PRISON SERVICE
JOURNAL

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Editorial

Flora Fitzalan Howard is a Forensic Psychologist and Researcher, Co-Editor of the Prison Service Journal, and founding Partner of KTA Research and Consulting.

This general edition of the Prison Service Journal brings together a range of articles and book reviews which we hope will be of interest to our diverse readership. We hope that they promote discussion, debate, and reflection.

We begin with an article by **Dr Sarah Waite** which examines the concept and operation of trust in prison by drawing upon theory, policy, and practice. The article analyses the operationalisation of trust in prisons, critically assesses conceptualisations of trust, and uses theories of trust and reflections from research to outline a typology which proposes a loose framework through which to consider trust and its associations with power, performance, and person-centred practice in prison.

In our second article **Paul New, Dr Miznah Al-Abbadey,** and **Dr Lianne Wood** present the findings from an exploratory study highlighting key issues that persistent pain presents in prisons, trends in dispensed pain medication, patients' general needs, and the facilitators of, and barriers to, de-prescribing intervention.

Next **Dr Carol Robinson, Vanessa Lang Burns,** and **Pete Thompson** describe their collaboration for a University of York undergraduate degree module, *Working in the Criminal Justice System,* to 'take the prison to the classroom' in order to aid communication between prison staff and students about working in the Prison Service. After describing the rationale for, and practicalities of, delivering the initiative, the authors reflect on their experience and learning from this, including the apparent benefits for both students and prison staff.

In our fourth article **Elieze Termote, Lennert De Boe, An-Sofie Vanhouche, Kristel Beyens, Annelies Jans,** and **Eva Meeus** report on their study, which utilised Participatory Action Research, to undertsanding the barriers to people living in prison accessing activities in two newly built Belgian prisons: Haren and Dendermonde. Following their identification of several obstacles, they conclude with implications which feel relevant for prison services in other countries as well as Belgium.

In the penultimate article **Raeanne Valois** presents the findings of her qualitative research examining the experiences of people who have completed Kaizen (an HMPPS cognitive-behavioural accredited programme), focussing on how those who completed Kaizen experienced the programme environment, what learning they took and in what ways they felt their participation supported their desistance.

In our final article **Dr Laura Janes** and **Dr Susie Hulley** outline recent changes in legislation which have increased the minimum terms in custody that judges must consider when imposing life sentences on children, discuss the tension between the law and policy in this area, and highlight the important implications for practitioners working with 'child lifers'.

This edition concludes with three book reviews. The first is particularly unique in that it is the PSJ's first 'special feature extended book review' and focusses on *The Stains of Imprisonment — Moral communication and men convicted of sex offences,* written by criminologist Alice Ievins. This was reviewed by **people living and staff working at HMP Rye Hill** in collaboration with the **Building Futures Network (Prison Reform Trust).** The review explores the prisoners' and staffs' views on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Overall, the majority of the group felt that this book is a valuable tool for both officers and those writing policy. To them it sheds light on the reality of the stains of imprisonment prisoners convicted of a sexual offence face, and the harms that this imposes on their rehabilitation and progression within the prison system.

The second book, *The Politics of Prison Overcrowding: A Critical Analysis of the Italian Prison System,* written by Simone Santorso, is reviewed by **Dr Sacha Darke** and **Irene Sangaletti.** They conclude that this comprehensive exploration, based on real-life accounts and solid research, positions the book as an indispensable tool for understanding the complexities of contemporary prison policies and the administration of justice. The final book, *Prison Suicide: What happens afterwards?* by **Philippa Tomczak,** is reviewed by **Bradley Read.** This book asks us to consider in more detail a vitally different angle to suicide prevention and suggests that more focus on the *afterwards* will potentially impact on the *before.*

Mapping the Landscape of Trust: Towards a Typology in the Context of the Prison

Dr Sarah Waite is a Researcher and Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice at Leeds Beckett University.

Trust is certainly perceived as a contentious term within prison environments. When sent to prison people have their trusted status removed and are subject to risk management policies and procedures, underpinned by assessments of trust.[1] Historically, relationships between staff and prisoners have been divisive, with outward expressions of trust made by either side considered to be cultural betrayal.[2] In addition to this, the prioritisation of security heightens and shapes conceptions of trust, which can then also differ significantly between institutions.[3] More generally, people in prison often have adverse experiences of trust, particularly relating to state criminal justice institutions and broader social structures, meaning prisons are broadly distrusting environments.[4] Despite these hurdles, there are multiple research studies that evidence the existence of trust in prisons, drawing attention to its benefits,[5] its challenges,[6] and the ways in which it can operate.[7]

Crucially, trust has been cited as a central quality in assessments of 'good' prisons,[8] meaning that at the level of policy and practice, interest and use of the term and its positive associations have grown in recent years. Despite this, very little is known about trust from an operational perspective, including how staff and people serving sentences understand the term, its relational characteristics, and the impact of the complexities of the concept and the interests of the prison.[9] In 'everyday' communication we regularly discuss trust in a binary way, we trust, or we do not, and we rarely

deliberate its variable forms, shades, and shifts. The aim of this article is to examine the concept and operation of trust in prison by drawing upon theory, policy, and practice. The article will firstly analyse the operationalisation of trust in prisons, considering its importance for staff, people serving sentences and the institution more broadly. Secondly, the article will critically assess conceptualisations of trust, including the ways in which the term can be shaped and experienced. Finally, the article uses theories of trust and reflections from research to outline a typology which proposes a loose framework through which to consider trust and its associations with power, performance, and person-centred practice in prison. In mapping the literature through a practice-focused lens and reflecting upon findings from doctoral research, this article outlines a typology of trust to consolidate and inform our individual and institutional understanding of the concept in prison.

What's Trust got to do with it?

A simplistic search of HMPPS Policy Frameworks reveals the importance of the term trust to a wide range of documents that underpin crucial decisions and processes at operational level. The term trust can be found in Prison Service Instructions involving prisoner complaints, security categorisation, prisoners' property, body worn video cameras, procedures for searching people, and escape and abscond policies, to name but a few.[10] Trust plays a key role in the concept of procedural justice which prison policy has placed a

1. Sparks, R., Bottoms, A., & Hay, W. (1996). *Prisons and the Problem of Order.* Oxford University Press.
2. Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2004). *Prisons and Their Moral Performance: A Study of Values, Quality and Prison Life.* Oxford University Press.
3. Williams, R., & Liebling, A. (2023). Do prisons cause radicalisation? Order, leadership, political charge and violence in two maximum security prisons. *The British Journal of Criminology, 63*(1), 97-114.
4. HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2022). T*he Experiences of Adult Black Male Prisoners and Black Prison Staff.* Thematic Review. HMIP; Liebling, A., and Maruna, S. (2005). The Effects of Imprisonment. Willan.
5. Ugelvik, T. (2022). The transformative power of trust: Exploring tertiary desistance in reinventive prisons. *The British Journal of Criminology, 62*(3), 623-638.
6. Waite, S. (2022). Imprisoned Women's Experiences of Trust in Staff-Prisoner Relationships in an English Open Prison. In I. Masson & N. Booth (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Women's Experiences of Criminal Justice* (pp. 511-522). Routledge.
7. Liebling, A., Arnold, H., & Straub, C. (2011). *An Exploration of Staff-Prisoner Relationships at HMP Whitemoor: 12 Years On.* NOMS.
8. Liebling, A. (2018). Social Science Bites: *Alison Liebling on Successful Prisons* [podcast]. Tues, 18th May. Available at: https://socialsciencebites.libsyn.com/alison-liebling-on-successful-prisons
9. For exceptions, see: footnote 2 - Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2004); Brierley, A. (2023). *The Good Prison Officer.* Routledge.
10. Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Prison and Probation Policy Frameworks.* London

process-driven emphasis on to promote compliance, perceptions of fairness and legitimacy.[11] It is now a well-recognised and accepted expression that staff-prisoner relationships are integral to operational order and the smooth running of prison life, of which trust is said to be an integral feature.[12] Alongside this, over time there have been various iterations of relational initiatives advocating for the importance of building trust, including the concept of the personal officer, custody support plans (CuSP), and key worker schemes, and there are calls for a better understanding of trust and its relational development in prisons.[13] Shifts in the promotion of trust as a value can be seen in pockets of training across estates, including therapeutic provision and trauma-informed practice.[14] Additionally, some estate-specific recruitment and training is premised on the acknowledgment that working with people that do not trust prison officers is a significant characteristic of the day-to-day role.[15] Perhaps amplifying this subtle organisational deviation, the term trust appears as an explicit feature in the Measuring Quality of Prison Life+ survey which informs institutional decency audits. Considering this, it is safe to conclude that the institutional promotion of trust in prison is becoming high on the prison agenda.

In assessments of trust, it is important to remember that this intangible concept functions as a two-way process and so given this operational direction, understanding the importance of notions of trust to all parties involved is paramount. A look at the research involving people in prison and their experiences of trust begins to expose some of the ways constructs and systems shape the complexities involved in the concept. Much research has been done to shine a light on the role of broader social issues within people's experiences of trust and distrust and it is particularly important to appreciate the weight of distrust, as it is not just the absence of trust, but an active stance towards harm. Distrust features significantly in the experiences of black men and women because of systemic disadvantage and racism in the Criminal Justice System,[16] and people in prison with care experience are likely to distrust the state because of its multiple failures.[17] Social constructs such as gender and age also shape people's experiences of trust and distrust. This is sometimes due to perceptions of relatability and a lack of shared cultural experiences, but it can also be because of trauma and the nature of the environments in which people are imprisoned.[18] There are elevated levels of trauma within the prison population and with strong links between trauma and trust, it is unsurprising that people with adverse life experiences are more likely to be distrusting.[19] Taking all this into consideration, we begin to see that trust is not solely grounded in the individual, but instead tied up in the ways structural and institutional positions interact, shape, and constrain experiences. To this end then, we can also see the complicated web that surrounds people's experiences of trust, which leaves the question; why should people trust a system or structure that has harmed them?

Concepts of trust and distrust are significant to many aspects of prison officer work. The prioritisation of security alongside heightened perceptions of risk mean distrust is a centralised characteristic of the role. Relationally, a general distrust of prisoners is said to be embedded through training and enculturation.[20] Yet many aspects of prison officer work rely implicitly on trusting people in prison,[21] particularly within a climate of low staffing.

> Distrust features significantly in the experiences of black men and women because of systemic disadvantage and racism in the Criminal Justice System.

11. Fitzalan Howard, F., & Wakeling, H. (2020). People in prisons' perceptions of procedural justice in England and Wales. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 47*(12), 1654-1676.
12. Crewe, B. (2011). Soft power in prison: implications for staff-prisoner relationships, liberty and legitimacy, *European Journal of Criminology, 8*(6), 455–68.
13. Ministry of Justice. (2020). *Areas of Research Interest. December 2020.* London.
14. Bradley, A. (2021). Viewing Her Majesty's Prison Service through a Trauma-informed Lens. *Prison Service Journal, 255*, 4-11.
15. HMPPS (2023). *Women's Estate. Why work in a Women's Prison?* London.
16. See footnote 4: HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2022); Charles, A. (2022). At the intersection of disadvantage, disillusionment, and resilience: Black Women's Experiences in Prison. In I. Masson & N. Booth (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Women's Experiences of Criminal Justice* (chapter 19). Routledge.
17. Fitzpatrick, C., Hunter, K., Shaw, J., & Staines, J. (2023). Confronting intergenerational harm: Care experience, motherhood and criminal justice involvement. *The British Journal of Criminology, 64,* 257–274.
18. See footnote 6: Waite, S. (2022); Kelman, J., Gribble, R., Harvey, J., Palmer, L., & MacManus, D. (2022). How Does a History of Trauma Affect the Experience of Imprisonment for Individuals in Women's Prisons: A Qualitative Exploration. *Women & Criminal Justice, 1*-21.
19. Herman, J. (2001). *Trauma and Recovery.* Basic Books.
20. Arnold, H. (2016). The prison officer. In Y. Jewkes, B. Crewe, & J. Bennett (Eds.), *Handbook on Prisons* (2nd ed, chapter 19). Routledge.
21. See footnote 2: Liebling, A., & Arnold, H. (2004).

Interactions within prison are governed by complex institutional norms, with staff-prisoner relationships providing the most explicit example of this. Ideas around jail craft, maintaining boundaries, and dynamic security are just some of the features of staff-prisoner interactions that both drive and shape what trust and distrust looks like in prison. These principles are crucial to the prison officer role and underpin the forms of order, compliance, and co-operation the prison aims to achieve.

For officers and prison environments that weight their focus towards rehabilitative ideals, gaining relational trust becomes a significant part of their work. Here, rather than trust providing a route to order and compliance, it is built with the intention to 'change mindset' under the assumption that people in prison will then 'open up' to interventions, support, and ultimately, 'correction'.[22] However, prison officers work within the constraints of prison life and there are aspects of the job that mean they are not always in control of how they navigate trust and distrust or perceptions of their trustworthiness. The concept of soft power provides a good example of this, as people in prison can be distrustful of the managerial context staff work in and in the power they have to closely regulate their social behaviour.[23] Other examples can be seen in issues around perceptions of inconsistency between themselves and other prison officers,[24] and sometimes management.[25] Competing regime demands and interruptions and staff shortages mean that because it is often a challenge to deliver the day-to-day basics, staff do not have the resources to be able to focus on the relational aspects of the role, and so policy mechanisms such as key work become impossible to deliver. Additionally, it is important to recognise that perceptions of officers' vulnerability to assaults and broader threats means that they can experience significant costs associated with trusting.[26]

> Trust and distrust seep into and through a complex mosaic of cultural norms, metaphors, and often conflicting institutional priorities.

The prison setting is therefore an environment in which trust and distrust seep into and through a complex mosaic of cultural norms, metaphors, and often conflicting institutional priorities. Having discussed these features at an operational level, the following section will assess our understanding of trust as a concept, focusing particularly on the meaning of the term and how it can be shaped and experienced by people in prison.

Unravelling the Tapestry of Trust

Whilst we have seen that great emphasis is placed on the value and purpose of trust in prison, there is little guidance on its meaning and characteristics. Large demands are placed on trust as a concept at policy and operational level, yet it is rarely acknowledged that there is no general agreement on how the term is defined. For example, trust has been described as many things, including a feeling, an attitude, and characteristic of a relationship.[27] The literature on trust is often abstract and philosophical which makes it difficult to translate its complexities into the applied and actionable world. However, there is a general agreement that trust is of crucial importance to our social lives. Some go so far as to state that without the routine trust-based assumptions we make in our day-to-day lives, we would not get out of bed on a morning.[28] As a result of this, trust is something intangible and embedded unconsciously and it is only when we have misplaced trust, that we become aware that it is something we have assumed or taken for granted and we become more conscious and cautious of who, what and when to trust.[29]

Whilst trust is often associated with value and positive meanings and outcomes, some research shows that it can operate coercively and control our freedoms.[30] Here it is argued that it is mistrust that can

22. Warr, J. (2008). Personal reflections on prison staff. In J. Bennett, B. Crewe, & A. Wahidin (Eds.), *Understanding Prison Staff* (chapter 2). Willan.
23. Crewe, B. (2011). Soft power in prison: implications for staff-prisoner relationships, liberty and legitimacy, *European Journal of Criminology, 8*(6), 455–68.
24. Crewe, B., Schliehe, A., & Przybylska, D. A. (2023). 'It causes a lot of problems': Relational ambiguities and dynamics between prisoners and staff in a women's prison. *European Journal of Criminology, 20*(3), 925-946.
25. Lambert, E. G., Hogan, N. L., Barton-Bellessa, S. M., & Jiang, S. (2012). Examining the relationship between supervisor and management trust and job burnout among correctional staff. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 39*(7), 938-957.
26. Schultz, W. J. (2023). "Hesitation Gets You Killed:" Perceived Vulnerability as an Axiomatic Feature of Correctional Officer Working Personalities. *Justice Quarterly,* 1-21.
27. Hosking, G. (2014). *Trust: A History.* Oxford University Press.
28. Luhmann, N. (1979). *Trust and Power.* Wiley.
29. See footnote 27: Hosking, G. (2014).
30. Carey, M. (2017). Mistrust: A*n Ethnographic Theory.* Hau Books.

create constructive social interactions and relationships. Indeed, by drawing upon some of the earlier operational points, we can see that not placing trust in a system, situation or individual, can provide an effective way of protecting from potential harm and it is wise not to trust indiscriminately. Crucially, trust is also a term that is pliable and easily shaped so its meaning can differ and change. This is particularly the case when institutions are involved and there is historical evidence to suggest that institutions use the term trust artificially to express and mitigate power and interest.[31] Consequently, the characteristics of the term mean that if we are to understand trust, its operation, and its meaning across prisons, we need to pay attention to its variations and to the role of the prison itself. There is the potential that if we focus on trust as a solely individualistic and enriching concept, we miss the subtleties and shades of grey.

By focusing more particularly on the research that has been done on trust in prisons, we begin to gain an understanding of what it might look like in particular prison contexts. Most notably, trust has been recognised as an individualised concept and 'intelligent trust' has been applied to explain the way that people make judgements of trust and place trust in the trustworthy.[32] This notion of trust places emphasis on a person's trustworthiness and shows that these judgements are based on a person's perceptions of the reliability, honesty, and role-based competencies of the other. Put simply, this means that in prison, if someone performs their role in a reliable and honest way, they are more likely to present as trustworthy and therefore be trusted.[33] We have seen that in a prison context, trust is often strongly associated with security and so underpinned by notions of risk, particularly within the high security estate. The experience of feeling trusted is shaped significantly by the type of prison and whilst this is not to suggest a simplistic binary related to security categorisation, though categorisation is in theory

decreased via trust, there is evidence to show that trust is shaped according to prison culture.

Using the concept of a 'reinventive prison', it has been argued that despite the nature of prison and the relational imbalances of power that make trust difficult, people in prison experience feelings of value and hope if they are trusted by a state agent.[34] This is seen as particularly important because of the messages this can communicate to a person in prison and its links to desistance journeys. As well as this, there is also evidence to suggest that trust in prison can be associated with care and prison officers that structure their work through a caring approach are more likely to be trusted to provide support to prisoners.[35] Most notably, this has been associated with the belief that staff care about the person on a humanistic level, going beyond job-based competencies.[36]

Towards a Typology of Trust

Having assessed the operational relevance of trust and discussed the evidence base and its current complexities, this section moves to map the literature and draw upon reflections from doctoral research,[37] considering the literature on trust and its associations with power, performance, and person-centred practice. In doing so, this section proposes a loose hierarchical framework through which to consolidate and move forward our understanding. Primarily, this framework offers three broad and intersecting categories through which trust can present in prison.

Trust as power

Within this category, trust is created and shaped by the power dimensions that characterise imprisonment. The broader literature terms this 'forced trust' and uses the concept to describe how trust is generated by institutions in spaces and cultures of distrust.[38] This process involves an institution defining the meaning of

> Trust is also a term that is pliable and easily shaped so its meaning can differ and change.

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31. Frevert, U. (2009). *Does Trust have a History?* EUI MWP LS, 2009/01. Retrieved from Cadmus, European University Research Institute Research Repository.
32. Liebling, A. (2016). The Dalai Lama, prisons, and prisons research: A call for trust, a 'proper sense of fear', dialogue, curiosity and love, *Prison Service Journal, 255,* 58-63.
33. See footnote 3: Williams, R., & Liebling, A. (2023).
34. See footnote 5: Ugelvik, T. (2022).
35. Tait, S. (2011). A Typology of Prison Officer Approaches to Care. *European Journal of Criminology, 8*(6), 440-454.
36. See footnote 6: Waite, S. (2022).
37. Waite, S. (2023). *"Their ethos is all about building trust": an exploration of staff-prisoner relationships at a women's open prison.* (Doctoral Thesis, Leeds Beckett University)
38. Tikhomirov, A. (2013). The regime of forced trust: making and breaking emotional bonds between people and state in Soviet Russia, 1917–1941 *Slavonic & East European Review, 9*1(1), 78-11.

trust, identifying who can and cannot be trusted, and then distributing trust and distrust through various mechanisms. Central to this idea, is the individual's dependency on the institution alongside our need for a basic level of trust to function day-to-day. Consequently, a form of forced trust is generated which then builds compliance as people have little choice but to rely on a central power.

In prison trust is a scarce resource and extensive assessments of risk set the terms and conditions under which trust can be granted. This is often based on notions of compliance and behaviour and trust can be swiftly withdrawn if conditions are not met. To be trusted means following rules with consequences for the withdrawal of trust if rules are not followed. People in prison consistently talk of having little choice but to rely on systems and staff to get things done and there are policy mechanisms that aim to promote trust in the prison. Whilst trust has typically positive associations in Western societies, it is important to acknowledge this form of trust in a prison context. There is an unspoken acceptance of the power the term holds in relation to order and compliance. Indeed, the rationale behind embedding trust within prison policy is littered with phrases such as order and legitimacy, in a way that allows state decisions to be trusted. Yet this asks people to trust with little questioning that this might not be the correct thing to do, and we rarely consider the ethics of *requiring* people to trust the state.

Trust as performative

This category of trust is arguably the most common and openly discussed within prison. We start to see trust as performance when people begin to comply with and perform their determined roles. Here a level of trust is established that, though thin, goes beyond the forced when people start to identify others that they trust to complete defined tasks or roles. The key feature here is that whilst there is some trust, it is defined to narrow role-based circumstances and performative as it operates to achieve an instrumental goal, meaning it helps someone to achieve a specific aim and is a means to an end. This concept of trust is seen in accounts that suggest we trust as a continuation of our own self-interest, and we trust a person because we believe they will benefit from our interests.[39]

In the prison context we see this in several examples. People may comply to gain the trust that will enable them to progress in their sentence and gain favour with staff. People work in trusted positions, move to lower security categories, and comply with ROTL requirements to gain trust because it gives social capital and can make prison life more manageable. People identify staff they trust based on notions of reliability, honesty, and job-based competencies as they demonstrate the ability to support with the completion of non-instrumental goals.[40] Notably, whilst this is distinctive from forced trust, it is associated with a need and reliance on staff to get things done. Arguably, the distinguishing feature is that a thin and defined form of trust develops in response to the performance of role-based competencies and people can trust that these competencies will be performed.

Trust as person-centred

Finally, there is evidence that pockets of thicker, interpersonal trust are present in some prison spaces when interactions and relationships are humanising and person-centred.[41] This category is associated with a deeper level of trust that stems from our need to belong and matter to others in a non-instrumental way.[42] These explanations take into account the ethics of involuntary relationships of dependency and distinguish between trust and reliance. They argue that when we trust, we are vulnerable to the deeper emotions that are associated with betrayal, rather than the frustration we feel when someone lets us down.[43] This deeper level of harm is experienced because the actions of others in dealings of trust, communicate whether we matter. In this sense, offering trust can be challenging because of the vulnerability to harm that comes with it.

Though not often associated with prison, this type of trust can exist. There is trust between friends and colleagues, and there can be trust between staff and prisoners. We have seen that there are higher levels of

> Pockets of thicker, interpersonal trust are present in some prison spaces when interactions and relationships are humanising and person-centred.

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39. Hardin, R. (2002). *Trust and trustworthiness.* Russell Sage Foundation.
40. See footnote 32: Liebling, A. (2016).
41. See footnote 6: Waite, S. (2022).
42. Kirton, A. (2020). Matters of Trust as Matters of Attachment Security. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies, 28*(5), 583-602.
43. Hawley, K. (2012). *Trust: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford University Press.

trust in relationships where people experience care, and there is trust in relationships where this is experienced alongside a separation from the prison itself. In relationships where people believe they matter as human beings, have time to know each other, and see staff going beyond the regime for them, trust is distinguished from competence and can reassure people of their value.[44] Interestingly, when this form exists it
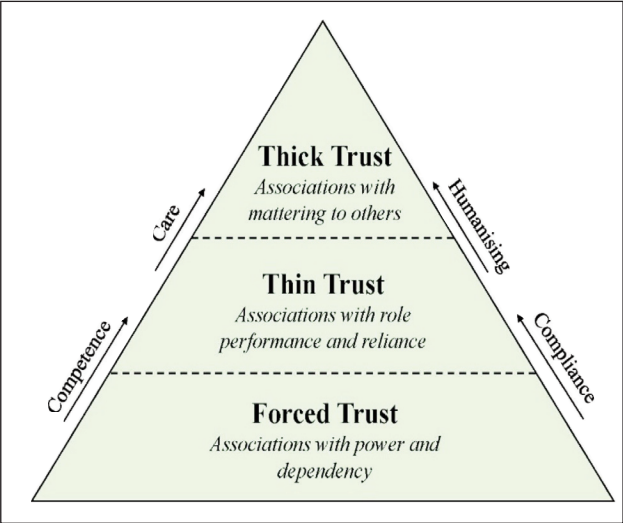
survives being damaged by regime-based frustrations, such as not been able to carry out a promised task. When people feel they matter, reliance-based instrumental competencies are not at the heart of trust.

Conclusion

The term trust can be used indiscriminately with an assumption towards its meaning as a valuable and enriching concept. Whilst this can often be true, it means we pay little attention to its subtle features and distinctions, including its links to institutions and its links to power. This can leave important ethical questions unaddressed. This article has considered the concept of trust and its operation within prison environments. Importantly, the article has highlighted a hierarchical operational framework through which we can begin to view trust within the Prison Service, raising crucial issues of power, role performance, and person-centred practice. Whilst each domain of trust serves a purpose within the context of the prison, a deeper sense of the term can go some way to ensuring that a more mindful and ethical understanding of its variations and complexities is applied.

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44.   See footnote 6: Waite, S. (2022).

Persistent Pain Management in Prison: an exploration of current practice and patient needs, and facilitators and barriers to intervention engagement

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Persistent pain is a complex long-term condition (LTC) characterised by biological, psychological, and social features.[2] It has a significant impact on the physical and emotional function of individual patients and is associated with a lower quality of life, detrimentally affecting families, communities, and wider society.[3] Pain that continues for longer than 12 weeks is termed chronic or 'persistent' and affects between 18 per cent to 51 per cent of the world population.[4] Pain is defined by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) as: 'An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage.'

Persistent pain was acknowledged as a primary health condition in 2021,[5] following the World Health Organisation's (2019) updated chronic pain guidelines,[6] which recognised the condition as pain that persists for more than 3 to 6 months. Studies have demonstrated that an inverse relationship exists between persistent pain and socioeconomic status, with higher prevalence rates seen in poorer areas.[7] These social determinants are likely to be the same circumstances that the prison population comes from.

England and Wales has a prison population of 85,851, most of whom are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and typically (53 per cent) aged between 30 and 50.[8] Higher levels of poor health exist in the prison community in the UK and across Europe, compared with the general population.[9] In addition, the Prison Reform Trust estimates that 50 per cent of all people entering prison have a drug problem.[10] The intersection of coexisting persistent pain and opioid use disorder (OUD) poses problems for the prison system due to the diversion of medication and safety concerns.[11]

An estimated 30 per cent of prisoners in England suffer persistent pain.[12] Whilst national figures for pain medication prevalence are unknown, one study of a single English prison reported a third of the population to receive these, of which 44 per cent were opioids.[13] In the general population, musculoskeletal (MSK) pain is the most common diagnosis associated with opioid prescription, and has been closely linked to the

1. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR, ARC Wessex, or the Department of Health and Social Care.
2. British Pain Society (2011). *Pain Summit Report*. Available at: https//www.britishpainspciety.org.
3. See footnote 2: British Pain Society (2011).
4. International Association for the Study of Pain (2020). *IASP announces revised definition of pain.* Available at: https//www. iasp-pain.org
5. National Institute for Clinical Excellence (2021). *Chronic pain in over 16s: assessment of all chronic pain and management of chronic primary pain.* Available at: https//www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng193
6. Treede, R. D., Winfried, R., Barke, A., et al. (2019). Chronic pain as a symptom or a disease: the IASP Classification of Chronic Pain for the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). *PAIN, 160(*1), 19-27.
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10. Prison Reform Trust (2023). The Bromley Briefings: Prison Fact-file. January. Available at: https//www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk
11. Annison, H., Guiney, T., & Rubenstein, Z. (2023). *Locked In? Achieving penal change in the context of crisis and scandal: A discussion paper.* Prison Reform Trust. Available at: https//www. prisonreformtrust.org.uk
12. Public Health England (2013). *Managing persistent pain in secure settings*. Available at: https//www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-persistent-pain-in-secure-settings
13. Croft, M., & Mayhew, R. (2015). Prevalence of chronic non-cancer pain in a UK prison environment. *British Journal of Pain, 9*(2), 96-108.

development of OUD.[14] Prescription rates for pain medication in English prisons have been found to be higher than community rates and to be associated with substance misuse.[15] Frontline pain medications, such as opioids, gabapentinoids, and tricyclic antidepressants, are frequently the focus of illicit drug trading within secure estates.[16] Patients with comorbid OUD and persistent pain conditions have been shown to suffer more psycho-physiologically and recover more slowly from a pain challenge than opioid naive controls. This is due to their increased pain sensitivity and reduced pain tolerance, caused by prolonged opioid use, leaving them at risk of ongoing drug dependency and relapse.[17]

The Royal College of General Practitioners advise that pain medications (e.g., opioids and gabapentinoids) offer little benefit beyond symptom modification in persistent pain cases, and therefore recommend safe discontinuation.[18] Additionally, passive approaches to pain management prevent engagement with rehabilitation services by encouraging reliance on medication, and averting the acknowledgment of relevant psychosocial factors, such as depression, self-efficacy, and inactivity, impacting on the individual pain experience.[19]

On reception into prison, prisoners are medically assessed and pain medication that is deemed inappropriate for use in this setting, such as opioid analgesics, are reduced (de-prescribed) as per NICE guidelines,[20] frequently leading to patient frustration and drug seeking behaviours.[21] At present, limited alternative pain management interventions are offered to prisoners after de-prescribing. The WHO/Europe Health in Prisons Programme recommends that prisoners should have the same standard of medical care as those living in the community,[22] and guidelines recommend that persistent pain patients should be supported in their self-management.[23] The confinement and isolation of the prison experience can exacerbate existing painful conditions and cause emotional distress.[24] The European Federation for Primary Care warns that disempowerment caused by penal detention is detrimental to effective self-management.[25] Despite this, prison presents a natural opportunity for positive behavioural change, and the development of interdisciplinary partnerships to target effective pain self-management, substance misuse, and other physical health concerns.

Higher levels of poor health exist in the prison community in the UK and across Europe, compared with the general population.

The challenges of institutional overcrowding, staff retention, and underfunding mean that prisons frequently struggle to achieve their statutory aims, resulting in environments that are detrimental to prisoner health.[26] This is likely to impact negatively on effective self-management of LTCs and persistent pain.

This exploratory study aimed to highlight key issues that persistent pain presents in prisons and gain an understanding of patients' general needs, and the facilitators of, and barriers to, intervention. Objectives were to:

1) Explore routinely collected pharmacy data within a single site to describe trends in dispensed pain medication.

2) Undertake Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) with prisoners with persistent pain and lived experience, and key staff with knowledge of potential areas for

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14. Magel, J., Kietrys, D., Kruger, E., Fritz, J., & Gordon, A. (2021). Physical Therapists should play a greater role in managing patients with opioid use and opioid misuse. *Substance Abuse, 42*(3), 255-260.
15. Sedgwick, A., & Orr, M. (2017). *The chronic pain management service at HMP The Mount: overview of the current service and audit.* Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust.
16. See footnote 11: Annison, H., Guiney, T., & Rubenstein, Z. (2023).
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19. Wachholtz, A., Gonzalez, G., & Ziedonis, D, (2019). Psycho-physiological response to pain among opioid use disorder: Implications for patients with prolonged abstinence. *American Journal of Drug & Alcohol Abuse, 45*(5), 495-505.
20. See footnote 4: IASP. (2020).
21. See footnote 17: Wachholtz, A., Foster, S., & Cheadle, M. (2015).
22. World Health Organisation (2023). *Prisons and health EURO.* Available at: https://www.who.int/europe/health-topics/prisons-and-health
23. See footnote 4: IASP. (2020)
24. Walsh, E., Butt, C., Freshwater, D., Dobson, R., Wright, N., Cahill, J., Briggs, M., & Alldred, D. (2014). Managing pain in prison: staff perspectives. *International Journal of Prisoner Health, 10*(3), 198-208.
25. See footnote 8: Ministry of Justice (2023).
26. See footnote 9: Groenewegen, P., et al. (2022).

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service development, to hear stories, suggestions, and expectations around the needs, facilitators of, and barriers to, de-prescribing in general.

The authors intend the results of this exploratory study to be used in future to explore the feasibility of designing a biopsychosocial treatment programme for persistent pain management in this unique setting.

Method

This mixed methods exploration of current prison pain management practice consisted of a database search to scope the number of individuals entering HMP Winchester on prescription pain medication, combined with PPIE input from both prisoners and key staff stakeholders (see study inclusion criteria). PPIE was used to gather stories, experiences, and expectations of prison healthcare in relation to pain management practice, through the eyes of service users and workers, to shape further research priorities and the initial stages of future intervention design.

Setting

This explorative study was conducted at HMP Winchester, which is an old Victorian remand prison built in 1869, and serves the law courts of the south-central region of England. It houses a population of 690 men, mostly aged between 30 and 50, with 17 per cent over 50 years of age and 21 per cent being under 25. Half are unsentenced and 13 per cent are foreign nationals. Only 3 per cent are serving life sentences, and on average 83 (12 per cent) prisoners a month are released back into the local community.[27] Health care at the prison is provided by Practice Plus Group Limited.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was not required as the project was deemed PPIE and not clinical research. The project was registered with the Practice Plus Group Ltd, Health in Justice, Research and Innovation Committee and funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), Applied Research Collaboration Wessex. Each PPIE participant was provided with a plain language description of the activity and its relation to the project. Confidentiality was discussed and participants were required to verbally acknowledge their agreement, prior to taking part. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point from the discussion. All completed surveys and written feedback were destroyed securely after data analysis.

Database Search

Inclusion criteria

All participants were men over the age of 18. The prison pharmacy database was searched for admissions to the prison receiving a prescription for a controlled pain medication. The search was conducted under the generic names of commonly used analgesics. Search terms were as follows; Opioids, 'Codeine based preparations', 'Tramadol', 'Morphine sulphate', neuropathic analgesia', 'Amitriptyline', 'Pregabalin', 'Gabapentin',. Other medications licensed for pain relief, such as tricyclic antidepressants (for example, Duloxetine) and Benzodiazepines (for example, Diazepam) were excluded, due to widespread use within the prison population for other conditions.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the electronic healthcare records database, SystemOn, and pharmacy records were searched between March to May 2023 inclusive. A three month period was stipulated to fit within the study funding period.

Data Extraction

Demographic characteristics (age, ethnicity, work status, and living accommodation) were extracted. Recorded comorbidities were documented, and a mental health or substance misuse disorder was recorded if a case note showed evidence of a clinical diagnosis or an active treatment from the respective service. LTCs were defined as a disorder impacting on an individuals' quality of life for more than a year, as per NICE guidelines.[28] A recorded diagnosis of two or more

> Frontline pain medications, such as opioids, gabapentinoids, and tricyclic antidepressants, are frequently the focus of illicit drug trading.

27. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2022). *Report of an unannounced inspection of HMP Winchester. 7-11th February.* Available at: https//www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk
28. National Institute for Clinical Evidence (2015). *Older people with social care needs and multiple long-term condition.* Ng 22. Available at: https:// www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng22

LTCs was taken as evidence of comorbidity. The primary diagnosis, or reason for the initial prescription of a controlled pain medication, was recorded. A prisoner was deemed 'homeless' if they were designated as 'of no fixed abode'. These demographics provide insight into patient socioeconomic influences and status (which is strongly associated with deprivation),[29] and may affect access to healthcare in the prison community.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample and categorical information organised into nominal and ordinal data. Numerical statistics were described using means, standard deviations, and ranges where appropriate.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement

Inclusion criteria

Patient contributions were collected in a two stage iterative process.
1) An initial convenience sample of six men with persistent pain were selected from the prison physiotherapy service waiting list and invited to complete an open text survey. This feedback was then used to construct discussion topics for interview in stage 2.
2) A separate convenience sample (n = 12) was selected from the pharmacy database search, as described above, and divided into two subgroups; group A (n = 6) from the codeine search list, and group B (n = 6) from the pregabalin list. Individuals from both groups were then invited for interview.

Patients were deemed eligible if they had entered the prison in the study period of March to April 2023, were medically stable, and not assessed as a security risk by prison staff. Codeine users (Group A) were canvassed, as they formed the largest group and therefore the most obvious for comparison, Pregabalin users (Group B) were included, as collectively they present the greatest challenge to prison health care services.[30] Due to its ability to replicate the effects of an illicit drug, pregabalin is the most diverted medication in the prison system.[31] Prior to patient interviews, the following key staff stakeholders were invited to an informal group discussion to explore potential areas for cross disciplinary partnership:

❑ Physical education instructor
❑ Psychologist
❑ GP
❑ Nurse prescriber
❑ Custody manager for activities

Data Collection

Prisoners (n = 12) invited to take part in one-to-one interview discussions were asked to acknowledge their agreement to participate as previously stated. Detailed notes in writing were taken by the lead author. Six key staff stakeholders involved in service delivery contributed to discussions, which were also recorded in writing by the lead author. Prisoner interviews took place in the privacy of the individual participants' cell, and staff meetings were held in the healthcare department.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Discussion highlights from prisoners and staff were processed to identify patient needs, and potential engagement facilitators and general barriers to behavioural change. These were organised into recommendations to support decision making for intervention design, as has been described elsewhere.[32]

Results

Demographics

A total of 475 men were received into HMP Winchester over the three-month study period, 43 of whom were in possession of a prescription for pain medication, giving a prevalence rate of 9 per cent (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Prevalence of prescription pain medication entering HMP Winchester in Spring of 2023*

Month	Receptions	Individual Prescriptions	Prevalence	Mean Age
March	147	n = 14	10 per cent	45.41 (SD = 15.65)
April	153	n = 9	6 per cent	46.75 (SD = 17.04)
May	175	n = 20	11 per cent	42.35 (SD = 14.44)
Total	**475**	**n = 43**	**9 per cent**	**45.14 (SD = 15.21)**

29. Public Health England (2020). *Prescribed Medicines Review: Summary.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk
30. NHS England (2017). *Pain management formulary for prisons: The formulary for acute, persistent and neuropathic pain* (2nd ed).
31. Soni, A., & Walters, P. (2019). A study of the reasons for prescribing and misuse of gabapentinoids in prison including their co-prescription with opioids and anti-depressants. *International Journal of Prisoner Health, 16*(1), 67-77.
32. Doria, N., Condran, B., & Boulos, L. (2018). Sharpening the focus: differentiating between focus groups for patient engagement v qualitative research. *Research Involvement and Engagement, 4*(19), 145-162.

The majority of cases (86 per cent, n = 37) were of white British ethnicity with an average age of 45 years (SD 15.21; range 20 to 88 years). As shown in Table 2, the majority had been prescribed their medication for a MSK condition. Most were known to mental health services and had a substance misuse history. Over a quarter were recorded as homeless and few were in paid employment at the time of arrest. The mean duration for receiving prescription medication was 8.77 years (SD 5.47).

Table 2. *Demographic characteristics of cohort in possession of a prescription pain medication*

MH History	MSK History	SM Disorder	Comorbidity	Homeless	In Work
n =36	n = 35	n = 29	n = 32	n = 11	n = 7
83 per cent	81 per cent	67 per cent	74 per cent	26 per cent	16 per cent

Note. MH = Mental health, MSK = Musculoskeletal condition, SM = Substance misuse

Prescribing Characteristics

Prescribing rates for the three-month period are displayed in Table 3. The majority of prescriptions were for opioid medications [codeine and tramadol (79 per cent)] with codeine-based preparations the most commonly prescribed, followed by gabapentinoids, of which pregabalin the most frequently used. Over a third had been prescribed a tricyclic antidepressant (Amitriptyline) for neuropathic pain, and half received two or more prescription analgesics, with codeine preparations in combination with a gabapentinoid (38 per cent, n = 8) being most common.

Table 3. *Breakdown of medication prescriptions for the three month study period of spring 2023*

No. Pts	Codeine	Amitriptyline	Pregabalin	Tramadol	Gabapentin	2 or More Drugs
Total	29	16	12	5	3	21
n = 43	67 per cent	37 per cent	28 per cent	12 per cent	7 per cent	49 per cent

Patient Perspectives

Feedback from PPIE discussions is presented under key themes and a summary of the general needs, and facilitators and barriers to intervention listed with recommendations for service development.

Needs: Information, Explanation, and Agency

Respondents believed they would benefit from a full explanation of the prison prescribing policy for pain medication, giving information and reasons for de-prescribing, provided inclusively in terms that could be understood by all. In addition, an opportunity for open discussion about medication changes with the attending clinician was seen as important. Prisoners needed the time and opportunity to voice their concerns, and wished to be listened to by clinicians so that some personal agency was retained in decision-making. This was perceived to be in contrast with current care practices. A full list of identified patient needs can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. *Patient identified needs and recommendations for targeted intervention design*

Recommendations	Group A — Codeine	Group B — Pregabalin
1. Explanation of de-prescribing policy to reduce confusion and provide understanding	● Why prison is prescribing different for community? ● Misunderstanding	● Inconsistency in messages ● Confusion in prescribing policy
2. Education of alternative management methods	● Emotional support on entry ● Positive coping strategies	● No knowledge of other management methods
3. Knowledge of benefits to healthy lifestyle	● No knowledge of influencers to better health	● Lack of resources for behavioural change
4. Health literacy	● Avoidance of activity	● Long term harms need to be explained
5. Information and training	● How to get better sleep	● Pains of detox explained
6. Patient centred and Inclusive Education	● Information tailored to individual learning needs	● Boredom and lack of role ● Help managing emotions
7. Service Provision	● Rehabilitation needs to be in a safe environment	● More time to move ● Individualised treatment

Facilitators: Purpose, Incentives, and Opportunity

Opportunities for purposeful ways to pass the time of imprisonment was called for, and rewards for engaging with rehabilitation programmes, such as more association time and wages, suggested. Several believed that prisoners themselves could play a meaningful role in helping others to cope better, and this could be developed into a healthcare peer mentor role, similar to the 'Listeners'.[33] Both groups put forward ideas of activities that the prison could offer, for example yoga and Pilates, or more regular routine physiotherapy. Prisoners wanted to be included in decisions regarding their medication, even if they did not agree with existing guidelines, and believed that opportunity for open and informative consultations would help to facilitate engagement. There was a common view that patients with pain needed to be listened to, given time to have the risks, benefits, and alternatives carefully explained to them, even though they were unlikely to be happy with the outcome. A full list of enabling facilitators is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. *Facilitators to participation and recommendations for targeted intervention design*

Recommendations	Group A — Codeine	Group B — Pregabalin
1. Activity programme backed up by In Cell activity packs and workbook	● Time out of cell ● In cell activities	● Resources to change ● Knowledge of other ways
2. Certification of achievement and peer support	● Rehab attendance rewarded as evidence development	● Being listened to ● Help from other prisoners
3. Provision of therapeutic services	● Yoga, Pilates	● Regular physiotherapy
4. MDT and patient centred approach	● Reduction to be explained, patient centred and discussed	● Addiction to be separated from pain management
5. Development of therapeutic relationships	● To be treated like a human being	● Harms of medication explained
6. Provision of therapeutic environments	● Provision of a safe place to do it	● Access for disabilities

Barriers: Activity, Awareness, and Addiction

A full list of barriers and addressing recommendations is shown in Table 6. In summary, patients offered a limited understanding of how positive health behaviours can favourably impact on pain. Most men were unaware of the benefits that exercise could provide in pain management and this lack of knowledge acted as a barrier to behaviour change. When asked for recommendations to overcome this hurdle, a loss of agency and an absence of self-efficacy was demonstrated, leading to a pronounced sense of helplessness, as seen in the following contribution: *'We're banged up all day, what can we do? Nobody listens, my medication is just stopped and my pain is worse. There is absolutely nothing I can do to help myself. I feel like cutting up.'*

Information about pain in simple understandable formats was suggested by a minority. Managing pain and cravings without medication was a major obstacle to participating in physical activity, and many denied the harms caused by long-term drug use. Some advised that OUD should be separated from persistent pain, with addiction addressed before behaviour change for pain management could be contemplated. The majority disclosed notions that 'addicts think differently' and required a different approach. Drug seeking was a primary concern over functional restoration. De-prescribing was viewed as unfair and perceptions of injustice common, resulting in demotivation, avoidance of constructive activities, and withdrawal from prison regime services.

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33. A peer-to-peer support service in prisons sponsored by The Samaritans.

Table 6. *Barriers to participation and recommendations for targeted intervention design*

Recommendations	Group A — Codeine	Group B — Pregabalin
1. Skill development in Health Literacy and cognition	• Lacking knowledge of benefits of activity and impact on health	• Denial of harms and habits • Refusal to Face situation
2. Provision learning in pain physiology and physical education	• Limited understanding of how to exercise	• Lack of support • No encouragement to change
3. Help to overcome pain to engage with opportunities offered inside	• Limited work potential benefits and demotivation	• Lack of motivation • Fear Avoidance
4. Substance Misuse referral for addiction issues	• No meaningful role in prison	• Drug seeking • Addiction mindset
5. Pain education and participation in exercise for all	• Access facilities for disabilities • Fear Avoidance	• Lack of understanding in how healing happens
6. Support with motivation and future goal setting/planning	• Limited opportunity for movement	• Immediate focus only • Lack of long term goals
7. Symptoms acknowledged and validated by healthcare professionals	• Perceived injustice	• Resistance to exercise • Catastrophising

Staff Proposals

Group members contributed that a pain management programme, which is activity-based and psychologically-informed, with an accompanying in-cell workbook would be beneficial. Educational level, neurodiversity, and baseline physical conditioning were raised as key considerations. Safety concerns regarding the risk of violence when mixing prisoners from different wings in group work was raised, and a risk assessment of prisoners' suitability for participation proposed. Enabling incentives to engagement with treatment were suggested also; a certificate of achievement on completion, and positive recommendations made on prison/probation records to demonstrate efforts towards reform proposed.

Discussion

This study describes trends in dispensed pain medication within a single prison, and themes drawn from PPIE to understand needs, and the facilitators and barriers to intervention engagement. Results indicate that persistent pain is a complex health issue in prison. The majority of patients had a history of mental health problems and a background of substance misuse. It may be that higher levels of these characteristics exist in remand sites, as we recorded greater rates than those reported by the Prison Reform Trust, nationally.[34] Many of our cohort were homeless and the majority unemployed, highlighting the difficult socioeconomic backgrounds of prison populations.[35]

Prescription rates of controlled pain medications in this study were similar to that found in other remand sites.[36] Most of our cohort had been prescribed medication for a MSK condition, which is the diagnosis most frequently associated with opioid prescription and risk of misuse.[37] Serious safety concerns about the harm caused by opioid medication in prisons have been raised,[38] and this has implications for intervention design and healthcare services.

Feedback from PPIE highlighted multiple concerns regarding pain and prison de-prescribing policies. Prisoners needed a voice that was properly heard, however prison is naturally a place of limited personal agency. Men displayed limited insight into the importance of de-prescribing, and little knowledge of the risks presented by escalating doses and harms of dependency. Our findings show that information needs to be provided in plain summaries to explain these risks. The de-prescribing process was seen as unfair and considered a form of punishment. Perceptions of injustice have been cited as a barrier to recovery in persistent pain.[39] Having symptoms acknowledged,

34. See footnote 9: Groenewegen, P., et al, (2022).
35. Ahmed, A., van den Muijsenburgh, M., & Vrijhoef, H. (2022). Person-centred care in primary care: What works for whom, how and in what circumstances? *Health and Social Care in the Community, 30*(6), 3328–3341.
36. See footnote 31: Soni, A., & Walters, P. (2019).
37. See footnote 13: Croft, M., & Mayhew, R. (2015).
38. See footnote 12: Public Health England (2013).
39. Njis, J., Lahousse, L., Roose, E., Mustaqim, K., et al,. (2021). *Pain and opioid use in cancer survivors:* A practical guide to account for perceived injustice. Pain Physician, 24(5), 309-317.

validated, and being given opportunities to talk were offered as ways to deal with a sense of unfairness. This has been shown to be an important step in improving treatment outcomes for people with chronic low back pain,[40] and for patients from low socioeconomic backgrounds.[41]

Managing without medication was perceived to be a barrier to behaviour change and it has been claimed that patients with persistent pain present seeking symptom relief.[42] Prison de-prescribing policy conflicts with patient expectations, and current practice guidelines indicate patients should cooperate in dose tapering. Therefore, it is important that those with coexisting pain and OUD are identified and supported in a referral pathway. Addressing both issues in a joint treatment strategy has been proposed,[43] and a psychologically informed approach to group physiotherapy has been shown to be effective in the treatment of other chronic conditions.[44] This indicates the need for interdisciplinary working and the incorporation of substance misuse services into de-prescribing programmes and policies, targeting drug seeking behaviours and hidden dependency, to improve personalised care and safety in prisons.

In contrast with current, general clinical opinion, patients with substance use disorders suggested separating the treatment of addiction from pain management. This is an issue worthy of deeper consideration as there are mixed views regarding the best approach to managing pain in OUD.[45] A move towards an interdisciplinary treatment pathway that addresses both coexisting OUD and persistent pain together has been called for by some researchers.[46] This makes intuitive sense, as smaller isolated communities have limited resources and a combined approach may facilitate better outcomes, as has been demonstrated in the treatment of other LTCs.[47]

Staff reported incentives and rewards as important facilitators to behaviour change, and suggested that allowing prisoners to play a role in the running of a programme may enable recruitment, endorse participation, and raise treatment satisfaction. Knowledge sharing between professionals and prisoners has previously been shown to aid better practice development and staff training opportunities.[48] Therefore, these contributions are important to consider in developing an interdisciplinary pathway for persistent pain management in prison. The current study has revealed a mismatch between patient expectations and current Prison Service provision in pain management. An integration of interdisciplinary care through the patient prison journey may improve outcomes.

Limitations

This study is limited by a narrow search strategy for frontline pain medication and it is likely that persistent pain prevalence rates are higher, as other medications which may be prescribed for pain, such as Benzodiazepines, were excluded due to their widespread use in other conditions. Our study was conducted at a single remand prison, with a small sample of all male prisoners, therefore findings are limited and it is not possible to generalise results to other custodial settings or different cohorts (such as women and young people). The study was also limited by its short time span, meaning the longitudinal picture remains unknown.

Conclusion

This explorative study highlights issues that persistent pain management presents in a prison setting, and indicates potential targets for pain management programmes. These findings will be used to design and develop an intervention for persistent pain in prison. Future research will build on this work to explore pain management in different prison settings and co-develop an interdisciplinary pain pathway to support safer de-prescribing of pain medications in custody.

40. Lamb, S. E., Hansen, Z., Lall, R., Castelnuovo, E., Withers, E. J., Nichols, V., Potter, R., & Underwood, M. R. (2010). Back Skills Training Trial investigators. Group cognitive behavioural treatment for low-back pain in primary care: a randomised controlled trial and cost-effectiveness analysis. *Lancet, 375,* 916–923.
41. See footnote 13. Croft, M., & Mayhew, R. (2015).
42. Wachholtz, A., Robinson, D., & Epstein, E. (2022). Developing a novel treatment for patients with chronic pain and Opioid User Disorder. *Substance Abuse Treatment Prevention and Policy, 17*(1), 35-47.
43. See footnote 42: Wachholtz, A., et al. (2022).
44. Williamson, E,. Boniface, G., & Marlan, I., et al. (2022). The clinical effectiveness of a physiotherapy delivered physical and psychological group intervention for older adults with neurological claudication: the BOOST randomised controlled trial. *Journal of Gerontology, 77*(8), 1654-1663.
45. Main, C., & Spanwick, C. (2000). *Pain management: An interdisciplinary approach.* Churchill Livingstone.
46. Magel, J., Kietrys, D., Kruger, E., Fritz, J., & Gordon, A. (2021). Physical Therapists should play a greater role in managing patients with opioid use and opioid misuse. *Substance Abuse, 42*(3), 255-260.
47. See footnote 40: Lamb, S. E., et al. (2010).
48. Treacy, S., Martin, S., Samarutilake, N., & Van Bortel, T. (2021). Patient and public involvement (PPI) in prisons: the involvement of people living in prison in the research process – a systematic scoping review. *Health and Justice, 9(*30), 30-51.

Taking the prison to the classroom: prison service professionals as guest speakers in Higher Education

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Making a meaningful connection between a criminology classroom and working in a prison is not always easy. As an academic discipline, criminology is concerned with theories, their empirical basis, and their practical application. Degree programmes typically focus on processes of criminalisation and victimisation, the causes, meaning and representation of crime, deviance and harm, and on official and unofficial responses.[1] Among these concerns, the experiences of people working in the criminal justice system (CJS) can be overlooked and when they are considered, with some notable exceptions, the focus is often on the roles of police officers, not prison staff.[2] In this article, we suggest some ways to create and take opportunities for communication between prison staff and students about working in the Prison Service. We argue that taking the prison, or at least prison staff, to the classroom has benefits for both students and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

This article arises from the shared experiences of the three authors collaborating on an undergraduate module, *Working in the Criminal Justice System,* which introduced guest speakers into the classroom. We were motivated by a concern to provide university students with a better understanding of the working lives of professionals in the CJS, and to equip them with insights that would assist them should they pursue a career working with people in contact with the CJS. We will reflect on the experience of being part of this module and explore how the contributions of prison service professionals in particular can enrich student learning and help bring the roles of prison officers and governors out from behind closed doors. We will also consider some of the practical issues of 'taking the prison to the classroom' and reflect on how our approach can be further developed.

Background

The module we collaborated on, *Working in the Criminal Justice System,* was set up by Carol in 2021 as an optional module for final year undergraduate students at the University of York. It typically recruits 50-75 students and is taught over 8-11 weeks. After an introductory week setting out some of the key concepts and theories related to the work, each week is then themed around one occupational group. Students listen to a pre-recorded lecture and read two set articles about some of the key issues relevant to that week's professionals, which provide useful background. They then attend a session with a guest speaker and the lecturer, and a follow-up seminar with just the lecturer. Because of the hidden nature of prison work, two weeks in the module focus on prison staff, dealing with prison officers and prison governors separately. At the end of the module, students are assessed on their ability to discuss a range of types of work in the CJS and to apply theory and concepts to the experiences of people who work in the CJS. They are also expected to critically engage with the current debates about working in the CJS.

Inviting guest speakers into the classroom is not new. As a form of experiential learning opportunity, invited external speakers, often practitioners from a relevant sector, are invited to contribute in many disciplines in Higher Education. Although academic studies exist that provide insights into the lives of people in working in prisons,[3] there is much to be gained from involving practitioners in the classroom.

1. QAA. (2022). *Subject Benchmark Statement – Criminology.* https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/sbs/sbs-criminology-22.pdf?sfvrsn=3b3dc81_4
2. Crawley, E., & Crawley, P. (2008). Understanding prison officers: culture, cohesion and conflict. In J. Bennett, B. Crewe, &A. Wahidin (Eds.), *Understanding prison staff* (pp.134-152). Willan.
3. For example: Bennett, J. Crewe, B., & Wahidin, A. (2008). *Understanding Prison Staff* (1st ed.). Willan; Liebling, A., Price, D., & Shefer, G. (2011). The prison officer (2nd ed.). Willan.

When this is done, the role of the lecturer includes helping students contextualise what they hear, but the directness of the encounter with the guest speaker offers something unique. Their contributions are important, not least because studies show students value seeing the relevance of course content to the 'real world'.[4][5]

Research on students' experience tells us that for them the primary contributions of guest speakers are to provide insights into working in an industry and to offer career guidance.[6] Typically, speakers offer information based on their personal experience and can knowledgeably discuss work culture and promotion opportunities, as well as illuminate the complexities of working in the criminal justice system.[7] Students relate the information they hear from guest speakers to their own imagined futures, and speakers may provide reassurance or encouragement, leading to a re-evaluation of career plans.[8] Chintakrindi makes the point that 'many students find guest speaker opportunities to be both beneficial for advancing their knowledge of the criminal justice system and confidence in pursuing a career in criminal justice' (p. 103).[9] Similarly, Payne et al.[10] argue that practitioner guest speakers enable students to see how their education can be put to use.

Furthermore, guest speakers have been demonstrated to help build student confidence and knowledge, and promote positive attitudes towards their studies.[11] Integrating the field into the criminology classroom can also reinforce learning materials and bring to light any student misconceptions.[12] Rockell describes the use of guest speakers as providing an opportunity for 'teaching by stealth' (p. 75)[13] which meets several pedagogical goals, including clarifying concepts students may be struggling with, and helping students discover their own misconceptions, all through questioning the guest.

Research shows that in the students' opinions, the ideal speaker is someone with knowledge and experience, who is willing to answer questions, and displays honesty.[14] Guest speakers have advantages over other forms of experiential learning, such as field trips, shadowing, or internships, because they can be included in scheduled teaching time, thus increasing the proportion of students able to participate.[15]

Motivations

The three authors of this article were motivated to take the prison to the classroom as a way of providing students with insights into the CJS, and the Prison Service in particular. Guest speakers from the Prison Service have a particular importance given the scarcity of opportunities for students to hear from them or observe their work. We wanted to help students relate their studies to the 'real world' of this setting.

Being a guest speaker provides an opportunity to promote working in HMPPS and to build students' confidence in considering a career in prisons. HMPPS needs to recruit graduates, and needs those graduates to be informed about what they are joining. New prison officers also need to have the ability to reflect on their working lives, and modules such as this can provide the conceptual tools to help them understand their roles and experiences. Participating as guest speakers was attractive to Pete (a prison governor) and Vanessa (a senior officer) as an opportunity to influence career paths, as discussed above, and to hopefully help recruit and retain the right candidates for HMPPS.

> The ideal speaker is someone with knowledge and experience, who is willing to answer questions, and displays honesty.

4. Payne, B. K., Sumter, M., & Sun, I. (2003). Bringing the field into the criminal justice classroom: Field trips, ride-alongs, and guest speakers. *International Journal of Phytoremediation,* 14(2), 327–344.
5. Xiao, H., Huang, W.-J., Hung, K., Liu, Z., & Tse, T. (2018). 'Professor-for-a-Day': An Initiative to Nurture Communities of Learning and Practice in Hospitality and Tourism. J*ournal of China Tourism Research, 14*(2), 242–261.
6. Jablon-Roberts, S., & McCracken, A. (2022). Undergraduate Student Perceptions of Industry Guest Speakers in the College Classroom. *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 22*(3).
7. Chintakrindi, S. (2023). Stimulating Career Development: Assessment of the Effects of Guest Speaker Learning Experiences on Students Enrolled in Criminal Justice College Courses. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology, 12,* 103–128.
8. See footnote 6: Jablon-Roberts, S., & McCracken, A. (2022).
9. See footnote 7: Chintakrindi, S. (2023).
10. See footnote 4: Payne, B. K., Sumter, M., & Sun, I. (2003).
11. See footnote 7: Chintakrindi, S. (2023).
12. See footnote 4: Payne, B. K., Sumter, M., & Sun, I. (2003).
13. Rockell, B. A. (2009). Challenging What They All Know: Integrating the Real/Reel World into Criminal Justice Pedagogy. J*ournal of Criminal Justice Education, 20*(1), 75–92.
14. See footnote 13: Rockell, B. A. (2009).
15. Crandall, K. L., Buckwalter, M. A., & Witkoski, M. (2021). Show and Tell: An Examination of Experiential Learning Opportunities in Criminal Justice Courses. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 32*(2), 155–170.

Being a guest speaker also provides a means for prison staff to challenge misconceptions of their roles, with an audience of students who are interested in the CJS but typically don't have first-hand experience. For both Pete and Vanessa, one of their motivations for agreeing to talk to students was the opportunity to communicate the range and depth of skills used by prison staff. This included highlighting the caring side of working in a prison, which is often lost in media coverage of the role, and explaining the satisfaction and rewards that come from helping prisoners.

There are also personal reasons to be a guest speaker. Xiao et al.[16] say that practitioners often feel an obligation to give back to education. For Vanessa, the motivation was rather that it is personally rewarding to re-connect with an education setting and good to try new things, adding a further dimension to her role. Having the opportunity to represent the Prison Service, and to promote something they believed in, was important for both Vanessa and Pete, who appreciated being asked.

The personal connection between the three authors, with Carol having previously worked at the same establishment as Vanessa and Pete, was also significant. With negative public and media responses to prison staff being all too common, there can be a reluctance to talk publicly about the work.[17] Knowing Carol, and having already established a good level of trust, provided a 'protective factor', making it easier for Pete and Vanessa to accept the invitation to be guest speakers. Without that prior relationship, there would have needed to be further exploration of what was behind the request, and more groundwork to establish trust and clarity about what to expect, although with good communication those problems are not insurmountable.

Practicalities

Payne et al. identify five stages to the practicalities of involving guest speakers in the classroom: preparing the guest; preparing the class; the presentations (which they assume is the format); appreciating the guest; and tying the guest speakers' ideas to the course material.[18]

> HMPPS needs to recruit graduates, and needs those graduates to be informed about what they are joining.

Because of our prior working relationships, preparation for Pete and Vanessa was relatively straightforward, but all guest speakers still need to have sufficient information about the module, a clear briefing on their anticipated contribution, and the opportunity to ask questions about the session well in advance. One question was what to wear; Vanessa wore her uniform and Pete a tie as usual, in order to convey professionalism and feel comfortable. Despite briefings, Vanessa and Pete both reported feeling a little nervous before the session, concerned that they might not be able to answer the students' questions. Vanessa was able to arrive before the session and talk over her key messages with Carol before meeting the students, which was helpful.

Part of preparing to be a guest speaker is agreeing the date and time of the session, but this proved complicated because of the nature of prison work. For both Pete and Vanessa, there were unexpected events, including a visit from HM Inspectorate of Prisons, which meant the dates planned for their respective visits to the University had to be changed at relatively short notice. Carol was able to change arrangements because other guests on the module had more availability. Circumstances also meant that on one occasion, Vanessa needed to join the class via Zoom, something she found less than ideal, and which lessened the opportunities for interaction with the students. In this instance, the university's audio visual team enabled a hybrid session in the timetabled space. One of the key lessons we took from this collaboration was the need to be flexible.

The class was prepared as part of the introduction week lecture, and the involvement of guest speakers was well known about by the students before they opted for the module. The contributions of the guest speakers to the module deliberately didn't follow the 'traditional' model of guest presentations. Research suggests that having to prepare a talk is time consuming for guests, and can act as a disincentive to accept the invitation or result in dull slides or ill-prepared talks.[19] Presentations are also less engaging for students, who learn best with some form of active learning.[20] Instead, all guest speakers on the module

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16. See footnote 5: Xiao, H., Huang, W.-J., Hung, K., Liu, Z., & Tse, T. (2018).
17. Crawley, E. (2004). *Doing prison work: the public and private lives of prison officers.* Willan.
18. See footnote 4: Payne, B. K., Sumter, M., & Sun, I. (2003).
19. Dalakas, V. (2016). Turning guest speakers' visits into active learning opportunities. *Atlantic Marketing Journal, 5*(2), 93-99.
20. See footnote 13: Rockell, B. A. (2009).

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were 'interviewed' by Carol in front of the students, with the questions having been shared in advance. The approach was conversational and relaxed, with this section of the session lasting approximately 25 minutes. Questions about career path, current role, challenges and rewards, were kept deliberately broad, with an understanding that Vanessa and Pete could answer how they liked and that there would be no follow up questions broaching sensitive subjects.

The students' appreciation for hearing from prison staff was clear in the sessions. After hearing Vanessa and Pete being 'interviewed' by Carol, they had a chance to ask questions for a further 25 minutes. For both Pete and Vanessa, hearing the students' questions was reassuring, indicated a genuine interest, and established a human connection. It was clear from the questions posed that students were attentive, wanting to know more, and that any fears that there would be an element of morbid curiosity were ill-founded. After the session, both Vanessa and Pete encouraged students to let Carol know if any other questions occurred to them and indicated a willingness to provide written answers.

In each guest speaker session, Carol had questions related to one of the concepts the students were studying, asking Vanessa about her experiences and reflections on establishing the right relationship with prisoners and Pete about managerialism and occupational culture. Further links to the module learning material were made in the seminars after Pete and Vanessa had left, with students reflecting on what they had heard and connecting the guest speakers' contributions to the concepts and theories they were studying.

Reflections and learning for the future

Our model of incorporating guest speakers from the Prison Service is still evolving and there are a number of changes we are considering. In particular, we would like to make the sessions more interactive and to explore ways to overcome students' unfamiliarity with the prison setting. The structure we have established works well for us but is not the only option. We can see alternative ways of incorporating guest speakers from prisons into the higher education classroom, depending on the circumstances of the students and the guest speakers, and the aims of the module. However, we think our approach and the principles behind it could be replicated or adapted elsewhere.

Research on what students want from guest speakers suggest that interactivity is an important element.[21] A very simple step we have planned is using name labels to address the asymmetry of the guest speaker being introduced but not the students, in what we want to be a conversation. In the next iteration of the module, we plan to use several tools to improve interactivity, such as padlets, mentimeters, or jamboards.[22] These are routinely used on this module outside of the guest speaker sessions and would enable shyer students to ask questions anonymously. They could also be used to give guest speakers feedback. One step we plan on introducing is asking students at the end of the session to generate a word cloud to summarise what they have learnt. Students tell Carol how helpful they have found the guest speakers' contributions, but this approach would enable the speakers to see this for themselves. Vanessa's considerable experience of facilitating groups within the prison is also something she is willing to draw on, and in the future we may disrupt the interview model we have established and have her lead more of the session.

Having met with the students, both Pete and Vanessa identified the difficulties their audience has in visualising the prison as a workplace. Its inaccessibility and unfamiliarity are potential barriers to their understanding. We are looking at how to incorporate images of the prison into the sessions. The prison officer recruitment videos produced by HMPPS show officers in their workplace settings and illustrates the physical environment.[23] These can easily be incorporated into the preparation for students before they meet with the guest speakers. Prison tours could also be a way to address this issue and could potentially

> Our experiences of hosting and being guest speakers from the Prison Service in higher education classrooms has been very positive.

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21. See footnote 6: Jablon-Roberts, S., & McCracken, A. (2022).
22. Padlets are virtual post boards. Mentimeters include polls, multiple-choice and open-ended questions, quizzes, and scales. Jamboards are digital whiteboards.
23. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2023). A day in the life of a prison officer. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/zXzPQf4qu8A?feature=shared

provide the opportunity for questions to arise organically, in context. Tours could be especially useful for students considering a career with the Prison Service, but they are also complex and resource-intensive to arrange, especially on a module of this size, and potentially pose security and ethical challenges.[24][25]

With both Pete and Vanessa being established in their careers, they have the expertise and experiences to inform their contributions. However, we can see an argument for new prison officers being recruited as guest speakers, and especially Unlocked participants,[26] recent graduates themselves and typically closer in age to the students, coming to talk to the class. Carol can also see further possibilities for integrating the contributions of guest speakers into the module learning outcomes. Students could be encouraged to include what they have heard from guest speakers in their assessments, and could be asked to write a 'reaction' paper, reflecting on how their thinking has changed as a result of hearing the experiences of a prison officer or prison governor. This is an approach that has been tried elsewhere with success.[27]

We are clear however, that in-person sessions are preferable to asynchronous, recorded sessions. There can be benefits from online, asynchronous discussions,[28] however, having had to use this method during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not our preferred option. While academics may be accustomed to Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings as key components of their work, levels of comfort with these tools can vary in the Prison Service. Online or hybrid meetings also lack the interpersonal connectivity we feel is so important for the inclusion of guest speakers in the classroom. However, we recognise the usefulness of online, hybrid, and asynchronous approaches when necessary.

Conclusion

Our experiences of hosting and being guest speakers from the Prison Service in higher education classrooms has been very positive. Conversations with students indicate they have found it useful, and although we can see scope for developing our approach and recognise the strengths of alternative formats, we are also convinced that there are benefits to both the students and HMPPS in what is essentially a demystifying engagement. Enabling the students to make a connection with a member of the Prison Service, and hear about their experience first-hand, establishes that working in prison is achievable, interesting, and rewarding. For all students, it provides insights into a 'closed world' and brings to life the issues they are exploring as part of criminology programmes. For prison staff, the opportunity to have a platform to talk about their usually 'hidden' work and extend their networks can be empowering and enriching. It is important to be realistic about the practicalities of taking the prison (staff) to the classroom and to maintain a willingness to be flexible and adaptable, but we would encourage more university lecturers to approach their local prisons, and more prison staff to get involved with their local universities.

24. See footnote 4: Payne, B. K., Sumter, M., & Sun, I. (2003).
25. Varela, K. S. (2023). "This is Part of my Final Grade": A LatCrit Critique of Prison Tours as Pedagogical Tools in Criminal Justice Education. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 34*(3), 342–366.
26. https://unlockedgrads.org.uk/
27. See footnote 4: Payne, B. K., Sumter, M., & Sun, I. (2003).
28. Kumari, S. (2019). Connecting graduate students to virtual guests through asynchronous discussions - analysis of an experience. *Online Learning, 5*(2).

Access to Activities in Belgian Prisons: Addressing The Needs of Incarcerated People Through Participatory Action Research

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Participation in prison activities significantly normalises the detention period.[1] Work for example provides daily structure, meaningful engagement, and the opportunity to earn money.[2] Education can lead to diplomas and has the potential to empower individuals.[3] There is a high demand for sports activities among incarcerated people, as they enhance physical and mental well-being.[4] Mental health services in prison can offer a chance for many incarcerated people, who may have never received psychological help before, to identify and manage their mental health issues.[5] Additionally, the library provides access to important information and books and could serve as a valuable source of distraction.[6] Meaningful engagement in these activities can be a crucial need for incarcerated people. In its absence, people may perceive their detention period as wasted time, posing a significant threat to their mental well-being and hampering their chances for reintegration.[7]

Barriers to Accessing the Offer of Activities in Prisons and Beyond

Research shows that incarcerated people face various barriers to participating in these activities. Several studies suggest that internal motivation among persons is often high but does not necessarily result in increased participation.[8] The Belgian study of Hellemans et al. showed that the lack of knowledge about the (registration for) activity offerings is particularly problematic.[9] In their study, 30 per cent of the surveyed incarcerated people reported not being aware of the offerings, and approximately one fifth did not know who to approach to enroll in activities. In addition to barriers related to information (flows), research highlights a strong security-oriented mindset of prison staff, limited language skills among incarcerated people, overlap between activities, limited offerings, and a lack of available staff leading to demotivation among incarcerated people to participate in activities.[10]

1. Halimi, M., Brosens, D., De Donder, L., & Engels, N. (2017). Learning during imprisonment: Prisoners' motives to educational participation within a remand prison in Belgium. *Journal of Correctional Education (1974), 68*(1), 3-31.
2. Naessens, L. (2020). Addressing the needs of people in prison: The case of prison work. *European Journal of Social Work, 23*(6), 933-944.
3. Baranger, J., Rousseau, D., Mastrorilli, M. E., & Matesanz, J. (2018). Doing Time Wisely: The Social and Personal Benefits of Higher Education in Prison. *The Prison Journal, 98*(4), 490-513.
4. Meek, R., & Ramsbotham, L. (2013). *Sport in prison: Exploring the role of physical activity in correctional settings.* Routledge.
5. Forrester, A., Till, A., Simpson, A., & Shaw, J. (2018). Mental illness and the provision of mental health services in prisons. *British Medical Bulletin, 127*(1), 101-109.
6. Garner, J. (2020). Almost like Freedom: Prison Libraries and Reading as Facilitators of Escape. *The Library Quarterly, 90*(1), 5-19.
7. De Vos, H. (2023). From Killing Time to Using Time: Normalizing the Time-Use in Prison. *In Beyond Scandinavian Exceptionalism: Normalization, Imprisonment and Society (pp. 247*-301). Springer International Publishing.
8. Bosma, A., Kunst, M., Reef, J., Dirkzwager, A., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2016). Prison-Based Rehabilitation: Predictors of Offender Treatment Participation and Treatment Completion. *Crime & Delinquency, 62*(8), 1095-1120.
9. Hellemans, A., Aertsen, I., & Goethals, J. (2008). *Externe evaluatie strategisch plan hulp- en dienstverlening aan gedetineerden.* Eindrapport.
10. Kaiser, K. A., Keena, L., Piquero, A. R., & Howley, C. (2021). Barriers to inmate program participation in a private southern US prison. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 44(2),* 165-179.

These barriers are not only recognised in prison studies. Ample research shows how vulnerable groups in society experience a variety of barriers hampering their participation. Looking at access to justice and welfare services, Cappelletti et al.[11] discussed economic, geographic, and psychological barriers to justice. These can be complemented by political, cognitive, and bureaucratic obstacles (focused on procedures, rules, and hierarchy).[12] When translated to the prison environment, the institutional and organisational needs of the prison system (e.g. bureaucracy) often conflict with the needs and rights of incarcerated people.[13] Moreover, deficiencies in knowledge, information, insights, and skills among persons also contribute to more inequality in access.[14] These findings are similarly important for prison researchers trying to understand these barriers.

A welfare state like Belgium, where the government wields significant influence over wealth distribution, aims primarily to address the exclusion of citizens by providing access to assistance and support for those needing it, inside and outside prison.[15] It is common for individuals who conform to the rules and expectations of the welfare state to be recognised as 'responsible' and receive the benefits that come with it. Individuals who do not meet these expectations, lose benefits and are often deprived of their rights.[16] This can also be applied to the prison population, with Kaiser et al. suggesting that incarcerated people with more self-control, fewer fears, less anger, and depression (and therefore conforming to expectations) experience fewer barriers in accessing activities and services.[17] Prisons are designed for young, healthy men. This is institutional thoughtlessness, with little consideration given to the needs and sensitivities of minority groups and especially vulnerable individuals.[18]

Digital tools are currently often put forward as the solution to overcome all kinds of barriers, however, research shows that it does not always facilitate access to justice, as intended.[19] Less digitally literate citizens find the government less accessible and struggle to access relevant information, making obtaining the rights and benefits prescribed by legislation more difficult. This digital divide results in digital exclusion and new social divisions.[20] The approach to contacting people must align with the client's needs,[21] which is this article's main focus.

Belgian Prison Context

This article focuses on the barriers to activities in two newly built Belgian prisons: Haren (2022) and Dendermonde (2023). These new prisons intend to improve material conditions and diminish overcrowding. Numerous old Belgian prisons face hygiene issues due to outdated infrastructure and unsanitary and degrading environments. Furthermore, there is a notable shortage of personnel, particularly among prison officers, resulting in regular prison officers' strikes, and exacerbating persistent problems of overcrowding.

The prisons of Haren and Dendermonde are, to Belgian standards, big prisons (1190 places in Haren and 444 in Dendermonde), function in public-private partnerships, and are located away from urban areas. The prison of Dendermonde is built according to the classical star-shaped architecture, while Haren is constructed in a campus-style design with smaller units. With the opening of both prisons, a system of job

> Meaningful engagement in these activities can be a crucial need for incarcerated people.

11. Cappelletti, M., Garth, B., Weisner, J., & Koch, K. F. (1978). Access to Justice, 4 Bände. *Mailand: Giuffrè Editore, Alphen aan den Rijn, Sijthoff/Noordhoff.*
12. Storgaard, A., Johansson, S., & Åström, K. (2023). Introduction. Access to justice from a multidisciplinary and socio-legal perspective: Barriers and facilitators. *Oñati Socio-Legal Series, 13*(4), 1198-1208.
13. Chantraine, G. & Kaminski, D. (2008). R*ights in prison: Institutional police, juridical activism, democratic struggles.* Champ pénal, Séminaire Innovations Pénales.
14. See footnote 12.
15. Bauman, Z. (2003). *Wasted lives: Modernity and its outcasts* (Reprint). Polity.
16. Nielsen, S. P. P. & Hammerslev, O. (2018). Gadejuristen [The Street Lawyers]: Offering Legal Aid to Socially Marginalised People. In O. Halvorsen Rønning & O. Hammerslev (Red.), *Outsourcing Legal Aid in the Nordic Welfare States* (pp. 169-191). Springer International Publishing.
17. Kaiser, K. A., Piquero, A., Keena, L., & Howley, C. (2024). Assessing the Institutional Barriers and Individual Motivational Factors to Participation in Prison-Based Programs. *Crime & Delinquency, 70*(3), 870-893.
18. Dodd, S., Doyle, C., Dickinson, H., Buick, F., & Yates, S. (2024). The forgotten prisoners: Exploring the impact of imprisonment on people with disability in Australia. C*riminology & Criminal Justice, 24*(2), 395-412.
19. Kristiansen, B. L. (2023). Welcome to McDenmark. *Oñati Socio-Legal Series, 13*(4), 1281-1297.
20. Faye Jacobsen, A. (2017). Digital Kommunikation i kommunerne. T*he Danish Institute for Human Rights.*
21. See footnote 16.

differentiation between detention supervisors and security assistants is introduced among prison officers. Detention supervisors provide support to incarcerated people by being their first point of contact on the landings and making any referrals based on the specific needs of the incarcerated people they are working with. Security assistants are solely responsible for static security and the operation of the security systems. Also, different forms of digitalisation, such as a badge system to move independently within the prison at certain times, and an in-cell digital service platform that allows communication with internal services and provides information on the prison regime, are used in the new prisons. Both prisons function with open and semi-open regimes alongside closed regimes. The prison of Haren detains both men and women, persons in pre-trial detention, and convicted persons, while Dendermonde houses only male convicted and remanded persons.

Regarding the offer of activities it is important to know that the Belgian prison system is operated by staff under the responsibility of two different Governments.[22] On the one hand, prison officers and other penitentiary staff work under the responsibility of the Federal Government and its Ministry of Justice. On the other hand, aid and service providers in prison work under the hierarchy of the Flemish, French, and German-speaking Communities, providing aid and services in their 'language' region. These services are organised according to an import model, which implies that the same activities and services in society should be offered in prison. This is also known as a collective form of normalisation,[23] most famously implemented in Norwegian prisons. As stated in the Federal Belgian Prison Act,[24] and the Flemish Decree on the organisation of aid and services for incarcerated people,[25] normalisation of the prison

> Ample research shows how vulnerable groups in society experience a variety of barriers hampering their participation.

regime is a leading principle, meaning that life in prison should closely resemble positive general standards of life in the outside world. Accordingly, incarcerated people should have access to the same services that are also available in society, which is converted into the import model.[26]

An important note here is that these services, in theory, do not explicitly have to focus on reintegration or reduce recidivism but that they first and foremost ensure people's rights to have access to state aid and (support) services. A tangible example of how this import model is implemented in Flanders is that schools and teachers, operating outside the prison, must provide (a part of) their services within the correctional system and provide the same teachers, diplomas, and certifications as on the outside.[27] Aid and service providers of the Communities develop their range of activities in six different life domains, namely (1) well-being, (2) sports, (3) culture, (4) education, (5) employment, and (6) mental health.[28]

The complex institutional organisation implies that aid and service providers often depend on an agreement with the prison governor to allow activities to proceed, and on the 'goodwill' of prison officers to get incarcerated people to their activities. Considering the regular strikes of prison officers due to the pressure of prison overcrowding and a staff shortage, this can be a real challenge and can hamper participation in activities in prison. Strikes we observe are not an uncommon occurrence in Belgian prisons, including national, local, and regional strikes. However, a comprehensive annual overview is not available. It is important to distinguish between the number of strike days and the number of strikes, as some strikes extend beyond 24 hours. Nevertheless, some figures can be found in the Central Supervisory Board for the Prison System's Annual Report,[29] and

22. Snacken, S. (2007). Penal policy and practice in Belgium. *Crime and Justice, 36*(1), 127-215.
23. Snacken, S. (2002). Normalisation en prison: concept et défis. In O. De Schutter & D. Kaminski (eds.), L'*institution du droit pénitentiaire.* Enjeux de la reconnaissance de droits aux détenus (pp. 133-152). Paris/Brussels: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence et Bruylant.
24. Federal Belgian Prison Act (2005). *Basic Law on Prison Administration and the Legal Status of Incarcerated People.* Consulted on 17th April 2024, from https://etaamb.openjustice.be/nl/wet-van-12-januari-2005_n2005009033.html.
25. Flemish Government (2013). *Decree regarding the organization of assistance and services for incarcerated people.* https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1022861&param=inhoud&ref=search&AVIDS=
26. Snacken, S. & Kennes, P. (2017). De interne rechtspositie van gedetineerden. In K. Beyens & S. Snacken (Reds.), S*traffen een penologisch perspectief* (pp. 425-475). Maklu.
27. Vanhouche, A.S. (2022). Penal Policies in Belgium. In A.S. Vanhouche, *Prison Food* (pp. 35-59). Springer International Publishing.
28. Flemish Government (2024). Aid and services to incarcerated people. Consulted on 17th April 2024, from https://www.vlaanderen.be/agentschap-justitie-en-handhaving/justitie/coordinatie-hulp-en-dienstverlening-aan-gedetineerden-en-geinterneerden/hulp-en-dienstverlening-aan-gedetineerden.
29. Central Supervisory Council for the Prison System (2023). *CTRG - Publications.* Central Supervisory Council for the Prison System. Consulted on June 7, 2024, from https://ctrg.belgium.be/publications/.

written questions to the Senate.[30] These statistics do not account for protest movements, emotional strikes, or other spontaneous work stoppages since these are not officially recorded. For instance, in 2019 (before Covid), there were 64 strikes. During the Covid period in prisons (2020 to 2022), there were between 21 and 32 strikes. In 2023, the number stands at 18. In 2024, the number of strike days will be significantly higher since there was a month-long strike in April that occurred across various prisons. These numbers indicate that strikes in Belgian prisons are an additional barrier to the offer and participation in activities.

Aid and service providers are not bound by the Federal Government and the Ministry of Justice. Therefore, they do not have to report to them and operate under professional secrecy. This distinction between the Federal Government and the Communities, each with their roles, provides particular benefits and challenges to implement services from a welfare perspective in a (static) security-focused prison environment. Considering the move to the new prisons, aid, and service providers have raised questions about the impact of the introduction of detention supervisors and the digital platform on the organisation of aid and services, and on certain activities. They also felt the need to fully grasp the struggle and needs of incarcerated people in these new prisons.

Therefore, policy coordinators of the Flemish Community and researchers of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel set up a Participatory Action Research, initiated using project funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, to identify these needs and set up actions. Based on Participatory Action Research, which was conducted in the prisons of Haren and Dendermonde, this article describes the barriers and needs of incarcerated people regarding the access to and nature of activities in prison.

Participatory Action Research Methodology: Cooperation and Co-Design

In 2023, Participatory Action Research (PAR) was initiated to identify the needs of various stakeholders in the prisons of Haren and Dendermonde. This broad approach was chosen because PAR typically develops and formulates research questions in collaboration with the people involved. However, due to delays in the construction and opening of the prisons, the digital platform was not initiated yet, and not all activities had been fully implemented at the time of the research. This initial starting phase should be taken into account in the interpretation of the data.

Our participatory approach involved close collaboration between researchers from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and incarcerated people, aid and service providers from different Communities, policy coordinators from the Flemish Community, detention supervisors, and prison governors to shape the research, enhance insights, and achieve multidisciplinary knowledge. This involved composing a project group comprising various stakeholders who convened every month, bringing together perspectives from both prisons and a variety of experts, to reflect on the subsequent steps in the (research) process.

Figure 1. *Different steps of Participatory Action Research in Haren and Dendermonde*

30. Belgian Senate (2013). *Written question no.* 5-9951. Consulted on June 7, 2024, from https://www.senate.be/www/?MIval=/Vragen/SVPrint&LEG=5&NR=9951&LANG=nl.

The first step we took with the project group, and with the incarcerated people from Haren, Dendermonde, and other Belgian prisons, was to create a questionnaire to be administered to the incarcerated population of Haren and Dendermonde. The questionnaire was inspired by prior (strength-based) needs and requirements research, as well as the Prison Climate Questionnaire, which is a validated questionnaire measuring different aspects of the prison climate as explained by Bosma et al.[31] Based on the input of the project group and other incarcerated people, sensitive questions were rephrased, unclear terms were adjusted to prison jargon (e.g. the term 'detention supervisor' was changed to 'chief'), and the questionnaire was shortened collaboratively. Subsequently, researchers, prison governor(s), prison staff, and incarcerated people convened to discuss the method of the questionnaires. Various strategies, such as explaining the research at cell doors, downstairs on the landings or units or in groups in a classroom, were implemented to motivate incarcerated people as much as possible to complete the questionnaire. Each incarcerated person had the opportunity to participate in the questionnaire after receiving an explanation about the research. Incarcerated project group members encouraged fellow incarcerated people to participate in the research and fill out the questionnaire in their cells.

To ensure that researchers could remain available for further questions from incarcerated people, we set up a toll-free telephone number and returned multiple times to the prisons to answer questions. At the time of the study, calls to this number were made up to 3 times a week. A year later (June 2024), calls are still received biweekly. This provides greater proximity and accessibility to the research. Subsequently, multiple collection moments were scheduled to provide individuals with various opportunities to participate. Questionnaires were also filled out with the assistance of the researchers in case individuals indicated difficulties in reading or writing. In Haren, the response rate was 47.6 per cent (156 respondents of the 358 incarcerated people during the time of data collection), and in Dendermonde 48.3 per cent (200

respondents of the 414 incarcerated people during the time of data collection).

The second step involved conducting interviews with incarcerated people and aid and service providers. The topics covered during the interviews were discussed beforehand with the project group. To recruit respondents, all incarcerated people were asked to fill out a form during the distribution of the questionnaires to indicate whether they wished to participate in an additional interview. It was also possible for people to refuse participation in the questionnaire but still be willing to take part in an interview. To ensure diversity in our sample of incarcerated respondents, we conducted interviews with a range of individuals in both Haren and Dendermonde. In Haren, we interviewed 10 convicted men: 5 Dutch speakers and 5 French speakers, as well as a mix of 5 convicted and accused women: 1 English speaker, 1 Dutch speaker, and 3 French speakers. In Dendermonde, we interviewed 16 incarcerated men, consisting of 13 Dutch speakers and 3 French speakers, including both convicted men and those on remand. We also interviewed 18 staff members from the aid and service providers of the Flemish and French Communities in Haren. In Dendermonde, we interviewed 15 employees of the Flemish Community, including four detention supervisors tasked with supporting activities. In total 64 interviews were conducted. The interviews with the aid and service providers extend the scope of this article and will not be further discussed.

> We observe that the traditional methods of communication (e.g. flyers and written report notes) do not effectively reach the target group.

By employing various data collection methods (e.g. close collaboration with stakeholders through the project group, intense presence in both prisons, and participation in activities, questionnaires, and interviews), efforts were made to mitigate language and mental barriers as much as possible and to detect the needs of our stakeholders as broadly as possible. It should be mentioned that, particularly in the Brussels prison of Haren, the language diversity of the population is very high, creating additional barriers to reaching out.

During the data collection, we also began analysing the data in the software programs SPSS (questionnaires) and MAXQDA (interviews) and sharing our reflections with the project group. This meant that

31. Bosma, A. Q., van Ginneken, E., Palmen, H., Pasma, A. J., Beijersbergen, K. A., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2020). A new instrument to measure prison climate: The psychometric quality of the prison climate questionnaire. *The Prison Journal, 100*(3), 355-380.

the project group was closely involved in analysing and reflecting on the results, which maximally incorporated the perceptions of the (incarcerated) respondents. While our analysis did not focus on how these perceptions differ between the intentions of the staff and the experiences of incarcerated people, we noticed that the (negative) experiences of incarcerated people sometimes starkly differed from the positive intentions employees have.

Between October and December 2023, we organised two brainstorming sessions per prison to prioritise the needs identified in the research. These brainstorming sessions were open to all interested stakeholders and were not limited to the project group participants. In each session, there were typically around 20 to 25 attendees, primarily consisting of aid and service providers, followed by incarcerated people, researchers from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and detention supervisors. The results section will focus on the needs deemed the most urgent by the attendees.

Information and Communication Needs for Equal Access

The need for enhanced information and communication about available activities and the broader prison regime was very prominent. Communication is broadly understood here, encompassing the messages exchanged between stakeholders and the (in)ability to communicate and consequently express one's own needs. At the time of the fieldwork, communication was still conducted through flyers and written report notes, as in many other Belgian prisons. As the digital communication platform had not yet been launched, this kind of communication could not be included in the research.

We observe that the traditional methods of communication (e.g. flyers and written report notes) do not effectively reach the target group.

Figure 2 illustrates where these needs regarding communication about the offered activities lie.[32] It draws the communication path of the offered activities and shows the numerous potential dropouts.

Figure 2. *Communication path of the offered activities (Termote, et al., 2024)*
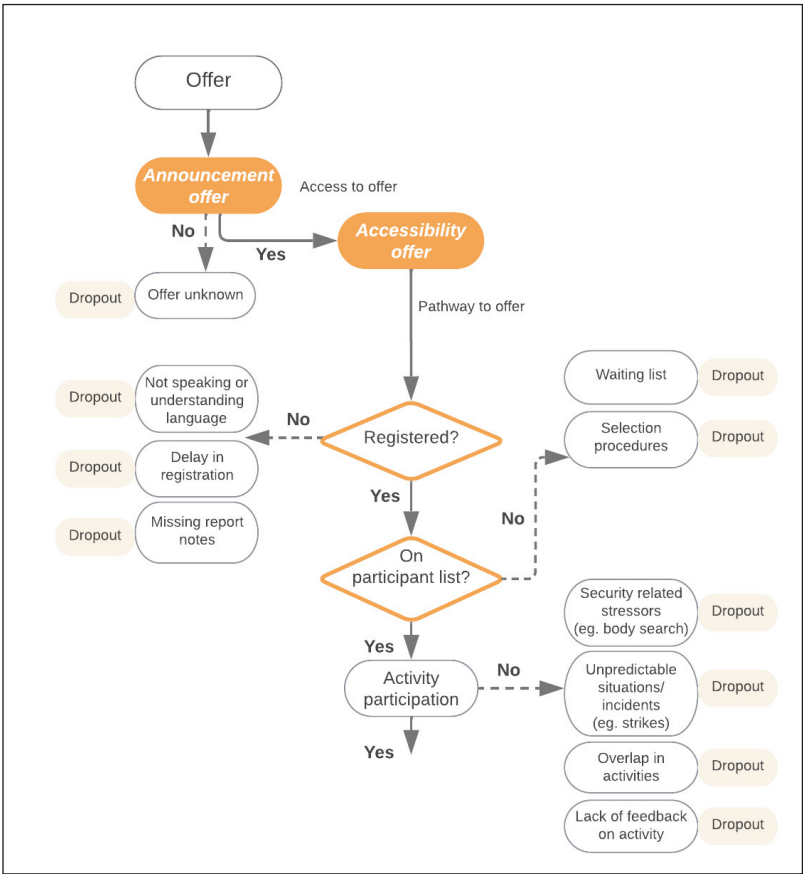
32. Termote, E., De Boe, L., Vanhouche, A.S., Beyens, K., Jans, A., & Meeus, E. (2024). Noden inzake het activiteitenaanbod in de nieuwe gevangenissen van Haren en Dendermonde: Kinderziektes of oude kwalen? *Fatik, 41(182), 7-25.*

Announcement Offer

The data show that many incarcerated people are not aware of the available activities and that current communication methods are not adequate to reach the individuals. Also (but not exclusively), non-native speakers who do not speak Dutch, French, or English (the three common languages of the personnel), and persons who are not proficient in reading and/or writing are easily left out.

Table 1. *Percentage of incarcerated people indicating whether they do or do not agree with a statement about knowledge of activities in Haren (N = 108) and Dendermonde (N = 148).*

Statement: *I know which activities are taking place.*	Completely not true	Not true	Sometimes	Agree	Completely agree
Haren	18.5 per cent	17.6 per cent	35.2 per cent	16.7 per cent	12 per cent
Dendermonde	10.8 per cent	10.1 per cent	36.5 per cent	31.8 per cent	10.8 per cent

In Haren, only 28.7 per cent and in Dendermonde 42.6 per cent of the incarcerated respondents (completely) agree that they know which activities are taking place. A substantial group of respondents in both prisons indicate that they are 'sometimes' aware of the activities (35.2 per cent in Haren and 36.5 per cent in Dendermonde). It is striking that 63.7 per cent (agree or completely agree) of the incarcerated respondents in Dendermonde indicate that the information received in prison primarily comes from fellow incarcerated people. In Haren, this percentage is even higher (72.2 per cent).

Table 2. *Percentage of incarcerated people who indicate whether or not they agree with a statement about receiving information via other incarcerated people in Haren (N = 122) and Dendermonde (N = 149).*

Statement: *The information I receive about the prison primarily comes from fellow detainees.*	Completely not true	Not true	Sometimes	Agree	Completely agree
Haren	6.6 per cent	4.9 per cent	16.4 per cent	36.1 per cent	36.1 per cent
Dendermonde	6 per cent	8.1 per cent	22.1 per cent	29.5 per cent	34.2 per cent

This leads to inequalities in the flow of information about the offer and creates a Matthew effect, namely that when incarcerated people have some knowledge about the offer, they often participate more in the activities and thus become further informed about other activities. Those who do not receive the information consequently have fewer opportunities to participate in the activities.

Our respondents further link these barriers to the need for more low-threshold and outreach work by aid and service providers. Incarcerated respondents expect a more proactive attitude from aid and service providers and a greater presence on the units in Haren or prison wings in Dendermonde, aiming to inform incarcerated people more orally and informally about their offer.

Knowledge About the Offer, But Not Registered

Additionally, we observe that being aware of the offer, and being motivated to participate, does not equate to being able to participate effectively in an activity. Even when the intrinsic motivation of people in detention is high, they encounter institutional barriers. Before one can participate effectively, there are still several steps to take: registering, being placed on the participant list, and moving from the cell to the location where the activity occurs.

Some incarcerated people already encounter barriers in the first step, namely registration. The method used in Belgian prisons entails that persons (should) receive a flyer about a particular activity and can register by submitting a completed report note. This method already expects a proactive attitude from individuals and assumes that the incarcerated people (can) take the first step towards the offer. Furthermore, 29.1 per cent of individuals in detention from Haren indicate they only sometimes know how to register, and 17.3 per cent indicate they do not know how to do this at all. In Dendermonde, a quarter of respondents (24.8 per cent) indicate they 'sometimes' know how to register, while 12.8 per cent indicate they do not know how to do this at all.

Some respondents indicated that they filled out the report note too late. Often they only become aware of the offer through fellow incarcerated people, when an activity has already started and registrations are already closed (due to the limited number of available places for certain activities). Sometimes registration deadlines may also change, causing one to miss a deadline out of habit:

> *'A good system, not really (...) Like for example the fitness, then you had to hand it [the report note] in on Friday. Friday morning, okay, and then you do that, and then suddenly it changed, and it's Thursday morning that you have to hand it in. In other words, ah, it's too late. You have to wait another week.'* (respondent 6, Dendermonde)

Finally, some respondents expressed doubts about whether the report note reached the right persons (e.g. through the detention supervisor in the unit or wing to the aid and service providers). Also report notes went missing, as sometimes people did not receive any information after handing in notes.

Registered, But Not On the Participant List

For the activities provided by the Communities (e.g. Flemish Government), a list is compiled of incarcerated people who may participate, sometimes based on selection interviews. The list is then dispensed to prison staff. At this stage, consideration is also given to which individuals in detention may or may not participate (e.g. persons who are not allowed to come into contact with each other), sometimes resulting in an additional selection process. In this case, a 'waiting list,' is created in case certain individuals from the initial list no longer wish, are able or allowed to participate, which can create a kind of cascading system. The unpredictability of potentially ending up on a waiting list also discourages some respondents from participating at a later time or from re-registering for another activity in the future. Moreover, for many activities, there are insufficient places.

Incarcerated people also describe access to certain activities as unpredictable because they perceive the selection procedures as unfair, including placement on a waiting list or participant list. For example, some may get work assignments faster than others who have been on the waiting list longer, and, according to some of our respondents, it's often the same persons who end up on participant lists for activities. There's also a perception that behaving 'well' during an activity, which means actively participating and not being distracted by other things, leads to being selected for the next activity more easily. Additionally, the ability to participate more frequently and quickly may also depend on whether incarcerated people cancel previous activities.

On the Participant List, But Not Participating

Several stressors or unpredictable circumstances further contribute to dropout even when persons are already on the participant list. One of the reasons for dropping out among incarcerated people is linked to security-related stressors during the movement to an activity. Specifically in Dendermonde, our respondents indicate that various security checks are applied, leading to frustrations. For instance, persons may undergo body searches in front of their cell and must pass through several metal detectors before being allowed to attend an activity. Moreover, these security checks consume a lot of time, sometimes causing individuals to arrive late at an activity. It is also common that persons do not get through the metal detector due to certain clothing, which prevents them from attending the activity.

Another security-related stressor is associated with the badge system. Regarding the transfer to an activity, we observed that in Haren, at the time of the study, a digital badge was already being used by incarcerated people to move independently from their cells to an activity. However, this badge system can be problematic since persons still need to wait for approval to open the doors after badging. Often, individuals have to wait unknowingly for a long time behind a door before they can proceed, leading to frustrations. Consequently, to avoid conflicts with detention supervisors, some persons decide not to participate in an activity.

> *'And then you're constantly wondering: What is it now? What's going to happen now? Is it [the activity] going to take place or not? That's constantly on your mind, so I said: I don't want those worries anymore. I'm quitting the whole thing.'* (respondent 6, Dendermonde)

Several stressors or unpredictable circumstances further contribute to dropout even when persons are already on the participant list.

Next to security-related stressors, some unpredictable situations ultimately prevent people from participating in an activity. For instance, incarcerated people in both prisons sometimes encounter issues with the summoning system. Again, the summoning process may sometimes proceed differently, and it occasionally happens that individuals are forgotten to be called out of their cells. This leads to confusion and stress, causing people to drop out. Furthermore, this may result in a delayed start of the activity, leading to a shortened duration.

Table 3. *Percentage of incarcerated people indicating whether or not they agree with a statement about the summoning to activities by prison staff (officers) in Haren (N = 124) and Dendermonde (N = 148).*

Statement: *The officers summon me to go to activities.*	Completely not true	Not true	Sometimes	Agree	Completely agree
Haren	14.5 per cent	4.8 per cent	37.1 per cent	33.1 per cent	10.5 per cent
Dendermonde	7.4 per cent	8.8 per cent	33.1 per cent	34.5 per cent	16.2 per cent

Approximately one-third of the incarcerated people in Dendermonde indicate 'sometimes' being called out for activities by the detention supervisor. Similarly, in Haren, most people respond 'sometimes' to this statement, highlighting the unpredictability of the summoning system. An additional issue regarding the summoning system reported in both Haren and Dendermonde is the incorrect information sometimes provided about the activity for which persons are being called out of their cells. This often leads to confusion about which activity they should attend, resulting in refusal.

Unpredictability also arises from prison staff strikes. This unexpectedly cancels activities, leading to frustrations. In this light, incarcerated people deem it crucial that strikes and their impact on activities be clearly communicated to them, as exemplified by the following respondent:

'(…) That one day when they announced it (a strike) nicely, that there's no visit that day, except conjugal visit, and that there are no activities and such. So mentally, it was just so nice because you can prepare yourself for it (…). I knew that day was going to be a strike so I could already imagine in my head, today I have to spend more time in my cell, so that's not a problem, you know?' (respondent 4, Dendermonde)

Furthermore, we observe that the accessibility of the offer may be hindered by overlapping activities. Due to a lack of communication and feedback regarding the cancellation or continuation of an activity, individuals sometimes attend one activity while also being expected at another. Additionally, moments such as receiving visitors or being called for a meeting with a lawyer inhibit participation in activities. This overlap subsequently leads to other problems, as individuals must justify their absence from an activity with a valid reason. Failure to do so results in being removed from the participant list after several occurrences. Respondents feel powerless about this, as they do not choose the overlap and are not always able to communicate why they cannot participate.

In response to the statement from the questionnaire, 'I cannot participate in all the activities I want because they take place at the same time', 53 per cent of respondents from Haren agree. In Dendermonde, 39.5 per cent indicate they cannot participate in activities due to overlap. In both prisons, incarcerated people mention that when activities overlap, work takes priority due to the financial compensation, because they want to minimise financial dependence on family or friends. Furthermore, incarcerated people often prefer time in the courtyard over other activities because it is one of the few opportunities to spend time outdoors.

'Having to choose between walking or an activity. None of us really like that. We're locked up 22 hours out of 24. We have 2 hours for a walk and if you get something extra, they take it away, like sports or fitness, like all activities... They even want to prevent you from going for a walk when you have visitors.' (respondent 8, Dendermonde)

Conclusion

The Belgian prison system grapples with a complex state structure where different governments collaborate, each with their responsibilities: the Federal Government is responsible for the organisation of detention, while the Communities are responsible for aid and service provision. The aim of the Communities, as described in their Strategic Plan, is to provide a high-

quality offer across its six domains: well-being, sports, culture, education, employment, and mental health.[33]

Our study focused on the experiences of incarcerated people regarding these activities and the needs they identify. We found that several barriers impede access to these activities. Aid and service providers operate in an import model, wherein services offered by society are brought into the prison system. However, it is crucial to note that access to justice, legal aid, and welfare services is unequal both outside and inside the prison system.

Research indicates that free citizens encounter various obstacles when trying to access aid and services to which they are entitled.[34] When these services are introduced into the prison system, the existing obstacles persist, and an additional layer of vulnerability is created due to the constrained, closed, and security-dominated environment of the total institution. Here people cannot easily request additional low-threshold support (e.g. from relatives or other outreach services). Consequently, the aforementioned obstacles are at least as significant within the prison context and, in some cases, even more prevalent.

At the time of the research, the available activities were announced through flyers and report notes. However, by 2024, both prisons had implemented a digital platform. This platform aims to facilitate faster communication and provides more opportunities for direct feedback, which can be very beneficial. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the downside of this digital communication method, as not everyone possesses the same level of digital skills. Digital communication does not necessarily lead to equal access and may create additional barriers through overly quick and uniform communication that is not sufficiently tailored to the diverse prison population. To avoid exacerbating the digital divide, Kristiansen emphasises the importance of recognising these barriers.[35] Ritzer even argues to always ask for and choose personal service when possible rather than solely offering digital options.[36]

Furthermore, the results indicate that much of the knowledge about the activities is shared informally among incarcerated people. On the one hand, this can be seen as a significant strength, providing a valuable source of knowledge that fills gaps and demonstrates solidarity and helpfulness. On the other hand, it should be noted that the responsibility for providing access to these offerings should not (primarily) rely on incarcerated people. This practice reinforces inequalities in access to the offer because incarcerated people with more social contacts and who already participate in activities gain greater access to the offerings. Therefore, the knowledge that incarcerated people already possess and share should also be supported by professionals. As discussed during our brainstorming sessions, this can involve providing information from one incarcerated person to another in a readily accessible manner, regardless of their offences, personal situation, or social contacts. It was also mentioned that this information should be provided throughout the entire period of detention, and not just at the beginning of the sentence.

The current communication methods used in prisons may thus be considered inadequate. As highlighted by Kristiansen's research, digitalisation isn't the ultimate solution to previous obstacles.[37] Instead, as underscored during the brainstorming sessions, a variety of methods should be employed to address barriers and tackle inequality and inaccessibility of aid and services.[38] Also, Brosens et al. previously demonstrated the importance of utilising multiple communication channels, including written communication, visual materials, and (in)formal verbal communication.[39]

If we genuinely aim to achieve the prescribed legal framework,[40] we need to explore alternatives that are easily accessible. A broader, multidisciplinary perspective on access to aid and services could help find new approaches, eliminate inequalities,[41] and strengthen accessibility.

33.   See footnote 28.
34.   See footnotes 11, 19, and 20.
35.   See footnote 19.
36.   Ritzer, G. (2013). *The McDonaldization of Society: 20th Anniversary edition.* Sage.
37.   See footnote 19.
38.   See footnote 16.
39.   Brosens, D., De Donder, L., & Verté, D. (2013). *Hulp- en dienstverlening gevangenis Antwerpen: Een onderzoek naar de behoeften van gedetineerden.* Digitale Drukkerij BZ-AFM.
40.   See footnote 24.
41.   See footnote 11.

'I see a really good future for myself now, to what I was':

Understanding the Experiences of People who Have Completed Kaizen

Raeanne Valois *is a trainee forensic psychologist in Psychology Services in HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). She previously worked within Accredited Programmes as a facilitator and Treatment Manager for the Kaizen programme.[1]*

A greater understanding of effective methods for the rehabilitation of people who have offended, referred to as the 'what works' literature, has led to developments in treatment options internationally.[2] The Accredited Programmes (AcP) currently available in HM Prison and Probation Services (HMPPS), are based on the principles of effective practice and receive regular review by the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel (CSAAP).[3]

It has been recommended that qualitative, as well as the traditional quantitative, methodologies be utilised to evaluate complex AcPs, as gaining perspectives from those who have undertaken interventions helps to ensure they are relevant and responsive.[4][5] Previous qualitative studies of AcPs have led to developments within programmes by incorporating new findings from the evidence base and thus remain an important aspect of the accreditation process. For example, following the review of the Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP),[6] a combination of individual and group sessions was incorporated into the Kaizen programme, the most recent high intensity programme that includes Sexual Offending (SO), Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), and General Violence (GV) strands.[7]

Kaizen is a cognitive-behavioural AcP that has a flexible delivery model, so that it can be delivered in a group format or on an individual basis. When delivered for a group, it has a rolling format allowing programme participants to join and leave the group at different times (whilst completing core curriculum), with a treatment dosage of approximately 160 hours. There is a maximum of eight group members attending the programme at one time.

Kaizen aims to support self-discovery of previous patterns of unhelpful behaviour, identifies existing skills, provides opportunities to develop further skills, and incorporates relapse prevention work.[8] It is based on a biopsychosocial model of change that builds on the Good Lives Model and principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR), including strengths-based and

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1. This research was commissioned by Intervention Services in HMPPS and will be used to form part of the author's qualification in forensic psychology to the British Psychological Society (BPS). In line with BPS guidelines, it was supervised by Rosalie Schulz and Sarah Disspain, both of whom are chartered and registered forensic psychologists working in HMPPS' Psychology Services Group at the time of writing.
2. Gannon, T. A., Olver, M. E., Mallion, J. S., & James, M. (2019). Does specialized psychological treatment for offending reduce recidivism? A meta-analysis examining staff and program variables as predictors of treatment effectiveness. *Clinical Psychology Review, 73,* 101752.
3. Hollin, C. R., & Palmer, E. J. (2006). *Offending behaviour programmes: Development, application, and controversies.* John Wiley & Sons.
4. Hollin, C. R. (2008). Evaluating offending behaviour programmes: Does only randomization glister? *Criminology and Criminal Justice, 8*(1), 89-106.
5. Levenson, J. S., Macgowan, M. J., Morin, J. W., & Cotter, L. P. (2009). Perceptions of sex offenders about treatment: Satisfaction and engagement in group therapy. *Sexual Abuse, 21*(1), 35-56.
6. Mews, A., Di Bella, L., & Purver, M. (2017). *Impact evaluation of the prison-based core sex offender treatment programme.* Ministry of Justice.
7. Walton, J. S., Ramsay, L., Cunningham, C., & Henfrey, S. (2017). New directions: Integrating a biopsychosocial approach in the design and delivery of programs for high risk services users in Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. *Advancing Corrections: Journal of the International Corrections and Prison Association, 3,* 21-47.
8. See footnote 7: Walton et al. (2017).

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desistance principles to support motivation for change and desistance from offending.[9] [10] [11] [12] Walton and colleagues provide an in-depth outline of the guiding principles of the programme, which includes that treatment is accessible to participants' individual biological, psychological, and social circumstances.[13] They outline that Kaizen focuses on the therapeutic climate to support exploration and skill development, and utilises motivational interviewing and aims to support the development of a pro-social identity to build participants' intention to desist from offending. It focuses upon four risk domains (offence supportive attitudes, self-management, relationships, and sexual interests), and one desistance domain (sense of purpose).

While there has been research exploring the assessment process for high intensity programmes,[14] [15] [16] and discussing the suitability of Kaizen for participants with psychopathic traits,[17] there currently remains a gap in the literature regarding the experience of people who have completed Kaizen. The current research aims to fill this gap.

Study Aims

The aims of this research were to gain an understanding of participants' experiences of the Kaizen programme, their perceptions of any treatment gains, and any meaningful engagement that they believed supported their desistance. The primary research questions were:

1. How did programme completers experience the programme environment (learning materials, therapeutic environment, and facilitation team)?

2. What learning did programme completers take away from the programme and in what ways did they think it supported their desistance (or not)?

Method

Participants

Ethical approval was obtained from the National Research Committee and Governors of the three English prisons where the research took place. A purposive sampling method was used to identify potential participants across all three strands of the programme (general violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence) for men who remained in custody across HMPPS and who had successfully completed the Kaizen programme since its inception. To mitigate confirmation bias,[18] sites where the researcher was involved in the delivery of Kaizen, and any prisoners where the researcher had previous involvement in their AcP, were excluded from taking part.

To mitigate selection bias and any influence in taking part in the study,[19] the researcher arranged initial contact with participants via local prison staff who had no previous involvement in their AcP. Participants were provided with an information sheet and if they declared their interest, the researcher then arranged for an interview where informed consent was first obtained. The researcher then spent time building rapport prior to interviews commencing in an attempt to reduce potential response bias, reiterating participation would be kept anonymous and the researcher was interested in participants' genuine experience on the programme, whether that be positive or negative.

A total of 22 potential participants were identified, 12 of whom indicated that they were interested in taking part. One participant was removed

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9. The Good Lives Model (GLM) assumes that humans are goal directed and seek to obtain primary goods (friendship, knowledge, excellence in work, excellence in agency, etc.), with secondary goods being the way in which primary goods are achieved. Offending is proposed to occur in the pursuit of primary goods. The GLM is a strengths-based approach that focuses on promoting the achievement of primary goods in more pro-social ways that will also target criminogenic needs. For the RNR principles, risk refers to having the programme dosage proportionate to level of reoffending risk so that those that are higher risk receive more intensive intervention, that the content of the programme should be directed towards criminogenic needs, and that the intervention should be delivered in a way that is responsive to a person's specific strengths and needs.

10. Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2007). Risk-need-responsivity model for offender assessment and rehabilitation. *Rehabilitation, 6*(1), 1-22.

11. Ward, T., & Maruna, S. (2007). *Rehabilitation.* Routledge.

12. See footnote 7: Walton et al. (2017).

13. See footnote 7: Walton et al. (2017).

14. Ramsay, L., Walton, J. S., Frost, G., Rewaj, C., Westley, G., Tucker, H., ... & Gill, C. (2019). Evaluation of offending behaviour programme selection: The PNA. *Journal of Forensic Practice, 21*(4), 264-277.

15. Ramsay, L., Wakeling, H., De Lucchi, R., & Gilbert, H. (2020). Learning disability screening: Impact on prison programmes. J*ournal of Intellectual Disabilities and Offending Behaviour, 11*(3), 145-158.

16. Wakeling, H., & Ramsay, L. (2019). Learning disability and challenges in male prisons: Programme screening evaluation. J*ournal of Intellectual Disabilities and Offending Behaviour, 11*(1), 49-59.

17. Henfrey, S. A. (2018). Kaizen: Working responsively with psychopathic traits. J*ournal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice, 4*(3), 199-211.

18. Conformation bias refers to seeking out and interpreting information in a way that conforms to one's beliefs. Response bias is a general term used to describe ways in which people may not respond to answers truthfully, such as acquiescence or socially desirable responding.

19. Selection bias is the bias introduced by the method of selection of individuals, groups, or data.

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from consideration as the researcher had previous involvement in their AcP, and two potential participants were not chosen to take part as data saturation had occurred.[20] This yielded a total sample size of nine participants who completed the programme between 2018 and 2022. Descriptive statistics of participants and their programmes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Programme Characteristics and Demographic Information of Participants*

Variable	Total	Percentage
Ethnicity		
British	6	67
Welsh	1	11
Black Caribbean	1	11
British Indian	1	11
Age range		
20 — 29	2	22
30 — 39	4	44
40 — 49	0	0
50 — 59	2	22
60 — 69	1	11
Offence type		
Rape	3	33
Murder	5	56
GBH	1	11
Strand completed		
IPV	4	44
GV	2	22
SO	3	33
Programme completion period		
Pre COVID	6	67
COVID recovery period	2	22
Both pre COVID and COVID recovery period	1	11
Delivery method		
Full group delivery	7	78
Full group and adapted delivery*	2	22

Note. *During the COVID pandemic, delivery of programmes were adapted for the safety of participants and facilitators. This included individual delivery with a facilitator and small group delivery of 2-3 programme participants per group.

Data Collection and Analysis

A semi-structured interview schedule was utilised to allow participants the freedom to provide their unique experiences while still maintaining a level of direction during interviews. The interview questions included a range of prompts for both positive and negative aspects of participants' experiences. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews lasted between 15 and 62 minutes.

Inductive thematic analysis was applied to the data as this best addressed the research questions given its flexibility,[21] whilst also allowing for actionable implications for practice to be generated.[22] To adopt a rigorous, systematic approach to data analysis, Braun

20. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2016). (Mis) conceptualising themes, thematic analysis, and other problems with Fugard and Potts'(2015) sample-size tool for thematic analysis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 19*(6), 739-743; Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1753-1760; Morse, J. M. (2000). Determining sample size. *Qualitative Health Research, 10*(1), 3-5.

and Clarke's approach was utilised, which includes familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and naming and refining themes.[23] The analysis process involved double coding a subset of interviews, and another review of the initial codes accompanied by a discussion regarding themes.

Results and Discussion

Three superordinate themes were identified from the thematic analysis which included atmosphere, internal experience, and developing proficiency (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Thematic Map*
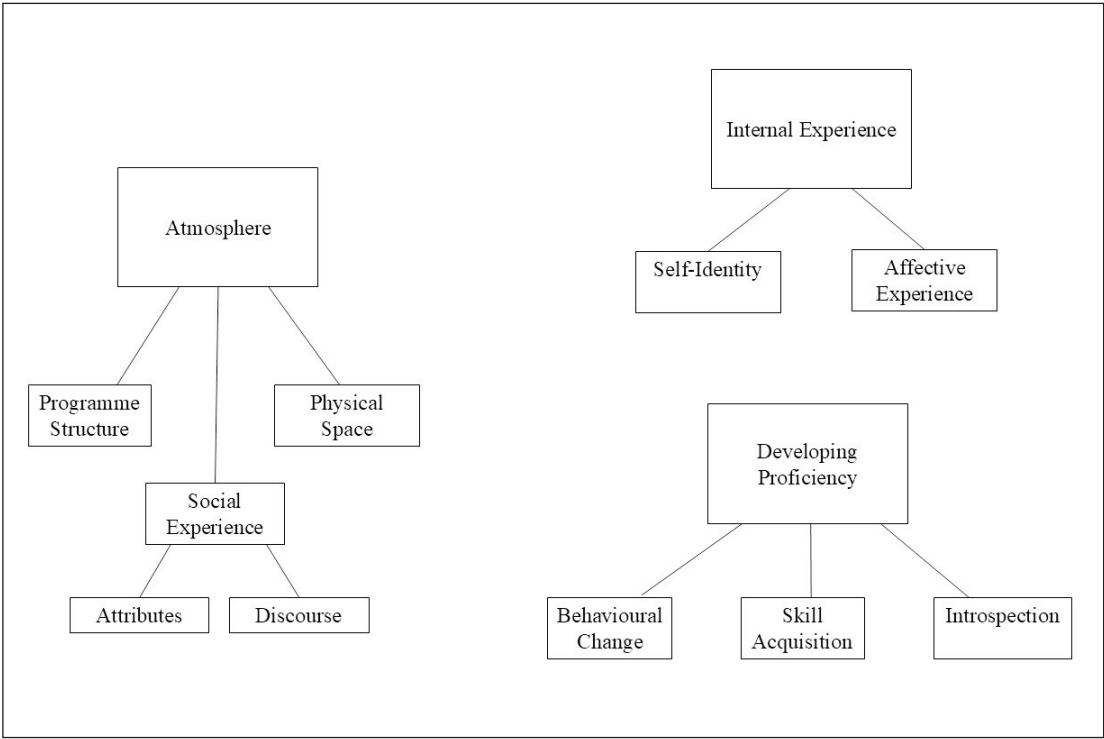
Theme 1: Atmosphere (research question 1)

Programme Structure

There were some noted benefits of the rolling format, such as repeated exposure to materials to support learning, and a greater understanding of what the programme entailed as individual participants were at different stages of the programme. This allowed participants to become more familiar with the programme structure and what would be involved in the AcP, which gave them a sense of predictability: *'Just sit and absorb and see what was going on with the other boys. It gave me a chance to* [pause] *just get into that role of you know exactly what to expect'* (P1).

However, there were also reported negative impacts from the rolling format, particularly in relation to the development of relationships and sharing during sessions when newer members joined the group. This extended to facilitators as well, feeling that changes to the programme team could impede people's willingness to engage: *'someone started literally when I was finishing, and they started asking me questions but I said 'there's no point telling you cuz I'm leaving in two weeks…...So why would I tell you my past experiences?'* (P6).

The individualised nature of the programme was felt more strongly within individual sessions and the group sessions involving fewer participants, which participants found beneficial. They identified that their engagement with the programme dwindled in larger group settings as the content became less individually focused, and involved longer stretches of time without slots for them to explore aspects of their own offending: *'I'd say there was a lot of times spent*

21. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association.
22. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 21*(1), 37-47.
23. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

waiting for other people to do their bit. …So it's hard to kind of like stay engaged and stay focused, especially if you're just sat there' (P4). This is consistent with past research on group size, which found participants experienced less personalised time during sessions and greater disengagement with materials as group size increased.[24] It may also suggest that, in this instance, facilitators were less able to create an inclusive therapeutic environment where all programme participants felt engaged (having opportunities for vicarious learning and contributing meaningfully), regardless of whether they were personally the focus of the discussion or activity.

Participants spoke about the flexibility of the programme, and how it supported their engagement. This included the pace of delivery, and being able to adjust when and how exercises were explored: *'Education and other courses, programmes, I found it's all been too rushed for me. So I can't really absorb everything that come out of it. As where Kaizen…you can take your time. There's nobody pressurising you'* (P1).

Participants were also asked about the learning materials. Some expressed that they didn't have specific learning needs that warranted adaptation on the programme, and that they were able to understand the materials as they were presented without elaborating further on their experience. However, others spoke about how the facilitation team supported their understanding by breaking down information further and being given extra time to review content. Individual sessions were reported to have been particularly helpful for additional support such as this. For example, participant 3 explained *'The staff, they were really helpful. …They'd sit down and go through everything with you until you understood it, in different types of ways'*. This would suggest programme adherence to the responsivity principle of rehabilitation, which has

been evidenced to be an important feature of effective interventions.[25]

Physical Space

In relation to the group room setting, there was a sense that, while fit for purpose, it was lacklustre and at times unclean. As participant 1 explained: *'It wasn't the best place for a programme.…They just didn't clean it. So, yeah. I think it could have been in a better environment'*. There is little research about how the physical setting can impact on engagement in AcPs, however Ross and colleagues theorised the immediate therapeutic setting can impact on the development of a therapeutic alliance, particularly within custodial environments where system factors and the immediate therapy context can differ significantly from the ideal therapeutic setting.[26] Research conducted in the field of psychotherapy suggests that the physical environment can impact on perceptions of both the therapist and participants' engagement with the therapeutic process.[27][28]

> The immediate therapeutic setting can impact on the development of a therapeutic alliance, particularly within custodial environments.

There was also discussion about the importance of privacy within the physical space, with one participant speaking about how they would put group members' work on the walls which, while making the room feel more inviting, also negatively impacted on perceived privacy as others could see their work if they entered the room. Likewise, the presence of a camera appeared to negatively impact on engagement, due to a concern of a breach of privacy: *'Lot of us sex offenders had this mindset of, that, oh, staff could be watching, and taking the piss or something'* (P3). Consistent with past research, therapeutic clients have not always been aware of how session recordings were being used.[29] Interestingly, concerns regarding privacy were voiced only by those on the SO strand of the programme, perhaps as a result of perceived stigmatisation of such

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24. Stewart, L., Usher, A., & Allenby, K. (2010). *A review of optimal group size and modularisation or continuous entry format for program delivery.* Correctional Service of Canada.
25. See footnote 10: *Bonta & Andrews* (2007).
26. Ross, E. C., Polaschek, D. L., & Ward, T. (2008). The therapeutic alliance: A theoretical revision for offender rehabilitation. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 13(*6), 462-480.
27. Miwa, Y., & Hanyu, K. (2006). The effects of interior design on communication and impressions of a counselor in a counseling room. E*nvironment and Behavior, 38(*4), 484-502.
28. Sinclair, T. (2021). What's in a therapy room?—A mixed-methods study exploring clients' and therapists' views and experiences of the physical environment of the therapy room. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 21*(1), 118-129.
29. Moller, N., Brown, E., Moller, N. P., & Ramsey-Wade, C. (2013). Recording therapy sessions: What do clients and therapists really think? *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 13*(4), 254-262.

offences and a greater importance being placed on privacy.[30] Blagden and colleagues highlighted the importance of psychological safety and how this can impact on engagement, particularly for people convicted of sexual offences who may have to worry about being "ousted", (p. 383).[31] It appears that participants' views of psychological safety could have negatively influenced their engagement with treatment. However, session monitoring is key to ensuring programme integrity, which has moderated positive outcomes for AcPs,[32] making communication of the purpose of session recordings (and how and with whom participant work is shared) all the more important.

Social Experience

Discourse. Interpersonal feedback within group therapy has a substantial contribution within treatment by fostering a cohesive group and supporting behavioural change.[33] [34] [35] Both strengths-based and developmental feedback appeared to be appreciated by participants who spoke about the usefulness of receiving this from facilitators and programme participants alike. This was also reported to be one of the most helpful aspects of the programme: '*Going away and thinking about what the other group members have said. … It's helping me to pick up on certain things that I may have missed*' (P5).

Participants identified a dislike for speaking in a group setting more generally, and (consistent with past research) how sharing was most challenging at the beginning of the programme.[36] There were specific topics participants found more difficult to share (or hear others share), including disclosing their early childhood experiences as well as discussing their own and hearing others talk about their crimes. This has also been observed in previous research.[37] For some, this was a result of feeling shame in relation to their crimes, something that has been quite commonly cited within incarcerated populations,[38] [39] for example: '*I hold a lot of shame and guilt throughout my index offence and I didn't, I didn't wanna to kind of [pause] share it with a lot of people*' (P2). A feeling that the programme included focus on more than just offending behaviour was well received by participants: '*Where other courses I've done, they're more focused around offending. Where this is more skills-based, learning…it does start sort of move off your offending. … More comfortable, is probably the best way to put it*' (P3). Being able to share offence details without being judged has been identified as an important part of effective group therapy,[40] and while difficulties were identified within the current study, it appears this concern dissipated as participants became more familiar with the group environment and began building trust and relationships. This appeared to also be a result of the flexibility in the delivery format, where some topics could be covered within individual sessions. The programme provides guidance to facilitators regarding sharing of potentially traumatic experiences.

Attributes. Participants described feeling supported, receiving guidance and help from both facilitators and programme participants alike. They identified that while it took time to build relationships

> An important aspect of the therapeutic process is peer relationships as it supports reciprocal understanding of experience.

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30. Schwaebe, C. (2005). Learning to pass: Sex offenders' strategies for establishing a viable identity in the prison general population. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 49*(6), 614-625.
31. Blagden, N., Winder, B., & Hames, C. (2016). "They treat us like human beings" Experiencing a therapeutic sex offenders prison: Impact on prisoners and staff and implications for treatment. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 60*(4), 371-396.
32. Robinson, C., Sorbie, A., Huber, J., Teasdale, J., Scott, K., Purver, M., & Elliott, I. (2021). *Reoffending impact evaluation of the prison-based RESOLVE offending behaviour programme.* Ministry of Justice.
33. Clarke, A., Simmonds, R., & Wydall, S. (2004). *Delivering cognitive skills programmes in prison: A qualitative study.* Home Office.
34. Leszcz, M. (1992). The interpersonal approach to group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 42*(1), 37-62.
35. Rothke, S. (1986). The role of interpersonal feedback in group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 36*(2), 225-240.
36. Walji, I., Simpson, J., & Weatherhead, S. (2014). Experiences of engaging in psychotherapeutic interventions for sexual offending behaviours: A meta-synthesis. J*ournal of Sexual Aggression, 20*(3), 310-332.
37. Connor, D. P., Copes, H., & Tewksbury, R. (2011). Incarcerated sex offenders' perceptions of prison sex offender treatment programs. J*ustice Policy Journal, 8*(2), 1-22.
38. Camp, A. R. (2018). Pursuing accountability for perpetrators of intimate partner violence: The peril and utility of shame. *Bulletin Review, 98,* 1677.
39. Mullins, E., & Kirkwood, S. (2019). Dams, barriers and beating yourself up: Shame in groupwork for addressing sexual offending. *Journal of Social Work Practice, 33*(4), 369-384.
40. See footnote 36: Walji et al. (2014).

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in the group, they primarily experienced these as quite positive:[41]

> *'They was there to help and support you and as well as the boys. I mean the boys further on in their Kaizen journey. They'd go back and say 'look, I've been through all this. Just take your time, chill out'.' (P1).*

Participants described facilitators as approachable, reliable, accessible, and patient, and spoke about the importance of investment from programme participants. Open sharing and participation by existing group members encouraged those who were newer to behave in a similar fashion, with participants often turning to their peers to better understand how to behave within the group environment: *'But to see them be open and honest, it gives you the confidence to be like, well, I don't have to hold anything back here. I can try because I'm not getting judged'* (P1). This highlights how the peer group can hinder or enhance group members' involvement, thus having a significant influence on engagement in the programme, and links to the development of a therapeutic climate.[42][43] The group environment also created opportunities to be understood and supported by peers: '*I think the other people will know what you've gone through or what you're going through. And obviously they are all there to help. We're all there to be a better person'* (P2). An important aspect of the therapeutic process is peer relationships as it supports reciprocal understanding of experience, as is group cohesion, therapeutic alliance, and therapist features in supporting treatment gains as well as reducing attrition rates.[44][45]

Theme 2: Internal Experience (research questions 1 and 2)

Affective Experience

Despite experiencing initial uncertainty when first joining the group, and that the programme was an intense experience, participants were overwhelmingly positive about how the group environment made them feel. Participants described feeling accepted, understood, and at ease: *'The facilitators they made you feel like wanted. … And it didn't matter what I said. … Nobody turned around and said anything negative about me'* (P9).

While recognising it could be difficult discussing certain topics (such as offending), when asked, participants described feeling comfortable to openly share within the group. This suggests the group environment fostered a positive affective experience for participants, one where they were able to engage effectively: *'I definitely feel comfortable talking to them…expressing my past, everything. Every situation. Like, certain things, maybe I wouldn't want to say in front of anyone, but, in front of them it felt comfortable'* (P7).

Self-Identity

Participants spoke of their views of themselves and their futures, and how this developed over the course of the programme. There was a sense that overcoming and coming to terms with their previous offending was a difficult part of the process, and something that some didn't think they would ever fully be able to do: *'There's not a day that I don't think about what I've done.…And I don't think I'll ever forgive myself for what I did'* (P8). Desistance is a gradual process with identity transformation (i.e., a subjective change in one's self concept that moves away from a criminal identity) being a key component of this.[46]

Feelings of hope and self-efficacy are also important for desistance,[47] and this was evident in the experience of the participants. Most (but not all) spoke about how they noticed a change in their self-confidence and had a more positive view of themselves because of engaging in the programme, which also translated into a more positive outlook for their future. Their descriptions included feeling a greater sense of pride in themselves and family, and feeling more confident and capable, happier, and thinking more positively. For example, participant 5 shared:

"I think the Kaizen course helped me to, to bring out a lot of things. And speak my mind"

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41. Aside from one participant who noted difficulties working with a facilitator.
42. See footnote 36: Walji, et al. (2014).
43. See footnote 7: Walton et al. (2017).
44. Beech, A. R., & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. E. (2005). Relationship between therapeutic climate and treatment outcome in group-based sexual offender treatment programs. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, 17,* 127-140
45. Marshall, W. L., & Burton, D. L. (2010). The importance of group processes in offender treatment. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*(2), 141-149.
46. Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2001). Understanding desistance from crime. *Crime and Justice, 28,* 1-69.
47. Maruna, S., & Mann, R. (2019). Reconciling 'desistance' and 'what works'. *Academic Insights, 1,* 3-10.

'Looking through all the different events in my life on Kaizen helped me understand that a lot of events in my past weren't my fault. And it made me start to look at myself in a different way. Made me believe that I could be a good person and do good things.'

Theme 3: Developing Proficiency (research question 2)

Introspection

Participants spoke about gaining greater insight into their previous offending, with the life map exercise being key in supporting this.[48] In particular, they spoke about being able to identify in greater detail the situations in which they may have 'gone wrong', patterns in their offending, and having become more skilled in perspective taking:

> *'I learned a lot about what led up to it [index offence]. . . . It was more about seeing the steps and where I could have stopped it before it got to where it got to. … And start- instead of just trying to think about myself, I try to think about other people more than myself.' (P5)*

Skill Acquisition

Participants spoke about specific ways in which they developed skills, most frequently having identified the 'great eight' tactics and 'time out/time in' skill as being the most helpful learned from the programme.[49] Many participants (all but two) also spoke about having more positive relationships with others. For some, this meant limiting socialising to prevent associating with negative peers, while for others it meant being able to communicate more effectively: *'I kept a lot of things inside me, and I think the Kaizen course helped me to, to bring out a lot of things. And speak my mind'* (P8).

This is consistent with previous research that found problem solving, social skills, impulse control, and perspective taking as the most commonly cited benefits of AcPs by participants.[50] Within the current research, the vastly differing accounts of what the programme taught participants speaks to the flexibility of the content and its ability to be adapted to each participants' individual criminogenic needs, which is a hallmark of effective rehabilitation.[51]

Behavioural Change

Participants reflected that it became more natural to use the skills from the programme outside of sessions, and that their learning continued outside of sessions. There was a sense of the importance of continuing to learn and using the programme as momentum to move onto other treatment opportunities: *'My next stage was coming off [location] and coming onto PIPE . … What you learned on Kaizen, bring it over to PIPE. And just carry it on'* (P9).[52]

Others recognised the usefulness of opportunities to consolidate learning. For one participant, this was through reviewing their work with their keyworker, while another noted the benefit of being a mentor and how this created a strong foundation through repeated exposure to programme material. Participants provided a wide variety of situations in which they were able to utilise skills with other prisoners, prison staff, and with their family and friends for a positive outcome in situations where they felt they would have previously managed the situation less well. For example, participant 9 spoke about being confronted by another prisoner, explaining: *'That's one thing that I learnt on the Kaizen. … Before, I would have just got up on the chair and . . . probably gone over to him, and just slammed him or something like that'.* Participants were able to consider the application of skills in managing future problems, and described how others had noticed behavioural changes in them

> ## Supportive authority promotes autonomy and does not necessitate change but simply provides a choice to learn skills for change.

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48. The life map exercise involves participants looking at past key experiences across their life (including times when they were offending) and reflecting on what they learned from the experience and how it shaped their understanding of themselves, others, and the world.
49. The 'great eight' tactics are a set of skills that are used on the programme (what happens to me, stop and think, their shoes, better life, here and now, ask for help, praise and reward, and stick at it). They are made into tactic cards that participants develop into personally meaningful content to improve accessibility of the skills. 'Time out/time in' is an emotion management skill where participants remove themselves from confrontational situations to regain control of their arousal so they may consider 'New Me' skills to implement to manage the problem.
50. Clarke, A., Simmonds, R., & Wydall, S. (2004). *Delivering cognitive skills programmes in prison: A qualitative study.* Home Office.
51. See footnote 10: Bonta & Andrews (2007).
52. Psychologically Informed Planned Environment (PIPE). This is a support service provided through the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) pathway. Prisoners who "screen on" to the pathway may access it. A diagnosis of personality disorder is not required.

(including the programmes team, prison staff, friends, and family).

The majority of participants held the programme in high regard feeling that it was a beneficial experience and would be for others too, attributing their own behavioural changes to the programme. For example, participant 1 stated:

'It was the best thing I've done. … It massively changed me. … You don't get any better evidence than when staff say they can see a change in your attitude. Your family can see, you know, see a massive change in your attitude.'

However, there were a subset of participants who had mixed views as to whether the programme alone was responsible for their changes. Some participants spoke about how change was a personal choice, which is consistent with a key ethos of Kaizen and a supportive authority approach: that it promotes autonomy and does not necessitate change but simply provides a choice to learn skills for change.[53] However, it is of note that one participant did not identify any positive changes from the programme.[54] Others felt the programme supported greater maturation, while still others felt it was a combination of the impact from the programme and becoming more mature that had led to positive change. Ageing and maturation have long been associated with desistance,[55] and participants who spoke of the programme supporting their maturation undertook it at a time when their psychosocial maturity could have still been developing.[56]

> The programme structure offering a supportive and flexible approach, meeting the responsivity principle.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In terms of how programme completers experienced the programme environment, the participants' experiences fulfilled many of the rehabilitative qualities of a therapeutic AcP that is supportive of rehabilitation. This included a therapeutic group environment with evidence of group cohesiveness and a therapeutic alliance with the facilitation teams, with the programme structure offering a supportive and flexible approach, meeting the responsivity principle.

In terms of the learning participants took away from Kaizen, and whether they believed their experience supported desistance, aside from one participant the results indicated that the programme participants believed the programme had helped them gain further insight into their offending, build skills, and utilise these outside of programme sessions. They reported believing the programme supported positive change and resulted in an altered self-identity, where participants had increased feelings of acceptance, self-efficacy, and a more positive outlook for the future.

From this study, a number of recommendations are made to continue to support a positive experience of Kaizen for participants. The results indicate that a smaller group size may better support engagement and enable a balance of individualised exploration with social learning and support. Programmes teams may benefit from assessing the physical space of treatment rooms, whilst paying attention to the importance of perceived privacy. While included in the consent process, they should also ensure participants are fully aware of how (and why) session recordings are used and who is able to view them. Lastly, there should be consideration for how and when new programme participants and facilitators are introduced to the group.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study used a qualitative approach with a small sample size across three delivery sites, which may limit generalisability of the findings.[57] Likewise, there was an imbalance in participants across the three strands of Kaizen which may limit the possibility of

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53. See footnote 7: Walton et al. (2017).
54. This participant felt the programme material was nothing new to them, though identified that it acted as a "refresher". He expressed he had had time to reflect earlier in his sentence and felt any changes he made were a personal choice and a consequence of maturing.
55. Graham, H., & McNeill, F. (2017). Desistance: Envisioning future. In P. Carlen & L. Ayres Franca, (Eds.). Alternative criminologies (pp.433-451). London: Routledge.
56. Bryan-Hancock, C., & Casey, S. (2011). Young People and the justice system: Consideration of maturity in criminal responsibility. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 18*(1), 69-78.
   Prior, D., Farrow, K., Hughes, N., Kelly, G., Manders, G., White, S., & Wilkinson, B. (2011). *Maturity, young adults and criminal justice: A literature review.* University of Birmingham.
57. Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review, 62*(3), 279-301.

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understanding potentially more nuanced experiences according to the strand undertaken by participants. A small subset of participants had experienced adapted delivery and engaged with the programme during COVID and in the pandemic recovery period, both of which could have impacted on their experiences of the programme. This study also did not include participants who deselected themselves from the programme after starting it. It is recognised that they may have a unique perspective on how the programme was experienced, and future research could explore this further.

Whilst efforts were made to mitigate against the risk of bias (confirmation bias, response bias, and selection bias), it is difficult to know how successful these attempts were, and thus what effect these might have had on the findings. Participants were also volunteers and therefore volunteer bias could not be precluded.[58] There was also the possibility participants reported more positive experiences due to the pressure they may have felt to identify the programme having been effective as a result of remaining in the Criminal Justice System and participants' reliance on professional opinions to progress.[59] While this cannot be ruled out, a variety of prompts were used during interviews to obtain a range of positive and negative experiences. Future qualitative research to replicate or refine the experiences reported here would be beneficial.

While this study provides initial evidence that Kaizen may support the desistance process, perceived behavioural change does not necessarily equate to actual behavioural change. Further research should also explore whether Kaizen supports desistance utilising a quantitative methodology to further add to the understanding of Kaizen's impact; and further qualitative research could provide greater insight into how, why, and for whom this may occur.[60]

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58. Volunteer bias is when people who volunteer to participate in research are not representative of the population of interest.
59. Bowden, L., Glorney, E., & Daniels, M. (2017). Individuals' experiences of sexual offending therapy in a forensic psychiatric setting. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 23*(3), 278-290
60. Rocque, M. (2021). *But what does it mean?: Defining, measuring, and analyzing desistance from crime in Criminal Justice.* National Institute of Justice.

Child lifers: Developments in law and policy and the need for a distinct approach by criminal justice professionals

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England and Wales stands out as one of the only jurisdictions in western Europe where indeterminate sentences (sentences that have no formal end date) can be imposed on children aged between 10 and 17. Research has shown the pains that children serving such sentences experience, including feelings of abandonment, loneliness and 'deep despair' (p. 30).[1] Despite this, the number of children subject to indeterminate sentences in England and Wales has grown over the last decade, and recent changes in legislation have substantially increased the minimum terms in custody that judges must consider when imposing life sentences on those who have committed murder as children. This increasingly punitive legal response to children is in tension with other developments in law and policy that recognise the specific challenges and needs of children serving life sentences, as they progress through the system and into the community (e.g., shorter period on life licence, prioritisation for parole, improved support, and minimum term reviews). This article aims to bring the tension between the law and policy in this area into focus, and to highlight the important implications for practitioners working with 'child lifers'.[2]

What do we mean by 'child lifers'?

Children in England and Wales, aged between 10 and 17 years old, can be subject to indeterminate sentences. Such sentences have no fixed end point and mean that, in principle, children can be detained for the rest of their lives. England and Wales is the only jurisdiction in Europe where life sentences are regularly imposed on children. In this paper we refer to those

sentenced to indeterminate sentences for crimes that occurred when they were children as 'child lifers'.

Children are subject to different considerations from adults at sentencing,[3] and the names given to indeterminate sentences for children and adults are distinct. There are three types of sentences that 'child lifers' currently in prison or under probation supervision in England and Wales are serving:

❏ Mandatory sentence for murder committed as a child: Detention at His Majesty's Pleasure (DHMP) (Sentencing Act 2020, s259);
❏ Discretionary life sentence: this includes detention for life (Sentencing Act 2020, s250 read with s258) and detention for life for manslaughter of emergency worker (Sentencing Act 2020, s250 read with s258A);
❏ Indeterminate sentence of Detention for Public Protection (DPP) imposed between 2005 and 2012: these sentences were originally imposed under the Criminal Justice Act 2003, s226(3) and s226(4). This sentence is the child equivalent of the Indeterminate sentence for Public Protection (IPP) for adults. Although the sentence was abolished in 2012, this was not applied retrospectively to those who had been sentenced already.

As with all life sentences in England and Wales, when a child is given a life sentence, the judge passes a 'minimum term' or 'tariff' period, which is the number of years they must serve in prison before they can be considered for release. Once the minimum term has been served, the Parole Board considers whether it is safe to release the individual on the basis of public protection. If they decide it is not, the individual remains in custody until the Parole Board

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1. Tynan, R. R. (2022). Living in the present, imagining a future: Children and young people navigating the mandatory life sentence. *Prison Service Journal, 261,* 27-32.
2. While the term 'lifer' can be objectifying, one of the authors (Laura Janes) discussed the use of this term with a young man serving an indeterminate sentence which he received when he was a young teenager. He explained that he and other children sentenced to life preferred that it was used to highlight the stark reality of the law in England and Wales, which enables life sentences for children. He also explained that it was important that the prison system distinguishes individuals sentenced as children from those sentenced as adults in their response to child lifers as their life experiences are very different.
3. See s105 Children Act 1989, s58 Sentencing Act 2020.

approves release at a subsequent periodic review (reviews must occur at least every two years). On release, the individual is required to remain on licence for the rest of their natural life and can be recalled to prison at any time if they breach their licence conditions. The only exception to this is for those serving a DPP sentence, where the licence may be cancelled after a specified period of time (see below).

Prevalence of child lifers in England and Wales

Although the number of individuals in prisons in England and Wales who were sentenced to DPP as children has reduced (due to its abolition), more children have been given either mandatory or discretionary life sentences over the last twenty years and have been sentenced to longer minimum terms.

In total, 326 children were sentenced to DPP during the seven years that it was available to judges.[4] The latest data shows that, on 12th March 2024, of those 326 children, approximately 32 remained in custody having never been released (meaning that these children will have served at least 12 years in prison); 48 were in custody after being released but recalled to prison; and a further 'hundred or so' had been released and were serving their DPP sentence in the community on licence.[5]

In recent years the number of children sentenced to mandatory or discretionary life each year has been rising, as Figure 1 below shows.[6]

Figure 1: *Number of children sentenced to mandatory and discretionary life sentences 2011-2023.*

Number of children sentenced to life 2011-2023
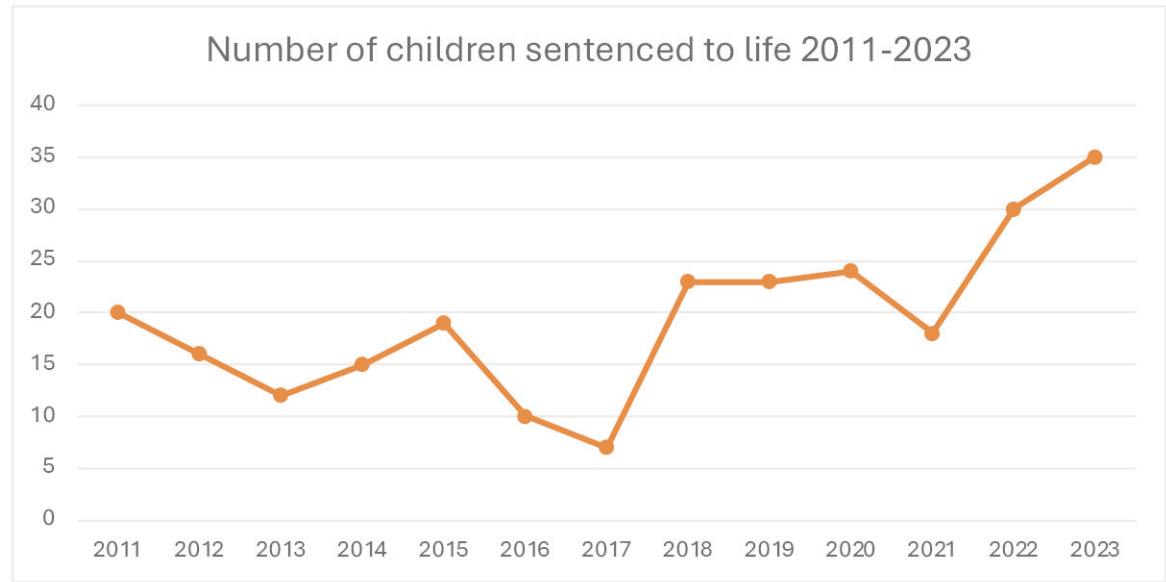
In September 2022, there were 446 unreleased men and women who had been sentenced to DHMP (mandatory life),[7] as children, and 36 children currently serving mandatory and discretionary life sentences in England and Wales (DHMP and Custody for Life).[8] It is very likely that the use of 'joint enterprise', a legal tool that enables more than one individual to be convicted for a single offence, has contributed to the increase in the number of children serving life sentences. For example, in the six months to September 2024, the Crown Prosecution Service reported that 14 per cent (95) of defendants in homicide or attempted homicide cases 'prosecuted on a joint enterprise basis' were children.[9]

In line with the broader (significant) rise in the average length of life sentences in England and Wales,[10] data shows that growing numbers of children serving life sentences have been sentenced to longer minimum terms. Despite the starting point for a child convicted of murder being 12 years in custody in 2021, at least 14

4. Ministry of Justice (2016). *Criminal justice statistics quarterly: December 2015,* Outcomes by offence tool. Ministry of Justice.
5. Victims and Prisoners Bill, Volume 836: debated on Tuesday 12 March, Col 1979 2024 https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-03-12/debates/9B2F3A68-A886-433F-93AF-79FA2B266E0A/VictimsAndPrisonersBill#contribution-C1F86D90-AA85-4CAF-8C25-F549F8349D74
6. This data excludes DPP sentences in 2011 and 2012 when they were last available. Ministry of Justice (2024). *Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: June 2023,* Outcomes by offence data tool: June 2023. Ministry of Justice.
7. FOIA request 221215009 (2023), Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Requested by Susie Hulley.
8. FOIA request 221117026 (2022), Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Requested by Susie Hulley.
9. CPS (2023), 'Crown Prosecution Service Joint Enterprise Pilot 2023: Data Analysis', https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/crown-prosecution-service-joint-enterprise-pilot-2023-data-analysis
10. Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2020). *Life imprisonment from young adulthood: Adaptation, identity and time.* Palgrave.

children were given minimum terms of 15 years or more in prison during that year, compared to three in 2011, and none in 2002.[11] Significant increases in mandatory minimum terms for children sentenced to DHMP, introduced in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (outlined below), is expected to lead to more children entering prison on life sentences with very long tariffs.[12]

The pains of life sentences for children

There is little empirical research conducted with children sentenced to life in England and Wales to inform our understanding of their experiences. However, the work that is available here and in comparable contexts highlights the significant emotional, psychological, and social problems that children who are sentenced to life face in prison and on release.

Recent analysis of the experiences of (relatively small numbers of) boys still in the early stages of a life sentence in England and Wales notes the lack of perceived legal and moral legitimacy of the sentence, as well as difficulties associated with processing the offence.[13] This was particularly the case for children convicted of murder at a trial involving joint enterprise, who struggled to cope with their detention and make sense of their future.[14]

The early stage of the life sentence has been identified as an acutely emotional time for individuals convicted as children or young adults. In a rare, qualitative study of the experiences of individuals who were convicted of murder as children in South Australia, Deegan describes a 'pattern of extreme emotional turbulence' (p. 138) among the children during the early stage of their life sentences.[15] Deegan notes the negative impact of such feelings on adolescents (e.g., night terrors) and on the prison environment (e.g., greater volatility).[16]

Children's acute emotional response to serving a life sentence was, in part, due to the significant rupture in their relationships with family and friends that occurred on entry into custody. Missing loved ones was the most cited pain of imprisonment for children in Tynan's research, who described the 'deep distress' (p. 30) of being forcibly separated from their mothers and younger siblings.[17] Participants in Deegan's research felt 'total abandonment' when they began their life sentence and described it as akin to being banished to a different world.[18] Being torn from their familial and social world at this key stage in their development left individuals 'depressed' and 'traumatized'.

Despite such distress, support for children serving life sentences in custody appears to be elusive. For example, none of the four children serving life sentences in a prison in England in Tynan's research felt that they were being 'advised or supported to find positive ways to cope'.[19] Thomas and Sadie (psychologists working with children sentenced to life) developed a group based 'intervention' to support child lifers after noting that the children's 'distress was intensified by the loneliness of having no sanctioned space in which to share it with others in similar circumstances' (p. 52).[20] However, such support appears to be ad hoc rather than systematically available.

Children who have grown up in prison report improvements in maturity, emotional control, psychological stability, and the development of greater respect for others over time.[21] However, they also recognise that their maturation is 'limited and contextual' (p. 308).[22] In this way, adaptation to

> More children have been given either mandatory or discretionary life sentences over the last twenty years and have been sentenced to longer minimum terms.

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11. UK Parliament. (2022). The Lord Bishop of Gloucester: Written Questions. https://members.parliament.uk/member/4540/writtenquestions#expand-1489049
12. See s127, Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/32/section/127
13. Thomas, H. and Sadie, C. (2022). "We are the walking dead": Piloting group therapy for adolescent boys serving life sentences. Prison Service Journal, 261, 51-57; See footnote 1: Tynan (2022).
14. See footnote 1: Tynan (2022).
15. Deegan, S. (2021). Juvenile lifers: (Lethal) violence, incarceration and rehabilitation. Routledge.
16. See footnote 15: Deegan (2021); see footnote 10: Crewe, et al. (2020), regarding men and women sentenced to long life sentences during young adulthood in England and Wales reporting a similarly acute emotional response to the early years in custody.
17. See footnote 1: Tynan (2022).
18. See footnote 15: Deegan (2021).
19. See footnote 1: Tynan (2022).
20. See footnote 13: Thomas and Sadie (2022).
21. See footnote 1: Tynan (2022).
22. See footnote 10: Crewe, et al. (2020); Crewe, B. (2024). 'Sedative Coping', contextual maturity and institutionalization among prisoners serving life sentences in England and Wales. The British Journal of Criminology, available online https://academic.oup.com/bjc/advance-article/doi/10.1093/bjc/azae001/7585780.

imprisonment may be maladaptive for release, as children remain inexperienced in many areas of 'life' outside, including intimate relationships. In Deegan's Australian study, individuals sentenced to life as children also felt that the focus on 'reducing risk', rather than human growth, limited their capacity to grow and develop in a meaningful way during the sentence (as people serving indeterminate sentences in England and Wales have also noted).[23]

Practitioners' responses to children sentenced to life, and their offences, can also negatively impact children's welfare and development. Deegan found that the seriousness of 'murder' obscured the young age of children in custody and the pain of being separated from family was overlooked by staff, who focused on the material possessions children had rather than the 'loneliness' they suffered.[24] Tynan noted that common behaviours associated with adolescence (e.g., breaking rules, testing boundaries) were punished as infractions in prison or used as indicators of risk, attracting 'tighter' oversight by staff and prison psychologists.[25] Racialised tropes among prison staff about children from black ethnic backgrounds and their pre-prisons lifestyles (particularly those convicted using joint enterprise who are often seen to be 'gang involved'), also rendered them less likely to see them as vulnerable children, impacting their subsequent responses to these children.[26]

In a rare exploration of the release experiences of child lifers, Deegan noted the prevalence of feelings of fear and anxiety, as individuals recognised their lack of 'life' experience beyond a prison setting.[27] Technological ignorance, inexperience in intimate relationships, and difficulties finding secure employment led to feelings of insecurity. Individuals also experienced precarious situations with parole supervisors, with some succumbing to the pressures of release and then being recalled to prison. Deegan described one of her participant's initial optimism about their future on release had 'free fallen' so that post-release he felt 'sad', and was 'highly agitated and paranoid' (p. 186).[28]

While others managed to adjust and find employment, they still experienced multiple obstacles, including restrictive licence conditions, a lack of belonging, and struggling to integrate into social situations.[29] Piecing together the available research demonstrates the multitude of problems that child lifers suffer during their detention and on release.

A distinct approach to children — the development of the existing legal framework

The need for a distinct approach to children has been recognised in law since the Juvenile Offenders Act 1847. This Act distinguished children by allowing those under 14 years to be charged with lesser offences than their adult counterparts. An entirely separate court system for 'juveniles' was established thereafter, under the Children Act 1908, otherwise known as the 'Children's Charter'. The Children's Charter was characterised as a reforming measure which was intended to provide 'special treatment for child offenders, with the emphasis more on treatment and care than on punishment' (p. 81).[30]

The Children's Charter replaced both the death sentence, and the life sentence (which was the sentence that would otherwise have been imposed on children aged between 7 and 16 who had been condemned to death and then reprieved) with an order for a new type of sentence that authorised detention for an unspecified period (s103). Modelled on a similar sentence for people with mental disorders, it was designed to be preventative and therapeutic in character rather than punitive, authorising detention for as long as necessary, or at His or Her 'Majesty's Pleasure'. The sentence was expanded to all children above the age of criminal responsibility but under 18 in the Children and Young Person's Act 1933 (s53).

It was not until the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965 was passed that the death penalty was abolished for most crimes committed by adults in

> Piecing together the available research demonstrates the multitude of problems that child lifers suffer during their detention and on release.

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23. See, for example, Jarman, B., & Vince, C. (2022). *Making progress? What progression means for people serving the longest sentences.* Prison Reform Trust.
24. See footnote 15: Deegan (2021).
25. See footnote 1: Tynan (2022).
26. See footnote 1: Tynan (2022).
27. See footnote 15: Deegan (2021);and see discussion of 'contextual maturity' in Crewe, et al. (2020) (footnote 9).
28. See footnote 15: Deegan (2021).
29. See footnote 15: Deegan (2021).
30. Aikin, K. W. W. (1972). *The Last Years of Liberal England, 1900-1914.* Collins.

England and Wales and the mandatory life sentence was introduced for adults in its present form. The provisions of that Act highlighted the intended difference between mandatory life sentences for children and adults: while an indeterminate sentence was to be imposed on both in cases of murder, for adults a minimum period could be specified for punishment. By contrast, no minimum term was set for children on the basis that they could be released at any time in accordance with progress and in recognition of the nature of the sentence as preventative and therapeutic. For example, the first HMP detainee — a boy of 15 convicted of the murder of his younger brother in 1915 — was released after only two years in detention in a Borstal reformatory.[31] Annual reviews were conducted with the aim of ensuring release at the earliest possible stage.

It was only in 1983 that those serving DHMP sentences were subject to minimum terms set in the same way as adults (at that time by the Home Secretary with advice from judges).[32] However, a review function remained an inherent part of the sentence, allowing the minimum term to be reduced in view of progress.[33] Until recently, a review of progress by the High Court was available to all those serving the sentence once they reached the halfway point of their minimum term and further reviews could occur throughout the sentence (see below).

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 formally introduced the judicialisation of the minimum term, but judges had to have regard to a schedule which provided that the starting point for children convicted of murder should be set at 12 years (schedule 21). Recent changes to the starting points and ranges for minimum terms for DHMPs and restrictions on the availability of minimum term reviews, introduced by the Police, Crime,

Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, are outlined in the following section.

Discretionary life sentences have always been available for children convicted of serious offences other than murder. In its current form, sentence of detention for life under sections 250 and 258 of the Sentencing Act 2020 can only be imposed if the seriousness of the offence justifies it and the sentencing court considers that there is a risk of serious harm of committing further specified offences. Discretionary life sentences and DPP sentences operate in a way that is identical to mandatory life sentences except for the fact that there is no right to a review of progress after the half-way point.

DPP sentences were created by s226 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. They could be imposed on anyone convicted under the age of 18 who had committed a specified offence and who was deemed dangerous but did not meet the threshold for a discretionary life sentence.[34] For individuals sentenced to DPP, they operate identically to discretionary life sentences, except for the fact that once released by the Parole Board, the licence can be terminated after a specified period of time. Future changes to this are described in the following section.

Recent changes in law and implications for practitioners

A number of changes to mandatory life sentences were implemented in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. The act changed the starting points in murder cases for children of different ages, as outlined in Figure 2.

Equivalent for adults	Mandatory minimum starting points		
	15 years	25 years	30 years
Person's age when offence committed	**Does not fall in other categories of offence**	**Sufficiently seriousness e.g., murder with knife or other weapon taken to the scene**	**Seriousness 'particularly high' e.g., murder with firearm, for gain, sexual/ sadistic conduct, two or more victims**
14 or under	8 years	13 years	15 years
15 or 16	10 years	17 years	20 years
17	14 years	23 years	27 years

31. Akester, K. (1997). Detention during HM's pleasure. *Criminal Justice Matters, 29*(1), 13-15.
32. R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Venables [1998] AC 407.
33. R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Smith [2006] 1 AC 159.
34. In their original form, they could be imposed with a minimum term of any period but following the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, they could only be imposed where the offence warranted a notional determinate term of at least four years.
35. Table adapted from s127 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/32/section/127 which section updates Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020. Also see NAYJ (2021). T*here's nothing smart about sentencing children harshly.* https://thenayj.org.uk/therersquos-nothing-smart-about-sentencing-children-harshly-nbsp/

Figure 2: *Mandatory starting points for life sentences for children imposed in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.*[35]

As a result of the changes in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Court Act professionals working in prisons may start to see more child lifers entering prison with very long minimum terms. The same Act also removed the opportunity for children convicted of murder to receive a review of their minimum term based on their progress, if they turned 18 years of age before being sentenced (128 of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022). In addition, it removed the opportunity for on-going reviews, reducing the scope of the progress review to a one-off opportunity. There will be a sizeable number of people in the system who had expected to have such a review who are no longer entitled to one.

The restriction on progress reviews to only those convicted of murder when aged under 18 at the point of sentence was successfully challenged in the High Court in the case of Quaye in 2024.[36] The Court found that there was no objective justification for treating individuals sentenced before and after the age of 18 differently. The Court noted that 'it is now widely recognised that young adults will continue to mature after their 18th birthday' and that 'the date of sentence can be subject to delay for a variety of reasons that are wholly unconnected to the culpability'. The Court also found that the removal of a progress review at the half-way point risked the sentence becoming arbitrary and a breach of the right to liberty protected by Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Secretary of State is appealing the decision so the current law remains that anyone sentenced after the age of 18 who has not yet had a minimum term review will not be offered one until the appeal is settled and the law is changed. However, it is possible that they will become entitled to a review if the appeal is upheld and the law changes: this should be borne in mind by professionals responsible for their sentence planning.

While the DPP sentence was abolished by Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act

2012, as noted above at least 85 individuals sentenced as children remain in prison, with many more unaccounted for in the data.[37] During the passage of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, legislative and policy changes were announced by the Ministry of Justice for those serving DPP sentences.

On 21 May 2024 Lord Bellamy stated in the House of Lords that [the Ministry] 'recognise the specific challenges faced by this cohort' (col. 965).[38] The changes included reducing the qualifying period — the period after which the Parole Board will review the necessity for licence — from ten years since first release to two years (whereas the reduction for those convicted to IPPs as adults is three years). DPPs will also benefit from a new sunset clause which means that, after the qualifying period has expired and two full years have passed without the licence being revoked, the licence will automatically expire. In one of the author's experiences working with many individuals serving DPP sentences (LJ), many have taken great hope from these proposals as signalling some light at the end of the tunnel.

> During the passage of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, legislative and policy changes were announced by the Ministry of Justice for those serving DPP sentences.

In addition to the recent changes in the law, the Ministry of Justice committed to a number of policy changes affecting individuals serving DPP sentences. These were announced in the House of Lords on 21st May 2024 in recognition of the particular needs of the cohort. They include a plan to 'update HMPPS operational policy so that there is a presumed annual referral of DPP cases to the [Parole] board unless there is a clear reason why this would not be beneficial to the individual concerned.' Further, in recognition of the 'need to provide tailored support' for people serving DPPs sentences, the Government announced further changes to the input from HMPPS psychology. As of 21st May 2024, it was confirmed that every DPP prisoner, whether never released or recalled, had had a case review. From that point on, those in prison serving DPP sentences should have quarterly reviews of their progress.

It was also confirmed in May 2024 that senior operational leaders across HMPPS had been commissioned to produce operational delivery plans,

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36. *R (Quaye) -v- Secretary of State for Justice* [2024] EWHC 211 (Admin). https://www.judiciary.uk/judgments/r-quaye-v-secretary-of-state-for-justice/
37. Some will have sadly passed away.
38. Victims and Prisoners Bill, Volume 838: debated on Tuesday 21 May 2024. https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-05-21/debates/21D1F04A-652C-41B8-8544-55D902903B6A/VictimsAndPrisonersBill#

within which there must be a specific focus on supporting and progressing DPP prisoners: 'This means expediting any required prison transfers, or access to required services or interventions. There is now a clear expectation that senior leaders know how all the DPP prisoners in their areas are progressing and that prisons and probation are being held to account for their work with them' (col. 966).[39]

The new law and policy, which is expected to be published in Autumn 2024, signals a recognition that those sentenced to life as children require a different approach. This is specifically in relation to progressing individuals serving DPP sentences through the prison system and considering the termination of their DPP licences. These have important implications for those working with such individuals in prisons and on probation.

In addition to these changes, the Parole Board has introduced a range of policies and guidance that recognise the special position of child lifers. Parole Board policy requires that an oral hearing must be granted where the person is under 18 at the point of application or recall, if release or progression cannot be determined on the papers, and there is a presumption of an oral hearing for young adults.[40] The Parole Board has also recently revised its listing policies to 'automatically prioritise' cases concerning anyone who was convicted as a child and is serving a sentence of DPP whether at the paper stage,[41] or the oral hearing stage.[42] It has now also agreed to prioritise cases of those serving DHMP. The Parole Board has drafted updated guidance in respect for anyone under the age of 18 at point of referral to the Board. These changes will be relevant to any professional involved in the management and progression of those sentenced to DHMP or DPP.

Conclusion

As more children enter prison sentenced to increasingly punitive life sentences, it is essential that the system and those working within it are able to identify them and recognise the distinct pains and problems they suffer in custody and beyond. Developments in law and policy may go some way to addressing the needs of child lifers in prison and on probation, but changes in law and policy are only effective alongside cultural and practice change. Increasing awareness of the recent developments in law and policy in relation to men and women serving DPP and life sentences among all professionals working with child lifers is essential. In addition, more systematic and intensive support for child lifers is needed, which focuses on their distinct and considerable suffering

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39.   See footnote 38: Victims and Prisoners Bill.
40.   Parole Board (2023). Types of Cases Member Guidance.
      https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657afe4b0467eb000d55f82b/Types_of_Cases_Guidance_November_2023_v3.0_FINAL_
      EXTERNAL.pdf -
41.   Parole Board (2023). *Prioritisation Framework for Paper Reviews under the Member Case Assessment Process.*
      https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64edd24c13ae15000d6e2f68/Prioritisation_Framework_for_Paper_Reviews_under_the_
      Member_Case_Assessment_Process_FINAL.pdf
42.   Parole Board (2023). Listing Prioritisation Framework for Oral Hearings
      https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a596dcc531eb001364feeb/Listing_prioritisation_framework__LPF__-_Verson_4.0_-
      _30th_May_2023.pdf.

Book Reviews

The Stains of Imprisonment: Moral Communication and Men Convicted of Sex Offenses
By Alice Ievins
Publisher: University of California Press (2023)
ISBN: 9780520383715 (Paperback)
Price: £30.00 (Paperback)

*Reviewers: Special feature extended book review by **prisoners and staff at HMP Rye Hill** in collaboration with Building Futures Network, **Prison Reform Trust.***

The Stains of Imprisonment — Moral communication and men convicted of sex offences, written by criminologist Alice Ievins,[1] is reviewed in this special feature for the *Prison Service Journal* by Building Futures Network Group (HMP Rye Hill). Building Futures is a five-year project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund to explore experiences of people who will spend 10 or more years in custody, with the aim of making a positive difference to the lives of very long-sentenced prisoners, their families and the wider community.[2]

Uniquely, this report compiles the thoughts and views from members of the Building Futures Network Group (BFNG) at Rye Hill and a number of staff working in a variety of areas throughout the prison. Data were collected through consultation work with all members and one to one sessions with staff. Some of the views recorded by current staff members were personal and may not represent those of HMPPS and/or G4S, as such we maintained their confidentiality so they could speak freely and openly to the group. This project was signed off by the current Director of HMP Rye Hill, Lee Davies.

The *Stains of Imprisonment* focuses on how in recent decades there has been a widespread effort to imprison more people for sexual violence. It offers a scientific description of the people and cultures of men convicted of sex offences. This book explores how prisons are morally communicative institutions, enforcing ideas about the offences the prisoners have committed, ideas that carry implication for prisoners' moral character. It investigates these moral messages, with Ievins finding that the prison she studied communicated a pervasive sense of disgust and shame, marking men as permanently stained. Rather than promoting accountability, the message portrayed discouraged prisoners from engaging in serious moral reflection on the harms they have caused. Analysing these effects, the book explores the role that imprisonment plays as a response to sexual harm, and the extent to which it takes us closer to and further from justice (p. 16).

This review will explore the prisoners' and staffs' views on a chapter by chapter basis, these are; Punishing Rape: Feminisms and the Carceral Conversation; Communicating Badly: Prisons as Morally Communicative Institutions; Distorting Institutions: Structuring the Moral Dialogue; Managing Guilt: Living as a 'Sex Offender' in Prison; Maintaining Innocence: Contesting Guilt and Challenging Imprisonment; Moralising Boundaries: Staff-Prisoner Relationships and the Communication of Difference; Denying Community: Social Relationships and the Dangers of Acknowledgment; Judging Prisons: The Limitations and Excesses of Denunciatory Punishment.

Punishing Rape: Feminisms and the Carceral Conversation

Many of the prisoner contributors felt that the vast majority of people who have not been through the legal system with a rape charge are unaware of how wide a scope the term rape covers. The points raised in chapter one revolve around the public's understanding, or lack thereof, of the complexity of the term rape. The chapter covers how political points can also be scored by the government and the opposition when commenting on convictions of rape. Such as when Victoria Derbyshire uses the public to light a fuse under 'Clarkes' plans for reform which is desperately needed, as sexual offence convictions are the fastest growing in England and Wales. Both staff and prisoner respondents had strong emotions ranging from anger to despair as the justice sector was once again being shaped by public opinion.

'…uses the public to light a fuse under 'Clarkes' plans for reform I was angered'.[3]

'The media clearly have more influence than the government who appear to buckle under public pressure'.[4]

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1. Ievins, A. (2023). *The Stains of Imprisonment: Moral Communication and Men Convicted of Sex offences.* University of California Press.
2. Prison Reform Trust (2022). Building Futures Promotional Leaflet.
3. BFNG prisoner comment.
4. BFNG prisoner comment.

However, there was contrast between staff and prisoner feedback.

> *'I was pleasantly surprised at the balance Dr Ievins achieved'.*[5]

Comparing that to the staff opinion of:

> *'The author paints a bit of a bad picture of the prison system, and she is playing up to the public demand, and the shame and guilt a prisoner faces are repetitive throughout the book let alone this chapter'.*[6]

Referring to the moral message as a 'stain' suggests something permanent. This impacts the social identity of the person(s) convicted, who are constantly marginalised and live in fear of the legal effects from their licence conditions or the sex offender register.

The overall feeling from this chapter is that the feedback regarding the mentality of the current prison system is a problem in successfully rehabilitating people convicted of sex offences.

Communicating Badly: Prisons as Morally Communicative Institutions

The raw honesty of this chapter was hard hitting for some. Ievins talks about punishment that has been removed from public view, hidden behind closed walls and the moral dialogue in which punishment has become an 'oblique communication carried out in institutions which give little expression of the public voice'. This rang true with many members of Rye Hill's Building Futures Network Group.

> *'The point made is essential to how justice is done and seen to be done'.*[7]

This clearly points to the lack of understanding by the public and the way that the government chooses to exclude the public with their 'we know best' approach. This leads to a system where all that is left to symbolise justice to victims and the community, is the number of years to which people are sentenced. Hulley et al discuss several ways in which long-term prison sentences can be damaging and counterproductive.[8] Long-term imprisonment necessitates coping strategies that fundamentally transform the individual, making them more emotionally detached, self-isolating, and socially withdrawn. These changes, although essential for survival in prison, make reintegration into society after release significantly harder. Prisoners often experience emotional numbing and become distant and hardened, which are maladaptive in the outside world and lead to difficulties in social and family life post-release. The cumulative negative effects of these adaptations include hypervigilance, estrangement, and a lack of trust, deeply internalised patterns that remain counterproductive in normal social contexts.

One respondent highlighted the extract; 'Punishment has become hidden behind closed walls' (p. 14). This prisoner expressed surprise that even as far back as 1830, prison reformers like John Howard were advocating for a new way to reform prisoners, noting that 'gentle discipline was commonly more efficient than the severity of sentences'. Ievins points out that losing one's connections to society and family only compounds a prisoner's feeling of shame; a very disruptive and negative emotion, as opposed to that of a feeling of guilt.

Prisoners and staff found it interesting that the author refers to 'denying, excusing or justifying one's own past offending does not seem to increase the likelihood of reoffending and may in some circumstances make it less likely'. This challenges the HMPPS approach to programmes. Ievins goes on to discuss how looking to the future is of importance in contrast to Offender Management Units' (OMU) perceived approach of referring to the past and being reluctant to talk about the future.

Distorting Institutions: Structuring the Moral Dialogue

Many of the prisoners commented on the first paragraph that discusses the distortions of how men convicted of sexual offending viewed their offences. This summarises the reading that Ievins completed before starting out on her fieldwork, however, the book mentions that she expected to meet many prisoners who would be falsely maintaining their innocence and downplaying their offences. She then goes on to say:

> 'I have an instinctive desire to probe official narratives … I was uncomfortable with assuming that any distance between the prisoners' stories of their offences and that officially validated by their own conviction was a product of the prisoners' dishonesty' (p. 34).

This intrigued many of the prisoners and made them feel Ievins was being honest that she was not 'judging a book by its cover'. Some of the staff reviewing this book also

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5. BFNG prisoner comment.
6. Staff comment.
7. BFNG prisoner comment.
8. Hulley, S., Crewe, B., & Wright, S. (2016). Re-examining the Problems of Long-term Imprisonment. British Journal of Criminology, 56(4), 769–792.

commented, that in their opinion, prisoners deal with their stains of imprisonment in different ways and that there is a lot of 'un-saids' in the official version of accounts. However, prisoners convicted of sexual offences are rarely completely honest about their crimes with those seen to be in authority.

The chapter then gives views of some prisoners from Ievins' fieldwork. Some prisoners noted that this chapter resonated with their own experiences of the justice system:

> 'I can relate to [a lot] of the comments made by men in HMP Stafford, especially when they spoke about being stained. It's a powerful word; it describes how disruptive it is for men convicted of a sexual offence to continue with the lives constructively post release'.[9]

The group felt that Ievins makes a valid reference to the potential for violence towards men convicted of sexual offences from fellow prisoners. It is not the only risk whilst in custody; it is widely known that officers across the prison estate have been abusive towards sex offenders both verbally and in the extreme physically.

> 'The accuracy of the chapter is excellent and revealing; Ievins describes how counterproductive the term 'sex offender' is' (p. 34).

Managing Guilt: Living as a 'Sex Offender' in Prison

A number of prisoners in the group mentioned that this chapter was difficult to align with as they were 'maintaining innocence'.

However, table 1 (p. 62) was seen by the whole group as eye opening, as many of the prisoners could recognise elements of themselves within this table, however multiple prisoners did mention that they do not fall into just one group but split over multiple groups which led to confusion and a feeling of the table not being as useful as first thought.

> 'It makes it both interesting to see how people can be grouped, while confusing because I don't fall into just one particular section'.[10]

This chapter stirred a multitude of emotions within the group both positive and negative, because of how men describe their convictions and how they deal with the shame, stigma and guilt attached. It can take a huge amount of mental strength to cope with the consequences of opening up.

One particular concern raised by the group was the chapter's acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of suicide in the lives of 'men convicted of a sexual offence'.

> 'It took me back to the time of my arrest, where I was repeatedly asked if I felt suicidal; this now makes sense to me because I was unaware at the time of the risks of suicide attached to being accused of a 'sexual offence'.[11]

The group concluded that Ievins captures a wholly accurate picture of the comments and topics discussed, based on their own experiences talking with fellow prisoners, both in 'mains' and 'VP' locations. They shared multiple accounts of hearing first hand some of the comments Ievins records from speaking with men in HMP Stafford.

Maintaining Innocence: Contesting Guilt and Challenging Imprisonment

One member of the group who maintains their innocence highlighted:

> 'The chapter clearly shines a bright light on how prisoners maintaining innocence are treated by prisons… An undercurrent runs within departments including OMU which suggests that prisoners who are innocent or 'maintain innocence' are in denial' (p. 62).

This sentiment resonated within the group, with many expressing concerns that those who might be innocent could be unfairly labelled as liars, hindering their progress within the system and ignoring the possibility of miscarriages of justice occurring.

Staff members offered an alternative perspective, noting:

> 'I feel that many prisoners wear a mask to hide their true feelings. I can see how hard it must be for those who are truly innocent'.[12]

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9. BFNG prisoner comment.
10. BFNG prisoner comment.
11. BFNG Prisoner comment.
12. Staff comment.

Again, this underscores how difficult it is for those who are maintaining their innocence, especially with the stigma attached of being convicted of a sexual offence.

The group debated the term 'denial' and concluded that the term itself causes many disagreements. They questioned how a person can deny something that did not happen, emphasising that an act must have taken place for a person to deny it. The term 'maintaining innocence' also has its own troubles due to the fact people who are innocent are not maintaining they are innocent; they are stating they are innocent.

One member who admits guilt stated:

> *'I am guilty and find prison difficult with the loss of liberty and being away from the people I love, maintaining relationships is difficult just with the distance involved as well as the lack of time to maintain relationships and the price [telephone system] of continued family contact. I can't imagine how difficult it must be for both the accused and their loved ones if they are truly innocent' (p. 62).*

The group thought that Ievins portrays these difficulties in progressing through the system within her book and gets the message across well, especially accepting that there must be a percentage of those convicted who are innocent of their charges.

Moralising Boundaries: Staff-Prisoner Relationships and the Communication of Difference

With the focus of this chapter being on staff relationships we focused on a professional staff-prisoner working relationship, as it is understood that prison officers cannot share too much of their personal lives due to security concerns.

A prison officer expressed the opinion that they do not agree with the findings of the book and concluded that if the field research had been carried out across multiple establishments including private prisons that a different opinion of trust between staff and prisoners would be reached, as in some prisons this working relationship is strong and real. The following comment was also agreed on by the group:

> *'I can see how she reached this opinion as my own experience of a black and white prison [non-private prison] officers are trained to be tough 'old school' no matter the type of offender'.*[13]

Members of the group concluded that the chapter points to the conclusion that prisoner-officer relationships are rarely real. There is a strong theme of distrust from both sides.

> *'I have witnessed officers treating prisoners harshly because they are deemed 'a sex offender' this is not uncommon in Public Sector establishments regardless of the prisoner's behaviour'.*[14]

The overall opinion of the group was that due to officers' mistrust and fear of manipulation, it is then difficult to encourage prisoners to share parts of their lives whilst interacting with them.

It was felt that the book portrayed the opinion that relationships in a custodial environment result in division, how this division is managed will shape how those in custody behave once released into the community. The punishment is prison, however the consequences of the treatment by those who provide custody is wholly harmful to the rehabilitation of those who they aim to help.

Denying Community: Social Relationships and the Dangers of Acknowledgement

There is a theme of collective denial that rings true throughout this chapter. Ievins describes how prisoners, irrespective of which category they fall into, choose to avoid discussing their offences with their peers.

The group could relate to this:

> *'…prison is an extremely hard environment to survive in and it is all about survival'.*[15]

> *'As prisoners we are only passing through, at some point [the majority of] prisoners will go back to the community and self-preservation is the most important tool to make this achievable.'*[16]

However, the group did state that it would be virtually impossible to navigate a sentence without having some form of social

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13. Staff comment.
14. BFNG prisoner comment.
15. Staff comment.
16. Staff comment.

interaction with fellow prisoners. However, many prisoners are struggling to come to terms with their own offence(s) and it would be overwhelming to take on board the details of the offences of your peers as well. Some prisoners also stated that although guilty themselves of offending, sometimes it is easier to make friends without knowing what the other person is guilty of.

One respondent shared:

'I have shared the full details of my offending with one fellow prisoner as we have grown to be good friends'.

However other members shared the fear that if they were seen talking about their offending with other prisoners it could be held against them as prison staff could see it as glorifying the crimes or worse 'getting off' on each other's memories.

Ievins describes the lack of conversation/discussion around offences as denial. Whilst she may have a point, many of the group members disagreed, suggesting that self-preservation, such as avoiding violence or the stigma of certain crimes, was the real reason.

A final comment was the acknowledgement that not sharing thoughts and feelings around convictions can be detrimental and lead to a risk of increased harm, both mentally and physically.

Judging Prisons: The Limitations and Excesses of Denunciatory Punishment

How do we judge prisons? This is not a simple question, as Ievins describes throughout the book, the prison environment is extremely complex. The book draws on the perspective shared by both prisoners and staff that the complexity arises from decades of politicians meddling in crime and justice, using it as a political weapon to appeal to the public in times of general elections.

'I personally find it hard to understand how prisons should morally communicate with prisoners when simple terms of communication are near impossible to identify within the prison environment. The prison environment is so controlling, every minute within your day is controlled by the State'. [17]

The consensus among the group was that denunciatory punishment has more limitations than benefits. They believed that by demonstrating remorse on the landings peers could be exploited by peers as it is a sign of weakness. Similarly, if shown with facilitators during offender behaviour programmes then the system may use it against you. Sometimes prisoners do not even know about this until they read their parole dossier. It is impossible to talk with family or friends as calls and visits are monitored, so how can prisoners deal with this? How can they talk, without fear?

Ievins makes a great suggestion:

'Benefiting from more creative endeavours by means of opportunity for longer, more private and more meaningful conversations with family members and loved ones'.

The group felt this would be a fantastic starting point for real, meaningful change.

The group also felt, if imprisonment is to both punish and rehabilitate people so they may re-enter the community as better versions of themselves, then Ievins makes a key point that should be at the forefront of change.

'There might be good reason to be parsimonious with the pain we inflict, and to speak more loudly about the harm we do by lengthening prison sentences, hardening conditions and permanently staining people'. [18]

Conclusion

The first-hand experiences, and the honesty with which Ievins approaches the book are genuinely powerful. The mix of lived experience and professional assessment illustrate the murkiness of prison institutions. The majority of the group feel that this book is a valuable tool for both officers and those writing policy. It sheds light on the reality of the stains of imprisonment prisoners convicted of a sexual offences face, and the harms that this imposes on the rehabilitation and progression within the prison system.

The group's conclusion was well summed up in the final comment:

'This has been one of the most important books I have read during my sentence and the only work that has had the balance and courage to address an ever-growing worsening issue.' [19]

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17. BFNG prisoner comment.
18. BFNG prisoner Comment.
19. BFNG prisoner Comment.

The Politics of Prison Overcrowding: A Critical Analysis of the Italian Prison System
By Simone Santorso
ISBN: 9780367467791 (Hardback) 9781003030997 (eBook)
Price: £100.00 (Hardback) £31.99 (eBook)

Reviewers: **Dr Sacha Darke** *is Reader in Criminology at the University of Westminster.* **Irene Sangaletti** *is a Custody Worker at HMP Isis.*

In The Politics of Prison Crowding, Simone Santorso provides an in-depth and documented analysis of the roots and effects of 'demographic transformation' and the neoliberal 'managerial turn' on Italian penal policy and prison working and living conditions from the 1970s. The book guides the reader through global theories on post-war developments in the use and experience of prison and the synergies and peculiarities of the Italian case, as the nation has grappled with a long-term crisis in prison crowding, preceding and continuing after a doubling of the number of foreign national prisoners in the 1990s and the introduction of open prison regimes, dynamic security measures, and minimum requirements of four square metre cell space per prisoner following a 2009 European Court of Human Rights ruling that the Italian prison system was inhumane and degrading. The author explores the manifestation of political, structural, and social forces that have contributed to this chronic problem and delves into its continuing impact on daily prison life and administration to the present.

A particular strength of the text is the inclusion of the author's own fieldwork, ethnographic and recorded interviews with serving prisoners and prison staff. These testimonies add a human and concrete element to the theoretical treatment, allowing the reader to come into direct contact with the lived reality of prisoners and prison workers. The personal stories and experiences gathered during the interviews contribute significantly to the redefinition of the prison system, highlighting how sentence execution has become more severe and complicated, driven by the contemporary bureaucratic logic.

Considering prison crowding as part of a broader transformation of governance provides a holistic view. The interconnectedness of criminal justice policy and dynamics in Italy suggests a comprehensive and integrated approach elsewhere, offering practical solutions beyond individual policies.

Moreover, the book deftly navigates the intricate web of management policies that shape the Italian prison landscape. Building on this idea, the book delves into the crisis of prison overcrowding, presenting it not only as a legal and constitutional challenge, but also as a significant source of revenue for the State. Decisions taken by the Italian authorities to tackle overcrowding, such as the temporary reduction of the prison population and the increase in capacity, are analysed, shedding light on the management change within the Italian prison system.

Another fascinating aspect is the consideration of prison crowding as part of a broader transformation of State governance and the institutional landscape. The author deftly links the crowding crisis with the broader dynamics of politics and criminal justice, offering the reader a comprehensive and interconnected view.

The second part of the research, dedicated to the Italian prison landscape, further explores the implications of space and time in overcrowded prisons. The analysis of the economics of prison life and the redefinition of the colour line behind bars add new facets to the overall picture, providing a deeper understanding of the daily challenges faced by inmates.

The final part of the book examines the changing roles of prison security and police officers, highlighting how inmates are losing the habit of being controlled. This change in prison dynamics adds an interesting perspective on security management and the dynamics of the relationships between the actors involved.

In conclusion, *The Politics of Prison Crowding* contributes significantly to the study of prison and justice policies. Its well-organised structure, wealth of data and testimonies and critical analysis of the dynamics of the Italian prison system make the text informative, engaging and stimulating for scholars and students as well as practitioners. This comprehensive exploration, based on real-life accounts and solid research, positions the book as an indispensable tool for understanding the complexities of contemporary prison policies and the administration of justice. The book combines academic rigour with a human touch, offering a nuanced perspective on the challenges faced by those behind bars and those tasked with managing the intricate dynamics of the Italian prison system.

Prison Suicide: What happens afterwards?
By Philippa Tomczak
Publisher: Bristol University Press (2018)
ISBN: 978-1529203585 (Hardback) 978-1529203660 (EPUB)
Price: £47.99 (Hardback) £16.99 (EPUB)

Reviewer: **Bradley Read** *is a PhD Candidate at the University of Cambridge. Bradley has worked in the criminal justice system for 14 years, 12 of which were as a senior manager in public sector prisons. He is now a senior policy advisor at the College of Policing.*

In 1992, when a previous authoritative book on suicide in prisons was written,[1] there were 2 self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners. During 2016, when the research for this book began, there were 124 self-inflicted deaths in UK jails, 354 prisoner deaths overall, the highest since records began in 1978. The last 30 years have seen a worsening of the situation for many people at risk of self-harm in prisons as the rate of suicide in prisons in England and Wales has doubled to 4 for every 1000 prisoners.[2] It is within this terrible and distressing reality that Dr Phillipa Tomczak's book exists and therefore, rightly, the book begins with a plea. This plea asks the reader to consider the current situation for many vulnerable people in custody and their families and to look to those who are still with us, whom may yet be protected from harm if we can make the changes needed. Tomczak begins her work by offering a way in which scholars and officials could respond to their plea and that's by taking more interest in what happens *after* a suicide, to take up a *'post-death*

vantage" (p. 3) in opposition to current practice which, perhaps too narrowly, focuses on the lead up to a suicide.

The opening chapter concerns itself mainly with illustrating for the reader the reality of the above challenge. How the prison system is to accurately define and detect risk factors in suicide, how does it influence how staff are motivated (or not) in programmes of suicide prevention and how are scholars and officials to assess the heavy and traumatic emotional burden placed on other prisoners, staff, and families by a death. Next the book concerns itself with the role of the deceased's intentions in official reviews following suicide. It asks why there is seemingly such strong desire for authorities to find the motivation for suicide. Perhaps, it is argued, it's a means for the 'system' to protect itself from its responsibility as the overseers of the environment where so much death occurs. One interviewee sums up these motivation debates simply *'their just as dead, no matter the motivations'* (p. 16). The middle sections of the book move forward to discussions concerning the role of prison staff and offers a useful critique of the narrow focus on their actions in the administrative and investigative process following a death (i.e. was the correct form filled in) and how not enough time and attention appears to be spent on the experiential and perhaps harm motivating aspects of prison life. There is a great deal of discussion on how the stigmatisation of prisoners affects matters related to suicide in prisons. Having worked in prisons for over 12 years I know it is not uncommon to hear *some* staff responses to issues effecting self-harm by saying the behaviour is 'attention seeking', 'medication seeking', 'vape

seeking', there are at times some truth in these concerns, prisons are tough and understaffed, people can and do manipulate staff and systems. Some staff can all too often see themselves as 'above' those they care for, after all prisoners are criminals, some of whom have done terrible things. Some staff can all too easily fall back on the old adage 'if you can't do the time, you shouldn't do the crime' in response to poor coping. Tomczak argues for the front centring of individuals to combat this potential view, in turn ensuring actions, recommendations and expectations don't 'de-personalise' the very real suffering experienced by prisoners.

The complexities of the current system are robustly demonstrated in the authoritative sections dealing with Prison Service Rules, Instructions, recommendations and the role of prison governors and directors (p. 116-122). These pages will be extremely enlightening for researchers new to the prison bureaucracy in England and Wales. Tomczak suggests that the overseers, the executive bodies who investigate and audit prisons, could be delivering much more than they are now, if only they could only focus their, as Tomczak frames it, 'bark' and 'bite' on those who really can enact meaningful and lasting change. In the current system, too many recommendations fall to individual governors to fix rather than ministers who might have a hope of developing and champion the system change needed to make a lasting difference. The disastrous impact of poor government reforms, such as the Transforming Rehabilitation project, have shown that significant damage to the criminal justice system can be done by those officials who can seem unaccountable for their decisions. It

1. Liebling, A. (1992). *Suicides in prison.* Routledge.
2. Ministry of Justice (2023). *Safety in custody statistics England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to December 2023 Assaults and Self-harm to September 2023.* Ministry of Justice.

is for these people that the hardest 'bite' needs to be reserved.

Due to the subject matter, at times this book is a bleak and difficult read, the challenges are not shied away from, and it remains authoritative and thought provoking. Its concluding paragraph a clarion call for the criminal justice system to ask itself again whether vulnerable people should ever be brought into prison, as a place of safety or otherwise. Whilst it does not seek to offer any concrete policy changes, nor is it entirely even handed *'government certainly deserves some more shaming'* (p. 132) the data is distressingly clear and so frustration with the political class does come through strongly at times.[3] It asks us to consider in more detail a vitally different angle to suicide prevention and suggests that more focus on the *as afterwards* will potentially impact on *the before*. As a practitioner I found myself nodding my head in agreement with this viewpoint as I recognised and relived the experiences of my prison work. Throughout this well researched and informative work Tomczak has a clear message for those working within this field *'prison suicide is a substantially, although not entirely, preventable crisis'* (p. 2). It is an inescapable truth that people in Prison throughout England and Wales continue to die in record numbers, therefore this book has a vital and important 'bite', and I am sure we could all do with 'barking' a bit more about that.

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3. There is a special spotlight retained for the impact of Chris Grayling throughout.

Prison Service Journal

Mapping the Landscape of Trust: Towards a Typology in the Context of the Prison
Dr Sarah Waite

Persistent Pain Management in Prison: an exploration of current practice and patient needs, and facilitators and barriers to intervention engagement
Paul New, Dr Miznah Al-Abbadey, and Dr Lianne Wood

Taking the prison to the classroom: prison service professionals as guest speakers in Higher Education
Dr Carol Robinson, Vanessa Lang Burns and Pete Thompson

Access to Activities in Belgian Prisons: Addressing The Needs of Incarcerated People Through Participatory Action Research
Elieze Termote, Lennert De Boe, An-Sofie Vanhouche, Kristel Beyens, Annelies Jans and Eva Meeus

'I see a really good future for myself now, to what I was': Understanding the Experiences of People who Have Completed Kaizen
Raeanne Valois

Child lifers: Developments in law and policy and the need for a distinct approach by criminal justice professionals
Dr Laura Janes and Dr Susie Hulley