aged 75. He was born on 21st January 1946.

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