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Editorial Comment

This edition of *Prison Service Journal* offers a wide array of topics rather than focussing on a single theme. It examines different types of prisons, different groups of prisoners, the experiences of staff, and also features international contributions.

Dr. Ian D. Marder, Magali Lapouge, Dr. Joe Garrihy and Dr. Avril M. Brandon are currently undertaking empirical research on open prisons in Ireland. These prisons are low security prisons, usually holding people nearing the end of their prison sentence and offer opportunities for reintegration with the community, including through temporary release. This particular article is a considered review of the existing, albeit limited, literature on open prisons. The article focusses on key themes including the benefits and challenges associated with the greater autonomy provided in open prisons; the potential impact on prisoners, and; the cultures and relationships in open prisons. The article sets out approaches to further research, and makes the important point that as well as considering any potential benefits relative to closed conditions, it is also relevant to compare open prisons with community-based sanctions. This article offers an excellent overview of the current research into open prisons and sets out a valuable programme of work, that has the potential to inform future policy and practice.

Dominique Moran, Yvonne Jewkes, Eleanor March and Matt Houlbrook outline their research looking at the continued operation of prisons built during the Victorian era. The authors explain how these prisons are a material reality, with some 22,000 prisoners in England and Wales housed in prisons built between 1837 and 1901, but also the design and function of these prisons has a hold on the public imagination and shapes how prisons are understood.

The emergence and effects of psychoactive substances has previously been addressed in *PSJ*, but Dr. Maggie Leese and Dr. Victoria Bell examine this from the perspective of members of staff. Their research in a category C prison exposes not only the physical effects

of exposure to 'spice' but also the psychological and emotional impacts. Their work is a considered assessment that recognises the harms experienced by prison officers and the need to ensure that support is available.

Transitional points can be critical in life, including for those who are in prison. The movement between prisons can be disruptive and difficult, and as the earlier article in this edition highlighted, the movement from closed to open prisons can also be a mixed experience. Dr. Jayne Price focusses on the transition between juvenile young offenders' institutions and young adult/adult estate. Price highlights the different resources and cultures between these functions, and argues that if this important transition is to be successfully navigated, it needs the investment of time, imagination and resources.

This edition also includes an evaluation of a prison peer review programme conducted by Julia Telfer and colleagues. The power of peer support and community building is a topic that has been regularly featured in *PSJ* and warrants continued attention. A novel contribution comes from Charles Prempeh, who explores the social media activity of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana. This is a fascinating study that explores the connections between religion, social justice and imprisonment in contemporary online communications. The edition closes with an interview with Michael Capra, the Superintendent of Sing Sing prison in New York State, USA. This includes a discussion of the extraordinarily courageous decision that Capra made to testify in criminal proceedings against one of his officers, charged for violence towards a prisoner. Capra describes that this was a simple decision to make morally, but the effects were significant.

This edition of *PSJ* ranges across topics and themes, but at its centre is an attempt to stimulate questioning and reflection on the policy, practice and realities of prison.