

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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# Editorial Comment

The *Prison Service Journal* has a long and strong relationship with the Perrie lectures. We are delighted to be able to publish three of lectures from this year and also an interview with the Perrie Award winner.

This year the Perrie Lectures were drawn together under the title *Through care — who cares? Resettlement in the real world*. This is both a timely and a timeless issue. It is a timeless issue as prisons have for over a century had the formal aims of both punishing and reforming. Soon after this aim was established, the voluntary prisoner aid societies that helped those released from prison were brought together to form what is now the Probation Service. Although at times imprisonment looks and feels insular, it has always had an eye on what happens to prisoners after they leave through the gate.

Over recent years, and in the form of offender management and pathways to reducing reoffending, this has become a clearer focus for prisons and for the National Offender Management Service. It is now widely believed that addressing issues such as housing, employment and training on release help to reduce the risk of re-offending by individuals.

The contributors to this year's Perrie Lectures make some important and telling contributions to this discussion. Trevor Williams, the Director of Offender Management for the Eastern Region, and Beverley Thompson, Acting Chief Executive of Northamptonshire Probation Trust, are both experienced and respected practitioners. They both make an organisational case for focussing on reducing reoffending describing its importance in public and political expectations of what prisons achieve. Trevor Williams in particular focuses on some of the challenges and opportunities in developing services for offenders that are presented by marketisation of public services, the reduction in public spending and the notion of a 'rehabilitation revolution'. Beverley Thompson is also keen to highlight some of the barriers to achieving success including the stigmatisation of released prisoners. She tellingly poses the question that if prisons are serious about rehabilitation then should they be willing to employ ex-prisoners themselves?

Professor Shadd Maruna is a world renowned academic particularly known for his work on desistance, the process through which people stop offending. His work focuses on the issue of 'care' and what that means. He presents what he describes as a

'belief in redeemability'. This is not simply that prisoners themselves should believe that they can change, but that those around them and society more generally do not write them off but instead constantly present a belief in the idea that they can change. He provides fascinating examples from education that show the power of this positive approach in achieving changes in behaviour. He also describes how this creates a more cohesive and caring society and so has benefits for us all.

This edition also includes an interview with Stephen Shaw, who recently stood down as Prison and Probation Ombudsman and was awarded the Perrie Award this year. This award recognises the contribution he has made over three decades as Ombudsman and prior to that as Director of the Prison Reform Trust. In this interview he shares his reflections on his work and the changes that have taken place in prisons during that time.

This edition also includes a number of other articles. The opening article is a fascinating study of female drug mules by Dr. Jennifer Fleetwood. This examines the reasons why these women get involved in this crime. Although this work was conducted in South America, it will be relevant to anyone working in women's prisons in the UK. Three innovative activities are explored in further articles. Gail Jones and Kim Hindle describe their evaluation of an alcohol dependency treatment programme. This is a long overdue development and will be welcomed by practitioners. Dierdre O'Neill describes a radical approach using media and film not only as a 'purposeful activity' but as a means of raising political consciousness about how the media is used as a form of social control and how creativity and expression can be a form of resistance and empowerment for marginalised people. In an important study, Jacqui Saradjian, Naomi Murphy and Helen Casey share the evaluation data from a programme of assessment and intervention for dangerous prisoners with severe personality disorder. The final article by Professor Michael Ross discusses the stresses that staff experience working in the prison environment and approaches to managing this.

This edition provides a strong mix of thoughtful and stimulating contributions from academics and practitioners. It sets out some challenges that prisons face but also gives some sense of optimism about the innovation and imagination of those working in prisons.