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## Editorial Comment

This first edition of a new editorial era is typically full of articles that have already been expertly curated by the previous incumbent. As per usual they are diverse and offer much to our readership's interests in prisons and life through and beyond the prison gates.

We start this edition with an article by Professor Roy King and Doctor Lucy Willmott from the Institute of Criminology in Cambridge. They draw on an extensive array of interviews that they have conducted for their recently published book, 'The Honest Politicians guide to prisons and probation'.<sup>1</sup> Their subjects are those with influence from the time of the Strangeways riots and include Home and Justice secretaries; Junior ministers; Lord Chief Justices; Chief Executives of the various guises of the Prison and Probation Services; and a selection of Chief Inspectors of the same. King and Willmott concentrate this paper on the effects on prisons and pepper their way of explaining the 'truth' about prisons and probation with insightful quotes from their interviews.

The next three articles then all cover efforts to improve conditions in today's prisons. Doctor Katherine Doolin and Doctor Kate Gooch explore in depth the issues around the growing levels of prison violence directed at staff in the UK. Violence against prison staff is often overlooked in academic scrutiny, with violence directed at or between prisoners garnering more interest. However, staff cannot withdraw their presence to protect themselves, as absence in this way only increases the likelihood of more violence. Megan Georgiou examines mental healthcare delivery during the pandemic. Georgiou has closely reviewed forty-four inspections completed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons during this period, which exposed new challenges, opportunities and existing inadequacies. On a similar theme of Healthcare in prisons, Mark Langridge and Sarah Bromley outline their study of the use of an

easily dispersed buprenorphine medication for use in opioid substitution therapy in prisons. The trial they describe helps overcome the issues around using buprenorphine tablets that take time to dissolve and then can be easily diverted or the issuing of methadone or abstinence which are all less than ideal options.

The final two articles have a focus on experiences through the prison gate. Dr Helen Wakeling, firstly with colleagues, explores the risk factors for drug related deaths following release from prison and how those who care for prisoners on release may potentially intervene and encourage uptake of treatment post release. In the next article the prolific researcher Wakeling presents the results of a qualitative study with men who have sexually reoffended. Very little desistance research has focused on this group, who, despite public opinion, have a comparatively low reoffending rate. She highlights implications for practice and reintegration in society more widely.

This edition concludes with two interviews. Firstly, Carwyn Jones, the former First Minister of Wales is interviewed by Professor Karen Harrison. The interview covers the unique position Wales adopts in criminal justice both compared to the other countries of the United Kingdom besides England and in terms of the principality's unique needs in this respect. Secondly, Simon Shepherd, Director of the Butler Trust, is interviewed by Dr Jamie Bennett. Shepherd and the charity are advocates for all the good practice that goes on in prisons. The interview focuses primarily on the thoughts behind the newly formed Ruth Mann and Kathy Biggar Trophies and how the good practice of the winners is being disseminated.

This edition offers wide ranging material, intended to stimulate discussion and debate about contemporary penal practices and the wider criminal justice system.

- Prison Service Journal readers can receive a 25% discount when they order "The Honest Politician's Guide to Prisons and Probation" by Roy D. King and Lucy Willmott from [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com) by entering the code **HPOL25** at the checkout.

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1. King, R. D. and Willmott, L. (2022) *The Honest Politicians Guide to Prisons and Probation*, London, Routledge