

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

July 2011 No 196

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

January 2011 No 193



Where does the prison
system go from here?

Special Edition

Voices from the front line

Contents

Jamie Bennett is Centre Manager at IRC Morton Hall.

Martin Kettle is a senior operational manager currently seconded to HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

Maggie Bolger is based in Training Services.

Ray Taylor is a prison officer at HMP Pentonville in London.

Dr. Rachel Bell is a senior officer at HMYOI Feltham.

Monica Lloyd is based in Rehabilitation Services Group, NOMS .

Margaret Adams was a prison manager.

Christopher Stacey is Head of Projects and Services at UNLOCK, the National Association of Reformed Offenders.

2 Editorial Comment

3 Interview: Prison Governor Jamie Bennett

7 Interview: Prison Officer in a High Security Prison Martin Kettle

10 Interview: Senior Officer in Training Services Maggie Bolger

13 Interview: Instructional Officer Martin Kettle

16 Interview: Prisoner in a local prison Ray Taylor

19 Interview: Prisoner in a local prison Dr. Rachel Bell

22 Interview: Prisoner in a female closed prison Monica Lloyd

24 Interview: Life sentence prisoner Margaret Adams

28 Interview: Prisoner in open conditions Monica Lloyd

31 Interview: Mother of a serving prisoner Christopher Stacey

Editorial Board Jamie Bennett (Editor) IRC Morton Hall

Margaret Adams
Dr Rachel Bell
HMYOI Feltham
Maggie Bolger
Prison Service College, Newbold Revel
Alan Constable
HMP Winchester
Dr Ben Crewe
University of Cambridge
Paul Crossey
HMYOI Portland
Dr Michael Fiddler
University of Greenwich

Steve Hall
SERCO
Dr Karen Harrison
University of Hull
Professor Yvonne Jewkes
University of Leicester
Dr Helen Johnston
University of Hull
Martin Kettle
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
Monica Lloyd
Rehabilitation Services Group NOMS
Alan Longwell
Criminal Justice Division, Northern Ireland Prison Service

William Payne
Public Sector Bids Unit
Dr Basia Spalek
University of Birmingham
Christopher Stacey
Unlock
Ray Taylor
HMP Pentonville
Dr Azrini Wahidin
Queens University, Belfast
Mike Wheatley
Directorate of High Security
Ray Hazzard and Steve Williams
HMP Leyhill

July 2011

- 34 Interview: Father of a serving prisoner**
Christopher Stacey
- 37 Interview: Worker for a large charitable organisation**
Michael Fiddler
- 43 Interview: Worker for a small charitable organisation**
Ray Taylor
- 47 Book Review**
Songs from the Black Chair: A Memoir of Mental Interiors
- 48 Book Review**
Drugs, Crime and Public Health: The political economy of drug policy
Ray Taylor
- 50 Book Review**
Positive Practice Positive Outcomes: a handbook for professionals in the criminal justice system working with offenders with learning disabilities
Jenny Talbot
- 52 Book Review**
Correctional mental health: From theory to best practice
Dr. Rachel Bell
- 53 Book Review:**
Not Bad for a Bad Lad
Peter Quinn
- 55 Values and Practices in Public and Private Sector Prisons: A Summary of Key Findings from an Evaluation**
Professor Alison Liebling, Dr. Ben Crewe and Dr. Susie Hulley

Michael Fiddler is lecturer in Criminology at the University of Greenwich.

Professor Alison Liebling is Director of the Prison Research Centre at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.

Jenny Talbot is the Programme Manager for Learning Difficulties and Disabilities in Prison at the Prison reform Trust.

Peter Quinn is a retired prison governor.

Professor Alison Liebling is Director of the Prison Research Centre, **Dr. Ben Crewe** is Penology Director and Deputy Director of the Prison research Centre and **Dr. Susie Hulley** is a Research Associate.

Cover photograph by **Brian Locklin**, Health Care Officer, HMP Gartree.

The Editorial Board wishes to make clear that the views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Prison Service.

Printed at HMP Leyhill on 115 gsm Claro Silk

Set in 10 on 13 pt Frutiger Light

Circulation approx 6,000

ISSN 0300-3558

© Crown Copyright 2011



Editorial Comment

In January 2011, *Prison Service Journal* published a special edition entitled: *Where does the prison system go from here?* This featured interviews with prominent public figures including the Minister responsible for prisons, the Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, several heads of prominent interest groups, a union leader and a former editorial board member of *Inside Time*. The interviews were conducted shortly before the publication of the Green Paper *Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders* and this edition was intended to provide a reflection upon the critical thinking that would inform the future direction of public policy.

The edition was generally well received by readers. However, there were criticisms from some quarters. In particular, some officers and prisoners commented that they felt over-looked in the debate. Those comments sowed a seed that over time took root and grew into this follow up edition focussing on *Voices from the frontline*. This has been a bold, challenging and risky project but one that has also been exciting, valuable and poignant. Providing a space for the authentic voices of staff, prisoners, prisoners' families and those working in the voluntary and charitable sector is important for a number of reasons. First, those are people who understand and experience imprisonment most intensely. They therefore have a particular insight into the reality of the lived experience, which is valuable in informing change. Second, it is precisely because their voices are so rarely heard directly, openly and at length that it is important that a space is provided so as to empower them to be participants in the debate rather than merely the subjects of it. Third, hearing those voices directly conveys something of the personality of those people, revealing their human strengths, frailties and complexities. It is a humanising process.

The interviews for this edition took place at the end of the consultation period for the Green paper, *Breaking the Cycle*, and shortly prior to the publication of the White paper setting out the Government's detailed legislative proposals. These papers will set the direction for the coming years. There are three particularly important areas of planned reform that are salient to prisons. The first is that there is a challenge being presented to the current use of imprisonment. It has been argued that not only does the expansion of the prison system need to be halted but indeed there should be a reduction in its use. This has been justified on grounds of efficiency, that this is not affordable; on effectiveness grounds, that community sentences often work better; and on moral grounds, that the current level of use is not justified. The second is that prisons should be 'places of hard work and industry' where prisoners should undertake employment in a way that more closely resembles a working week. It is intended that this will foster a habit of work as well as provide skills and prospects that may be of benefit upon release. The third is that an innovative approach to rehabilitation will be developed through 'payment by results'. The intention is that by incentivizing organisations there will be an opportunity to encourage more and more effective services that will help to break the cycle of re-offending.

The issues discussed in this edition are explored by thirteen people who are intimately and directly involved in the prison experience. They include four members of staff, ranging from an officer working in a high security prison, to an instructional officer, a senior officer working in training services and a prison governor. The five prisoners who contribute include two in local prisons, a life sentence prisoner, a woman prisoner and one in an open establishment. There are also interviews with two parents of serving prisoners and two people who work for charitable and voluntary sector organisations, delivering services to prisoners. The interviewees were identified through a range of contacts in prisons and whilst it is not intended that they are an exhaustive, representative or scientifically sampled group, it is intended that they provide authenticity, credibility and insight. It was decided at an early stage that personal details of the interviewees would be kept to a minimum. In addition it was decided that individual offences would not be discussed with prisoners or prisoner's families and that pseudonyms would be used. This was partly for reasons of relevance and sensitivity, but was also to ensure that those voices could be heard without distraction. The issues were discussed with each of the interviewees using a standardised list of questions. These questions examined the key issues including the size of the prison population and the conditions of imprisonment in the past, present and future. They also addressed prominent areas of public policy including the 'broken society', the 'rehabilitation revolution' and the role of the commercial and charitable sectors.

Whilst each individual has a distinct and personal perspective, and that was indeed one of the reasons for pursuing this project, there were some common themes that emerged. In general there was a consensus about prisons being overused and there was support for investment in rehabilitation and particularly employment in prisons. However, there were many pragmatic questions raised. The most significant of these related to resources. Interviewees were particularly concerned about how services could be maintained and improved in the current fiscal environment. Were the funds available to realise the ambitions? What services were at risk now or in the future from efficiency savings or policy changes? What might be the effect on the culture and climate of prisons from changes in service delivery? They also had many questions about the public, political and media appetite for proposed changes. Many questioned how much the public knew and understood about prisons? How much consensus there was about the changes? Can they be sustained in the face of resistance? Whilst there was some general optimism about the intentions for the future, there was anxiety about the challenges of turning this into reality.

This edition of *Prison Service Journal* is published at an important time where the Government's strategy is taking definitive form. This edition includes thirteen individual and authentic accounts of the hopes, fears and aspirations of those living and working in prisons or dealing with the consequences of imprisonment. For those involved, it provides an opportunity to talk openly and honestly and to be heard by those responsible for practice and policy. For those reading this edition, it is hoped that they will be rewarded with perspectives and insights that are all the more valuable as a result of their rarity.

Interview: Prison Governor

Dr. Peter Bennett is Governor of HMP Grendon and Springhill and is interviewed by Jamie Bennett who is Centre Manager at IRC Morton Hall.

Dr. Peter Bennett studied South Asian History and Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. He went on to carry out fieldwork in central India for his PhD, publishing a book and several articles on caste and sect¹. He joined the Prison Service as an officer at HMP Birmingham in 1983 followed by positions as governor grade at Everthorpe, Hull, Moorland and headquarters. He has been Governor in-charge at Nottingham, Wellingborough and latterly at Grendon therapeutic community prison and Springhill open prison. He has been Chair of the Perrie Lectures Committee and is a Director of the Koestler Trust and a Director of the New Bridge Foundation.

JB: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

PB: I believe that we lock up more people than we need to. Not that in any way I am an abolitionist, although I imagine a day when abolition might be possible, rather that imprisonment should be reserved for the worst offenders posing a risk of significant harm to the public. During my career I have experienced an alarming and unnecessary rise in the prison population during which time the punishment element of sentencing has increased and the rehabilitative element has progressed but at a slower rate than it could have. Other than not making economic sense, it decreases opportunities to focus on the positive side of criminal justice; changing lives and encouraging good citizenship. Inevitably if prisons are over full, there is a dilution of resources to fund effective rehabilitation and resettlement regimes. With regard to offenders identified as likely to benefit from particular offending behaviour programmes, we are currently experiencing a degree of stagnation as it becomes increasingly difficult to allocate places when courses are full and waiting lists are lengthening. But as Governor of Grendon, I am pleased to say that I have been spared some of the pressures of over crowding, largely because I have been able to demonstrate that to increase the population of this therapeutic community prison or to take too many prisoners at a time would have a serious adverse effect on the maintenance of a safe and trusting environment which is essential to the practice of good therapy.

Fortunately, senior Prison Service managers have listened to the argument and responded sympathetically.

JB: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world that the prisoners you work with come from?

PB: I am always intrigued by politicians' constructs of society, whether that is the 'big' society, or 'broken' society, or indeed an outright denial of the very existence of society. I suppose the idea of a broken society is a convenient way of saying that things have gone terribly wrong and the new regime knows how to fix it. It is all very facile. Society is highly complex and subject to continuous change. An ever-changing and uneven distribution of wealth and power leads to areas of deprivation, temptation, ambiguity and tension which are often linked to increased criminal activity. The prison population at Springhill reflects diverse social backgrounds, including prisoners from deprived neighbourhoods as well as professionals from the worlds of business, finance and politics. At Grendon therapeutic prison, however, there is a preponderance of men from dysfunctional family backgrounds, particularly those who have suffered traumas during childhood arising from neglect or abuse. My experience of therapy at Grendon over the last decade has convinced me of the close link between abuse and neglect within the family and subsequent criminal behaviour and therefore of the effectiveness of group therapy as a means of addressing such profound and traumatic experiences and ultimately helping men to change their lives for the better. Perhaps my experiences also suggests that the family ought also be targeted more than it has been as a focus for crime prevention, but this raises more political issues about intrusion and the 'nanny state'.

JB: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

PB: One has to be realistic here by acknowledging that prison can exacerbate individual problems, but having said this, prisons are not only about trying to mitigate the harmful effects of imprisonment per se. I don't think I could have continued working in prisons and maintaining a commitment towards reform and rehabilitation from within unless I thought that we could make a real difference. Prisons can provide the

1. Bennett, P. (1993) *The Path of Grace: Social Organisation and Temple Worship in a Vaishnava Sect* Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation.

time and space as well as the support and encouragement to help men and women confront their problems and improve their lives. As I speak today I can't help but consider how the greater proportion of my time as Governor is spent in maintaining and continually seeking to improve regimes geared to resettlement and rehabilitation in which prisoners can engage with future employers, study for educational and vocational qualifications, seek support from drug counsellors, benefit from courses in parenting and participate in family and children's days.

JB: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for prisoners to make positive changes to their lives?

PB: My background as a social anthropologist has always provided me with a rationale for the process of imprisonment which is pertinent to your question. Imprisonment is a rite of passage, a prolonged liminal stage between a forced separation from society to eventual reintegration back into society. Rites of passage are typically status changing and life changing events marked by a liminal stage where the individual is vulnerable to good and bad influences, traditionally forces of good and evil. The social metaphor is apt. prisons are potentially dangerous places where life choices and influences can be harmful or can lead to self improvement in preparation for release. What we have to ensure as practitioners is that the harmful effects are reduced — self harm, violence, drug misuse — and the positive impact is increased by maintaining a healthy regime that enables the prisoner to engage voluntarily in life changing pursuits. As a therapeutic prison, Grendon is remarkable for the reduced levels of bullying and self harm, rare resort to the use of force, the integration of sexual and non-sexual offenders, the absence of a segregation unit and the extremely low levels, in fact non-existence, of drug use. A prison like Grendon provides a safe and trusting space and an opportunity for prisoners to begin to make changes to their lives.

JB: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more

could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

PB: I very much welcome the Government's emphasis on rehabilitation, a term which had for a time dropped out of favour but which has now itself been rehabilitated, and could prove to be a potent message, albeit 'revolution' is rather grandiose. As for helping prisoners to go straight, I'd like to see greater emphasis on the last of the three stage rite of passage described earlier, that is reintegration back into society. Much more is being done than ever before in preparing prisoners for release, particularly initiatives to improve outside agencies in helping prisoners to resettle and to gain employment, for this is not just the job of the Probation Trusts. We are increasingly securing positive contacts with employers and educational institutions, mentoring schemes and other forms of support for prisoners and ex-prisoners are proliferating, helping prisoners to desist from reoffending. But more than this, I would like to see a clear and sincere acknowledgement by society that once a prisoner has served his or her sentence, he or she is accepted back into society as a citizen with the full status of a citizen and without the stigma that customarily attaches itself to the 'ex-prisoner'. Criminologists such as Shadd Maruna have identified this need for what in effect is a ritual of reintegration where desistance is reinforced by the ex-prisoner defining himself and being acknowledged by others as a law abiding citizen².

The readiness to accept this notion of full and complete reintegration should underpin all rehabilitation initiatives.

JB: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

PB: I think there are many highly innovative and relevant examples of work and training already in prisons. At Springhill I have been impressed by my staff and prisoners who have linked up with a range of agencies to set up work and training opportunities. These include prisoners serving the community by working for Oxford Citizens Advice Bureau, a farms and gardens project developed with Aim Higher and supported by Lottery funding training prisoners in

What we have to ensure as practitioners is that the harmful effects are reduced — self harm, violence, drug misuse — and the positive impact is increased by maintaining a healthy regime that enables the prisoner to engage voluntarily in life changing pursuits.

2. For example see Maruna, S. (2011) *Reentry as a Rite of Passage in Punishment and Society* Vol.13 No.1 p.3-28.

horticulture and growing produce to sell to local restaurants as well as to replenish the prison kitchens, and a training centre shared with Northern Gas and taking on prisoner apprentices as well as non-prisoners who train on the site. What is important, however, is that Governors are allowed space to be enterprising, that profits are not appropriated and needs assessments are conducted on a regular basis to ensure that the work and training provided is of relevance to the job market. The future looks promising.

JB: Would you welcome the opportunity for prisoners to 'pay something back' to the community for their crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting their victims?

PB: Forgive me if I introduce another three-fold social principle, one that is fundamental in all forms of social exchange and that integrates societies universally; the obligation to give, to receive and to repay. I would say that there is a corresponding three-fold principle which reflects the negative side of exchange; that is the tendency to take illegally, which leads to the victim's expectation of repayment or recompense, which is fulfilled by the perpetrator's making repayment or restitution to the victim. This seems to be the rationale underpinning restorative justice, and one that I support, particularly in as much as it brings to the fore the plight of the victim and helps him or her in coming to terms with a particularly traumatic life event. It also helps the perpetrator in a sense to atone for his or her 'sins'; to reform. As such, I believe that initiatives which are seen as a form of payback are to be preferred precisely because they satisfy a universal expectation of justice, whose outcome can be immeasurably more positive than punishment alone.

JB: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

PB: During my 28 years of working in prison, the most noticeable change has undoubtedly been the improvement in the treatment of prisoners and the impact of the decency agenda. But I have always acknowledged that as a Governor, my understanding of prisoners' experiences is inevitably vague and partial, indeed that is why I have always advocated and

supported research in prisons which goes beyond the routine statistical kind and digs deeply into the social and cultural life of the prison. Ethnographic research reveals so much about prisoner society that is normally hidden from view and an understanding of which is essential if we are to develop truly positive rehabilitative regimes. I was particularly pleased therefore to have the opportunity to support Ben Crewe in his research when I was Governor of Wellingborough. Ben's recently published book, *The Prisoner Society*³, provides a rare and fascinating view of what goes on in prisons and particularly of how the prisoner experience has changed over a period corresponding to my career experience from the overtly brutal and fearful to the more subtle pains and frustrations of the modern prison as the carceral experience becomes less directly oppressive but more 'gripping' and 'tight', demanding more and risking less. Nevertheless the pain of imprisonment persists.

JB: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

PB: This is an issue that is dear to my heart and I can't do full justice to my thoughts but I will say a little on how staff-prisoner relationships can be improved. In recent years I have been fortunate enough to be Governor of a prison where staff-prisoner relationships are extremely positive, indeed praised as 'positive' and 'outstanding' by

HM Inspectorate of Prisons. I was initially sceptical as to whether examples of good practice at Grendon could be introduced to other prisons, arguing that such seedlings of humanity are unlikely to take root unless they have similar therapeutic structures in which to germinate. However, some two years ago I was asked by the Director of Offender Management for the South East Region to lead an innovation project on improving relationships and offender engagement in the South East prisons. One initiative was to involve staff and prisoners at Grendon in distilling aspects of the regime with a view to exporting them to HMP Isle of Wight. The results were recently published in an article in the *Howard Journal for Criminal Justice*⁴. I believe they can provide a useful template for improving regimes. But it was not only about Grendon, last year I organised a

During my 28 years
of working in
prison, the most
noticeable change
has undoubtedly
been the
improvement in the
treatment of
prisoners and the
impact of the
decency agenda.

3. Crewe, B. (2009) *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4. Bennett, P. and Shuker, R. (2010) *Improving Prisoner-Staff Relations: Exporting Grendon's Good Practice in Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* Vol.49 No.5 p.491-505.

conference for all South East prisons which focussed on a wide range of potential initiatives including the development of prisoner councils and other ways of delegating greater responsibility to prisoners. Governors have all submitted action plans that are all being reviewed regularly by the new Deputy Director of Custody. It is difficult to assess the success of this project. I have a day job and limited resources and have not been able to pursue it as much as I would have liked but I have noted a deep surge of interest in the project with some encouraging signs, not least the excellent achievements at the Isle of Wight with its lively prisoner councils and the benefits of arranging several exchanges between staff at Grendon, Parkhurst and Albany.

JB: How has the experience of working in prison changed in recent years?

PB: Audits, inspections, performance targets, risk assessments, traffic lights, emails, emails and emails.

JB: What are the aspects of working in prison that people outside are least aware of?

PB: Generally people are naïve in their understanding of prisons. To some extent that is inevitable, after all, prisons are closed institutions set apart from society, but they are also depositories of stereotypes. Those stereotypes are by their very nature resilient to change, particularly when many journalists and politicians find it more dramatic to employ them for communicating sound bites and messages. I suppose that people are least aware of all the effort which goes into maintaining rehabilitative regimes and the fact that most prisons are for most of the time far less oppressive, brutal and violent than people would expect them to be.

JB: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

This is a rather sensitive question to ask a Governor at the moment so I will be circumspect. It goes without saying that there are massive potential benefits by involving the voluntary and charitable sector as long as developments are carefully regulated, particularly given that the management and treatment of prisoners is a serious responsibility of the state. The same goes for private prisons.

JB: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

PB: One of the biggest problems is what might be called logistics. That is the difficulties in allocating prisoners to the right prisons, programmes and courses. Another problem is those prison staff who do not subscribe to rehabilitation.

JB: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

PB: As above and also over full prisons or over sized prisons.

JB: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

PB: Downsize it, streamline it and focus on the custody and rehabilitation of those assessed as being most harmful to society, develop alternatives to custody for the rest.

Interview: Prison Officer in a High Security Prison

Christine Thomas is a prison officer at HMP Long Lartin and is interviewed by Martin Kettle who is a senior operational manager currently seconded to HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

Christine Thomas joined HMP Long Lartin as an Operational Support Grade before becoming a prison officer. Recently she has been working in the programmes team, facilitating the offending behaviour programmes.

MK: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

CV: To be honest I have not noticed it much here, yet. We have two new wings, so we are busier, but we have had more staff to cover that. We have been reprofiled, so we are feeling the changes in terms of staffing numbers being cut; but not perhaps as much as some other prisons. Perhaps in future people's workload will increase and their safety may come in to question.

MK: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world that the prisoners you work with come from?

CV: Certainly not all of them. Some of them will say that they had a really good upbringing and didn't want for anything; but for some of them it would describe it — people who didn't complete their schooling fully, or many never have gone to school at all. A lot of it I suppose can be to do with the area that they've come from, the peers they've been surrounded by, their upbringing and family life — a lot have said that they have been brought up in care — so, a mix. But I'd say more come from what politicians call the 'Broken Society'.

MK: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

CV: To some degree. For those with drug use problems, there are a lot of programmes in place now, help with detoxes, support from CARATs¹, treatment programmes, and now the Integrated Drug Treatment Service. With unemployment, they've got many education opportunities, though how far this will stand them in good stead on release — if someone's going for a job and they have two candidates, one of whom has been in prison for 15 years, it is going to be difficult for them to get jobs. In terms of family breakdown, there are a lot of things like the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme, and family visits, but for many it

is difficult not least because of the distance for the family to visits them. So I'm not sure how much prison helps.

MK: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for prisoners to make positive changes to their lives?

CV: It can be harder in some respects if there are lots of things outside their control; and some people may have many pro-criminal attitudes being reinforced in here, being surrounded by like-minded people. But there are a lot of opportunities in prisons now, in ways that have changed even since I have been in the job. They are away from certain risk factors on the outside, and have opportunities in the workshops and education, if they can attend them.

However, it can be a bit of an artificial environment. You can measure changes in behaviour to some degree, from their wing behaviour and whether they manage to progress. And it depends on the kind of sentences they're doing — some people are coming up for release, and some have got years and years and years, so that it's difficult to measure what impact it has after they get out.

MK: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

CV: Perhaps more interventions in terms of more specific programmes; more contact with people outside, probation and the community — which probably does happen much more in low-category establishments; more one-to-one work, more adapted programmes for those with learning difficulties. There are some gaps in provision, for example, the Focus programme (a drug and alcohol programme) is very high intensity, a six-month course; there are people who don't fit that need profile, who need a programme in the middle ground that is less intense. There are some shorter programmes, about two weeks, but maybe some things in the middle are also needed. Others may need more intensive input, for example for offenders with a lower IQ, we are always looking at ways we can facilitate programmes — whether it can be adapted, or if it's a matter of working with Education first before the programme — we might be

1. Counselling, assessment, referral and treatment for substance misuse.

able to make it more specific — but it's very difficult to do at the moment.

It is also important that there is a link back into the community through probation. When we do post-programme reviews after offending behaviour courses, Probation staff are encouraged to come, and we do a fair amount of teleconferencing where they are too far away to attend. It is less easy in high security, where often a prisoner may not know who their probation officer is, or it may change quite often.

MK: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

CV: What they are doing could be more meaningful in terms of work on release. There are some things here, like the brick shop, where they are learning trades, but not all the workshops are like that. And although they go to work, it's of course a completely different environment; it could be made more realistic, more appraisal and feedback processes, to make it more meaningful for them and more like real life — but that would take resources.

MK: Would you welcome the opportunity for prisoners to pay something back for their crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting their victim?

CV: I don't think that meeting their victim would be a good idea, unless the victim thought it would be beneficial for them. The victim awareness courses are good, where the victims are willing to discuss it, but it should be considered a lot more from the victim's perspective and how they would feel. I imagine many victims wouldn't want to meet the perpetrator. It could be very difficult for them, especially if the person didn't feel much remorse for what they had done. Though in victim awareness courses it does have more of an impact on the offender when they hear a victim directly about what the effect can be — but maybe not from the victim of their specific crime. I know there's talk about a prisoners' earnings bill — I think that could be a good scheme for them, as well as the unpaid work and community service.

MK: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

CV: While I have been here there have been extra incentives under the IEP scheme². Some prisoners say it

is easier for them, and they maybe don't see it as a deterrent any more. And I think there are more issues now to do with drug use, and issues have arisen around religion, which for some is a positive thing, although where there is pressure it can be seen as a negative.

MK: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

CV: There's a lot more communication now; the personal officer role has developed. It is checked that contact is made at least weekly, and the entries are updated. There is a need for consistency — everyone has the same training but they do things quite differently. The personal officer scheme is a valuable one — I have helped people read letters and write letters, about things which people probably wouldn't feel comfortable asking every officer on the wing to help with. It's a first port of call — though there are teams of other officers they could go to.

MK: How has the experience of working in prison changed in recent years?

CV: With the reprofiling of staff there has been a lot of changes. There are more staff in some areas but less in others, so there does seem to be more in the programmes and healthcare departments, less in psychology, less in certain areas of the jail. I

think morale is changing in prison — it's lower than it has been, perhaps with all the changes coming in at once, or the prospect of being privatised. Now that that's happened to one jail³, it's something that people maybe thought would never happen, but now it's started to happen — it's the uncertainty.

MK: What aspect of working in prison do you think people outside are least aware of?

CV: Perhaps when there are serious incidents — I'm not sure the public are aware of the sort of things that can happen. And also the opportunities that prisoners do have — that they're not just locked up all the time, they can go to education, to workshops, to the gym. And then the fact that staff talk to prisoners — many people seem to think that you don't speak to them, when you can have normal conversations, have a laugh and a joke with them, while keeping the boundaries clear. Because they have the television, you can talk about things that are going on in

2. Incentives and Earned Privileges.

3. This refers to the announcement in March 2011 of the outcome of a competition to operate HMP Birmingham. This is the first time that a prison operated by the public sector has transferred to private operation as a result of competition.

everyday life — they've seen the Royal wedding, and events like that.

MK: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

CV: I'm not sure about me specifically. There may be some more opportunities if the voluntary and charitable sector is involved — but there's a real risk that people may lose their jobs, and if staff were to be cut you'd be questioning the safety of staff and prisoners on the wings. You may not have people who are as specialised, with roles like the programmes, the gym, the search teams. I'm not sure whether it would be the same training, and you might struggle to recruit and retain staff if it was in the private sector.

MK: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

CV: The lack of resources available, and the lack of staff. It's very difficult to complete the checks and keep an eye on everything that's going on on the wing — everything moves at a fast pace, there isn't time to slow down and have a good look. Also prisoners do have a lot of rights and entitlements now, and that can cause problems when things are not fulfilled exactly. For example the prison shop — if there are problems with orders, it can lead to

problems which may be unnecessary but can escalate from a small issue.

MK: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

CV: The changes that are made need to be reviewed more thoroughly after they're implemented — it seems to take time. We've just had a number of changes in recent times: some things may be working well, other things are not working as well, and they could do with reviewing more quickly. There has been a lot of consultation, but it's a question of how much of that was taken on board when the changes were implemented. And perhaps some more specific training opportunities. There is a lot of training happening now, but more variety would help — I'm not sure a lot of people can see where their career is going in terms of the opportunities available higher up, given all the changes that are coming in.

MK: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would that be?

CV: I haven't got a pat answer to that, but I think more staff is one of the biggest things. Everything seems to have to be done to a time limit, whereas if you had more staff, things could be done really thoroughly, with more staff on the landings for the prisoners, although I know we probably have a lot more staff than lower-category prisons.

Interview: Senior Officer in Training Services

Caroline Stimson is a Senior Officer working in Training Services for the Prison Service. She is interviewed by Maggie Bolger who is a Senior Manager in Training Services.

Caroline Stimson is Senior Officer working within the North West and Midlands Regional Training Team. She joined the Prison Service in 2001 in the private sector and transferred to the public sector in 2002. Caroline joined HR Learning and Development in 2007 and teaches a range of Offender Management training courses to both Prison and Probation staff.

MB: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

CS: More people are ending up in prison and this can't go on for ever. Something has to give. I know that the Government is recognising this and is trying to solve the problem. Over fifteen years we have gone from around 40,000 to over 80,000. That is astonishing. High population numbers effects offenders day to day living, and staff trying to deal with them. There are not enough staff to go around and it feels that we are more short of staff than ever. The more prisoners there are to each member of staff, then it becomes more difficult in terms of safety; if you haven't got the staffing numbers you need, you won't be able to look after, control or manage the offenders on each wing. Also, the more prisoners that we have with the same resources, I believe that they are not going to get what they need. They are not going to be able to get on courses or the interventions that they need. Staff are not able to spend the time that they need with them either. We only have a finite amount of resources, time and money.

MB: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world that the prisoners you work with come from?

CS: I think that the term 'broken society' is a bit extreme. I certainly don't think that we are there yet. The term 'broken society' gives the impression that there is no hope for society. I still have hope. Society has its problems and some areas are worse than others. I would also say that in years gone by, people had respect for each other, families and communities pulled together but that is slowly disappearing, some people are becoming accepting of crime, alcohol, drugs, unemployment and this is a real shame. I have real admiration for those people who refuse to accept the 'norm' and who strive to keep communities safe, decent, respectful places to live. Rather than focus purely on the areas of society which have their problems and fostering this idea of a 'broken society', the Government, and the media, should focus

more on the success stories. Give people hope and something to strive for.

MB: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

CS: It is easy to become sceptical, working in prisons. Working with the people that we do and listening to their life stories, it's clear that many don't know of any other type of society or background, other than the one that they are from. This can be rife with crime and unemployment etc. With this in mind, you would think that perhaps prison staff would be more inclined to believe in a 'broken society', but I don't think that this is true. Many of the staff that I have worked with feel very strongly about helping offenders to change their lives. They haven't given up hope, so why should the rest of society? Personally speaking, this gives me an incentive to work even harder to try and help offenders get back on track and turn their lives around. Staff working in prisons offer a wealth of experience and expertise to help offenders with the whole range of problems that they may face. If staff are given the time, training and most importantly money, then we are able to make a real difference in terms of helping offenders address their offending behaviour, offer them help and advice with problems that they face, help to teach them new skills and offer encouragement and support. For many offenders, prison presents an opportunity to turn their lives around. I have seen some real success stories in the past and that is what keeps staff going each day.

MB: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for prisoners to make positive changes to their lives?

CS: Although I do feel that prisons are the ideal place to help with social problems, this can only happen if staff are given the resources with which to work their magic. Unfortunately, in the face of cuts to prison budgets, what interventions, services and help we can offer to offenders will be significantly reduced.

MB: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

CS: I'm not so sure about the term 'revolution', but we certainly need to do something about the rate of re-offending as a matter of urgency and find a solution that works. Charities and local people have worked with prisoners for many years with varying degrees of success. I believe that the good will is there and that this resource should be utilised wherever possible, but you can't rely on

good will alone. To make things work, to move forward with this plan of reducing re-offending we need to make sure that the people working with offenders are well informed, well trained and most importantly are financially well backed. Without a financial commitment things are done on half measures, without commitment and consistency, and this leads to failure as both key workers and offenders become disillusioned in the work that is being done.

MB: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

CS: The work that we already do within prisons is of great benefit to offenders. However, there is more that we could offer. In terms of work, it is important to give offenders the opportunity to learn a trade or skill that they can put to use when returning to the community. So many offenders don't feel that they could get a job on release even if they wanted to and I am sure that this is made even more difficult in the current climate. I believe that offenders should understand that they need to contribute in to society and I feel that this could start in prison. I would support offenders paying some of their wages back in to the prison, as they would outside. This might help prisons to keep workplaces running and would help prepare offenders for a more realistic situation on release. In some prisons, many offenders 'outwork' during the day. Wherever possible this should be encouraged, helping offenders reintegrate back in to society, but with a similar form of contribution, either to the prison, victims or charities should be put in to place.

In terms of training, this is another critical area. It is vital that we provide offenders with the appropriate training to help rehabilitate and reduce the risk of serious harm. More specialist training and interventions need to be offered, in particular in areas such as alcohol, domestic violence and female sex offenders where there are a shortage of interventions provided at the moment. Although offering work opportunities for offenders is greatly needed, a greater emphasis should be placed on rehabilitation and reducing risk of serious harm first.

MB: Would you welcome the opportunity for prisoners to 'pay something back' to the community for their crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting their victim?

CS: Yes, I would. Nothing in life comes for free, everything has to be earned, be that money, security, respect or even forgiveness. This is a message that needs to be clear to offenders. This message isn't in an easy one to deliver, offenders need to understand the true meaning of

this message rather than going through the motions. Understanding that being part of a society or community means restricting their behaviour, being law abiding, and most of all making a contribution, putting something back in to the society that they live in. This could be a financial contribution, but other forms of contribution are also needed to help offenders realise that they can become a member of society. Unpaid work, is a great starting point and at least allows offenders the opportunities to get out in to society and pay something back, very often they can also develop skills that they need to help them secure paid work in the future. Restorative justice needs to be carefully managed and I have heard of many success stories. Very often offenders don't see or understand the effect that they have had on their victim and a greater appreciation of the long term damage that their offending can have on people's lives and families can help the offender as part of their rehabilitation process and can on occasions help the victims come to terms with what has happened to them

MB: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

CS: From what I can see, we seem to be going round full circle. When I joined the service 10 years ago, the emphasis was on prisoner time out of cell, ensuring that they were engaging in purposeful activities. Staff were encouraged to spend time with prisoners, working with them, getting to know them. This is all changing, now we seem to be locking the prisoners up for

longer and not being afforded the time to work with the prisoners. The range of activities offered to them is also being reduced. This has to be attributed to cuts in funding again, Governors' budgets are being squeezed so tightly, things have to give.

MB: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

CS: This is probably one of the biggest changes that I have seen in my time working for the Prison Service. When I joined the service we were encouraged to work with offenders to talk to them and get to know them, this is changing so quickly now and one of the main concerns that I hear when speaking to prison and probation staff is the lack of time that they now have to work with offenders. Positive working relationships between staff and prisoners is a really important part of daily life in a prison for a number of reasons. The most important reason is dynamic security, staff used to know their prisoners and spoke to them on a regular basis. This meant that staff knew what was happening in the prison, what the problems were and

Nothing in life comes
for free, everything
has to be earned, be
that money, security,
respect or even
forgiveness. This is a
message that needs
to be clear
to offenders.

could try to do something about them. These relationships keep a prison safe and therefore go a long way to ensuring safe environments for staff to work in and prisoners to live in. Most prisoners want to work with staff, they don't want to live in a chaotic, violent, unstable place and both parties knew that by working together we were able to keep everyone safer. These days staff are under pressure to do more work in less time and the consequence of this, means that staff-prisoner relationships are suffering.

Staff-prisoner relationships also allow staff the time to work with offenders, to lead by example. Much of the positive work done with offenders is on the landings day to day. Prisoners are treated with respect and decency and they learn that these are earned by treating others in the same way. Once again, these are messages that are lost when staff are too busy.

MB: How has the experience of working in prison changed in recent years?

CS: The biggest change has been what is now expected of the prison officer in their day to day role. As I have already mentioned, staff are expected to do more in less time. This particularly has an impact on the amount of interaction on the landings. There has also been an effect from the loss of the Principal Officer role and staff leaving due to the Early Departure Scheme. Staff that I speak to tell me that they are expected to spend more time office based, in front of computers or filling out paper work, rather than interacting with prisoners. Staff also tell me that they feel their job role has become diluted, their work is now more about meeting and achieving targets, rather than interacting with prisoners.

Staff have also told me that there is reduced team work as group working has reduced. In the past wings or departments have had a core group of staff dedicated to that area. This allowed staff to get to know their offenders and there was a sense of consistency and stability. Now staff can be detailed to work in all areas of the prison and this means that staff and prisoners work and live in an unsettled environment. This reduces the sense of ownership of their work and work area. There is also a sense of uncertainty that comes from privatisation, cost cuts, increased competition and threats to pensions. Even when I joined the Service I saw this job as a job for life and most importantly a career. I was proud to be a Prison Officer and felt a sense of certainty about my future. Now, I, along with many other staff work with uncertainty, this obviously effects staff morale and our working life.

MB: What are the aspects of working in prison that people outside are least aware of?

CS: Strangely enough, the public and the media don't often get to hear about the successes, the end result of a lot of hard work and commitment by both the offender and the staff. I suppose that it is because these stories don't sell papers, make good viewing on the TV or win elections. If we did focus more on successes then society would change their perception of what they consider to be normal.

MB: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

CS: As a public sector prison officer my immediate reaction is that I am not in favour of the private sector running our prisons, certainly not in the majority. However, I have tried to think about this rationally. The introduction of private prisons has certainly required the public sector to 'up it's game' as it has introduced an element of competition. If this makes our public sector prisons rethink the way that they operate and implement more efficient and effective measures then this can only be a good thing. I am not for doing things a certain way, just because they have always been done that way. However, I don't believe in making money from the business of keeping offenders in custody and if making a profit is the overbearing objective, then the focus is less on the rehabilitation of offenders; it's more about how they can do a 'good enough' job for the least money

MB: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

CS: The increasing prison population for all of the reasons that we have already discussed, the reduction in budgets, the reduction in suitable and yet critical interventions available to offenders, the increasing uncertainty surrounding staff's careers and futures. The list is endless and I am sure that I have missed many other issues that affect staff and prisoners every day.

MB: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

CS: The media and public perception are our biggest obstacles to prison reform. The public want to see us deliver a hard line on offenders and this is encouraged by the media. The public understand less that it is about rehabilitation and working with offenders to challenge their beliefs and change their behaviours, it's not about locking offenders up 24 hours a day.

MB: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

CS: I have given this a lot of thought and I am just not able to come up with one thing above anything else that would improve effectiveness. Better communication amongst managers and staff, between agencies and departments is essential to improve effective practice, including less duplication of processes which can appear unnecessary and most of all are very time consuming. Time to allow staff to do their jobs to the best of their ability is also important along with support from management. Less uncertainty about the future of our jobs and the Prison Service as a whole will let staff get back to focusing on what is important, their work and engaging and working alongside prisoners to provide a safe, stable and decent environment.

Interview: Instructional Officer

*Derek Shorthouse is an instructional officer at HMP Long Lartin and is interviewed by **Martin Kettle** who is a senior operational manager currently seconded to HM Inspectorate of Prisons.*

Derek Shorthouse has been an instructional officer at HMP Long Lartin since 1989. Before that he served an engineering apprenticeship and worked in that industry for six years. He initiated the woodworking workshop at Long Lartin, which now makes garden furniture. Prisoners working in the shop achieve National Open College Network qualifications, and many of the products are sold, while arrangements are currently being made for Barnardo's to take offcuts from the workshop to sell in their own outlets.

MK: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

DS: Over the period of time I have been working here, there have been a larger amount of people coming in with a range of different abilities. Back in 1989 a lot of people were qualified, whereas now people are coming in with very little in the way of qualifications. So in the area where I work, in woodwork and the like, we are given that opportunity to develop their skills. But the population has had an impact on the regime, in terms of the numbers you're controlling. The workshop ratios have increased; there are more lads coming into the workshops than a few years ago.

MK: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world that the prisoners you work with come from?

DS: Occasionally, yes. But by the same token, we are finding that people who come from very good backgrounds have not got the level of ability, the level of education you might expect — not switched on, for want of a better phrase. We do try to encourage each person, but then again, you do have that 'broken society', where you can see that the support mechanisms have not been there — issues of family and background that have had an impact on their very survival plan, as it were. So their response has been to do other things, rather than get involved with trying to better themselves.

MK: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

DS: Yes, with the type of courses that are made available; for example in the workshop areas, there are posters up about where they can go to try and address

the issues around their offending. We do it on a voluntary basis, when they feel ready to address the problems that they've had outside. But we can also be proactive in offering it to them. Because we're on the civilian side, they tend to open up a little. So they tell us a few issues, and we can then discuss with the various areas — maybe CARATs¹. Or we can just pass on information about what the concern may be — we may have found that they're just not settling, or they're not thinking — sometimes you find the tell-tale signs of drowsiness or whatever that just indicate there is a problem somewhere.

MK: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for prisoners to make positive changes to their lives?

DS: I'd have mixed emotions about that, because I've actually experienced seeing people that have shown good signs of progress, and I've also seen the other side where it doesn't do anything, they're still in that same mode irrespective of who talks to them. It can be a bit of both. But by and large, I'd say the majority of those I've come across have shown improvement — not necessarily a fantastic improvement, but a real one. I think that is down to good teamwork. From the workshops, that is about prisoners speaking to the staff and then passing that information through to the various areas — you need that communication, and the connection with the prisoner as well.

When I started back in 1989, we didn't get involved in this sort of thing, whereas now we're getting more involved with the prisoners' well-being.

MK: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

DS: There's quite an odd balance here really. The only way to explain it is — they've got their own minds, and sometimes you can give them that advice to go straight, but at the end of the day it's their mindset. We're trying to rearrange it to suit ourselves, but in reality 70-75 per cent of their input is from themselves — we are the ones who are trying to grab an extra few percent off them, to try to direct them. We can help, we can support, we can do everything we can, but the majority is going to be within themselves.

1. Counselling, advice, referral and treatment for substance misuse.

I have spoken to some of the prisoners who have been on some of the offending behaviour programmes. You'll get a percentage who will say 'We'll give them the answers they want'. Others will say 'I realise what I did wrong. I should have done *that*.' Then it starts to take effect. I do happen to see occasionally prisoners that have come in perhaps two years ago, quite aggressive, and they have now calmed down, and they're actually saying 'I've got to remember to behave here, otherwise I won't get *that* later'. It's a matter of time.

MK: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

DS: There are some basic practical skills we can give people. We could teach them how to repair washing machines and cookers. We can give them the belief that yes, we can do these trades. We should also focus on things that we do at home, just domestic chores like being able to clean out a cooker, learning how to put these things together and not be reliant on other people. It's confidence as much as anything. A lot of people haven't learnt that practical ability. Some of it is not that they can't do it; it is that they don't believe they can do it. We can give them that encouragement and the opportunity to learn those trades.

Work can also get people into a way of thinking. Outside we get up, we go to work at a certain time and come back. That is how they need to think rather than a couple of hours here and a couple of hours there. It's the discipline side. That is that they are there from morning to the end of the day and don't go anywhere in between. Getting into that discipline side is good.

MK: Would you welcome the opportunity for prisoners 'pay something back' to the community for your crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting their victim?

DS: What you're looking at is the type of thing we're doing with the Barnardo's charity. The prisoners are doing something that's worthwhile, and it's going back to a charity organisation, they're actually putting back into the community. They're being paid to work, but not getting any bonus or the like for the extra they do, they do it for the love of doing it because it's going to a charity. That sort of thing has an effect on

a lot of people. To give you an example, I've got a prisoner at the moment who comes from a children's home and he's absolutely over the moon about producing work for Barnados and giving back to them. Maybe he's telling us that he wants to pay something back for what he didn't appreciate when he was younger. That's the way I'd be looking at it.

MK: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

DS: There are a lot more opportunities for prisoners now than in years gone by. Under the IEP scheme², they're given a lot more now. Years ago it was a matter of 'No, you don't have that, you have this and this only'. Now there are options, the three different levels based on behaviour. It has become more discriminating, where before it was just 'you can or you can't', in simple terms. And prisoners understand more than they did in the past, about how things run.

MK: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

DS: They have improved on the whole. In a workshop environment, because the staff are civilian there's more rapport, prisoners open up to staff, so you get information without giving them information. With officers that doesn't happen so easily, because of the barrier of

the uniform.

MK: How has the experience of working in prison changed in recent years?

DS: Obviously things have changed, but basically what's happened is we have gone full circle a couple of times! It's gone from finding things easy to difficult to easy and so on. You can get down, and into a bit of a rut at times, and what perks you up is to find a challenge. I do the same with prisoners: if we can give them a little challenge, we see them change.

MK: What are the aspects of working in prison that people outside are least aware of?

DS: People don't know enough. I hear people saying that prisoners should have bread and water, and saying that it's like a holiday camp. They see the TV programmes, the series like *Bad Girls* and what not, and they believe that's how it runs. They are forgetting that these people are human, and we've got to treat them as humans. In general, prisoners are

2. Incentives and earned privileges.

treated a lot better now than they were when I started; there is more respect in prison and on the whole prisoners treat staff with more respect.

MK: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

DS: The professional manner in which these people need to be managed and challenged needs a skilled organisation. It's not an everyday job that anybody could do. I've experienced people who have come for interviews, opened the gate, looked inside, and say: 'I can't come in. I don't like the sound of that gate shutting behind'. It's not as easy as people think. I think the public sector have got it under control. It would take a lot of effort to maintain that quality and it would be very difficult to step in and improve how things run.

MK: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

DS: Morale has dropped. To a large extent this is due to outside factors like finances, pay cuts, budgets, and the unemployment outside. The job is more pressured, because the job has to be done correctly and the slightest mistake is not going to be missed. You are being watched, more so than you ever were in the past, and that adds extra pressure.

MK: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like what you would want them to be?

DS: Budgets is one of the biggest, because you're restricting yourself on how much effort you can put in to making sure you get the maximum from those prisoners. An example is prisoner ratios, where workshops are employing higher numbers of prisoners. That does cause some problems as the risks go up and staff can feel more isolated. It's a difficult balance between efficiency, safety and quality.

MK: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

DS: I would like to get the staff on the same side and keep them together. We should be a team. Whether you're management level, or civilian level, or a cleaner — all should be at the same level. You're all working at the same place with your own bit of input, and all should be valued equally. The same with prisoners; it goes back to the old saying of 'treat people as you would be treated'. With prisoners, you're not always going to get every prisoner who's going to treat us well, and vice versa, so it's getting a happy medium, but the main thing is to get everybody on the same side. In all these discussions it always comes back to communication; that we all need to keep communicating.

Interview: Prisoner in a local prison

John Richards is a convicted prisoner, currently serving a sentence at HMP Pentonville. He is interviewed by Ray Taylor, who is a prison officer at HMP Pentonville.

John Richards is a prisoner at HMP Pentonville Prison, serving a four-year sentence. He has recently embarked on an Open University course of study which he intends to continue on release from custody, leading to a first degree qualification. Among many activities, he is a wing representative, a listener, chapel orderly, and is employed as a cleaner.

RT: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

JR: Putting more and more people in prison isn't working. That's the bottom line. To imprison someone for a minor offence, with a sentence of 12 months or less, where they haven't done the crime of the century, means that you are just adding to the overcrowding. I once spent some time in Belmarsh and you have guys there who are in for driving offences being treated like Cat A prisoners. This is just madness. I spoke to someone in the chapel here at Pentonville the other day and asked him how long he was in for and he said 'three weeks'. What's the point of that? Prison should be reserved for serious and violent offenders.

RT: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world you come from?

JR: I don't know about 'broken society' but I do think that prisons should help more with problems like housing. I spoke to someone the other day who will soon be released after a nine-month sentence. His licence conditions are numerous but, as he says, 'how can I stick to them without a roof over my head?' People need more help with housing. They need a roof over their heads. It would help prisoners greatly if they knew they would get out with somewhere to live. Most people want a place of their own. They don't want to end up sleeping on other people's floors. If you knew you were going out to sheltered accommodation, it would be a start in the right direction.

RT: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

JR: Unemployment is a big problem. With employment, the buck stops with you but, when you come into prison, the opportunities are not there to

better yourself. From a personal point of view, I am quite impressed with the education courses on offer, here at Pentonville. I am on an Open University course and was quite impressed that I was able to get the funding for that. Years ago it would not have been done. As far as family life is concerned, I think they do quite a bit to support us. They give us extra 'family day' visits which is a good start. It's a lot better than it used to be but how far do you go? After all, prison is meant to be a punishment. Other than that, I think that the police and schools could make a better contribution to educating children about what it's like coming to prison.

RT: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for you to make positive changes to your life?

JR: With a lot of time to think about where you've gone wrong, you can make positive changes. You have time to reflect and, if you have had problems with drugs, for instance, it's a perfect time to make those changes. On this basis, I would say that it is easier to make positive changes to your life.

RT: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

JR: I do believe it is possible. If they helped more with employment and training — something worthwhile like a trade — then that's the right direction. It's all about work. If they could do something worthwhile while in prison, earn a decent sum of money, and have that money deposited in an account for when they are released, then this money could maybe be used to get a roof over your head, or further training. People are coming out on the street with no employment prospects and no money to spend. It's a bad start and they end up going straight back into crime because they need the money. If you have a criminal record, you are up against it anyway. In Pentonville, we have training run by an outside hire company. As I understand it, they may offer a job to trainees after they have been released. This kind of thing has got to be a big help.

RT: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

JR: Some people have been criminals all their life. To go out there and not get into that same routine is

a hard thing to do. But if they were able to do worthwhile courses, to learn a proper trade, they would stand a much better chance on the outside. I know a lot of prisons do this but there needs to be more of this kind of thing made available. Coming out of prison with a skill like bricklaying, for example, is a good thing to do. It's bound to help.

RT: Would you welcome the opportunity to 'pay something back' to the community for your crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting your victim?

JR: Depending on what the crime was, a meeting with your victim — if you are truly sorry — would give them the chance to see you in a different light and perhaps give closure to whatever crime was committed.

RT: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

JR: I have seen a lot of changes over the years since my first time in prison in 1988. In those days, we didn't have TVs, kettles or even sanitation in our cells, let alone access to phones. We had none of this. All we had was a radio for company and plenty of letter writing. The food, in particular, is a huge improvement. Now you get a decent solid meal on your plate and plenty of choice. A lot of people still complain about the food but twenty years ago, all you got on your plate was slops.

The NHS coming in has also made a big improvement. You get a very good service all round. Some things could still be improved, such as specialist services like dentistry but, on the whole, health care is excellent.

Other positives include the greater use of prisoner reps, listeners, equality reps and anti-bullying work by prisoners working with the establishment as a whole. And of course, the drug-related support services such as CARATS are immensely valuable and beneficial.

Training and education has been improved a great deal too, but I feel that there is a lot more that can be achieved. More could be done that is work-related, for example the Clink restaurant at HMP Highdown, recently featured on BBC TV. This is a good example of how training prisoners for a valuable work skill can help stop them reoffending on the outside.

RT: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

JR: The prison experience is not just a question of TVs and kettles. Everything now has moved forward. We have come a long way since those bad old days. The most important change of all, in my view, is how much better the staff and prisoner relationship is. It's a lot more relaxed and friendly. You can stop and have a chat with an officer. In some cases you may even be on first-name terms. It has got to be better. It can't be a bad thing if you feel

comfortable coming to an officer to talk. With the public-spending cutbacks, I feel that it's going to get worse before it can get better and this could have a negative effect on prisons as a whole. I am particularly concerned about the potential for deterioration of the staff-inmate relationship. I would hate to see us going back to the days when you're spending more time locked up in your cell. This is bound to have a negative effect and we could end up going back to the bad old them-and-us relationship between staff and prisoners.

RT: What are the aspects of being in prison that people outside are least aware of?

JR: Regardless of what people think, the fact remains that prisoners are still locked away from where we want to

be. That's a punishment. Away from loved ones and places we would rather be, being told when to eat, exercise, and just about everything else that people take for granted. In time, you become institutionalised.

RT: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

JR: To be honest, I have no experience of privately-run prisons and so I have nothing to base an opinion on. I have heard that living conditions in some private prisons are very good but cannot speak for myself.

RT: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

The most important change of all, in my view, is how much better the staff and prisoner relationship is. It's a lot more relaxed and friendly. You can stop and have a chat with an officer. In some cases you may even be on first-name terms. It has got to be better.

JR: The biggest problem has always been drugs. And it's got much worse, with the widespread use of heroin being a particular problem. Heroin used to be frowned upon by prisoners but now it is accepted by many as a way of life.

RT: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

JR: I would say this is mostly a question of available resources. I would like to see more education and training, more time out of cell doing constructive things. But these all cost money and, in the current economic climate, I can't see where the money to do these things will come from.

RT: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

JR: If I could introduce one change in the prison system it would be to pay top money to people who want to use their time to educate themselves. Currently, they are the worst paid. Where's the incentive if you are paying people more to clean the landings than you are for them to learn how to read and write or to learn a new work skill? Some blokes come in with no qualifications. When they see their name on a certificate it makes a huge difference to them. It helps them to have pride in their work and to start believing in themselves. They want to carry on and do more and more to improve their chances. And once you get going with education, the next step should be work placement.



Prison Service Library & Information Services

PSC Newbold Revel

Delivers a quality Library and Information Service to staff working in HM Prisons. Provides access to Prison Service related information to other organisations in the criminal justice system.

For further information:

Tel: 01788 804119

Fax: 01788 804114

Email: catherine.fell@hmps.gsi.gov.uk

Interview: Prisoner in a local prison

Sanjar Jamolov is a serving prisoner at HMP Wormwood Scrubs. He is interviewed by Dr. Rachel Bell who is a senior officer at HMYOI Feltham.

Sanjar Jamolov has been a prisoner at HMP Wormwood Scrubs since 2010. Before coming to prison he worked as a painter in London.

RB: From your perspective what are the causes of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison?

SJ: That's a very hard question and very good question as well. It depends how we are looking at it. I would say if the life was better outside and everybody got enough money to look after themselves they won't do any robberies, they won't do any stupid things and there would be less people in prison. It's the quality of the life: if you give them enough then they won't be here.

But from another view everybody does mistakes. We can stop them: instead of putting them in prison to give them punishment we can give them different punishments. We can give them free works to do like community works. And in the same time they can learn as well: we can give them opportunities to start to learn something. Then we will save on the money: electricity, rent, food, you know.

RB: Politicians often use the term 'broken society'. Do you think this describes the world you come from?

SJ: Yeah. Families have always got the problems to look after children, pay taxes, and from there starts the problems. If they can afford to pay they won't be in the trouble.

And at the same time as well everybody likes drinking and abusing drugs. Most people outside don't think for the future. But that's not the issue. We have to help them to stand up on their feet, pay for the mortgages or electricity. Then they won't feel any problems. Once they don't feel any problems there won't be any troubles.

RB: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment and family breakdown?

SJ: With drugs they can help. They can explain like I do to teach my kid: it's not good to take drugs, you are going to be in trouble, your health will be in trouble.

Also, if you cooperate with the government to get jobs we could organise something for prisoners. In fact we have workshops. And they are not bad to be honest with you. They are very good. But it will be more good if you can do electrician courses, building courses, plumbing courses. That is an opportunity to learn something and get qualifications and start working.

And I had a job in the prison kitchen as a chef. And that might help me get a job in future.

RB: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for you to make positive changes to your life?

SJ: It is hard to go back to life outside. It will be harder for me going back because I lost a lot. My family and my kids might turn away from me. As the judge called me a criminal they might call me the same. So I don't want to be in trouble. I don't want to do anything criminal and come back to prison. Because after that if I go out it will be very, very hard to go back to same life. I already lost my job. I'm not sure if I'm going to get the same job back or not. So it will be harder than before.

But also there are some things that prison can make easier. For example if somebody doesn't have any place to live they will organise for you to get a place.

RB: The government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help that to happen?

SJ: First of all I think they have to cooperate with prisoners. If you cooperate with prisoners, ask them what is the necessary things for prisoners to rehabilitate, or if they need learn something before they go out, even ask them if they need help to manage to look after themselves mentally or psychologically.

You can take 40 or 50 people and ask them 'what do you think?' and everybody will have a different opinion, obviously. But let them have a view what is the opinion from the prisoner side. Not always just what the government says.

It is hard to go back to life outside. It will be harder for me going back because I lost a lot.

RB: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

SJ: It could be construction courses, electrician courses, plumbing courses, carpentry courses or even health and safety courses. And we could teach the foreigner prisoners how to behave themselves in UK, to learn the UK law, what is the life in the UK: St Patrick's day, St George's day and all that. Why not? They want to be British citizens. That's a kind of help as well, and they can do it here.

RB: Would you welcome the opportunity to pay something back to the community for your crimes, either financially, by unpaid work or through meeting your victim?

SJ: Yes. But we are paying already for crime. Whoever does a crime is paying in a prison: they are receiving already the punishment in a prison. If you want some more money back they have to have a good job to pay the money back. You should not squeeze them as much as possible. It is a good idea to pay something back but instead of being here, let's work outside, earn money, and give you the money. Why not?

And Benedict the Pope, the person tried to kill him and the Pope went to prison and he saw him, he talked to him. That's a very good idea, why not? Apologising. Not only apologising and asking for forgiveness but having free speech with him as well. Maybe it was a misunderstanding, communication problem or drug abuse problem which forced you to be in the crime. From the victim's side as well: so many victims are abusing drugs or position or so many things and then they blame somebody else.

RB: How could prisoner-staff and staff-prisoner relationships be improved?

SJ: With more respect I think. They don't have to treat the prisoners as criminals. We are criminals but at the same time if you call us prisoners as well as being in prison it is painful. Instead of treating them with respect, saying: 'you are still a criminal, you have to listen to me, you have to follow my rules'.

We are not asking them to do anything for us, to bring anything for us. We are just asking them to help us if we've got a problem like contact numbers and canteen problems. If they respect their job and us it will be much easier.

RB: What are the aspects of being in prison that people outside are least aware of?

SJ: Not many people outside know about prison. Whoever has been here knows, but not the people outside. Alright everybody might have small conversations with family members or friends: 'We got canteen in the prison', we got this, we got that.' But full imagination other people don't have unless they see it.

And people outside don't know what a 'red band'² job is until you explain it and show them and explain that a red band must go around the prison and work, and that he has to wear a green jacket. So many people they don't know.

RB: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future. And there will potentially be wider opportunities for charities and the voluntary sector. What are the benefits and the risks of those changes for you?

SJ: I don't agree with giving jobs to private companies. But more charities in prison would be good, very good. Why not? But from my point of view I can do charity work as well: I am a painter. I could take ten people and teach them how to do it. Charity could provide us with the materials. And that would be kind of pay back as well. I could show that I'm really sorry, I'd do that. And I will do definitely a good job!

RB: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

SJ: Oh, I can't answer that! The biggest problems... there are no big problems I don't think. There are small problems which can become big if we cover our eyes. But right now there isn't anything. There are problems which could become big problems if we don't fix them within one or two years time.

For example: respect. It looks small but it is a big problem as well if you are behind the bars and nobody is helping you to put your phone number in your phone book, or letters are missing, or you never receive your money sent in, or if you order canteen and it doesn't come, or if there is something missing. Then you have to chase, tell them [officers] 'please can you phone the canteen?' And then your money is not in your account, you don't have it to spend. That is a

It is a good idea to
pay something back
but instead of being
here, let's work
outside, earn
money, and give you
the money.
Why not?

1. 'Canteen' is the prison shop.

2. A job in which a prisoner has a trusted position with greater freedom of movement in the establishment.

big problem. You lose a week: your time, your nerves. That is a big problem. Behind the doors it is big. But from the other side there isn't any big problems.

RB: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

SJ: I call myself a normal man, not bad. I'm not bad because my parents, they taught me how to behave myself, to have respect for people, respect everyone. Everybody can do bad things but it is difficult to do good things. If you are good, simple, honest, you won't have any problems.

But the problem is how people are brought up, their mentality, and how they treat people. We have to teach them. With our help, with our politicians' help, with our government, with our prison staff — we have to help them. Not only with our idea of prison and believing that they deserve to be here and should pay the punishment. Instead we have to talk to them, see what they need. Instead of being behind their door, we have to teach them how to behave

themselves. Everybody must do thinking programs. Even shoplifters should have to learn thinking programmes.

Yes it would be good to teach people how to think, how to communicate, how to relate to other people. Maybe nobody taught them. Maybe they didn't have a mother to teach them. Maybe they didn't go to school or learn. Maybe they were only drinking, drug using, stealing. I know people that have 25 convictions — I can't imagine how it's possible to get that much convictions! Twenty-five ... it's impossible!

RB: And if you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service what would it be?

SJ: The dental service should be improved as the waiting time is currently 6-8 weeks. On release day, people should be helped so they don't live on the streets and commit crime again. They need accommodation and a job. If they had that there would be less crime.

I'm not bad because
my parents, they
taught me how to
behave myself, to
have respect for
people, respect
everyone. Everybody
can do bad things
but it is difficult to
do good things.

Interview: Prisoner in a female closed prison

Debra Walton is a prisoner at Eastwood Park serving a sentence for financial fraud and Monica Lloyd is based in Rehabilitation Services Group at NOMS headquarters.

Debra Walton is a prisoner at Eastwood Park serving a four year sentence for financial fraud. She has completed several courses in the education department during her sentence and has the objective of completing a counselling qualification. She is a listener and is currently employed as an orderly.

ML: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

DW: Services are plainly over-stretched and officers are not able to spend as much time with individual prisoners, particularly personal officers. There are still some officers who make time, but on the whole they are over-stretched and with the cuts we are having that's going to get worse.

ML: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world you come from?

DW: It doesn't apply to me, but I do recognise it for many of the others. The size of the drug and alcohol problem is huge and for me, first time in prison, it's a real eye opener. It's not just the prisoner who's on drugs or alcohol, it's the entire family.

ML: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

DW: Well, they're doing a good job by providing methadone de-tox if they're here long enough, which is good. And you do see girls here desperately wanting to stay off drugs when they go back out. Unfortunately they are going back to an area where there are no jobs and they have lost their homes. They go into hostels where they are mixing with alcoholics and drug users and before long they're back on the drugs. It's a vicious circle and in the time I've been in here there are several girls who have been in three times, and that's down to drug use. It doesn't seem to make much difference what the prison does, it's not followed up outside to keep them off drugs and stop them coming back. The job situation is the same for everybody, but if you've just come out of prison and have been on drugs it's a real problem. Of course if you're in a hostel a lot of employers won't take you on either. I can't see how it can change. It goes beyond prisons.

ML: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for you to make positive changes to your life?

DW: It's a bit of both. For me it's certainly easier because I have time to re-educate and retrain and work towards what I want to do when I get out, but I can't do it properly because of the facilities that are available. I'm trying to retrain as a counsellor and I could really do with access to the internet. I understand why we can't have this but it would be useful if we could go to restricted sites. I've done as much as I can here but have come up against a brick wall now. For others I know that distance learning is difficult as by the time they've applied for funding they've missed out on the course because it takes a long time to get the funding organised. We are a remand prison so it's difficult.

ML: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

DW: This comes back to the cycle of drug use. The Government needs to address this. Yes, prisons can get women clean and genuinely wanting a new life but until they put facilities in place outside and jobs, housing and benefits they are not going to be rehabilitating successfully. The revolution needs a lot more support from outside. Another big problem is that the criminal records checks take so long and if you're waiting to start a job and you're on the dole, you get desperate and your aspirations fade. If you can't get a job sorted within a month you go back to your old ways just to survive.

ML: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

DW: That's not easy. We had some wonderful courses here. Textiles and needlework, though there are very few clothing manufacturers outside now, so that's no longer any use. Painting and decorating would be brilliant, but perhaps we should look at trades such as plumbing or electrician. It's what the country needs after all and it would provide an opportunity for somebody.

There are jobs that prisoners could do that are currently being done by the administrative staff. Of course they can't do the security stuff and I wouldn't expect them to do so, but there's no reason why prisoners can't help with issuing visiting orders for example once the prisoner is set up on the system. There are actually a lot of jobs that prisoners could do office wise. Everything seems to take so long in the administration department and I often think 'let me have a go. I'd get it sorted'. A lot of us are quite capable of doing a lot more than they give us credit for. I just feel that in these days of austerity it really

is time that they started looking at those prisoners who have the ability to help.

ML: Would you welcome the opportunity to 'pay something back' to the community for your crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting your victim?

DW: It is costing the Government thousands of pounds to keep me here. I strongly feel that that money would have been better spent if I'd been given a sentence that required me to pay something back to the community. I've spoken to others and most agree with me, if it's for non-violent crime. With drugs it's different. You have to get your de-tox. But for those who are not on drugs and are not violent all you are doing is removing them from society at great cost, and you're losing everything when you come into prison — your home, your possessions, often your children — your whole life. It's a big price to pay.

ML: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

DW: There's more lock up now because of staff shortages. In general I hear the girls saying it never used to be like this.

ML: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

DW: Relationships between staff and prisoners have to be good, the morale of the prison hinges on staff and prisoners getting on. If they're not you are going to have trouble. Respect goes a long way. There has to be respect both ways and if things aren't fair that's where problems start. If you put into an application you may get one answer and a girl in the other room gets a different answer to the same question.

There is not enough flexibility to allow for individual differences. Some of us are educated and able to do an awful lot of good for the prison and help. A lot of us are quite capable of doing a lot more than they give us credit for. I feel that in these days of austerity it really is time that they started looking at those prisoners who have the ability to help.

ML: What are the aspects of being in prison that people outside are least aware of?

DW: The time it takes to do things. It took three and a half weeks to get my first visiting order, and that was an important one as it was my first time in prison. My parents needed to know that I was alright and if I'd had children wanting to see me it would have been dreadful. And when you ring people they say can you ring back later? But, sorry no, we are locked up at 5 o'clock. They don't realise there are restrictions. Another thing are

restrictions like not being allowed fabric to make curtains for my room because it is not fire retardant, and you are not allowed to be sent in magazines. Nobody explains why. It's silly little things that create frustration.

ML: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

DW: It's obviously another way of the Government saving money. As long as they are regulated in the same way I don't see that as a massive problem. At the end of the day if the country is in trouble we have to make savings. As for the charitable sector being involved, great, as long as it's not just for drugs and alcohol. There are other people who need help, and it needs to be followed through into the outside as well.

ML: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

DW: It's down to the prisoner themselves but the whole idea of the prison regime is to provide education and to make us more employable. There is a lack of discipline in the classroom and a lack of respect that disrupts lessons for the majority. The other thing is they have some wonderful courses and they are a bit over-focussed on catering for drugs and alcohol and nothing else, such

as for mental health.

ML: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

DW: The one thing that did surprise me when I came into this prison were the stunning grounds and it's very pleasant. It gives you every opportunity to do something with your time, but there are people who can give more. At the end of the day we are stuck here and want to do things to help, but are hampered at every turn.

ML: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

DW: I would like to sort out the mountains of paper that are produced. For example I am on medication for various things and failed a mandatory drug test the other day, having signed the form to say that I was on medication. I ended up on two charges for which there was reams of paper produced, all representing time and money. Why? A simple phone call to health care staff would have prevented it all. It just seemed like an awful waste of time and money, and there is a lot of it.

There's more lock up now because of staff shortages. In general I hear the girls saying it never used to be like this.

Interview: Life sentence prisoner

Jim Simmonds is serving a life sentence and is interviewed by Margaret Adams who was a prison manager.

Jim Simmonds is a 50 year old unmarried father of two children. He is a life-sentenced prisoner with a tariff of 4 years and 6 months in respect of his most recent offence of armed robbery. He has served almost a decade in prison for this sentence. He has served four previous custodial sentences spanning a 26 year period

MA: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

JS: For me, I think it is an unstable environment because there seems to be no direction at the moment. My sentence doesn't exist anymore. IPP sentences¹ were brought in in 2005 and things have been rearranged twice since then. I am part of a 'forgotten group of people' because IPPs are being prioritised, but this is wrong. I know there is a build-up of IPPs in Cat B prisons. Some of these are really dangerous people but some of these are young kids learning tricks and traits to survive in prison.

I have noticed a really quick turnover of prisoners now. For instance there have been five different Servery Lads on my wing in two months. We've got category B and category C lads here because it's about 'heads on beds'. Previously staff had more time to assess you against set criteria. They could monitor your demeanour and assess changes and things like victim empathy, all of which would be taken into consideration before you could be downgraded. This used to be done by a dedicated group of staff who got to know you. Now because of policies and budgets governors have staff doing other things. For instance staff are being used to do the census, and the prison closed down to do it. Prisoners like me, IPPs and lifers would rather have a lockdown to get our reports done. My Board is nine months late.

MA: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world you come from?

JS: No. I was damaged goods long before they even thought of the 'Broken Society'. My MP knows nothing of the real people of the constituency, apart from what he gets in his surgery. He is a barrister — not many off my estate became barristers! My role models were builders. Now I am too old for certain jobs.

MA: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

JS: Yes, especially with family interaction. There is a family link worker to help with Family Days and Lifer Days and more family friendly visits and access to visits. On the downside though there are too many departments now. We used to have the old SWIP officer² who knew your wife and they knew the landings and people on them — what was going on in their life. Now it's too impersonal, and things get missed.

In terms of unemployment prisons could be better if they opened up and took more contracts right across the full prison estate, more like the private sector. Campaigns to close down so called 'Noddy shops' miss the point. Yes, you can do the work blind-folded but it is a work routine and gives you more responsibility getting up and going there every day. For some people it stops them thinking about other things like harming themselves. A company came in here and gave me a guaranteed interview — the first I had in 20 years!

More needs to be done with transition to open conditions though to overcome the 'culture shock'. You need to have faith and build up a relationship but that doesn't happen now you have to start over again with people who don't know you. After 10-15 years in closed conditions you have to do things you never had to do in 15 years like finding the dining hall — panic could set in. It is good that Risley is now linking with Thorn Cross because it helps with that transition from here to there with the same staff and governors.

I also think more needs to be done before release to prepare life sentence prisoners for modern life. When I was sentenced you didn't have phones with cameras; or tills in supermarkets where you do it yourself. Everything is IT now to do with shopping. Even alcohol and drug awareness is different these days. A lot is said about money management but when you manage on prison wages it is not about understanding money management it is about the choices people make about how they spend their money.

Since the changes to housing in 2010 you can't have permanent housing. Long term prisoners will not be aware of this.

1. Indeterminate sentences for public protection.

2. Social work in prisons.

IDTS³ is the worst thing they ever introduced for drug addicts. It gets abused and people just maintain a drug habit in prison. They could be on a £10 bag outside but tell the doctor they are on a gram a day. They just get what they ask for and end up getting out with a 50ml methadone habit. They even get zopiclone just to keep them quiet. There seems to be a different rule for IDTS. It should be more about recovery than maintenance. There is no incentive in the Lifer system where you are supposed to do what the system wants. You can do what the system wants and don't get the reward whereas with IDTS you can carry on with a drug habit and still get on. A lifer could do 21 years on IDTS avoiding adjudications throughout.

MA: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for you to make positive changes to your life?

JS: It makes it easier to look at yourself. There are too many distractions outside and you get caught up in the utopia of being 'top dog'. We live in a throwaway society.

MA: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

JS: Using prisoners as mentors and ex-users to challenge drug addicts would help. Companies need to take a chance on people. Probation need to do this more. They need to use sanctions at first as a support for instance as part of a licence condition you should help others before getting to the next stage. This helps you to get self-respect and self-worth back. I also think that there should be more real life information for academics and professionals who set things out in policies but don't really understand the reality of people's lives.

I came into prison age 24 and I am going out at 50 years old with short periods of being out in between. I had a probation officer who was relaxed and wanted to be my friend not my probation officer. I needed a short rein — I needed to be managed. I knew I could get away with things so it didn't do me any good to have someone like that then. There needs to be a balance between what it was like then and

what it is like now. You can't get appointments easily now because caseloads are so high. They don't really have time for you and probation officers always look tired. This is no good for long term prisoners who need some sort of halfway house — not a hostel, which houses people from court on bail because there is too much coming and going. They need a keyworker who can help with links to other services like the local authority and Jobcentre Plus and MAPPA⁴ services. There needs to be an advocate role.

MA: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

JS: Work and training need to go hand in hand like fork lift truck training and then using them in workshops. Public prisons are too restrictive. Governors should be given more leeway to use things like the textile shop to make a range of stuff and set up social enterprises to sell on visits etc. Government purse strings are the stumbling block. An example is the staff mess can only now use the national contract for supplies. Kitchen managers used to be able to innovate and subsidise but they can't anymore.

MA: Would you welcome the opportunity to 'pay something back' to the community for your crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting your victim?

JS: I wouldn't have a problem saying sorry to my victim but under the Victim Charter and the victim's impact statement I have agreed not to contact them or even enter my old town, which means I can't even go to visit my parents grave. I agreed to this because they didn't deserve what I did to them and they shouldn't have to worry about bumping into me in the street when I get out, so I accept that is a consequence of what I did.

I would like to work with the handicapped or elderly but the voluntary and community sector can't take me on because of my offence. I would also like to speak to students and professionals to help them get a taste of reality by giving the user perspective. If I was younger I would build a youth centre. I worry about young people I see coming in here. They need something to do but their way. They have a whole new language and outlook. Kids can't be individuals.

3. Integrated drug treatment services.

4. Multi-agency public protection arrangements.

They have to be part of a 'pack' and they get caught up in things and end up here.

MA: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

JS: Prisons are warehouses now with a conveyor belt system. They have introduced telephones and TVs but before that you had to interact. Prisoners and staff don't know how to interact now. Prisoners used to have radios so there was more exposure to culture because you would listen to different programmes on at different times of the day. I used to listen to Radio 4. I even went to see *Les Misérables* once when I got out because I had listened to it on the radio. I really enjoyed it. It's not something I would have done before.

MA: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

JS: You don't get any continuity with staff on the wing — it is different staff all the time. But staff also need to drop the barriers a bit. They should be able to think for themselves. It needs to be built into their training that they can interact without being unprofessional. They don't seem to be willing to engage and build on their insight. They are afraid to take that step because they are so security conscious and are wary of breaking a confidence about themselves.

MA: What are the aspects of being in prison that people outside are least aware of?

JS: They don't know the background circumstances of why someone might be in prison, 'There but for the grace of God' for some people. Just look at the Cumbria killings where he was wrapped up in his feelings but before he snapped and did that everybody liked him. If he had just killed himself people would have said 'what a shame we couldn't do anything about it'. You don't always have to break before you can be mended! Besides punishment people also need to be helped, more restorative approaches.

Prisons could interact more with the local population to see the regimes are not just about playstations and pool. They should understand the trauma, the impact of self-harm and deaths, and daily interactions. Victims should be allowed to see what the prisoner has done to turn things around.

MA: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

JS: The benefit is that prisoners can earn more money however the cost is that you can be in a lot longer because your paperwork doesn't get done. I am a commodity and to keep me the private prison earns £80-£100 per week. As a lifer I provide them with a guaranteed income. In my experience the public sector is good at paper trails and routine and having my paperwork done is important to me so public is better than private. The private sector offer window dressing through individual benefits to regimes.

It is good that the voluntary and community sector are getting involved particularly if they team up for aftercare and throughcare planning. As I said earlier halfway houses run by Langley Trust and Phoenix House resulted in fewer people coming back into prison. There is also scope to get the charity sector involved in the prison maybe opening up a sort of Grace Brothers providing clothes for discharges or making things to sell in charity shops outside. At this prison we have the cycle workshop which is a charity.

The problem for the public sector is that it is not allowed to do things differently and the public sector always has to deal with difficult cases so I'm not sure that they have the leeway to compete on a level playing field with the private sector.

MA: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

JS: Underfunding, you can't keep robbing Peter to pay Paul. There is no funding for a victim awareness course, so if a judge or the Parole Board want that course then progression doesn't happen. If there is a smash-up, a cell is out of action until it is repaired which costs money. Constant watches cost money but you can't set that because it's unpredictable.

MA: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

JS: Red tape — forward thinking and progressive governors have ideas but these are stifled by protocol,

Prisons could interact more with the local population to see the regimes are not just about playstations and pool. They should understand the trauma, the impact of self-harm and deaths, and daily interactions.


procedures and procurement. For example we hire a contractor for food. Six months ago there were fewer foreign national prisoners so more space was used for European food with no flexibility meaning there was less available to respond to the increase in foreign national prisoners. In the past you could get E45 (skin cream) from Healthcare now it's an added expense to be paid for.

More power should be given to local managers. Probation and prisons should be the Parole Panel not the Ministry of Justice because they don't know the day to day happenings in your life.

MA: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

JS: Open it up to society more. If people could see where the money was going and how it was being spent it would go back to rehabilitation and not warehousing. I will be costing society for the

remainder of my life. Politicians get in the way with knee-jerk reactions to the press, making it difficult for society by inaccurate reporting. A ten year sentence should be broken down into 5 years punishment, 2 years restorative work and 3 years licence period. It would provide clear expectations using a 'carrot and stick' approach. There should be clear targets before prisoners get out and this needs to be explained to probation that handovers are too quick and not inclusive so mistakes happen. If you had a bad time at a particular prison, it doesn't mean you are bad. Probation need to think more about the whole person and not just the process if people are going to stay out of prison. There is every walk of life in prison and the skills should be used to better effect particularly with younger people because it is frightening the extremes that they feel they need to go to find their place in society.


New books on prisons from Willan Publishing

Handbook on Prisons
Edited by
Yvonne Jewkes
(The Open University)

Willan Publishing

Published: June 07

Price:
£31.50 (paperback)
£67.50 (hardback)

ISBN:
9781843921851 (pbk)
9781843921868 (hbk)

This is one of the most comprehensive and ambitious book on prisons to have been published, a key text for anybody studying the subject and an essential work of reference for practitioners working in prisons and other parts of the criminal justice system. It is especially timely in view of the many changes and debates about the role of prisons and their future organisation and management as part of the National Offender Management Service. Chapters in the book are written by leading scholars in the field, and reflect the range and depth of prison research and scholarship.

Dictionary of Prisons and Punishment
Edited by Yvonne Jewkes
(The Open University) and Jamie Bennett
(HM Prison Service)

Willan Publishing


Published: November 07

Price:
£22.00 (paperback)
£50.00 (hardback)

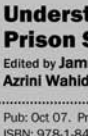
ISBN:
9781843922919 (pbk)
9781843922926 (hbk)

This will be the essential source of reference for the increasing number of people studying in, working in prisons and working with prisoners. This Dictionary covers key terms, concepts, legislative provisions and the institutional, social and political context. It takes full account of emerging occupational and Skills for Justice criteria and is edited by a leading academic and practitioner in the prisons and penology field. Entries are contributed by leading academic and practitioners in prisons and penology.


Other New Titles




The Prison Officer (2e)
Alison Liebling and David Price with Guy Scheler
Due: May 08. Price: £17.50 (Pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-84392-269-8



Understanding Prison Staff
Edited by Jamie Bennett, Ben Crewe and Azrini Wahidin
Pub: Oct 07. Price: £22.00 (Pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-84392-245-2



Prison Governors
Managing prisons in a time of change
Shane Bryans (Home Office)
Pub: Feb 07. Price: £35.00 (Hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-84392-223-0



Who to Release?
Parole, fairness and criminal justice
Edited by Nicola Padfield (University of Cambridge)
Pub: Apr 07. Price: £37.50 (Hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-84392-227-8

WILLAN PUBLISHING

Interview: Prisoner in open conditions

*Brendan Hadley is a prisoner at Leyhill open prison. He is interviewed by **Monica Lloyd** from NOMS headquarters.*

Brendan Hadley is a prisoner at Leyhill open prison serving a four year sentence for financial fraud. He has run his own business in the past and is currently working in the laundry prior to his imminent release.

ML: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

BH: People are being put in prison for what appears to me to be increasingly trivial offences; other avenues of punishment are not being explored sufficiently. They are being locked up to remove them from the public gaze and you get the impression that the prison system is being used as a warehouse. Once they're in prison no-one knows what to do with them, and then and as a consequence they're just left to rot. Because the prison is full there is less to go round; less resources and less people to manage them. It's causing a degree of frustration, anger and stress. Communication too: People don't seem to have the time to talk to you, to explain why certain things happen..

ML: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world you come from?

BH: I come from an ordered, structured, goal-orientated world. I've worked for myself for 25 years so I don't personally relate to a broken society. I can see that for others it describes their whole life. They're in and out of prison and their families are used to it and it's a way of life to them. It's a difficult one to answer unless you are part of it.

ML: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

BH: Given sufficient resources yes it can. Particularly if you can give people a work ethic, discipline and if you taught trades like plumbing, electrician, plastering, HGV licence, fork lift truck. I know they're not educated jobs but we need them and they are always being advertised. There's a stigma about being a criminal so you can teach people about being self employed.

For drug users I'd let them go cold turkey. Sorry I have no sympathy. I know you have to treat them right and fair but I'm sorry I'd lock them up and they'd have closed visits until they were clean. The physical

addiction passes in seven days so I'm told. With drug and alcohol abusers I'd be quite draconian. Drugs are to blame for many problems in prisons.

Family breakdown: What you see a lot in prison is families breaking down right at the end of sentence, because you've been away and only seen the family on visits a couple of times a month. They get used to you not being around, then they realise you're coming home and they've not necessarily found someone else, but they can't contemplate life together again. So many get 'dear John' letters. Prisons could help with a lot more family days, a lot more to help maintain a family.

ML: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for you to make positive changes to your life?

BH: The only person who can make positive changes in your life is yourself. If you're frustrated, humiliated, angry, it becomes increasingly hard to see the positive. I don't know whether counselling helps, but you need a positive attitude: If I work hard I will get this, turn my life around. So I recommend a carrot and stick approach. A short sharp shock of lock up 23/7 and then a chance to turn it around and get a positive return. A lot of the jobs in prison not proper jobs but are there purely to keep people occupied. This breeds a sense of frustration. It is frustrating when people are not working hard but are still getting paid. It's frustrating when you are trying to complete an education course and there is limited access to a computer, or you move prisons and your course work follows six months later. These problems make it harder to make positive changes in your life and maintain your resilience.

ML: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

BH: I absolutely agree with it. Prison should be about stopping offending behaviour, looking at what is causing it. Sexual, violent and arson offenders are wired in such a way that you can't stop them offending unless they want to. However, a lot of burglars are not doing it because they want to hurt people; they're doing it because they have a habit. These are crimes of opportunity to feed their habit and if you take the habit away the chances are they're not going to do it again. Or it can be a lack of

education so you can't get a job. Prison itself can be part of the solution but it can't do all of it. It can provide education, it can enforce discipline, it can also further punish people for bad behaviour, so the rehabilitation revolution I agree with completely, but you've got to look at why people are committing crimes in the first place and what needs to be done to break that cycle. Some of the solutions are pragmatic. You give them the ability to earn money. You don't give them the job. You give them the skills and a work ethic. You get them an interview or you help them to go self employed. You set up a bank account for them with their earnings in it. You give them life skills and work skills and some education. It requires a multi-pronged approach.

ML: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

BH: If you make people work in prison, pay them properly you could make them more responsible. If they want to eat a different diet they could pay for it, or pay for their TVs, their TV licence, pay for their bits and pieces. You only need to spend a bit in prison; if you're paid the minimum wage the rest can go into your savings so you have a bank balance when you leave. Otherwise you're released with a half a week's dole and it takes six weeks for your next dole cheque to come through. What are you going to do except go back to what you know to raise cash? Whereas if you had £2k or £3k that you'd earned and you'd instilled a work ethic then you can pay a deposit for a flat or buy a car or at least put food on the table for a couple of weeks. So the answer is prison can help with unemployment and self esteem, if it's structured properly. I know the public don't want to see lags earning large sums of money but there are ways of stopping people coming back and it costs a fortune to keep people inside. If they had the minimum wage there would be an incentive to work and you could make a contribution for your keep and there would be a balance for when you leave.

ML: Would you welcome the opportunity to 'pay something back' to the community for your crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting your victim?

BH: Of course I would. Absolutely no problem at all. Others don't agree with me but I would have chain

gangs. It should be a condition that you have to pay back. Look at the state of the roads and public parks. If I could put one officer on site with 25 prisoners, with three people who know how to tarmac, I can redo the roads and repair the public parks. We could paint the schools in the summer when the kids aren't there, maintain the public baths. You've got electricians and well qualified people in here. Some would welcome the opportunity to pay something back. It keeps their skills in if nothing else. So the answer is yes, though financially isn't necessarily the best way as prison wages are so low, but if prisoners were paid proper money for fixing the roads or other amenities you are doing a proper job and have a degree of self esteem.

Meeting your victim is an emotive one. I'm not sure that all victims would want to meet their assailants. Most personal crimes are about control, so I'm not sure how helpful it would be for the victim to be put back in a position when they are giving the perpetrator back some control, if only briefly, over their life. They might be remorseful but I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing.

ML: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

BH: I've only been in for a couple of years but others tell me that it was originally a level playing field: officers and prisoners with a clear demarcation between the two. Life was easier then; no private cash, everybody had to live off their earnings. It was more about punishment and was

more of a shock.

ML: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

BH: Prison staff were always Mr or 'gov', not first names. There was a clear demarcation. They will be your friend but you step over the line and they are always the prison officer. Because of the blurring of that line you can end up in trouble. People will always form relationships but the demarcation should be maintained and the erosion of it is causing a lot of discipline problems. There are some members of staff who can abuse their position, whether it's because they are upholding rules or whether they're just being petty. There should be a degree of discretion but

We could paint the schools in the summer when the kids aren't there, maintain the public baths. You've got electricians and well qualified people in here. Some would welcome the opportunity to pay something back.

where punishment is disproportionate it can lead to resentment. If everybody knew where they stood life would be so much easier.

ML: What are the aspects of being in prison that people outside are least aware of?

BH: I have to say it's the loneliness, the frustration, the humiliation, the lack of freedom. The public do get the impression that we are all in a holiday camp, but prison is a place of punishment. People outside need to be more aware of how the system actually works. Like my mate serving a life sentence. He has a tariff that's like a fixed term but he can serve any number of years beyond that and when he goes out he's on licence for the rest of his life and can be recalled at any time. That doesn't mean anything to anybody, and the newspapers don't educate people about how the system works. Lifers here are in category D because they're assessed as low risk of re-offending or of hurting anyone and are at the end of very long sentences. And they've had to do a number of courses to qualify for being here.

ML: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

BH: I don't see anything wrong with the private prison. As far as I'm concerned, having run my own business, they are a business and should be run as one. In my time in prison I've seen a lot of waste.

Private prisons might actually spend more money where it's meant to be spent, on rehabilitating prisoners, or it could go in the coffers to save money for the government. I'm not sure about what is best, but there are alternatives.

ML: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

BH: Inertia. Unfairness and inertia, lack of rehabilitation, lack of education. Someone has been dealing drugs to kids, he gets three or four months and comes here, he gets out and does it again and comes back, then the cycle repeats. He might go somewhere else next time, but what is he learning? That's not punishing someone for repeat offending. Some people get dealt with far too leniently; some get dealt with for too harshly.

ML: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

BH: It's a difficult question.

If you pay me to do a job I'll pay for the privilege of a nice place to be and I'd pay back to society. Conversely if I abuse it you take it away. Just give me the basics and everything beyond that I'll earn. You've got to teach people rules and regulations, self esteem, give them a work ethic, call it what you want.

ML: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

BH: Break the circle and get rid of the lethargy and inertia. That's a big thing.

You've got to teach people rules and regulations, self esteem, give them a work ethic, call it what you want.

Interview: Mother of a serving prisoner

*Janet Brookes is the mother of a serving prisoner. She is interviewed by **Christopher Stacey**, Head of Projects and Services at UNLOCK, the National Association of Reformed Offenders.*

Janet Brookes is the mother of a serving prisoner. Her son is serving a six year prison sentence for sexual and internet offences, which is his first time in prison. Her mother had been a Magistrate for many years and was shocked at the sentence. Janet has been in professional jobs in education, both in senior management and then in inspection and advice in schools. None of this had brought her anywhere near the judicial system. She writes to her son and visits him as often as possible with as many friends as are willing to go with her. is also trying to help him continue his education and sort out his finances, as his bank accounts were closed within a few weeks of sentencing. Her son has no partner or children.

CS: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?’

JB: The main one is not being able to get on courses; you are never quite sure whether that is because there are so many prisoners and not enough courses, for example at last my son has been on a thinking skills course but he can't get on the offence-specific course, which follows on for more than six months. There is one sooner but it's full. It does seem that prisons are overloaded — prisoners are often locked up when they shouldn't be, and officers seem to have too much to do. Sometimes there has been a lack of response to my son's (perfectly reasonable) requests.

CS: Politicians often use the term ‘Broken Society’ Do you think this describes the world you or your relative come from?

JB: Not really. In the past I worked for a long time in education in an inner-city area, and we are very privileged in many ways in comparison. It's not really society but humanity that is broken here.

CS: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

JB: My son has Asperger's syndrome a personal problem but likely to lead to employment and relationship difficulties. Everything that happens in prison only seems to make things worse. I had imagined that we send people to prison because society needs keeping safe from them, but that in terms of the prisoner we would try and send them out better than when they came in, but it's impossible for me to see how the way that prisons are operating at the moment is doing that.

CS: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for prisoners to make positive changes to your life?

JB: Imprisonment makes it harder. If they're in work, it takes away their job. If they have families, it causes immense stresses — I can't imagine what it must be like for those with children who have their fathers taken away from them. All our friends and family are working hard to visit, to write and to keep in touch so that there will be a network for my son when he comes out, as life will be harder than ever for him then. He is not very far away fortunately — I dread him being moved away.

I knew nothing about prisons before and I really ought to have done. Here I am, a left-wing member of the middle-classes and I knew nothing about it, and I'm appalled by what I've experienced. Prisons should be able to help with problems, but my experience suggests that it doesn't. The courses my son has at last been on may help make some change. After he was arrested, whilst on bail, he had a lot of therapy paid for by me, and a lot he is getting now is repeated. It feels too little too late. Perhaps it's not too little, but perhaps it's not at the teachable moment. As an educator I couldn't believe that this didn't happen before he got into trouble.

CS: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a ‘rehabilitation revolution’. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

JB: When my son went in, the first thing anybody ever said to me was, ‘we'll look after him and we can work with him’. I was so relieved and I thought it was good. But then nothing positive happened at all for almost a year. All the right noises seemed to be being made, and I read all this positive stuff in *The Guardian*, but it's not borne out in practice.

I've read about prisons which have amazing rehabilitation programmes and employment opportunities, and that's what I would do if I was a prison governor, keep them busy! My son was part-way through his degree before prison, and I understood education was fundamental in prison, but there has been zero. He hasn't been able to get on an Open University degree.

I don't really know what's going to be available on release, but I have heard about the Quaker Circles of Support Programme, and I'm hoping something like that will be available for my son. He's very worried

about being recalled. I fear what it's going to be like when he comes out, but there is a growing number of support organisations; anything where all of the services, churches etc work together and with the families to help the person sounds a good idea — joined up thinking.

CS: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

JB: Absolutely anything, including the opportunity to use and develop the skills they have. I feel sure that as a society we should regard it as a priority to provide appropriate work and training. If we don't we are giving ourselves a bigger problem than we started with.

CS: Would you welcome the opportunity for your relative to 'pay something back' to the community for your crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting their victim?

JB: I have no problem with that, and neither would my son. Even if he had a job on release, to do voluntary work as well would be fine. He loves being part of a team and contributing to society. He would willingly participate in that. Any kind of community payback sounds like a really good idea.

CS: How has the experience of prisoners shifted in recent years?

JB: I'm not too sure, but for example, prisoners having televisions seems a good idea for whiling away the hours and days, and at least it's a way of keeping them in touch with the outside world — they would be cut off otherwise.

CS: How have services for prisoners families changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

JB: Everything that I have had, and I have had some help, has been from the charities like PACT — they're brilliant. But there isn't anything like that at the prison where my son is, it's a rural one so I've had to come back to these other organisations. It seems the charities are all focused on doing their little bit, helping you with one thing or another, lots of small charities beavering away on their own, and the umbrella organisation Action for Prisoners Families seems like a really good idea.

The easiest thing the prisons could do is to give families information — I don't see why you have to tease out information about everything, whether it is visiting, sending in money or whatever. I got something from the local prison when my son first went in but it

was 50 pages long. PACT produced something which wasn't too bad but it actually didn't reflect the reality of the prison. When he moved to the prison where he is now there was nothing, so I had to start all over again. They said 'you can always ask', and when I did ask they were usually courteous and usually gave an answer, but why you should have to winkle out all of this information I just don't know. They could do something that covers the routine, this is what you can send in, this is what the visiting process is — it's not rocket science. In my son's prison, there is a notice board that you stand facing when you are waiting to be let out after the visit, which includes the mission statement of the prison, which bears no relation to what I see going on and gives the name of a person you can contact. I

have wanted to contact them and tried to ring — I spent half an hour trying to trace them before I discovered this person was no longer employed, and there is nobody in that post anymore. Nobody had a clue. Although that person had already left — that phone number and name is still there now. So not only can you not get information, but there is out of date information being provided.

CS: Have you come across the Offenders Families Helpline, which is funded by NOMS?

JB: Yes, I have, because I have been talking to them about some of the difficulties that I've had. But what it doesn't do is tell you about the individual prison — you have to find it all out yourself.

CS: What are the aspects of being the relative of a prisoner that people outside are least aware of?

JB: I think the sense of stigma as a family member, and having had things in the press, some of it invented, and you've got no right of reply, and you're under all the weight of this stuff being put around — that's appalling. My friends know because they went through it with me but in general people don't know how appalling that is. After some months I did learn to laugh again and enjoy myself, but for example a neighbour who'd heard me outside enjoying the evening with friends said how glad she was that I'd moved on but as we talked she suddenly said 'it's still a live issue for you isn't it', and I said 'yes, every day'. I'm dealing with stuff all the time, whether it is dealing with his bank account, or his OASys report, you can't put it down. The effects on people with children, or the breadwinner going into prison, must be awful.

I feel sure that as a society we should regard it as a priority to provide appropriate work and training. If we don't we are giving ourselves a bigger problem than we started with.

CS: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

JB: I don't know — I heard some of the programmes may be run in different places and I was afraid, in the short term, that it might mean my son would be moved further away, but I'd worry about that with any organisation. I suppose my main concern would be that the people who run them actually know what they're trying to do, and that as a society we know what we're trying to do, that the principles and outcomes we're after are laid down, so that whoever is running them might actually achieve the right ends. I'm thinking about schools going into private hands; I'm not sure whether we have a corporate view of what we're trying to do in education, with it all becoming fragmented. It could be the same in prisons.

CS: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

JB: The biggest problem is we don't know what we're trying to do, and so we're not doing it. The picture is very confused. As an outsider, this is the biggest problem — we need to decide what prison is for and what the best way is to achieve the ends, and then do it. Another problem is that, though I can understand that there are a lot of prisoners who are very difficult, where you have a Category C prison and you have people who are not difficult, who want to sort themselves out and make a contribution to society, I think they could be treated more constructively.

CS: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

JB: Imagination, and perhaps also a lack of funds. There are entrenched attitudes as well in some of the staff. One of my friends, a very upright man, who has found this whole business with my son very difficult, nevertheless asked to visit, which was quite a big deal. He was appalled that one of the officers in charge of the visiting room was sitting there with his feet on the desk. The whole idea that the prison was not run professionally with people meeting professional standards was a huge shock to him.

CS: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

JB: Well I think we are back to what I mentioned before — decide what we are doing, decide what the right course of action is, recruit the right sort of attitudes, train the people in the skills to do it — it's straight out of a management textbook but that is what I believe. The officers could be much more active, they seem so passive at the moment. They lock them up, and then they don't do anything.

Fundamentally, I believe most people in prison are there because society has screwed them up, or let them down, or failed them in some way. I don't actually believe

that most people are there because they are wicked — perhaps when I think of some high-intelligence person in finance who has defrauded millions then I think maybe that is wicked, and they should just be punished (but I still think about the effect on the families), but most of them have so many other social issues. If we spent more time working out what has gone wrong we could maybe unravel it more effectively.

. . . most of them
have so many other
social issues. If we
spent more time
working out what
has gone wrong we
could maybe
unravel it more
effectively.

Interview: Father of a serving prisoner

*George Pearce is the father of a serving prisoner. He is interviewed by **Christopher Stacey**, Head of Projects and Services at UNLOCK, the National Association of Reformed Offenders.*

George Pearce is the father of a serving prisoner. His son is serving a 30 year prison sentence for murder. He was convicted under the joint enterprise law. George himself served time in prison in late 1960's. He has been married for over 30 years and has a number of children and grandchildren. Having served in the Armed Forces and working as a bus driver, he is now retired. He visits his son, with his son's young daughter, at least once a month, despite the distance.

CS: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

GP: Well, at the moment he's not going to move. But, it is a big problem. Through his conviction I lost my job because of people talking about it. It still goes on now — when I go out, people talk. I know they're saying it, but they don't say it to me. They keep locking people up, but I'm beginning to wonder whether it's to appease the victims of the crime or for the media, because they spend money on putting people in prison, which puts a burden on the taxpayer, and it's a knock-on effect on society and the family. It's an extra expense I could have done without, that my family could have done without. My granddaughter was a toddler when my son first got locked up, and now she's nearly a teenager. We'll be going to see him in a couple of week's time and she looks forward to seeing him, but we don't like all the travelling. We leave at 7.30 in a morning and won't get back until 10 at night. If the system weren't so full, then they could move people about more freely.

CS: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world you or your relative come from?

GP: He didn't come from a broken home. He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was a head chef, living with his partner, had a baby, and everything was going fine. He lost his job because he refused to work Christmas Day, so was out of work. He got into drugs, which is pretty much common practice nowadays. He ended up owing money, and instead of coming to me, he got into some trouble.

CS: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

GP: The only social problem my son had was he was using drugs a lot. Obviously, going into prison has cleaned him. He now knows that that was wrong. He has managed to get help in prison. He's learnt to channel his energies into exercise, and he's not interested in drugs anymore. That's one thing to have come out of it. It got him off drugs and away from that part of society.

CS: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for prisoners to make positive changes to your life?

GP: No, not really. I don't really know what he would be doing now. As they say, things happen. He has a long time before he comes out. He doesn't have a guaranteed release date anyway. He may not be out until he's 60. He's resigned to the fact he'll never get out, as he won't admit guilt. Prison sentences for that long a time cannot do anything. Long-term prisoners need to be with one another, because it's unfair for them to mix. I've got to be honest — they don't care about prison officers. I know it's wicked, but they don't give a monkeys. Some become violent towards staff. If you're in for a few years, you lose a remission, but if you're doing 20 years, you can't lose remission. Really, it's a waste of time putting them in for that length of time, and then trying to rehabilitate somebody.

CS: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

GP: For short term prisoners, you can teach them a trade — plumbing, carpentry, and try and find them a job whilst they are inside. When I worked for a bus company, there were loads of other areas at a meeting and a representative of a different area said that they employed four prisoners from Ford prison. The wages they earned were paid into their bank, but they were only allowed so much in the prison. If you fast-forward, prisons are expensive, and if that system still works at Ford, if a prisoner earns £250 a week, £50 could go into their prison account, £50 could go into a savings account for release and £150 could go back into the community — that way, they're helping the community and helping themselves. I cannot see, if there were enough people to do it, how that wouldn't work. Then, it wouldn't cost as much to run prisons, and they wouldn't be in the prison all week, so it drops the budgets down.

CS: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

GP: My son works for the prison kitchens. He started at the bottom, but as he knows what he's doing, he was telling the head chef how to do the job, so they gave him a trial doing the staff dinners. When he first started, they were 4-5 a day — now, they're doing 18 a day — they love him. The company that run it, Aramark, because they do separate prisons, have asked him to sit the NVQ Assessors Course, they would pay for it, so that he could become an Assessor. He's going to try and see if he can do it. If he only had a few years to do, he could do that and would be able to walk out with an NVQ, and go get a job in a technical college. He could also help the prison in doing what they do.

CS: Would you welcome the opportunity for your relative to 'pay something back' to the community for your crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting their victim?

GP: Yes. It gives them a target, and he could think that he has actually achieved something, or work towards something. At the moment, not a lot of them give a monkeys. There are prisoners who don't want to help themselves, and they're just not interested, but at the other end of the spectrum there are the people who want to change and know they could do something and put back into society. At the end of the day, society has locked them up so they could pay a little bit of a debt back to society. I don't believe that the victim or the victim's family should be able to see the person who committed the offence. In my situation, if it was reversed, I wouldn't want to see the person as I'd just want revenge. I think a lot of people would do the same. I wouldn't want justice I'd want revenge. There a lot of people around who want the same.

CS: How has the experience of prisoners shifted in recent years?

GP: It's changed thousands of percent since 40-odd years ago. Wormwood Scrubs prison — you used to have a wing full of lifers, banged up 23 hours a day. The prison officers were frightened of them — they were doing 40 years, so couldn't hurt them. It's all changed. I've noticed it myself. My son has a lifer officer and she said he was a model prisoner, and didn't even think he needed to be in prison.

CS: 'How have services for prisoners families changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?'

GP: The visiting has changed a lot — it's got worse. Now, when my son was in a different prison, we left home, pulled up, booked in, and the sniffer dog came around. I've seen the dogs in prisons and I've seen what they do — they indicate by circling then sitting and looking up at you. They said 'you've been indicated, you're not having a visit' — I said 'do you know how far I've just come?' and he said 'I don't care, can't give a closed visit, there aren't no facilities. You ain't seeing your son'. My first thought was 'should I hit him now, or later' and I said 'this ain't over' and walked off. Now, I contacted the Governor — didn't even get a reply. I contacted my MP, and got a reply, and went to his surgery. The reason my visit had got cancelled was because I'd had the nerve to complain before — my son confirmed this, because I'd wrote to the Governor prior about a previous visit, where it took us 45 minutes to get in to see our son then we only got 20 minutes. My son had told me to leave it, as he said they would take it out on him. From prison to prison, the way they treat you on a visit varies hugely. The way they treat people is bad — they treat me as a criminal, and I'm not.

CS: What are the aspects of being the relative of a prisoner that people outside are least aware of?

GP: Nobody can really know how people feel. Only a few people really know about what happened to my son. Our

family back us 100 per cent, but when I go into my local town, people are always talking. I know what they're doing — they're talking about my son. Loads of people do it. It has eased off a lot. It got a lot of press coverage at the time. It was the heaviest sentence that anybody had ever got in our local town. Because of the nature of the crime, it was splattered all over the papers. The company I was working for at the time were very good. Things have eased since then as it was several years ago. My other son went out one night and got his head kicked in because of his brother. Mud sticks unfortunately. I keep thinking of going to the papers to correct things but I don't want to drag it all up again — I'll try and do something through the proper channels. I have lost my son, but I can't grieve, because he hasn't actually died.

CS: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

The visiting has changed a lot — it's got worse.

GP: Private prisons should be used more. They say there isn't any difference between the two but there is. With private prisons, they're allowed to wear their own clothes, and the prison officers are polite. I know at some public prisons they are not polite at all to prisoners. What I would love to see is if they run all prisons the same, G4S could run them all for me, but you'd want somebody to sit down to say how they needed to run, across the board they should all be run the same. In the prison where my son is now, he can't have anything brought in, but he can buy them from M&S Direct or Argos, and they pay through the nose. In a previous prison, we could get him a couple of t-shirts and so swaps. In a third prison he was at you couldn't do that but you could take a CD player. All visitor regimes are different — now, if we go to visit him, we have to email him and he has to book it in the prison, all because you don't need a VO. In Elmley, he used to send out VO's and we'd fill them in. They could, if they got the right people together, put together a set of rules for prisons, it's feasible that they could all be run the same.

It's good that charities get involved too. In some prisons, the visitor centres are run by charities or volunteers, and that would work in 90 per cent of prisons if you had somebody to run the canteen where any money they make go back into the prisons, whereas now private companies like Aramark get it all. Charity organisations should get involved a lot more with the visitor's side and helping prisoners.

CS: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

GP: Overcrowding and foreign national prisoners. There are tensions between different

national and religious groups and this also causes problems running the prisons. As for overcrowding, my son is entitled to a cell on his own, and luckily he has one at the moment, but sometimes there are two or three to a cell. If you've got two Protestants, a Catholic and a Muslim you're going to have a problem. I think it's purely because of the population.

CS: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

GP: The sheer weight in terms of numbers and the crimes they are getting put in for. It's about time the police, CPS and others sat down and understand that we can't keep putting people in unless we either build more prisons and get some of those in at the moment out. I think it's the biggest drain on budget — it's so expensive to keep somebody in prison — and the people they're keeping aren't putting anything back in.

CS: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

GP: Get more work in prisons, and get everybody singing from the same hymn sheet. If all prisons were run the same, it would allow the prisoner to know what's happening, it would allow the prisoners family to know what is happening. When they keep

moving people about, people haven't got a clue what's going on. It isn't fair on the family. Because they're all different in their visiting regimes, it makes it so confusing for families. They even constantly move the goalposts within the prison, never mind between different prisons.

As for overcrowding, my son is entitled to a cell on his own, and luckily he has one at the moment, but sometimes there are two or three to a cell. If you've got two Protestants, a Catholic and a Muslim you're going to have a problem. I think it's purely because of the population.

Interview: Worker for a large charitable organisation

Kelly Ewers is European Social Fund Project Manager at Nacro. She is interviewed by Michael Fiddler lecturer in Criminology at the University of Greenwich.

Kelly Ewers was recruited into the position of European Social Fund (ESF) project manager at crime reduction charity, Nacro, in March 2010. Prior to that she had worked for Welfare to Work Organisation and a charity called Women in Prison. In the latter position, she began as a volunteer before moving up to a front-line worker role and then became a specialist projects manager.

Her current role finds her overseeing ESF funded projects with particular reference to young offenders. She manages a team of resettlement brokers working in Young Offenders Institutions across the South region. She also has an employer engagement remit allied with collaborating on a pilot project commissioned by the London Mayor's Office. This involves encouraging employers to provide paid employment and work placement opportunities for Nacro's clients.

MF: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

KE: My experience of prisons, over the last few years, echoes a lot of what was said in the Green Paper. For me, the biggest thing is that the current system clearly does not work. Re-offending rates have been stuck between 49 per cent and 60 per cent over the last decade. That is a clear indication that the system is not providing rehabilitation and is not giving people the opportunity to move out of the cycle of crime. So, it is very apparent it is a flawed system. Increasing numbers of people in prison will inevitably mean greater levels of social exclusion and we're creating an on-going cycle that left without action we're not going to be able to break.

We need to move away from this debate around whether or not 'prison works'. Instead, the Green Paper is a really good opportunity for the Government to look at how we can turn this around and make the required changes.

At the moment we don't have a rehabilitation strategy that includes a really co-ordinated approach to resettlement. There are pockets of things that work really well. So, in some prisons, you'll have a really good housing department that is very effective at providing housing on release. In others, you may not. Or you might

have an effective housing department, but you might not have an effective Job Centre Plus. So, someone might be put in housing, but there's no support to get them on the right benefits and then that has a knock-on effect as they can then lose their housing through rent arrears as the correct housing benefit has not been arranged. What I would really like to see, to make resettlement more effective, is a rehabilitation strategy that joins up all of those services and is much more holistic. A strategy that looks at prisoners as individuals and looks at the journey that they need to go through to get the right resettlement for their needs as opposed to fire-fighting certain issues.

MF: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society'. Do you think this describes the world that the prisoners you work with come from?

KE: The fact that really hit me when I looked at this question was this whole thing about 'different world'. For me, prisoners don't live in a different world. To describe where they come from as a different world, I have a real issue with that. I think sometimes people use that as an escape from really looking at the issues affecting those people. It's almost like 'Othering', it's not our problem so let's not worry about it. That's quite sad because we're in a society and we have a responsibility to those people. The big difference is that it's not that these people live in a different world, but they don't necessarily have access to the same choices as the rest of us. I just pulled up a few statistics¹ to show that some of the things that don't change and have never changed since I've worked in prisons: 67 per cent of male prisoners were unemployed before they went to prison; 49 per cent were excluded from schools; 72 per cent suffer two or more mental disorders. 66 per cent had drug use in the previous year before custody; and 52 per cent had no qualifications. That for me just demonstrates the sheer level of social exclusion these people experience. The main thing to remember is that prison doesn't make those problems go away. What inevitably happens is that prison exacerbates them and further compounds the social exclusion.

At the moment, what prison doesn't do is look at whether this person (for example) has got an issue with unemployment. If so what are we going to do? Are we going to upskill them? Are we going to build their

1. Prison Reform Trust (2010). Bromley Briefings: Prison factfile. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/uploads/documents/FactFileJuly2010.pdf> (accessed 19th April 2011).

confidence? Are we going to give them a vocation? They don't do that. Instead we've got this kind of really archaic resolve just to lock a door and hope that gets rid of the problem. My experience is that it doesn't. It just makes it worse.

MF: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

KE: Certainly all the experience I've had and all the research that's looked at the population of prisons shows that these problems are significantly over-represented across the estates. That's whether you go into the young people's estate, the male estate or the female estate. There are always more people with those issues than there are not. So, clearly, it can be used as a means to support these problems. I think the problem is, at the moment, it's not. It's just used as punishment. The whole point of prisons in this country was that they were supposed to be rehabilitative and if they're not, we have to question why they're there. If we must lock people up, if that's what we decide as a society that's what we need to do to, then we need to use it as an opportunity to address those problems. So, put in the right support package so they don't come back.

In addition, we also have to consider the impacts for future generations. It is estimated 160,000 children are affected by a parent going to prison every year.¹ Only 5 per cent of children whose mother goes to custody stays in their family home, and for 85 per cent of mothers custody was the first time they have ever been separated from their children from any significant amount of time. Yet we take no responsibility as a society to protect these children and more often than not they often receive little or no special support. It's estimated that out of 205 Local Authorities, 188 made no direct reference to children of offenders in their Local Children plan despite government directives to say they should. Yet we know that offenders who receive visits are 39 per cent less likely to re-offend, with an estimated saving of £15,071.00 per year for each offender². Yet services to link prisoners with their

families and children are inconsistent and patchy. This is a prime example of how we are recreating cycles of social exclusion, instead of putting the right interventions in place to protect vulnerable groups of our society and provide an opportunity for offenders to tackle the root causes of their offending behaviour.

MF: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for prisoners to make positive changes to their lives?

KE: At the moment, all we can say is that it doesn't work. The Green Paper suggests that re-offending is at 50 per cent, but, depending on where you look, the number can be much higher. In the young people's estate, for example, it's 86 per cent. That's a lot. How do people re-offend so quickly within one year of leaving custody?

I'm just going to use the project that I manage, called *In Touch*, as an example, and it's aimed at 15 to 19 year old offenders. When we designed it, it looked at addressing some of these issues. We looked at research that highlighted that low confidence, self-esteem, family structures and negative educational experiences were really significant barriers in young people being able to access employment and education. Now that obviously has a massive impact on their lives. It limits the financial resources they have access to. It limits their opportunity for social mobility. So, because of that, the project that we put in place looks to try and stabilise all

If we must lock people up, if that's what we decide as a society that's what we need to do to, then I think we need to use it as an opportunity to address those problems. So, put in the right support package so they don't come back.

of those factors and provide resettlement support that links them to sustainable employment and education, while almost establishing a wall of support around their vulnerability. For me, that's a much more effective way of tackling the root cause of crime because we're looking at the social problems that lead to that person committing crime, rather than just saying 'you've done something bad, so let's just lock you up.'

Of course, it's a hard sell. It's not easy. It's not like we walk into the prisons and they're all biting our arms off for the service. It's difficult and there's not a lot of trust in statutory and voluntary sector services. A lot of people feel like they've heard it all before. In particular, with the young boys that we work for, it's difficult

1. See Glover, J. (2009) *Every Night You Cry: The Realities of Having a Parent in Prison*. Ilford: Barnado's.

2. de las Casas, L., Fradd, A., Heady, L., and Paterson, E.. *Measuring Together: Improving Prisoners' Family Ties; Piloting a Shared Measurement Approach*. London: New Philanthropy Capital.

because we have to invest a lot of time building the relationship, developing trust with them, ensuring that they understand that there is some consistency on our projects. We are dependable. We're not just going to be in one day and gone the next. They need to know that they can rely on us. It takes time to facilitate that relationship and I guess that you can see it through the work that we do. It takes time to actually get to a point where we know what their support needs are. I think the biggest thing to achieve is demonstrating consistency and being able to prove that you are trustworthy as a service.

MF: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

KE: The first thing we need to remember is that if we want to support prisoners to make a positive change beyond the punitive aspect of just locking them up. We have to invest in them as members of our society and provide effective resettlement programmes that provide them the opportunity to contribute to society in a meaningful way. Specifically, the things that I would really like to see are a reduction in short, ineffective sentences. Secondly, enhanced resettlement support for young offenders and early intervention projects. So getting them before they go into prison.

That's crucial in young offenders. Also, gender specific services across the estates that accommodate the different resettlement needs of male and female members. Female prisoners face extreme marginalisation by being part of a prison system that was designed by and for men. We need to ensure that resettlement programmes are tailored toward their gendered needs. I would also like to see more services that aim to link offenders with their families and children, fostering more stable family relationships.

There should be more funding for through the gate resettlement services so that services that go into prisons really support offenders in custody and then bring them through the gate and support them after that. We can track where they're going and provide support when they wobble a little bit.

Finally, a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy that addresses all of this and offers the chance for joined up communities that offer services across boroughs, across

geographic splits, but also across service users' needs so that they don't have to go to one place for benefits, another place for housing, another for education support etc. and relive their story all the time. Somewhere where we can join all that up.

I know this isn't necessarily about prisons, but I think it comes under 'rehabilitation revolution', but a reform of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act is really required, it has not been revised since 1974. It's completely out of date. It makes it very difficult for offenders to move on and get on with their lives. There must be a better way to manage risk than simply saying, you know, you have to disclose for 7 or 10 years. What aids that disclosure? What are people

managing risk against? A lot of the time it's just used as a way to discriminate against people.

MF: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

KE: Resettlement support focussed on sustainable financial independence. What I mean by that is actually looking at the cognitive process of what it means to earn money. So, typically with a lot of offenders you get the response to 'why don't you do this job?' 'well, I can go out and make £2000 a day selling drugs, for example. Why do I need to do this job for £150 a week?' It's actually that process of asking 'what's the longevity of that career? How many old drug dealers do you see? Not many. How many years are you going to spend in prison?

How many hours do you need to work for that money?' Working out their per hour rate, a lot of them end up really shocked at the fact that they earn less than the minimum wage the vast majority of time. It's going through that process. It's almost like a cognitive change and acknowledging that you might get these weekends where you make loads of money, but in between there's a lot of scratching about and not really having much in-between. So that I think is really important.

Mentoring is a really effective means of providing support. We use mentoring here and it is volunteer mentoring. So the mentors don't get paid. That says a lot to the people that they're mentoring. Those people think 'why do you want to help me? You're not getting paid for it. I don't really understand'. It helps to demonstrate the importance of taking responsibility for your society and wanting to support other people. It's somebody that they can depend on, build a personal relationship with and can provide emotional support.

Female prisoners
face extreme
marginalisation by
being part of a
prison system that
was designed by
and for men. We
need to ensure that
resettlement
programmes are
tailored toward their
gendered needs.

Finally, more vocational training that really links people in prison to the labour market, financial stability and independence is often the cornerstone to mitigating against the risks of re-offending.

MF: Would you welcome the opportunity for prisoners to 'pay something back' to the community for your crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting their victim?

KE: For me, I would rather see a focus on providing offenders with the opportunity to tackle the cause of their offending. Stopping or reducing reoffending would have a greater positive impact on communities and victims. You know, for a victim, meeting the person that attacked them isn't necessarily going to bring a sense of closure, but maybe they will feel reassured if they know that that attack is not going to happen again or it's far less likely that it's going to happen again. Reducing crime is a much better solution than simply saying that we need a load of orange boiler suits out doing some gardening. I don't really know what that would achieve. I am a fan of restorative justice, and I think that can work, but like I said, I would rather have an emphasis on resettlement support that stops the reoffending.

MF: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

KE: It's quite sad actually because I don't think it's changed that much. I still think prison remains a hugely, hugely ineffective means of rehabilitation. We've got to get away from saying 'this type of prison doesn't work, so let's try a different type of prison' because clearly prison in itself is not working. I think the saddest thing for me is that even after all the massive reports that have come out — you know, this Green Paper is obviously very recent, but before that we had reports on sentencing, we had the Corston Report³, we've had the Bradley Report⁴ on mental health — what I still see when I walk around prisons is extreme desperation, extreme social exclusion and, without wanting to sound over-dramatic, people that are really institutionalised by offending and by our

prison system. I find that really sad. So I hope that this Green Paper is an opportunity for the Government to overhaul this system, really be brave in the choices that they make and to test out a new rehabilitation strategy that really does look at how we're going to support these people to stop crime and look at the root causes of crime instead of repeating the same old mistakes.

MF: How have prison-staff and staff-prisoner relationships changed in recent years? How do you think they could be improved?

KE: That's tough because I think historically the prison system has got a real legacy of recruiting from certain places — ex-police, ex-army — so it definitely had a regimented feel. Which is what some people would argue is what it needs. What that did cause for a long time was a massive divide between 'them and us' for the prisoners and the prison wardens. The Prison Service tried to do lots of things to change that. So they've tried to improve their diversity strategy. They tried to recruit from more BME communities. They've tried to increase the number of gay and lesbian prison staff. They've tried to look at the age ranges and try to bring in younger people, but I do still feel that unless you're in a London prison then the staff will not represent the clients in there. In Young Offenders, for example, black young men are hugely over-represented, you can see it as you walk around. Yet, as soon as you come out of London, you can really see a divide just in terms of cultures, where people come from. I think there are some

I think there are some really, really positive prison staff that are trying their best to come in and offer effective resettlement programmes. Unfortunately, there is also this legacy of old-school workers that are trapped in this sort of punitive approach.

really, really positive prison staff that are trying their best to come in and offer effective resettlement programmes. Unfortunately, there is also this legacy of old-school workers that are trapped in this sort of punitive approach. So, for every really positive example of someone trying to support offenders, you've got a line of maybe 10 who are doing the opposite. I still don't think, prisoner and prison warden relationships have improved drastically, but I do think the Prison Service has at least attempted to increase diversity. The main thing for me is, I guess, lack of diversity when you come out of London prisons.

3. Corston, J. (2007) *A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*. London: Home Office.

4. Bradley, A. (2007) *A Review of People with Mental Health Problems or Learning Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System*. London: Department of Health.

MF: How has the experience of working in prison changed in recent years (37.51)?

KE: The big thing for me is that prisons have become a lot more risk averse, particularly around big publicity that's come out. So, in Holloway there was that Halloween party that hit all the press. There's been lots of media attention around arts-based projects. So, because of that, two things have happened. One, security procedures to get in prisons are a lot harder which limits the amount of ex-offenders that can work in custody. That's really a shame because a lot of the staff that I've got are ex-offenders and do an absolutely amazing job and are living proof to our client group that change is possible. I think the other thing is that it's affected the types of projects that are allowed to go into prisons. Art-based projects, for example. Now that's a real shame because I've seen some fantastic art-based projects — be it paint-by-numbers or drama — that really, really help to tackle some of these deep-rooted issues. There was an arts project that helped perpetrators of domestic violence and it explored anger management and how you deal with that. Now that is clearly an effective means of rehabilitation in getting people to be able to cope with their feelings, but because there is media pressure around 'offenders do art', they've stopped the courses. So, I think it has a negative impact on what we're doing and it's the same with the Holloway example and the Halloween party. That sort of negative press attention makes prison governors really risk averse. Then the final issue with that is that they become so risk averse that they don't want to let people out on release on temporary licence. Now, when you're looking at resettlement, release on temporary licence is fantastic. For example, the women from Askham Grange working in a local hotel. You can get an offender out for the day, get them to go to a housing appointment, get them to go to the job centre or maybe go on an interview. That's a really great way of trying to slowly introduce them back into society, but, because there was so much negative press, that's kind of stopped and now it's very, very difficult to get a release on temporary licence.

MF: What are the aspects of working in prison that people outside are least aware of?

KE: It is the vulnerability of offenders. Everybody sort of views offenders as these big monsters. They're the Fred Wests of the world and that's what people see

as an offender. I'm not saying that there aren't violent, psychologically dysfunctional people. Of course there are. There are people like that. So while I understand there is a place for prisons and we do need to keep people safe, I think what people don't see is the amount of people that go into prison for non-violent crimes and don't have viable alternatives. So, I think the big thing for me is vulnerability of offenders and how quickly people can be institutionalised by crime. Not institutionalised by prison, but by crime. It is very difficult to break the cycle once you've started going down that road. Lack of choices, lack of viable alternatives, lack of suitable housing, substance misuse management, employment — those things that the rest of us take for granted — it removes people's choice or limits their choices. I don't think the vast majority of people out there are aware of that and are aware of the sheer depth of social exclusion that you can see in prisons.

MF: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

KE: The benefits are — if they use specialist agencies, like Nacro, who have got a proven track record of providing high quality effective resettlement services — that you have an agency there that can provide real support and that is reflective of the needs of the client group. We believe that, if we put the right tools in place, we can help an offender stop committing crime. So that's a very different standpoint to a statutory body that is going down a punishment road. So, whether it's Nacro or another voluntary sector organisation, organisations coming from that viewpoint and that are focused on providing support have a different emphasis.

We're commissioned to do projects, attract funds and our money goes back into our client base. I do feel there are a lot of benefits to having a mix between statutory and privately funded prisons.

MF: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system (48.51)?

KE: I wrote a long list! The thing for me is the emphasis on punishment versus rehabilitation. Every time we launch a new community payback scheme, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* goes wild with

We believe that, if
we put the right
tools in place, we
can help an
offender stop
committing crime.
So that's a very
different standpoint
to a statutory body
that is going down
a punishment road.

'Murderer Gets to Work in a Cinema' or something really ludicrous and they don't really unpick the story behind that. Ultimately, if we stop people committing crime, we've got safer societies and isn't that what we want rather than these big full prisons and people with no chance of ever changing?

A lack of resources reminds me a little bit of primary care trusts. Depending on where you live will depend on what medical services you get. So, it's a bit like a postcode lottery. Some prisons are really well resourced, really well managed. Others have nothing. I think there's a real disparity. Depending on where you go will depend what your likelihood is of coming out and reoffending. So some consistency would be good.

Also there are ineffective education departments. Yes, maths and English are great and we do need to have literacy and numeracy, but if we've got someone who never did that at school, why do we think they're going to do it now in prison? Look at alternatives, give them qualifications that they can actually use to go and work outside. There are really good examples of where that can be hugely positive. I know in Portland they do a bricks qualification attached to some sort of CORGI registry. Yes, they teach them maths, but they don't know that it's necessarily maths!

There is a lack of support for the families of offenders, particularly in the female estate. A woman can be miles away from her child. In the male estate that not every prison will have family visits. How do you maintain a relationship with your child? We know that children of offenders are more likely to end up in prison. So we need to make sure that his children are supported as well so that we're not creating another generation of offenders.

Having worked with children of offenders, they are at such risk and they have such issues. They feel guilt. They feel resentment. They feel anger and so there has to be a way for them to explore those feelings and support them through that. There are some really interesting projects out there for prisons and families. We have visits with specialised workers that support those discussions. That's really important.

72 per cent of male offenders suffer from two or more mental disorders⁵. Now for me, that's staggering. They're not always picked up or managed in the same way and what typically happens is that they'll be picked up in prison once it's got to a psychosis episode. So where's all the management before that?

Finally, as I keep saying throughout this whole thing, is that prison as it stands just does not address the root cause of crime. What are the real triggers of crime? Is it economic? Is it a social problem? Is it psychological? What is it? Let's try and put some support packages in place to stop it happening again.

MF: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

KE: Negative media attention and the example I always give of this was the big media furore that came out when one of the papers reported that Travelodge was recruiting women from Askham Grange Prison. It was all over the papers. You know, 'Local Hotel Recruits 3 Murderers'. Travelodge got all these complaints about the fact that people were coming to stay in a hotel where there might be convicted criminals working. If we gave people the opportunity to work and build up savings for when they're released, they would be more independent on release. They would not be reliant on welfare and so they've got more of an opportunity to move on with their lives. So, for me, that was an innovative, pioneering project that should be championed and celebrated and it just got ripped to shreds in the papers.

Also, negative public perception towards rehabilitation programmes and community sentences — which are often described as soft options — is really damaging to trying to offer a system that rehabilitates and offers people the opportunity to change.

MF: If you could do one thing to improve the effectiveness of the prison service, what would it be?

KE: The thing that I've kept saying all the way through would be a resettlement strategy that really looks to address the root cause of crime, puts in support to address that and allows offenders a chance for change. I guess, finally, reform what I can only describe as a fundamentally failing system. It doesn't work. Why do we keep spending money on it? I just really hope that a lot of the findings in this Green Paper suggest a need for a solid resettlement strategy and the need for alternatives. I just hope that the government are brave enough to stand up to the *Daily Mail* readers and, you know, start putting some of those systems in place. The proof will be in the pudding!

5. See note 1.

Interview: Worker for a small charitable organisation

Caroline Edwards is a part-time volunteer for Shannon Trust. She is interviewed by Ray Taylor who is a prison officer at HMP Pentonville.

Caroline Edwards has for two years been a part-time volunteer for Shannon Trust¹, working in local prisons to train reading mentors and support access to literacy amongst prisoners. She is currently working with staff and prisoners at HMP Pentonville and HMP Wandsworth in London.

Shannon Trust runs the Toe by Toe Reading Plan, an award-winning peer mentoring programme that encourages and supports prisoners who can read, to give one-to-one tuition to prisoners who struggle to read. Several thousand prisoners have been taught to read with the support of the Trust. The organisation was founded in 1997 by Christopher Morgan, a farmer from Sussex who, having joined a pen friend scheme run by the Prison Reform Trust, was shocked at the levels of poor literacy among prisoners.

Caroline Edwards is employed full-time as the Community Investment Director of a City-based investment bank. Her work involves developing and implementing the bank's community programme including staff volunteer programmes and management of its UK charity partnerships.

RT: From your perspective, what are the effects of the fact that we are locking up increasing numbers of people in prison? What are the consequences for you of prisons being full?

CE: I know this is a complex and multifaceted issue, but the upward increase in the prison population is unsustainable. Not to mention expensive. And do we really have so many more 'bad' people in society than 20 years ago when the prison population was around 40,000? Government statistics tell us that the crime rate is falling.

There has been a significant increase in short sentences for minor offences, and custodial sentences given to women, children and the mentally ill. Surely prison should be a last resort and for those who pose a considerable risk to others? If one of the responsibilities of the prison system is to rehabilitate offenders — as much for the victims as well as those in prison, and if almost two thirds reoffend within two years of leaving prison, then it strikes me that we are not doing this very well.

Many prisoners that I speak to seem to be going in and out of prisons for much of the time. The spell in prison is long enough to disrupt their lives and test their bonds with family and community, but too short for them to benefit from education or training opportunities

inside. Going back into society with a criminal record and insufficient life skills does not increase the chances of many prisoners to change their lives.

RT: Politicians often use the term 'Broken Society' Do you think this describes the world that the prisoners you work with come from?

CE: I don't like the term 'broken society'. It has a kind of inevitability about it and locks people in. Does our society have problems? Yes, of course it does. My experience of London is that it really is a city of two halves where extreme wealth sits alongside grinding poverty. The life chances of many of the young people I meet in the poorest parts of London are significantly different from those of their counterparts growing up in leafier areas. It is often those from poorer backgrounds whose dysfunction and bad luck will come together in prison.

RT: Do you think prisons can help with social problems like unemployment, drug use and family breakdown?

CE: I don't see prison as a solution to social problems, rather I see prisons as a mirror of our society, reflecting the fraught and tangled lives of, usually, young men, which have resulted from social instability, poverty, family breakdown and anti-social behaviour.

RT: Does imprisonment make it easier or harder for prisoners to make positive changes to their lives?

CE: I don't think there is a 'one-size-fits-all' answer to this question. The circumstances and actions leading to imprisonment are different for every prisoner, and the experience of being inside and how each one responds to the environment will vary considerably.

Being in prison obviously removes prisoners from the life and life style they were leading before conviction and it can be an environment in which to reflect on past choices and actions. Opportunities do exist in prison for personal development; access to education, counsellors and health professionals; all of which will contribute to making positive life changes.

But the high rates of reoffending, the 'revolving door' many prisoners seem to be locked into, suggests that many prisoners are not making lasting positive changes. Many prisoners will have come from chaotic lives which have lacked routine and purpose. Many will have low educational attainment and have not experienced good role models. I think the Prison Service

1. The views expressed in this interview reflect those of the interviewee and not necessarily those of Shannon Trust.

is doing its best to deal with these troubled and troubling individuals, and it can work if it is not over loaded and under resourced. Development of basic skills such as numeracy and literacy; the ability to self manage and awareness of how to live back in the community are essential skills every prisoner should have as they return into society.

RT: The Government wants to achieve what it is calling a 'rehabilitation revolution'. From your point of view, what are the areas where more could be done to help prisoners go straight on release?

CE: It sounds good and I believe anything is possible. I do wonder what will be completely and radically different? I certainly hope that there is something we can do to reduce recidivism. We need to work with prisoners, support them in making better life choices while they are inside, so that they can act on those choices when they are out. Prisoners need greater support on release as they adjust to life on the outside. And, yes, charities can help with this working in conjunction with other statutory agencies. There is definitely a role for the voluntary sector. I am curious about how this will be achieved in the current climate of austerity.

RT: What kind of work or training do you think could be introduced to prisons?

CE: I know the Justice Secretary wants to end 'enforced idleness' in prisons, and introduce a regime of work. From my experience of HMP Pentonville, prisoners seem to spend an incredible amount of time locked up in their cells, and I understand the challenges prisons face in balancing time out of cells for prisoners with staffing levels and costs.

The links between skills levels, unemployment and crime are well documented. The introduction of work or training opportunities that will equip prisoners with skills that would lead to employment opportunities on release, has to be welcomed. The type of work would depend on the category of prison, the local area and physical constraints or possibilities of each prison's estate.

RT: Would you welcome the opportunity for prisoners 'pay something back' to the community for their crimes, either financially, through some kind of unpaid work, or by meeting their victim?

CE: I think we would all like a world with less crime and more justice. The doubling of the prison population over the past two decades suggests we are not

achieving these goals and stimulates the 'does prison work?' debate. I'm interested in the approaches of restorative justice and offender accountability in reducing reoffending and linking offenders with their communities. If we are working to rehabilitate and integrate prisoners back into society and reduce offending then we need to work with prisoners so that they are aware of the consequences of their actions. Studies both in the UK and abroad suggest that restorative justice programmes do have positive outcomes particularly with young offenders.

RT: How has the prisoner experience shifted in recent years?

CE: Having only been involved for just two years I can only answer that from speaking to prisoners and from what I have observed of the staff and prisoner relationship. Prisoners tell me that things have improved greatly over the past decades and certainly the relationship with staff is much more positive and productive. I have observed little animosity between prisoners and officers, for instance. Relations seem to be very friendly. The environment itself seems to me to be quite unfriendly, the gates and the bars and security is what I would expect, but it can be very noisy, but then I have only been there during the day.

RT: What are the aspects of working in prison that people outside are least aware of?

CE: Real prison reform requires political will and preparedness to champion penal reform almost in spite of public opinion. Politicians do not want to be seen to be too soft on crime but the vast majority of people never enter a prison and rely on the media for information about life on the inside. This opens the way to media exploitation of the public fear of crime and being afraid of becoming victims of crime. I wouldn't describe the environment I've seen in the two prisons I work in, as holiday camp.

RT: An increasing number of prisons are potentially to be managed by private companies in the near future and there will be potentially wider opportunities for the voluntary and charitable sector. What are the benefits and risks of these changes for you?

CE: I find the prisons and the private sector to be strange bedfellows. Prisons provide a service to society. We look to the state to provide certain key services such as health and crime prevention. Private companies are

Prisoners need greater support on release as they adjust to life on the outside. And, yes, charities can help with this working in conjunction with other statutory agencies.

by nature profit driven and I wonder how this will sit with the rehabilitation agenda. Prisons are expensive because they are all about people and security. To give prisoners more time out of their cells requires more prison staff to supervise them. Whilst I believe competition is healthy and that the private sector will introduce innovative practices, I wonder how performance will be measured particularly payment by results against rehabilitation metrics? It will also be interesting to see whether the private sector would be willing to take over some of the older prisons where the estate requires much greater resources to run a 21st century facility. Or is there huge potential for cherry picking and where will that leave the public sector?

RT: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system?

CE: I think the biggest single problem is the size of the prison population. The rising population has put a great deal of added pressure on staff and resources, making it difficult to concentrate on the job of rehabilitation. Another problem is not making use of the time prisoners have on the inside. A lot of the time spent in prison is idle time. I know that it is in the nature of prisons to waste time, and I know that it is often due to lack of resources but I feel this is such a waste.

RT: What are the things that get in the way of prisons being more like you would want them to be?

CE: The main obstacles to reform are the size of the prison population and the failure to break the cycle of offending. These coupled with the increasing squeeze on resources and the downward pressure on budgets will make it increasingly difficult to reform the system in the short term.

RT: What do you think are the biggest problems in the prison system? If you could introduce one change what would it be?

CE: If there is one thing I would change it would be levels of literacy. Nearly half the prison population have a reading ability below that expected of an 11-year old¹. This is in a developed nation. If over 90 per cent of all employment in the UK requires employees to be able to read, half of all offenders leaving prison are unable to do this. I would love to think that anyone who entered prison not being able to read could leave being literate or having acquired an additional skill. This has the potential to make a significant contribution to the rehabilitation process. The Toe by Toe reading scheme, for instance, began in HMP Wandsworth prison in the late 1990s and through small steps we were able to introduce it to many prisons. When it comes to making real change, it's not just the big bold projects that count. Sometimes we need to do the small things to make bigger changes.

1. Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners*. London: Social Exclusion Unit.

Special Offer for *Prison Service Journal* Readers

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY AND RECEIVE A 20% DISCOUNT

Quote: **TPO11** when placing your order online

The Prison Officer

2nd Edition

By Alison Liebling, David Price and Guy Shefer

'The most important book for the prison service of the past 30 years.'

—Phil Wheatley, Director General of the Prison Service

'This outstanding book will be a constant source of reference.'

—Martin Narey, Former Director General of the Prison Service

This book is a thoroughly updated version of the popular first edition of *The Prison Officer*. It incorporates the significant increase in knowledge about the work of prison officer since the first edition was published and provides a live account of prison work and ways of understanding the role of the prison officer in the late-modern context.

Few detailed narratives exist of prison work and the sort of role the prison officer occupies; this book addresses the gap. Using a range of quantitative and qualitative data and drawing on available theoretical literature it explores the role of the prison officer in an 'appreciative' way, taking into account the little-discussed issues of power and discretion.

It provides a single accessible guide to the world and work of the prison officer, looking in detail at the present role of the prison officer in Britain and demonstrating the centrality of staff-prisoner relationships to every operation carried out by officers.

This book will be of relevance to anyone with an interest in the work of a prison officer; students and others looking for an introductory survey of the literature and essential reading for any established and aspiring officers.

Table of Contents

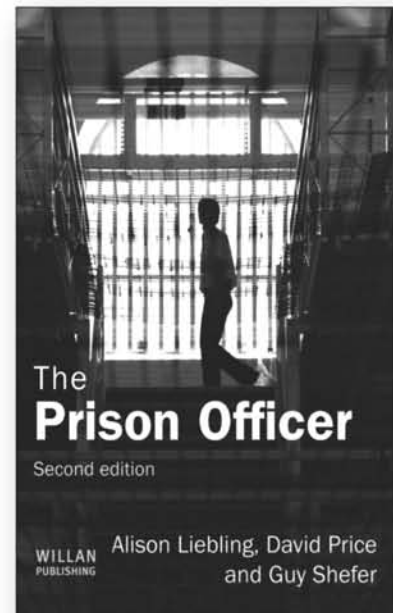
1. Introduction: Prison Officers at Their Best 2. Who is the Prison Officer? 3. Understanding Prison Officers and Their Role 4. The Complexities of Role 5. Staff–Prisoner Relationships: The Heart of Prison Work 6. The Centrality of Discretion in the Work of Prison Officers 7. Prison Officer Culture and Unionisation 8. The Prison Officer in a Modern Bureaucracy 9. Conclusions

December 2010 | Paperback: 978-1-84392-269-8 | ~~£17.99~~ £14.39

**For a free look inside, or to place your order today, visit
www.routledge.com/9781843922698**

Visit our Criminology arena today

For more information on new titles publishing, special offers and key journals publishing in your area www.routledge.com/criminology



Offer expires 31 December 2011.

Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Discount available only from www.routledge.com

Visit our website for more information and online ordering:
www.routledge.com

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

Reviews

Book Review

Songs from the Black Chair: A Memoir of Mental Interiors

By Charles Barber

Publisher: University of Nebraska Press (2005)

ISBN: 978-0803212985

(hardback), 978-0803259751

(paperback)

Price: £14.99 (hardback), £10.99 (paperback)

Over the last twenty years, the most significant thing I have learned is this: if you slam doors now, you're less likely to kill yourself later (p. 198).

I read this book in two sittings. On the way to and from Paris (a city that features in the storyline, symbolising hope), with no time between journeys. I couldn't put it down, despite having to steel myself slightly to read it. It is human, vivid, tender, moving and breathtakingly insightful. What a contrast with the objectifying accounts of psychiatric illness found in so many scientific journals, with their stultifying labels and lack of human narrative. This is a moving life story, full of wisdom, with three main protagonists. There are many losses, and setbacks, and only one survivor. But the author tells us about more than one life. He makes sense of the self-inflicted deaths of close friends, at the same time he describes with sensitivity how difficult these tragic endings are to endure. At least one of these case descriptions (friendships that ended) made me cry.

The book is in the same league as *Stuart: A Life Lived Backwards* (Alexander Masters 2006), and *Elling* (Ingvar Ambjornsen 2007), in telling the story of being at the edge of

mental illness (obsessional compulsive disorder, in his case), violence, suicide, homelessness, and exclusion, drawing on intimate knowledge of the condition, and showing a deep sympathy for others who are similarly placed. In this case, the book includes a beautiful account of where the disorder abates (wearing new shirts, clean socks, writing) and the steps made towards recovery and professional flourishing, once Barber finds his way into research and writing on the condition from which he has suffered (like Kay Jamison achieved for borderline personality disorder before him in *An Unquiet Mind*, 1997). The importance of recognising his own early strangeness (those words, those intrusions, the avoidance, the anxiety) as symptoms, of finding therapies that worked for him, even when they seemed ridiculous, and of working out through his friendships that what unites people can sometimes be their unseen vulnerabilities, are beautifully articulated. Life felt better out of the rat race, when he could be 'his physical being', among disabled children who played, instead of trying to be a fully functioning professional Harvard student who talks.

The best part of the book is where he describes the role of hope and creativity on seeing Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, or William Styron describing in *Darkness Visible* how he heard Brahms's *Alto Rhapsody* and the world seemed beautiful, exquisite, and expressible. Excellence in art gave him 'something to live for' — the horror of the world transformed into something creative and meaningful. Or a book of interviews with John

Lennon, in which he acknowledged his own despair, and its passing. These pages add so much weight to the argument for 'the arts' (whether in prisons, hospitals, schools, or life more generally) as life affirming, rather than as 'entertainment' (as they have become branded in the prisons context). Later in the early stages of a hopeful turn in the book, Barber reenters the world of expression and language: 'it was like water flowing again'. One can recover the capacity to speak freely.

I loved the vivid portrayal of his satisfaction on contemplating a deep bite, inflicted by a befriended and disturbed child: now he had a deep wound to show to the world: 'see my tribulations' and feel for me. His anger at 'the well' and in charge (Dr's, Professors, and psychologists), and the world (cars, the universe, 'managed mental health care', and God) is rendered wholly understandable. The lessons he learns throughout his troubled recovery add up like a stack of gold:

There are two types of deeply troubled people: those who inflict their pain on others, and those who do not (p. 132).

The trick is to know you can relate to clients in their general sense of dislocation, but to avoid specifically embracing, or endorsing, their pathology. Fitzgerald — my literary compass — wrote famously: 'The test of a first rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function'. It is exactly that knack that is required to work

effectively with psychotic people: you must hear and understand as best you can their version of distorted reality, while remaining stably in your world' (p. 138-9).

He intuitively from his own experience that listening sympathetically, not 'instructing', or 'arguing them out of their psychotic beliefs' — 'sitting where they sit' — offers comfort, support, and a gentle invitation to share thoughts and feelings that have meaning. He trawls through the assorted notebooks of a psychotic friend, presumed dead, and finds meaning (and an explanation) the way a detective finds clues. Good research skills and good clinical skills share this characteristic. No wonder he has turned to research.

The author describes the combined experience of illness and good health — there are 'islands of functioning' in among the craziness. In the end, he tames 'the violent threats of his own OCD' and finds work he loves, researching how to get people into psychiatric treatment:

I found it exhilarating. It was exhilarating that people like John entrusted me with their stories, and it was exhilarating to observe him appear to get better. I felt like I was doing something with my life, which was an unaccustomed, somewhat odd, and deeply pleasurable sensation' (p. 173).

There are other gems in the book — how do a group of 'psychotic (and self-absorbed...) clients' respond to the suicide bombing of the Twin Towers?

I puzzled over the clients' bizarre stability, their incredible lightness of mood right after the attacks. And then I realised that on that day only, the world's trauma matched their own. They live out the violence and despair

and bloodiness and trauma of 9-11 every day, and it was an enormous relief that for one or two days the world experienced that same level of trauma. They weren't alone any more, and they felt good and ... normal. For once, everybody else felt like them. That's what mental illness does to you. (p. 176)

Laura, when she appears, becomes a figure with therapeutic strength — with her sensible pragmatism, her lack of judgmental feeling, and wise sticking power. The account ends hopefully:

What a wonderful, miraculous, extraordinary thing stability is, it doesn't matter how you get there, I thought, as I headed home...' (p. 188).

Even in the depth of his confusion, Barber had recognised that there were things he wanted to do — 'travel, dance, go to Paris, meet A S Byatt'. He could see that 'the world was extreme and divergent, terrible and beautiful at the same time' (p. 195). Parts of the book's underlying message reminded me of Mary Midgley's more philosophical memoirs in *The Owl of Minerva*. A different story, but the same conclusion, her title drawn from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: that 'the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk'; that sometimes great insight or wisdom is possible only when things become dark and difficult. We should explore the darkness, and deal with new confusions, rather than turning our backs on everything difficult and doubtful. Barber's book is a perceptive and moving testament to this truth.

Professor Alison Liebling is Director of the Prison Research Centre at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.

Book Review

Drugs, Crime and Public Health: The political economy of drug policy

by Alex Stevens

Publisher: Routledge (2010)

ISBN: 978-0-415-49104-4

(hardback)

Price: £75.00 (hardback)

When you pick up a book with the words 'political economy' in the title, you know you have picked up a book that leans to the left. *Drugs, Crime and Public Health* is no exception. Its aim, says author Alex Stevens, is to change the way you think about the links between drugs, crime and public health. Certainly, the bold approach of this work goes a long way to challenging received wisdom about the drug-crime connection.

Stevens, who is Professor in Criminal Justice at the University of Kent, begins by looking at the historical context of drugs laws in Britain and the USA where, from the nineteenth century, legislators have sought to control the danger of imported drugs and the new immigrant populations that were perceived to be responsible. Thus it was, argues Stevens, that right from the start government policies on both sides of the Atlantic have identified the drugs problem with unwanted foreigners. The underlying theme of this book is that the causal link from drugs to crime is exaggerated, and that the focus of attention of legislators and law enforcement has been strictly on the poor and minorities, blaming them for the drugs menace. In particular, Stevens is heavily critical of the 'tripartite framework' which he feels is too readily accepted as the basis of thinking in many studies on the subject of drugs misuse and, consequently, in policy development. The tripartite model, elaborated by Paul Goldstein uses a tripartite

conceptual framework for examining the drug-crime relationship. In this model, there are three possible links between drugs and violent crime: psychopharmacological, economic compulsive, and systemic. Psychopharmacological effects of drug use are proposed as direct causes of violence while drugs users are thought to initiate economic crimes in order to pay for their anti-social habits. Systemic violence is said to derive from the inherently violent characteristics of the trade in drugs. For instance, in Goldstein's view, violence may be used by drug dealers to control markets and territories, to enforce payment and otherwise to regulate a market that cannot be regulated by legal means.

Stevens provides substantial research evidence that may be used to question the veracity of the Goldstein model. 'Looked at closely,' says Stevens, 'the tripartite framework and many of the studies that have inherited its blinkered approach to the drug-crime link fail to match up to the complex social reality that is increasingly visible through the work of sociologists and anthropologists'. He goes on to propose an alternative way of thinking about the drug-crime link. Drugs and crime, to Stevens, are both instances of a process of 'subterranean structuration' and linked together by powerful forces of attraction to those who 'have been relegated to the underside of later modern employment and consumption'. From this perspective, although many people from all walks of life may journey into damaging patterns of drugs use, it is mainly the poor who journey into crime. In order to break the drug-crime link, says Stevens, we must reduce social inequality. He also argues that any drug-crime causal link can work either way. Offenders, for

instance, may be attracted to drug use by increased resources and access. Moreover, problem drug use and offending may well go hand in hand because those who offend or misuse drugs often come from the same deprived backgrounds. In which case, the link may not be causal at all.

The book does not ask readers simply to accept this alternative discourse at face value, but seeks to demonstrate the failings of the Goldstein model with a critical look at some of the research that supplied the justification of the tripartite theory. In numerous examples, it is shown how the relationship between crime and drug use or drug users has been an assumed relationship based on the prejudice of the observer at the time. For instance, in one example in New York, a 26 year old attempted to rape, and then murdered, his 56 year old babysitter. The offence was recorded as being crack-related, even though the perpetrator was drunk at the time and, himself, put the offence down to alcohol. Another case was classified as psychopharmacological because the perpetrator stated he believed the victim was about to rob him to finance a drug habit, even though there was no evidence of an attempted robbery. These and further examples show how much of the evidence may have been shoehorned into the desired classification in order to demonstrate how the tripartite model works in practice. There would also appear to be a dearth of subsequent testing of the Goldstein model. Thus, to Stevens, 'The tripartite framework may have 'intuitive appeal' but it still has little empirical support'.

Such selective use of evidence is even more prevalent in policy making where, to Stevens, it provides the means to highlight drug motivated crime and to

ignore other harms from illicit drug use such as death of users, the spread of diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B and the neglect of children. It follows that the argument in favour of control of illicit drug use and treatment of drug users is boiled down to a cost-benefit analysis showing that a reduction in drug use will result in a reduction in crime and therefore a reduction in the cost of crime. Any health benefit of increased access to treatment programmes then becomes secondary to the cost benefit of an expected reduction in offending.

The book provides an interesting discussion of the controversy over the reclassification of cannabis, contrasting the government decision to follow recommendations to downgrade cannabis from class B to class C in 2004, with the decision to return cannabis to its class B status in 2009 in advance of an impending general election, despite expert advice against this U-turn. This discussion (based on contemporary research) shows that the reclassification decisions prior to 2009 were based on selective use of research by people within the machinery of government who are in a good position to make policy decisions. Stevens argues that decisions such as these may be made before the evidence is selected in order to support the foregone conclusions. To Stevens, this demonstrates what he calls 'the willingness of people who hold power to listen to stories which do not challenge that power.'

Stevens goes on to challenge the belief in the power of the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) to reduce drug related offending. Although he accepts that DIPs can help reduce offending, he argues that there is insufficient research work done using control groups to establish the extent of that effect.

Research may suggest that DIP regions see a reduction in offending while offending has also fallen during the same periods in non-DIP regions. Any difference between DIP and non-DIP reductions in offending, suggests Stevens, may not be justified by the cost of the programme in the DIP region.

Drugs Crime and Public Health should not be seen simply as a cynical swipe at policies and programmes aimed at reducing drug related offending. The book acknowledges the benefits that have derived from the increased availability of drug treatments, including the reduction in drug related offending. However, the flip-side of the perceived drug-crime link, argues Stevens, is the huge increase in the number of drug users in prison and the targeting of the poor and black and other minorities by law enforcement, since white affluent drug users are hardly touched when it comes to arrest and conviction for drug offences, despite the fact that drug use itself is widespread through all social strata. The only disappointing aspect of this book is that, although it decries the lack of emphasis on the health related harms of drugs misuse, it does not delve deeper into the health impact of drug treatment policies.

A thoroughly researched and convincingly argued treatise against prevailing attitudes to the drugs crime link, *Drugs Crime and Public Health* provides a useful grounding in the subject for the casual reader as well as a deeper insight to anyone reading from a professional or academic perspective. This work is highly recommended to anyone interested in drug policy and drug related offending.

Ray Taylor is a prison officer at HMP Pentonville.

Book Review

Positive Practice Positive Outcomes: a handbook for professionals in the criminal justice system working with offenders with learning disabilities

By Department of Health
Publisher: Department of Health (2011)
Price: available as a free download¹

The handbook, *Positive Practice Positive Outcomes* (PPPO), was first published in 2007. This latest edition, produced and published by the Department of Health and Valuing People in March 2011, is an updated version of the original publication. It is described as being 'best practice guidance' providing 'information, practical advice, sign-posting and best practice examples for criminal justice professionals working with offenders with learning disabilities and learning difficulties'. Although the primary focus is on offenders with learning disabilities, content on specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, and on autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) is also included. The target audience is broad and includes professionals working in healthcare, offender health, adult and children's social services, commissioning and specialised commissioning, as well as criminal justice professionals such as the police, probation services, the prison service and the courts.

PPPO (2011) contains an introduction, eleven numbered sections, a section on resources and a 'useful local contacts' page, which encourages the reader to complete his or her own list of local contacts. The first seven sections provide information relevant to the whole target audience, and these are:

1. What is a learning disability and a learning difficulty?
2. Learning disability and the criminal justice system
3. The health and social care needs of people with learning disabilities
4. Recent developments
5. Key legislation
6. Getting help and support
7. Effective communication.

Four further sections follow on information specific to the police service, the courts service, the prison service and the probation service.

The handbook is well laid out and the use of diagrams, 'positive practice' examples, case studies and quotes from practitioners help to make it readily accessible and relevant to the reader. The list of 'actions' at the end of each section is helpful and encourages the reader to obtain further information and resources, and to create their own data set of local information.

This review will consider the introduction and each of the eleven sections in turn, followed by an overall comment on the handbook.

The introduction is clear and concise. It sets out the importance of the subject matter and provides a context for the handbook; it states the intention of the handbook, which is to provide '*an introduction to working with offenders with learning disabilities*' and informs the reader that the handbook is '*not a diagnostic manual*'.

Section 1 defines what a learning disability is and provides practical examples of what it means to have a learning disability and the sort of help that people with a learning disability might need. It informs the reader that people with a learning disability are

1. Available from http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_124744.pdf

'people first' and, while they will have shared characteristics, they are all 'individual' and will have different support needs. Descriptions of specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and ADHD are given, alongside the kinds of problems and support needs that people with such conditions might have. Autism and Asperger syndrome are included and the reader is informed that many people with autism also have a learning disability. Two short lists of 'actions' encourage the reader to seek out further information on specific learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder, and include details about further resources such as *Autism: a guide for criminal justice professionals*, which can be downloaded from the National Autistic Society website.

Section 2 informs the reader that people with learning disabilities who enter the criminal justice system should be identified and provided with the necessary support so they are able to participate effectively in the criminal justice process. The number of people in the criminal justice system with learning disabilities and learning difficulties is highlighted, and some simple questions are given that will help staff to recognise if an individual might have a learning disability.

Section 3 introduces the reader to the particular health and social care needs frequently experienced by people with a learning disability and highlights the need for a multi-agency response to help prevent further offending.

The fourth and fifth sections provide the context and legislative framework as it relates to offenders with learning disabilities. In particular, Section 4 *introduces the reader to Valuing People Now*¹ and the four guiding principles promoted for people with learning disabilities; *The Bradley Report*², which is Lord Bradley's review of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities in the criminal justice system, and the Prison Reform Trust's *No One Knows and Out of Trouble* programmes³. While Section 5 considers disability discrimination and the Equalities Act (2010), the Mental Health Act (1983 and 2007) and the Mental Capacity Act (2005). Further, Section 5 highlights specific policies and guidance relevant to the different criminal justice agencies, such as Prison Service Order 2855 on prisoners with disabilities.

Learning to recognise that an individual might have a learning disability is important, but knowing how to get the appropriate help and support can make a significant and positive difference for people with learning disabilities who come into contact with the criminal justice system. The sixth section provides helpful information about the range of statutory and non-statutory organisations that can provide help and support locally, while recognising that not all local areas will have access to the same levels of support — for example, only around a third of magistrates' courts have access to criminal justice liaison and diversion

schemes. The 'positive practice' examples in this section are especially helpful in demonstrating what can be done locally to ensure that help and support is forthcoming, and the list of 'actions' at the end of the section suggests that a proactive approach is needed.

Section 7 provides an extremely helpful introduction to effective communication including what can go wrong when a person's communication needs are left unrecognised and unmet. It describes the different ways people communicate, for example, spoken and written communication, listening, body language and the importance of checking an individual's understanding. This section provides a wealth of practical tips and techniques for more effective communication.

Sections 8 to 11 provide information for professionals working in or with each of the different criminal justice services including police, courts, prison and probation. Collectively they provide a valuable overview of the criminal justice system as it relates to suspects, defendants, offenders and prisoners with a learning disability. Each section contains detailed information about 'Rights and Responsibilities', relevant policies and guidance, and 'positive practice' examples.

Overall, *Positive Practice Positive Outcomes* claims to be 'best practice guidance' providing 'information, practical advice, sign-posting and best practice examples for criminal justice professionals working with offenders with learning disabilities and learning difficulties'; it does all

1. *Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities 'Making it happen for everyone'* (HM Government, 2009).
2. *The Bradley Report: Lord Bradley's review of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities in the criminal justice system* (Department of Health, 2009).
3. *No One Knows* was the Prison Reform Trust (PRT) programme that examined the experiences of people with learning disabilities and difficulties who offend. A number of publications were produced and a series of recommendations were made. See, in particular, the publication, *Prisoners Voices*. *Out of Trouble* is the PRT programme to reduce child imprisonment. An integral part of the programme considers children with particular impairments and difficulties, including learning disabilities. See, in particular, the publication, *Seen and Heard*. Publications from the *No One Knows* and *Out of Trouble* programmes can be downloaded free of charge from the PRT website, www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk.

of that and more. It provides a comprehensive and straightforward introduction to the subject; it assumes little in the way of prior knowledge and so avoids the creation of 'knowledge gaps' for the reader. However, should the reader require further clarification, the lists of 'actions' throughout the handbook and the section on resources provide a wealth of further information and practical guidance. It also encourages activity and further learning; the tone throughout is one of application — what can the reader do to enhance his or her way of working? Similarly, the reader is introduced at an early stage to the need for multi-agency working and the importance of forging good working relationships between criminal justice, health and social care. There are many misunderstandings concerning people with learning disabilities, in particular what it means to have a learning disability, the differences between learning disabilities and learning difficulties, and between learning disabilities and mental health problems. PPPO provides clear and concise descriptions for the reader, including the different names, terminology and labels used. The reader is clearly told that people with a learning disability are 'people first' and should be treated as such.

Many individuals and organisations have contributed to the revised version of PPPO, and these are acknowledged in the publication. Special thanks and congratulations should, however, be given to the primary author, Neisha Betts, who has created such a valuable handbook, and to members of the Working for Justice group — people with learning disabilities with direct experience of the criminal justice system — for their insight and advice.

Jenny Talbot is the Programme Manager for Learning Difficulties and Disabilities in Prison at the Prison reform Trust.

Book Review

Correctional mental health: From theory to best practice

Edited by: Thomas Fagan and

Robert Ax

Publisher: Sage Publications

ISBN: 9781412972567

(paperback)

Price: £33.99 (paperback)

Correctional institutions have become the primary providers of mental health services in the United States. American prisons and jails house 775 000 seriously mentally ill people compared to a population of 55 000 in state mental hospitals. However, the editors of this volume note, correctional mental health is under researched and developed. With this text they aim to provide a practical guide on how to establish and manage a correctional mental health practice.

The first section introduces the context in which forensic mental health operates, describes the various stages and forms the criminal justice system takes, compares and contrasts mental health services in community and correctional settings, and ends with a chapter detailing the specific challenges of managing mental health services in a correctional environment. The material will be familiar to anyone experienced in the field, nonetheless the last chapter of the section does a respectable job of summarising the conflicts that can arise between the objectives of security and care, and would be instructive for students lacking experience of secure environments.

The second section provides an overview of the research relating to clinical assessment, treatment and psychopharmacology in correctional settings, to issues around multicultural assessment and treatment, and to

interdisciplinary working. A good overview of various available psychometric instruments is offered, alongside accounts of the evidence base regarding difficulties such as socially desirable responding and the applications of the interventions in multicultural contexts.

The third section contains a series of chapters each dedicated to specific populations such as juveniles, women and those with co-morbid disorders. Evidence on prevalence levels is presented, followed by guidance on treatment options with reference to their evidence base where present. At this stage the book becomes a frustrating read as the chapter authors return to much of the material already raised in previous chapters. Topics such as screening and barriers to treatment are discussed without adding greatly to the coverage in earlier chapters. At the same time, some topics are only raised in the themed chapters even though they are far more broadly applicable — for example the only discussion of therapeutic communities occurs in the chapter on women. Having said that, the chapters read well as standalone primers on their respective topics.

Approached as a complete text, the book suffers from attempting to cater for too broad an audience. At times it reads like an elementary text book and at others like a professional reference book. The editors say that the book is intended for primarily for academic use across the disciplines of psychology, sociology and criminal justice, but also that it addresses correctional mental health practitioners and correctional administrators. As an academic resource it would best serve the needs of students needing an introduction either to mental health or to secure environments, whilst also offering a platform for exploring the

evidence base in more detail. As far as practitioners are concerned, the greatest contribution made by this book is the second section which collates a large quantity of empirical evidence and best practice guidance relating to the provision of mental health services in prisons. This section would be an excellent resource to assist the design and planning stages of such services.

Many of the influences that have contributed to the large and growing mental health needs in the US context have parallels in the UK. The current mental health needs in our prisons have been shaped, as in the US, by the deinstitutionalisation of mental health care and by substantial growth in levels of imprisonment. Therefore many of the dilemmas and general themes that this text refers to closely reflect those encountered here in the UK. However, from the perspective of a British reader, it is a limitation of the book that the legislation, case law, and standards referred to in the book are all American. Moreover, for anyone using the book as a guide to service planning in the UK, it would be necessary to explore the extent to which the psychometric research and psychological programs referred to have been validated in a British context. Thus for British readers — even more than for American readers — this book will be of most value when used as a platform from which to further explore the evidence base that could and should underpin the much needed mental health services in our prisons.

Dr. Rachel Bell is a senior officer at HMYOI Feltham.

Book Review:

Not Bad for a Bad Lad

By Michael Morpurgo

Publisher: Templar Publishing
(2010)

ISBN: 978 1 84877 308 0
(hardback)

Price: £9.99 (hardback)

As this retired governor hurtles towards second childhood it is perhaps apt that he should now revert to children's literature. In truth, it was the 'A' board that did it. Revisiting Woodbridge after some thirty years, the local bookshop was advertising this work as 'a story set at Hollesley Bay'. Since that was also the setting for my early story, the urge to purchase was overwhelming. A book from the former Children's Laureate will have been eagerly anticipated by young readers and, in terms of a simple but cracking story, it does not disappoint. But — oh dear.

A grandfather decides to set the record of his life straight by revealing his dark secrets to his grandson. The fourth of six children, raised in wartime by a single mother, he often preferred exploring bomb sites to education. At school he was publicly branded 'a brainless, useless good for nothing waste of space' by his headteacher. And if the headteacher said it, then it had to be right. The head was just one of very many authority figures who defined him as a bad lot. But at least he was good at that and, since it made him the centre of attention, it imparted some sort of status. The exception among the teachers was Miss West, who taught music, with whom a trusting rapport and a love of music developed. But she left the school for no apparent reason and the vilification continued.

Wandering the streets led to petty thieving, fights, joy riding, fencing of stolen goods and

burglary. And eventually, to borstal. But one thought remained with him. Miss West had spoken for him at court, explaining that he was good at heart and that he would 'come right one day'.

The borstal was Hollesley Bay Colony and his induction was terrifying — of which more later. Redemption was around the corner when he was chosen to work with Suffolk Punch horses at the borstal stud farm. He became trusted by the stud hand, Mr Alfie, and was given the care of a particular horse. It was Mr Alfie's encouraging words that give the book its title and the narrator a hope that life might take a turn for the better. Mr Alfie left, just like his father and Miss West before. But to reveal more of the story would be to spoil it for those who read the book. There is a somewhat contrived but happy ending that children will love. It involves growing up, horses and music.

The book allows Michael Morpurgo further to explore the relationship of man and horse that we saw in *War Horse* and in *Farm Boy*. He and his wife Clare are renowned for their charity, Farms for City Children. In conflating this interest with the Hollesley stud the reader becomes aware of the institution's reliance on agricultural work as 'a panacea for the displaced city boy'¹ rather than fulfilling the Gladstone Committee's 1895 aspiration that the institution 'should be situated in the country with ample space for agricultural and land reclamation work'². This was traditionally seen to be 'healthy outdoor work' and 'very valuable training for borstal boys'³. If only such simple formulae had been grasped by one of my former Hollesley trainees whose work reports from the stud farm were

1. Hood, Roger (1965) *Borstal Reassessed*, London, Heinemann, 127.

2. Report of the Departmental Committee on Prisons (1895)

3. Gilmour, Sir J (1934) and Hoare, Sir S (1938) HC Debates cited Hood, R. (ibid).

exceptionally good but who confided that 'The trouble is, we ain't got many stud farms on the Caledonian Road!'

On 23 February last year Michael Morpurgo told *The Guardian* that among his set of rules for writing is that:

'The notion of a story is, for me, a confluence of real events, historical perhaps, or from my own memory, to create an exciting fusion.'

This does not excuse or explain, no matter how rattling a story it is, the errors that abound here. These are both factual, in sentencing and allocation terms and also in the careless stereotype of borstal training Michael Morpurgo applies to Hollesley Bay Colony.

Borstal training was an indeterminate sentence. In the 1950s, when the story is set, it could last between nine months and three years (later reduced to six months and two years) depending upon the behaviour of the trainee. Magistrates had limited sentencing powers and could only recommend borstal training to the higher court whose job it was to sentence. Here the magistrates, unlawfully, sentenced the boy to a twelve month determinate term.

He was taken from police cells directly to borstal thus bypassing the Borstal Allocation Centre where, in those days, he would have been interviewed by a

visiting 'house master' from Hollesley Bay to assess suitability for its regime. Rogue staff do exist and can be cruel but since the Hollesley of those days was widely recognised for its pioneering and liberal ethos, it is unlikely that contemporary induction procedures included a gratuitous exemplary beating while stretched over a vaulting horse in front of a cohort of new receptions.

Hollesley Bay Colony had been self-sufficient in home grown food since its days as an agricultural college and, later, as resettlement scheme for the London unemployed. The borstal operated a farm shop, open to the public, many decades before these became fashionable. Yet here, the food was 'always as disgusting as they could make it.' Further, the normal response to absconding would have been one of disciplinary hearing and transfer but in Michael Morpurgo's Hollesley it is one of yet more beatings.

More errors display a basic lack of research. The central character 'liked the two mile run we had to do before breakfast, because that's when we got to go outside the walls'. Hollesley Bay Colony was an open borstal, without walls. Morpurgo's words might be taken as metaphorical but for one of Michael Foreman's delightful illustrations showing the central character being released through a barred prison gate lodge by a prison officer attired in a uniform. Uniforms were not worn in borstals until about

quarter of a century later; officers wore civilian clothes. Further, in an appendix entitled 'The Facts behind the Story' we learn, surprisingly, that:

'In 1982 the British Government decided to replace Borstals with the Young (sic) Custody Centres we have today'.

Would it have been too much to hope, in a section purporting to set out 'the facts', that the author might have informed himself that borstals were replaced by *Youth Custody Centres* and, in turn, by the Young Offender Institutions we have today?

Is this mere penological pedantry? Is it fair to criticise the text for such inaccuracies when, after all, they will not detract from the story for most readers? I think it is. I draw a rough parallel with historical content of Sarah Waters' novels where the portrayal of prisons and other institutions is based upon meticulously accurate research. Michael Morpurgo is not a lawyer, a criminologist, a penologist, or a prison administrator. He is a wonderfully engaging writer and is universally acclaimed as such. He might not be expected to know much of that for which he is criticised here. But he could easily have found out.

Peter Quinn is a retired prison governor, who was an Assistant Governor Class 2, at HM Borstal Hollesley Bay Colony 1971-76.

Values and Practices in Public and Private Sector Prisons:

A Summary of Key Findings from an Evaluation

Professor Alison Liebling is Director of the Prison Research Centre, Dr. Ben Crewe is Penology Director and Deputy Director of the Prison research Centre and Dr. Susie Hulley is a Research Associate, all are based at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge¹.

Introduction

As public sector prisons move towards the staffing level model of profit-making institutions, with their high turnover of personnel who are less tied to their occupation, a study conducted by the authors and colleagues, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), warns of a potentially detrimental impact on prison quality. Until now, little has been known about the relative strengths and weaknesses of public and private prisons. Today, when the privatisation of prisons is on the increase and the public sector staffing model is becoming more like the private one, it is vital that we look beyond the stereotypes and assumptions about private sector prisons to understand the two sectors and their differences. The privatisation 'experiment' is controversial but provides an important opportunity to understand better how prisons work, and how different models may lead to different outcomes, and via what mechanisms. The most interesting finding of our study is that when experienced staff in the best private sector prisons use power, there seems to be more care and less 'indifference' in it. One of the weaknesses of private sector prisons is that in pursuing cultural distinctiveness from the sometimes overbearing culture of public sector prisons, their staff do not use this (more legitimate) version of power enough. We expand a little on this interesting finding below.

The Study

Considerable progress has been made in conceptualising and measuring the quality of life or moral performance of prisons over a number of

research projects carried out by members of the research team over the last ten years.² One of the key findings of this cumulative research programme is that the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships are among the most important determinants of the quality of prison life. The way prison officers conceive and approach their work, and the way they treat prisoners and use their authority, makes the difference between a prison that is constructive and one that feels destructive, according to prisoners. This is borne out by data on prison suicides.³

Comparing prisons is notoriously difficult — for example, new buildings (more likely in the private sector so far) may be much easier to operate in than old buildings. So design, function, population mix, geographical location, among other things, can confound the results and are difficult to hold constant. As we have found in other studies, however, prisons serving the same function differ significantly in what they deliver, how they are experienced, and what effects they have. Public/private ownership is *not* the most important variable in determining prison quality, even though there are certain characteristic features in each sector.

In this study, we compared two matched pairs of public and private sector prisons. We subsequently collected data from three further private sector prisons. In the four prison comparison, the private prisons showed weaknesses in policing and control, organisation and consistency, and prisoner development (that is, opportunities to grow and change). Managers in the private sector prisons acknowledged that staff did not follow procedures as well as public sector staff. We found the private prisons had relatively inexperienced staff, and were sometimes hampered by their tighter staffing levels. Staff training in these prisons aimed to foster a respectful and positive staff culture, and appeared to be successful in

-
1. With Clare McLean, also at the Institute of Criminology, Cambridge.
 2. For example, Liebling, A.; assisted by Arnold, H. (2004) *Prisons and their Moral Performance: A Study of Values, Quality and Prison Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Liebling, A., Hulley, S. and Crewe, B. (in press, 2011), 'Conceptualising and Measuring the Quality of Prison Life', in Gadd, D., Karstedt, S. and Messner, S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Research Methods*. London: Sage.
 3. Liebling, A., Durie, L., Stiles, A. and Tait, S. (2005) 'Revisiting prison suicide: the role of fairness and distress', in A. Liebling and S. Maruna (eds) *The Effects of Imprisonment*, Cullompton: Willan, pp. 209-31.

doing so. However, the good intentions of staff were hindered somewhat by their lack of experience. The ways that staff used their authority had a significant impact on prison performance and the prisoner experience. In one of the private prisons, staff tended to over-use their authority to achieve order, to the detriment of interpersonal relationships. In the other prisons staff under-used their power and maintained good relationships but at the expense of safety and control.⁴ In the public sector prisons, officers were confident and knowledgeable, delivering routines that were safer and more reliable than in the private sector. However, uniformed staff in the public sector were more jaded and cynical than those in the private sector, and this limited the levels of care and humanity that prisoners experienced.

When we evaluated three further private prisons, however, we found that prisoner quality of life was higher in two of these additional prisons than in either the poorer performing private prisons or either of the public sector prisons in the study. In these prisons, prisoners described feeling able to change and develop personally. Order, organisation and consistency as well as respect and fairness were part of what made a prison work.

The variation between prisons in quality was highest *within* the private sector, so private sector prisons run by the same company were at the highest *and* lowest end of a wide quality spectrum. This tendency for private prisons to do either 'very well' or very badly' has been found before.⁵ Different contract conditions, and the quality of management have a significant impact on quality. The quality of senior managers in both sectors varies enormously. Most prison managers in the private sector are recruited from the public sector, and sometimes the sector makes good choices, picking 'high fliers' who flourish outside the constraints of the public sector, or who feel undervalued within it. This includes many women, who seem to hit a ceiling in the public sector. But they have also got some choices of senior managers wrong. There are fewer management layers in the private sector, and much lower levels of experience (and competence) among line managers.

Staff on the ground in the private sector receive less guidance, mentoring, and support from experienced seniors. It is an extraordinarily demanding management task, leading a new and privately operated prison into operation. On the other hand, staff are more 'willing' and malleable, once they know what it is they are supposed to do.

Poor performance in the private sector tends to be related to high staff turnover, low cost, inexperience, unstable management, location and speed of opening. It is difficult for management teams to get a new prison up and running, so that it functions smoothly and staff understand and perform all aspects of their work professionally. High performance seems to be related to

the build up of experience among staff (in turn related to lower turnover), strong, effective and competent management, in one case, an expensive contract, good design, and sometimes individual flair in long-stay governor/directors.

The public sector, on the other hand, has (underestimated) strengths in the use of authority, security, safety, stability and 'professionalism'. The sector benefits from having a large corporate structure behind it, which comes into its own in times of crisis (including, occasionally, on behalf of the private sector) and sometimes serves as a 'corporate memory' or resource. Its weaknesses are in aspects of its traditional and resistant culture, and in the amount of management time

and attention taken up by dealing with the prison officers' union (the POA). Although there is considerable variation in quality within the public sector, the worst prisons still function (like a slightly cranky machine). The best tend to be 'good', like a well oiled machine, but a bit 'heavy', creating some resistance and frustration for prisoners, enthusiastic staff, and managers. The private sector has strengths in being more flexible, outward looking, developing pockets of innovation in areas like working in creative partnership with other organisations, building a polite and respectful culture, and at its best, facilitating personal development among prisoners, which can help them turn their lives around on release.

The variation
between prisons in
quality was highest
within the private
sector, so private
sector prisons run
by the same
company were at
the highest *and*
lowest end of a
wide quality
spectrum.

4. See further, Crewe, B., Liebling, A. and Huley, S. (2011) 'Staff culture, the use of authority, and prisoner outcomes in public and private prisons' *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 44(1) 94–115.

5. For example, National Audit Office (2003) *The Operational Performance of PFI Prisons: Report by the Controller and Auditor General*: HC700 Session 2002-3: 18 June 2003, London: HMSO.

One of the main lessons of this research confirms our earlier finding in related studies that the way that prison staff use their authority makes a huge difference to the quality of a prison. In private sector prisons, staff commitment and attitudes are often positive, but this does not necessarily mean that officers use their authority well. In the less good private sector prisons, staff under-police the wings, and prisoners have too much power and too few boundaries. In public sector prisons, some staff over-use their power and are a bit blasé about the authority they wield. This can make prisoners feel disrespected and resentful, which makes it less likely that they will engage positively with staff or with prison programmes.

Our research demonstrates that where staff-prisoner relationships have the right balance of control and respect almost all aspects of the prisoner experience are enhanced. Better quality prisons tend to be good in most areas, whereas poorer performing prisons tend to be poor in most areas. Staff need to be able to use their authority professionally — with both confidence and care — in order to create decent environments. Both over-staffing and understaffing lead to (different) difficulties: over-staffing can encourage resistance and staff complacency, whereas under-staffing can lead to fear and distancing from prisoners. The problem is to find an optimum level of resourcing, staffing levels, quality, training and experience (and turnover) level. The concept of the 'professional prison officer' is helpful, suggesting a model of prison officer work that is confident, authoritative, legitimate and pro-active. But there also needs to be clarity of purpose, an appropriate (effective, and evidence-led) model of work with offenders, and competent and consistent leadership. This is a complex and demanding business, requiring highly skilled staff and outstanding leadership.

Despite political assumptions that the private sector is inherently superior at service delivery, private sector prisons are not necessarily better or worse than public sector prisons. When they get it right, they can provide decent and positive environments. But when they get it wrong, which seems to be more likely (but not inevitable) if they are run cheaply, they can be chaotic and dangerous places, which are no good for either the staff who work in them or the prisoners who live in and will be released from them. When things go wrong in prisons, they go wrong in very

significant ways: riots, escapes, murders, suicides, and so on.

There are therefore real risks in privatising prisons 'on the cheap' and in re-conceiving public sector prisons on the cheapest private sector model. There are no guarantees that private sector prisons will be cheaper or better than public sector prisons. The cost differential between the sectors has reduced considerably, especially in those prisons that go through competitive processes. It is not always the case that the cheapest bid wins or, now, that the cheapest bid comes from the private sector. There is a danger that bidders lose sight of the realities of running a complex organisation in their eagerness to win the contract — a sort of 'race to the bottom'. This has been evidenced in both the public and the private sectors. At least two poorly performing private sector prisons in the UK have been returned to the public sector.

We would recommend trying to combine the strengths of both sectors, above the lowest possible cost threshold, rather than assuming that the private sector is simply better or more cost effective, in this key area of public services. This would be achievable if we reduced the number of prisoners, by cutting the extraordinarily long and indeterminate sentences prisoners now receive, and diverted short term prisoners into constructive alternatives. Some of the difficulties prisons face are related to how they are used, so

not all problems of the prison can be resolved by different management techniques or changes in ownership.

There is a need for more learning from each sector, and more independent and meaningful evaluations, linking internal organisation and quality of life to outcomes. What we don't know, internationally, is what proportion of prisons within each sector are very good and very poor respectively, and why this is. These are the sorts of questions that need answers. The main aim of prison privatisation is to improve public sector service performance or delivery and effectiveness via competition and innovation, by injecting new energy and vision, and by experimenting with new management and staffing arrangements: the cross-fertilisation argument. There are problems of inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and poor or traditional culture in the public sector, but there are also some strengths, which are in danger of being lost. Staff and prisoners still speak a moral language of *making a*

Our research
demonstrates that
where staff-prisoner
relationships have
the right balance of
control and respect
almost all aspects of
the prisoner
experience are
enhanced.

difference but there is a general shift in the Prison Service towards a security-and-efficiency driven management style that risks stifling professional enthusiasm by its process and performance-oriented culture.

Some believe that private sector competition will improve the quality of prisons, prisoners' welfare, and outcomes, others believe it poses greater risks. We have found that both of these possibilities are real, and that the outcomes depend on several factors, such as: the quality of the contract, the quality of management, staffing stability (which is linked to pay and conditions, but also to management) and the effectiveness of monitoring processes. The balance of risks may vary with changing values and interests — so in a cost cutting and/or punitive era, the risks of violations may be higher.

Many people believe that matters of punishment and deprivation of liberty are and should be inherently public, and should be a core responsibility of the State, acting on behalf of the community. The Supreme Court of Israel recently decided to prohibit the private operation and management of prisons on the grounds that it was constitutionally unlawful and permitted a potential violation of human rights.⁶ It contravened the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty. Limits to this principle can only be justified if made in order to further an essential public interest. According to the ruling, violations of a prisoner's constitutional right to personal liberty are more likely when the entity responsible for his imprisonment is a private corporation motivated by economic considerations of profit and loss, than when

the entity responsible for his or her imprisonment is a government authority not motivated by those considerations. In other words, the profit motive may increase the risk of human rights violations. This is an argument based on principle, but is not yet based on empirical fact. Israel is the first country to make this legal decision. Other jurisdictions have reversed their privatisation decisions on the grounds that it does not provide the hoped for benefits or is risky (Canada, Scotland, and Victoria in Australia, for example).

Breaches of basic rights and international standards are not uncommon in public prison systems as currently operated. The current state of public sector provision and management (from basic conditions, overcrowding and the quality of health care to the availability of what sort of rehabilitative, educational and vocational programs) may be relevant to the moral reckoning process.

The key question is what is the best way to realize the public interest in having a proper, decent, effective and efficient prison system? This is a very difficult question to answer. Is the word 'effective' relevant, and is its meaning clear, when we are talking about institutions that punish? Once we know what we mean by 'quality', we need to know more about what mechanisms, including management, staffing and accountability/regulation, best secure such conditions.

The privatisation issue raises profound questions about the role of the State in punishment, the difference between privatisation's effects on quality and *quantity*, and the role, identity and moral status of the prison officer.

More detailed results from this study can be found on the ESRC website at <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-062-23-0212/read/reports>.

6. See Harding, R (forthcoming) 'State monopoly of 'the limits of permitted violation of human rights': The decision of the Supreme Court of Israel prohibiting the private operation and management of prisons, *Punishment and Society*.

Special offer for *Prison Service Journal* readers



ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY AND RECEIVE A 20% DISCOUNT

Quote: **UPS11** when placing your order online

Understanding Prison Staff

Edited by

Jamie Bennett, *Senior Manager, HM Prison Service, and
Editor of Prison Service Journal*

Ben Crewe, *Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge*

Azrini Wahidin, *School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social
Work, Queen's University Belfast*

The past decade has seen dramatic growth in every area of the prison enterprise. Yet our knowledge of the inner life of the prison remains limited. This book aims to redress this research gap by providing insight into various aspects of the daily life of prison staff. It provides a serious exploration of their work and, in doing so, will seek to draw attention to the variety, value and complexity of work within prisons. This book will provide practitioners, students and the general reader with a comprehensive and accessible guide to the contemporary issues and concerns facing prison staff.

November 2007

Paperback: 978-1-84392-274-2

~~£27.99~~ £22.39



**To place your order or request a complimentary exam copy, visit
www.routledge.com/9781843922742**

Visit our Criminology arena today

For more information on new titles publishing, special offers and key journals publishing in
your area www.routledge.com/criminology

Offer expires 31 December 2011.
Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.
Discount available only from www.routledge.com

Visit our website for more information and online ordering:
www.routledge.com

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group



PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

PUBLICATIONS



The Prison Governor: Theory and Practice by Shane Bryans and David Wilson

Describes in one closely argued book, the history of imprisonment, the management of prison staff, the understanding of prisoners, the developing role of the Governor and some well governed prisons.

Order Form (Please photocopy this page)

The Prison Governor

£4 for prison staff

£5 for non Prison Service staff

Include £3.00 p+p per book

Copies

☐

Total

.....

Cheque Value

.....

Enclose a cheque made out to 'HM Prison Service' and send to:
Prison Service Journal, c/o Print Shop Manager, HMP Leyhill, Wotton-under-Edge,
Gloucestershire, GL12 8BT. Tel: 01454 264007

Name Address

.....

..... Signature

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

Purpose and editorial arrangements

The *Prison Service Journal* is a peer reviewed journal published by HM Prison Service of England and Wales. Its purpose is to promote discussion on issues related to the work of the Prison Service, the wider criminal justice system and associated fields. It aims to present reliable information and a range of views about these issues.

The editor is responsible for the style and content of each edition, and for managing production and the Journal's budget. The editor is supported by an editorial board — a body of volunteers all of whom have worked for the Prison Service in various capacities. The editorial board considers all articles submitted and decides the outline and composition of each edition, although the editor retains an over-riding discretion in deciding which articles are published and their precise length and language.

From May 2005 selected articles from each edition are available in the Resource Centre of the HM Prison Service website. This is available at www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk

Circulation of editions and submission of articles

Six editions of the Journal, printed at HMP Leyhill, are published each year with a circulation of approximately 6,500 per edition. The editor welcomes articles which should be up to c.4,000 words and submitted by email to psjournal@hotmail.com or as hard copy and on disk to *Prison Service Journal*, c/o Print Shop Manager, HMP Leyhill, Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, GL12 8HL. All other correspondence may also be sent to the Editor at this address or to psjournal@hotmail.com.

Footnotes are preferred to endnotes, which must be kept to a minimum. All articles are subject to peer review and may be altered in accordance with house style. No payments are made for articles.

Subscriptions

The Journal is distributed to every Prison Service establishment in England and Wales. Individual members of staff need not subscribe and can obtain free copies from their establishment. Subscriptions are invited from other individuals and bodies outside the Prison Service at the following rates, which include postage:

United Kingdom

single copy	£5.00	
one year's subscription	£25.00	(organisations or individuals in their professional capacity)
	£18.00	(private individuals)

Overseas

single copy	£7.00	
one year's subscription	£35.00	(organisations or individuals in their professional capacity)
	£25.00	(private individuals)

Orders for subscriptions (and back copies which are charged at the single copy rate) should be sent with a cheque made payable to 'HM Prison Service' to *Prison Service Journal*, c/o Print Shop Manager, HMP Leyhill, Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, GL12 8BT.

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

This edition includes:

Interviews with prisoners, prison staff, prisoners' family members and workers from voluntary and charitable sector organisations.