

Special Edition Editorial: The Perrie Lectures

*This edition is guest-edited by **Professor Rosie Meek**, who is based at Royal Holloway University of London, and serves as a member of the Perrie Lectures committee.*

The Perrie Lectures is an annual event which has the purpose of stimulating dialogue between criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector, and all those with an academic, legal, or practical interest in people in prison and their families. Since 1995, the Perrie Award has been presented during the day of the lectures. It is awarded by the Perrie Lectures Committee in recognition of efforts to promote an understanding of the work of the Prison Service, and the development of penal policy. Through the Perrie Lectures and the Perrie Award, it is hoped that the care of people in prison can be improved, and penal policy, in its broadest sense, advanced. The Perrie Lectures are named in honour of Bill Perrie, who retired from the Prison Service in 1978. He worked as a prison governor for 32 years, latterly at HMPs Hull, Long Lartin, and Birmingham, and he attended the lectures every year until his death in 1997. We are grateful to have the opportunity to guest edit this edition in honour of Bill and the annual event he inspired.

Readers of the PSJ will be familiar with the back story and day-to-day reality of our prisons crisis, with staff facing increasing challenges in their ability to carry out their duties safely and effectively. Understandably, the Prison Service has been working on its culture — a positive culture for staff, and a rehabilitative culture for those in prison, both of which are critical in enabling the Service to deliver. But for many of us it wasn't clear what such a focus on culture might mean in reality, and how that might play out in policy developments and in day-to-day practice within our establishments.

For some time, the Perrie Lectures committee has planned this year's lectures in response to the focus on prison culture, in order to provide a challenging and stimulating platform on which to explore in what ways those individual and collective efforts to promote positive cultures in prisons has or has not progressed, and to think about the barriers and enablers in doing so. We knew we wanted to bring stakeholders

together, but we faced our own barriers in doing so — firstly due to Covid-19 and then due to train strikes — so when we finally succeeded in our mission to gather at Newbold Revel on a blisteringly hot day in June it felt like an achievement in itself.

We had tasked our carefully selected speakers with a broad remit. We all know that managing the risks of Covid-19 posed a massive challenge to the prison estate, which demanded centralised guidance and control. But as we (have attempted to) transition back to the 'new normal', we wanted to ask how we balance control, accountability, and autonomy — for prison leaders, prison staff, and prisoners themselves. We know that organisations with a healthy culture encourage innovation and accept that at times things may go wrong, but we also know all too well that in the context of criminal justice in particular, avoiding risks and averting criticism can dominate decision making.

The culture of an organisation relies heavily on good leadership, excellent communication of its aims, and a shared understanding of those aims. How far is visionary and brave leadership being cultivated at all levels of the Service? What progress has been made in the quest for a learning culture? Is it still possible to achieve a rehabilitative culture, or is it just another slogan on the shelf? We posed these questions, and our speakers and audience (with representation including prison staff, the voluntary sector, and academics) responded heartily to the challenge, chaired ably by Phil Maguire, Chief Executive of the Prison Radio Association.

In this edition of PSJ we bring together a collection of essays from some of our remarkable speakers. We open with the acceptance speech delivered by Paula Harriot of the Prison Reform Trust upon being presented with the Perrie Award. We have also included as the cover image for this edition the striking artwork (from the Koestler Trust) that accompanied her award. Although Paula's speech was given towards the end of the day, we chose to include her contribution at the beginning of this collection as it serves as an effective and emotive call to arms. The

subsequent paper from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Charlie Taylor, reflects on his first 2.5 years in post and asks us to consider the importance of, amongst other things, risk, trust, and accountability. Professor Shadd Maruna and colleagues take us back to Covid-19 and ask us to consider how in our prisons those lockdowns became the 'new normal', weaving powerful direct quotes from prisoner interviewees into the article. As an experienced prison governor, Gareth Sands reflects on his own experiences of navigating culture change, offering a raft of illustrative examples and tips. David Breakspear (of *Revolving Doors*) offers his own

powerful reflections from his experiences within the prison system, reminding us of the unique value of seeking the voices of those with lived experience in building a more effective system. And we close our speaker contributions with Gill Attrill, a Deputy Director in HMPPS with direct responsibility for prison culture, offering a practical, robust guide to seeking effective, safe, and rehabilitative cultures. Finally, the edition concludes with two book reviews, one for 'Prisons of the World' by Andrew Coyle, and the other for 'Criminal: How are prisons are failing us all' by Angela Kirwin.