

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

January 2016 No 223



*Special Edition*

**PRisoN: Unlocking prison  
research**

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Cover photograph courtesy Karl Lenton, SAFE Innovations and Leeds Healthcare Trust.

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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 and 200 gsm Galerie Art Satin

Set in 10 on 13 pt Frutiger Light

Circulation approx 6,000

ISSN 0300-3558

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# Editorial Comment

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In recent years, we felt driven to use our knowledge and experiences to create awareness of the state of prisons, the experience of imprisonment and the social impact of imprisonment in the wider community. Our ambition has been to create a supportive network of likeminded individuals interested in prison research by bringing together researchers, charitable organisations, prison staff and local communities to pursue new collaborative research and project opportunities. During an initial meeting in 2013 to discuss how we might approach this, we began by considering the obvious question “Where do we start?”. After many cups of tea, considering a range of ideas and writing several ‘to do’ lists, we agreed that we initially wanted to gain an understanding of who might be interested in joining us in our vision to create a network that would welcome anyone with an interest in prisons and the wider social impact of imprisonment.

A call was put out to prospective members, both within and external to our own university (Leeds Beckett), the academy in general, and external contacts within the criminal justice system. The responses we received amazed us, and the power that can be generated from one single email version of a ‘call to arms’ highlighted just how relevant and needed our network might become. Our initial call for interest, which was facilitated by the University Research Office at Leeds Beckett, provided us with a membership list from a wide range of subjects. Before this, we had not realised research was being conducted with prisoners, ex-prisoners, families of prisoners, (and a host of other topics) by staff within Architecture, Art, Criminology, Design, Health Promotion, History, Law, Physiotherapy, Play Work, Psychology, Sociology and Sport. External interest was forthcoming from the Prisoners’ Education Trust, The Intelligence Project, NHS, Probation Service, English Pen and representatives of a small number of prison institutions.

The Prison Research Network (PRisoN) was launched at an event held at Leeds Beckett University on 28th April 2015. Leeds Beckett researchers presented their current work before a keynote lecture from Nick Hardwick, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons. The launch event was designed to showcase the work being done by members both internal and external to the university and open the network to a wider audience. Research presented included: Dr James

Woodall’s National Institute for Health Research-funded work on peers in prison; Mike Wragg’s studies around children’s stress when visiting parents in prison; Karl Lenton’s Wellness Pod, an initiative based at the University’s Enterprise and Innovation Hub, bringing portable spaces within prisons and currently being trialled at HMP Leeds; and a presentation by Jenny Landells on enhancing access to probation interventions: a partnership between Speech and Language Therapy and Probation staff.

The response we gained from the launch was beyond our expectation to say the least. We were particularly enthused that attendees acknowledged the welcoming and somewhat informal environment we had strived to create at the launch to encourage networking and the sharing of ideas — an environment that we feel represents the nature of the network itself. The event resulted in the creation of new connections between PRisoN members and those who had attended to find out about the network. Following the event we welcomed new members from Nottingham, Manchester, Hertfordshire, Canterbury and Bedfordshire universities, Probation, and organisations including DISC, Ex-Cell Solutions and RMF Construction.

After the launch, we were interviewed for a profile piece in the Times Higher Education during which we were able to discuss the establishment and growth of the network and create further awareness of our work. We welcomed additional members (who had seen the article) from the Open University, Bath Spa University and the University of Queensland in Australia. The growth and development of the network has been incredibly encouraging and we have been delighted to engage with organisations and fellow researchers to listen to what they would like from the network. In reflecting on this, we are now in a position to consider where we are, what the network is for and who might benefit from the network’s establishment.

For us, PRisoN has become a central hub of knowledge and experience concerning prisons; whether this be researching prisons, working in prisons, or experiencing prison first hand. Included in this hub are those who work with people in the community through resettlement and reintegration processes. Our aim is to continue connecting people and organisations to encourage the pursuit of understanding about the

prison institution and the impact it has on society broadly. We provide information, advice and guidance for people wishing to pursue research projects and for organisations who need research to be conducted to improve their service delivery or evaluate the outcomes of their work. As we are based in Leeds, we have found that our university campus is an ideal meeting point 'up North' meaning that we can host events for organisations based in London that wish to connect with their colleagues and members in other parts of the country. Ultimately, our mission is to improve people's lives through the valuable resource of knowledge and experience — something that is significantly strengthened when researchers and organisations come together with a common purpose. We hope that our facilitation of these connections results in genuine change, promotes the positive outcomes of collaborative research projects and makes the most of the pool of expertise we have brought together.

We are delighted to present this special edition as an example of just a small number of areas of expertise held by PRisoN members. As we have found when exploring the expertise of our members, there are a seemingly endless amount of topics of discussion and inquiry concerning imprisonment that can potentially contribute to improving the lives of others and we feel that taking an interest in these varied subject areas is important in itself to encourage such work to continue.

In any prison visiting room, the volume of children present at any one time is difficult to ignore, yet rarely written about. This highlights the importance of Mike Wragg's article which encourages us to momentarily stop thinking of the impact that this environment might have on prisoners and shifts our attention to the impact that visits may have on children. Mike begins by identifying just how important it is in a child's development that they simply be allowed to 'play'. The importance of play within a child's life is of paramount importance, especially within the lives of children where happiness might be of short supply. If the prison estate is going to change, then so should the attitudes towards the hidden victims of imprisonment — children. This article links nicely into the discussion that Kinsella, Woodall and Frost provide in the following article regarding their study of a NOMS funded drama project that was run in a Northern England category B prison. The project saw three external drama practitioners working closely, over the space of a week, with a group of prisoners and their

children to bond over the putting on of a play. The results of the project highlight the real need for evidence based support in relationships between prisoners and children.

Moving on from children of prisoners, the focus of the next article stays with young people but focusses upon those who are engaged within the criminal justice system; more importantly, how they communicate within the system. Landell and James write passionately about the plight of offenders with communication and learning disabilities who are often seen by the establishment as being 'trouble'. A significant number of young people within the criminal justice system have poor language skills, which invariably leads to poor literacy skills. Something as simple as not understanding a question and being too embarrassed to admit it can manifest as belligerent behaviour resulting in sanctions for the individual, especially if it relates to court mandated behaviour programmes that form part of a sentence.

While this special edition does seek to think beyond the present and consider the future of the prison 'landscape', we have also endeavored to represent the current experiences of prison researchers who are in the process of trying to uncover and make sense of the lived experiences of serving prisoners. To this end, we are pleased to present an article by PhD

candidate, Gemma Ahearne, whose reflexive account of her research on the experiences of imprisoned sex workers highlights an often ignored part of the prison population and also reminds us of the detailed nature of prison research. From her admission to naively underestimating the luxury of biscuits in the economy of the prison to the challenge of the representative probability sampling of 'hidden populations', Ahearne's article is an important read for anyone interested in this research topic and also the reality of conducting research in the prison environment.

In a journal aimed towards those who work in the prison service, it may seem strange that we have invited an article from an academic whose work is primarily focused on police culture. However, the article by Tom Cockcroft in this special edition draws our attention to the need to focus more on lessons from police officers for prison officers. In this insightful article, Cockcroft discusses the similarities and distinctions between the public-facing police and the officers behind prison walls to draw out their essential differences in occupational features but also highlight the potential similarities in their responses to politicisation.

Ultimately, our mission is to improve people's lives through the valuable resource of knowledge and experience...

One of the many themes of this special edition is the potential for improvement in prison conditions. Safe Innovations present an article which considers how the implications of increasing challenges across the prison estate are impacting the wellbeing of prisoners. In their article, they explore the potential that *seedS* (a portable 'appropriate space') has to be used in multiple ways to improve access to healthcare, education and therapy on prison wings. Particularly noteworthy is the potential for *seedS* to also have beneficial implications for prison staff who may need a 'safe' space in the prison environment to manage their own wellbeing in the workplace by providing 'guided interventions' or 'quiet reflection' to reduce stress. This article explores the numerous potential benefits that *seedS* may have on issues such as promoting emotional intelligence, preventing deaths in custody, improving physical and mental health and preventing disruptive behaviour. Although Safe Innovations do not present *seedS* as a 'magic bullet' which will suddenly improve prison conditions, this article certainly demonstrates the multiple potential benefits of the implementation of new spaces in prisons.

Demonstrating the diversity of the articles in this special edition, which we hope exhibits the

inclusiveness of the Prison Research Network, we present an article from the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) which provides an introduction to recent research on prison education including studies conducted by PET. PET is an organisation that raises awareness of the importance of education for prisoners in aiding rehabilitation and this article presents a coherent overview of current discourses on prison education with attention also being paid to the growing global network of academics working with PET to create rehabilitative cultures, bring universities and prison education together and to 'break the digital divide'. This article delivers a thorough introduction to PET for those who may not be familiar with the organisation and a welcome update for those who are already aware of their work.

We hope that this special edition reaches a varied audience and encourages further thought on prison related projects and collaborative work. We of course would be pleased to welcome new members to the network and would encourage readers to contact us if they would like to hear more about our work or tell us about their own.

# Play and Playwork in the Prison:

## past, present and future

*Mike Wragg is a Senior Lecturer in Playwork at Leeds Beckett University.*

### Introduction

**Playworkers often occupy nooks and niches overlooked or considered to be beyond the remit of the wider Children and Families' Workforce. Encountered in these spaces may be vulnerable or traumatised children, whose emotional and developmental needs are forgotten, ignored or trivialized. In response playworkers seek to enable children in such unsettling circumstances to exercise their autonomy through the intrinsically motivated behaviour of play, and in so doing regain agency and emotional equilibrium. One example of such a space is the prison in which children can be unaware of the nature and purpose of their visit and may be subjected to necessary yet emotionally destabilising controls, which have been observed to render them confused, worried and anxious. This paper summarises the key themes of a presentation delivered at the inaugural conference of the Prison Research Network, April 2015 at Leeds Beckett University. The presentation drew on experiences of playworkers, and children and parents visiting play facilities in a number of the country's prisons, and raised questions about future research and impact assessment of such provision.**

### Play, Play Deprivation and Playwork

In its most generic sense playwork is a term applied to occupations where the medium of play is used as the major mechanism for addressing aspects of developmental imbalance in childhood.<sup>1</sup> In an era in which opportunities for children to play freely are arguably more restricted than they have been since the mid-1800s and the introduction of the Factory Act,<sup>2</sup> the consequences of this developmental imbalance are implicated in a number of significant and growing

public health concerns including an increased prevalence of Type 2 diabetes; what has been termed as a childhood obesity epidemic; and rising rates of psychological disorders in children including ADHD, stress, anxiety and depression.<sup>3</sup> Such is the extent of the restrictions on children's freedoms to play — brought about by a number of social and environmental factors including increased road traffic, parental anxiety for their children's safety and societal intolerance of children and young people — that in the course of a generation the distance children are permitted by their parents to travel unaccompanied from the home has decreased by 90 per cent, as has the number of children travelling to school independently. Furthermore, whilst the average age at which children were permitted to play out of sight of the home and without adult supervision was six years in the 1970s, recent studies suggest that that age has now increased to 11 or 12 years.<sup>4</sup> Whilst causation is difficult to prove, this increasing play deficit correlates strongly with negative outcomes for children's health, happiness and wellbeing.

In respect of children's physical health the relationship between play, particularly active outdoor play, and fitness would seem fairly self-evident. This relationship was highlighted in 2008 by Professor Roger Mackett and James Paskins of Middlesex University who found that children who play out freely expend more energy over the course of a week than children spending the same amount of time engaged in adult-led team sports.<sup>5</sup> In respect of children's psychological health play is associated with increased confidence and self-esteem, emotional resilience, emotion regulation, positive attachment and self-efficacy;<sup>6</sup> the process of playing stimulates the production of endorphins, popularly referred to as 'happy hormones' which act on the reward centres of the brain promoting feelings of happiness and combatting the negative effects of stress.<sup>7</sup> The trivial behaviour it is commonly mistaken for, is an evolutionarily imperative bio-psychological drive

1. Brown, F. (2008) 'Playwork Theory and Playwork Practice in the UK' in Brown, F. & Taylor, C. (eds.) *Foundations of Playwork* Maidenhead: Open University Press.
2. Hendrick, H. (1997) *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880 – 1990* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Butland B, Jebb S, Kopelman P, et al. (2007) *Tackling obesity: future choices – project report (2nd Ed)*. London: Foresight Programme of the Government Office for Science.
4. Gill, T (2007) *No Fear: Growing up in a Risk Averse Society*. London: Calouste-Gulbenkian Foundation.
5. Mackett, R. & Paskins, J. (2008) Children's Physical Activity: the contribution of playing & walking. *Children and Society*. 2; 345-357.
6. Elkind, D (2007) *The power of play: how spontaneous, imaginative activities lead to happier, healthier children*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.
7. Brown, S (2009) *Play. How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

critical to the healthy development of individuals and social groups.<sup>8</sup>

Given the positive outcomes for children of expressing the play drive, it is reasonable to assume that any significant suppression or distortion to the expression of this drive – conditions referred to in the playwork field respectively as play deprivation and play bias — is likely to result in converse outcomes.<sup>9</sup> Whilst sufficient play is critical to children’s development and the prevention of ill-health, so too does it have an ameliorative effect on the symptoms of physical and psychological disorders and helps maintain emotional equilibrium in the face of bereavement, trauma or loss.<sup>10</sup> Significantly this is to a large part because it is only when playing that children are in complete control of the content and intent of their actions; as noted by Jens Qvortrupp, play offers us something that direct instruction does not: when we play we have agency.<sup>11</sup> Consequently one of the fundamental principles of playwork is to enable children to play in the ways that they need to without unnecessarily influencing, directing or intervening in that behaviour.

In all other professional contexts in which children and adults interact those interactions require the child to conform, to a lesser or greater extent, to the adult’s agenda. For example, whilst progressive pedagogy might advocate child-centredness in its approach, the relational power lies with the educator whose purpose is to teach the child. Similarly the role of the youth worker in their relationship with the child, however equitable, is ultimately to affect change in the child or their behaviour in accordance with a predetermined aspect of the adult-derived social agenda. So, in seeking fundamentally only to enable the expression of the play drive the power distribution in the relationship between playworker and child remains equal. Indeed, according

to internationally renowned children’s rights advocate, Roger Hart, playwork is the only profession to work horizontally or collaboratively with children, rather than from a position of power or control.<sup>12</sup>

Informing the playworker-child relationship are a number of assumptions which I discuss in the 2011 publication, *Children’s Rights in Practice*, edited by Jones and Walker.<sup>13</sup> The first of these relates to the play drive itself and the way in which it is understood and articulated. As alluded to previously, in traditional Western societies at least, play tends typically to be misunderstood or trivialised by the adult population. On occasion when play is ascribed value that value tends to

Consequently one of the fundamental principles of playwork is to enable children to play in the ways that they need to without unnecessarily influencing, directing or intervening in that behaviour.

be attached to its contribution to affecting an adult-desired change in the child. For example, play in school is acceptable providing that it contributes quantifiably to children’s increased academic attainment or improved behaviour in the classroom. The emphasis on these benefits instrumental to the development of individuals has given rise to an interpretation of play known as a utilitarian perspective.<sup>14</sup> An alternative interpretation, which whilst acknowledging the wide-ranging developmental benefits of play, recognises its primary value as being for its own sake rather than for its content or potential outcome. That is to say that the purpose of playing is regarded as being simply to play, the natural consequences of which are a range of multi-sensory rewards and

developmental benefits. Crucially it is the child’s own initiation and direction of that behaviour which leads to those rewards and benefits being derived. Outcome-oriented adult manipulations of that process undermine the child’s autonomy, reducing the process and behaviour to something other than play. This understanding, often referred to as the intrinsic perspective<sup>15</sup> informs the occupational standards and first two ethical principles of playwork. The second of

8. Russ, S. (2004) *Play in Child Development and Psychotherapy*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

9. Hughes, B. (2001) *Evolutionary Playwork and Reflective Analytic Practice*. London: Routledge.

10. Russ, S. (2004) *Play in Child Development and Psychotherapy*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

11. Mouritsen, F. & Qvortrup, J. (2003) *Children and Children’s Culture* London: Routledge.

12. Hart, R. (2008) *Participation and Playwork Play for Wales* issue 24.

13. Jones, P. & Walker, G. (2011) *Children’s Rights in Practice*. London: Continuum.

14. Powell, S. & Wellard, I. (2008) *Policies and Play: The Impact of National Policies on Children’s Opportunities to Play*. London: Play England / National Children’s Bureau.

15. Hakarrainen, P. (1999) Play & Motivation, in Engestrom, Y, Miettinen, R. & Punamaki, R. L. (eds) *Perspectives in Activity Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

these principless states that: 'Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.'<sup>16</sup>

The second assumption relates to the way in which playworkers conceive and value the child. Contrary to the dominant way in which children are valued and conceived in UK society: as future social and economic capital — a conceptualisation often referred to as the 'becoming' child — playworkers value children in the here-and-now, as competent, capable and autonomous social actors in their own right — a construct known as the 'being' child.<sup>17 18 19</sup> Although playwork tends not to go so far as to concur with the view of some that children should be afforded equal *status* to adults, they do regard children as having equal value. That is to say that whilst playworkers recognise that children's biological immaturity renders them more vulnerable and therefore in need of greater rights of protection from themselves and others, it doesn't render them any less valuable. Children's views are considered to be of equal importance to those of adults, and in cases that affect matters of their play, more so.

Further assumptions underpinning playwork practice recognise children as a minority group who are disadvantaged by imbalanced power relations between themselves and adults. This assumption underpins an approach, which unlike many other areas of the Children and Families Workforce, seeks to challenge rather than reaffirm these relations.<sup>20</sup> This practice is referred to in another of the assumptions as anti-paternalistic in that it seeks to challenge the dominant view that adult needs and wishes should necessarily take precedence over those of children, and empowers children by facilitating a process by which they can genuinely make their own decisions.

It is this combination of play's positive affect<sup>21</sup> and healing qualities, and the uniqueness of the playwork approach to not only facilitating play but also establishing supportive, trusting and equitable working relationships with children that results in playworkers working with disadvantaged, discriminated and marginalised children in contexts often neglected or overlooked by other disciplines within the wider Children's Workforce; one such context being the prison. Indeed, according to Sutcliffe (2013) '*children of prisoners are quite possibly one of the most discriminated against in our society, often treated as guilty on their parent's account, even at the schools that they attend*'.<sup>22</sup>

### Prison Playwork

Although playwork tends not to go so far as to concur with the view of some that children should be afforded equal *status* to adults, they do regard children as having equal value.

*Time!!! The word echoes around the prison visits room and cascades into the play facility. A wide-eyed little girl, aged around four, runs to her inmate mother and wraps every part of her little body around her. Her screams of, 'No, I want my mummy with me!' are only audible through heavy sobs'<sup>23</sup> (Bedder, S. 2014).*

In 1997 Barbara Tamminen, a graduate of the Playwork course at, what was then, Leeds Metropolitan University, founded the pioneering Wakefield Prison Visits Children's Play Facility. Although there was little empirical evidence available at the time to support her assertions, Tamminen's undergraduate dissertation theorised that not only was the prison visiting process immediately traumatising, children of incarcerated parents would also experience longer-term consequences of this form of separation including stigmatisation, poorer academic attainment, increased anti-social behaviour, and an increased likelihood of developing mental health problems.

It is important to note at this juncture the difference between the type of professionally facilitated

16. PPSG (2005) *Playwork Principles* held in trust as honest brokers for the profession by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group Available from: [www.playwales.org.uk/page.asp?id=50](http://www.playwales.org.uk/page.asp?id=50)  
17. Mayall, B. (2005) *Values and Assumptions Underpinning Policy for Children and Young People in England* Children's Geographies 4 (1): — 17.  
18. Hendrick, H. (1997) *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880 – 1990* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
19. James, A., Jenks, C., and Prout, A. (1998) *Theorising Childhood*. London: Polity.  
20. Ibid.  
21. Isen, A. and Reeve, J. (2006) *The Influence of Positive Affect on Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: facilitating enjoyment of play, responsible work behaviour and self-control. Motivation and Emotion*, 29(4): 297-325.  
22. <http://grumpysutcliffe.com/2013/11/09/howard-league-story-about-wakefield-prison/>  
23. Bedder, S. (2014) *Reflective Diary*. Unpublished.

provision that Tamminen was developing and advocating for, and the existing traditional facilities for children in prisons' family visitors' centres, which might often amount to little more than a handful of well-used toys and a few books occupying a small corner of the room. It was in fact Tamminen's experiences of this type of poorly resourced facility, observations of the visiting children's behavioural responses to it, and knowledge and experience of the efficacy of play and playwork interventions which prompted her to develop the model of staffed prison play facility to provide more holistic support for visiting children. Co-founder of the Wakefield Prison Play Facility, Robin Sutcliffe, recounts in a piece for the Howard League for Penal Reform, his observations of a regular teenage visitor to the facility:

*This particular girl was a regular at the Unit, outgoing, contributing and supporting younger members of the play facility. One day she came to the Unit and sat without speaking to anyone, clearly troubled and upset. Barbara approached her to find out what was wrong and she confessed that she was coming up to taking her GCSEs and was desperately anxious about her English. Her teachers had refused to help her and her parents were unable to and she didn't know what to do.*

*Barbara took her on one side and spent the whole of that session with her teaching her about how to take exams and how to do better with her English. A few months later we heard that she had passed. I found this incredibly moving, where else had she to go? It (sic) has made me passionate about the importance of these facilities in Prisons and I am always grateful when I read of the work that the Howard League do to help these children. It can never be enough!<sup>24</sup>*

By any measure children are demonstrably amongst the most vulnerable victims of such policies, and not only is this victimhood unwitting and undeserved, the costs are born both by the individual and wider society.

Sutcliffe's assertion that the children of prisoners are amongst the most discriminated against in society becomes all the more alarming when one considers that children as a social group are universally disadvantaged across socioeconomic strata and income distribution scales.<sup>25</sup> This is evident at an extreme end of the spectrum in the denial of basic human rights to children forced into labour in the developing world. A less severe, but still worrying example can be found in the concerns for the health impact on children of excessive exposure to advertising as expressed by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.<sup>26</sup> Recently the Supreme Court ruled that the UK

government's reforms to welfare expenditure breach the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>27</sup> and forecasts predict that child poverty in the UK will increase by a third in the decade to 2020, to its highest level in a generation.<sup>28</sup> By any measure children are demonstrably amongst the most vulnerable victims of such policies, and not only is this victimhood unwitting and undeserved, the costs are born both by the individual and wider society. For a government committed to the best interests of the child in accordance with Article Three of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>29</sup> and to reducing public spending whilst increasing the Exchequer's revenue, prison play provision ought to be a

statutory and mandatory requirement. For since Tamminen and her colleagues founded the Wakefield Prison Play Facility more has been learned about the social costs and longer term consequences for children of having a parent in prison. For example, children of prisoners are about three times more at risk of anti-social or delinquent behaviour compared to their peers; they are more likely to experience higher levels of social disadvantage; are at greater risk of developing mental health problems such as depression; and, as Sutcliffe's piece for the Howard League suggests, are more likely

24. <http://grumpysutcliffe.com/2013/11/09/howard-league-story-about-wakefield-prison/>

25. Corsaro, W. (2011) *The Sociology of Childhood 3rd edition*. London: Sage Publications.

26. CRC (2013) *General Comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights*. United Nations.

27. Butler, P. (2015) UK benefits cap is lawful but breaches UN children's rights obligations *The Guardian* 18 March. p. 22.

28. Doward, J. & Helm, T. (2015) Child Poverty Rise Across Britain Halts 'Progress Made Since 1990s' *The Guardian* 20th June p. 17.

29. Unicef (n.d) Fact Sheet: *A summary of the rights under the convention on the rights of the child*. [http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

to suffer lower academic attainment than the general population. Perhaps most concerning, they are more susceptible to entering custody themselves.<sup>30</sup> As for prisoners, developing close relationships with their children and maintaining family ties, in which prison playwork plays a significant role, can reduce their risk of re-offending by six times.<sup>31</sup>

Whilst there is very little empirical longitudinal data available to demonstrate the efficacy of prison play facilities in reversing these outcomes and their subsequent social and economic costs, anecdotal data from prison playworkers, students, parents and children suggests that such provision certainly has an impact in the immediate term. An extract of an anonymised letter from a parent of a visiting eleven-year-old girl, received and shared by a playworker working at a prison in the North of England, reads:

*...thank you to the playworkers because without them I don't know what would happen to our family. Marcy would refuse to come, and God only knows what that would do to John...he might not never (sic) make it out...*

A former student of the BA (Hons) Playwork course who was, at the time, running a prison play project at an institution in the South East of England recorded in her reflective diary a seven-year-old child who told her:

*I like visiting daddy when we can play, cos when we're playing together he's happier and nicer to me.*

## Conclusion

Since Tamminen began her pioneering work the number of dedicated playwork-staffed play facilities in prisons has increased, often run either as small charitable organisations in their own right, as is the case of Newhall Kidz Play Facility at New Hall Women's prison near Wakefield, or as one of a range of services provided by larger charities such as Spurgeons, which

coordinates play facilities in a number of London's prisons. Several of these facilities are staffed and managed by graduates of the Playwork course, who are able to provide supervision to current students wishing to undertake their experiential learning placements in such settings. The following policy statement from HMP Thameside's Children and Families project articulates the function of the prison play facility:

*During the visits play, the play area and the playworker help the children relax in the surroundings and give them a chance to be children in what can be very difficult and confusing circumstances — 90 per cent of the children believe that the male they are visiting is 'at work'. Play gives them a chance to bond with other children while also blurring the image of being in prison. Play is also extremely important for their concentration and stimulation levels. The male prisoner cannot move off their seats and the children become extremely bored and frustrated so the play area and play gives them the chance to come away from the visiting table and immerse themselves in play types including imaginary and socio-dramatic play. Socio-dramatic play, seen commonly in the play area, is extremely important as it can provide playworkers with crucial insights into the children and their home lives which informs social worker intervention outside of the prison. Giving children a chance to play out their fears, worries and questions is important in a prison as it allows for playworkers to understand and respond to these children's needs.<sup>32</sup>*

Unfortunately, however, since 2010 children's play has slipped further and further down the social and political agenda. Within months of coming to power in 2010 the Tory-led coalition government abandoned England's national play strategy,<sup>33</sup> froze the previous

As for prisoners, developing close relationships with their children and maintaining family ties, in which prison playwork plays a significant role, can reduce their risk of re-offending by six times.

30. Murray, J. and Farrington, D. P. (2005) 'Effects of Parental Imprisonment on Children', In Tonry, M. (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

31. Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*. London: Social Exclusion Unit.

32. HMP Thameside: *children & families project play policy statement*.

33. Jozwiak, G. (2014) *Outdoor Play Under Threat From Funding Cull* Children and Young People Now 7-20 January 2014.

government's allotted fund for children's play<sup>34</sup> and withdrew support to the national play development agency Play England.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the government has continued to advance policy which further disadvantages the country's most marginalised and disadvantaged children, and has responded to a projected increase in national child poverty by doing little more than reconfiguring the way in which such disadvantage is measured.<sup>36</sup> Without any apparent political will for play *per se* it seems inconceivable that the already under-resourced specialism of prison playwork is likely to fare any better.

However, the future may not be as gloomy as the present might suggest. The newly elected Labour party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, looks set to appoint a Shadow

Cabinet Minister for Children's Play,<sup>37</sup> and professes a wish to be guided in the development of that portfolio by those working in the field. Perhaps now is the time for the playwork sector and other interested parties to develop a coordinated campaign for children's prison play provision. Qualitative analysis of observations contained in prison playworkers' field diaries and letters of parental gratitude are no doubt a source of data upon which such a campaign could be built, but there appears to be a distinct absence of insight into the benefits of such provision from prisoners' perspectives. Perhaps this information alongside the initiation of longitudinal studies of prison playwork and its wider benefits may gain political traction and see children's needs prioritised in the prison service.



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34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. [www.cpag.org.uk/content/measuring-poverty](http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/measuring-poverty)

37. Nelson, N. (2015) *Jeremy Corbyn wants to create a minister for play time*. The Mirror <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/jeremy-corbyn-wants-create-minister-6389896>

# 'Pure bonding time':

## Prisoner and staff perceptions of the impact of taking part in a drama project for imprisoned men and their children

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### Introduction

**Research has shown that prison visits have the potential to improve prisoners' mental wellbeing, increase social support and reduce the inmate-perceived stresses associated with imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> Identifying effective ways to promote the health and well-being of prisoners is important because although they are not a homogeneous group, they often have unhealthy lifestyles and poorer health compared to the wider population.<sup>2</sup> Fazel and Baillargeon<sup>3</sup> suggest that prisoners bear a 'substantial burden of physical and psychiatric disorders relative to the general population'. In particular, evidence suggests that prisoners experience higher rates of mental health issues including suicide.<sup>4</sup> Improving the health of individuals in the criminal justice system is recognised to be a key element of the reducing re-offending and health inequalities agendas. The determinants of offending are similar to the determinants of health; poor housing, low levels of social capital, stress, substance misuse, low educational attainment.<sup>5</sup> By adopting a social rather than medical model of health, it could be argued that increasing the health of an individual**

**could also potentially be beneficial in terms of reducing re-offending and lead to better rehabilitation outcomes.**

Over the last decade the Government has taken many steps towards reducing re-offending which has proven to have little effect on reconviction rates.<sup>6</sup> A Ministry of Justice<sup>7</sup> Green Paper has stated that prisons are expensive to run and further commitment to reducing re-offending is needed. There is growing interest in the relationship between offenders and their families, the Ministry of Justice<sup>8</sup> found that maintaining family relationships can help prevent re-offending. Maintaining family ties during imprisonment holds many benefits both during and after confinement; research indicates possible reductions in intergenerational offending,<sup>9</sup> better chances of resettlement on release,<sup>10</sup> and improved mental health outcomes for prisoners.<sup>11</sup> Policy frameworks have focused on reducing re-offending endorse supporting family ties.<sup>12</sup>

### The drama based-intervention

This research study set out to explore a drama based intervention delivered at a category B prison in northern England as a vehicle for improving prisoner-

1. de Motte, C., Bailey, D., and Ward, J. (2012) How does prison visiting affect female offenders' mental health? Implications for education and development. *The Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice*, 7 (4) 170–179.; Jiang, S., and T, Winfree, Jr. (2006) Social Support, Gender, and Inmate Adjustment to Prison Life. *The Prison Journal*, 86 (1) 32-55.; Casey-Acevedo, K., & Bakken, T. (2001). Effects of visitation on women in prison. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 25 (1), 49-70.
2. World Health Organization (2014) Prisons and Health. [Internet] World Health Organisation Europe. Available from: <[http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/249188/Prisons-and-Health.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/249188/Prisons-and-Health.pdf?ua=1)> [Accessed December 2014].
3. Fazel, S. and Baillargeon, J. (2011) The health of prisoners. *The Lancet*, 377, 956-65.
4. Howard League for Penal Reform (2014) Young adult prisoner suicides: cries for help are going unheard. [Internet], Available from: <<http://www.howardleague.org/young-adult-prisoner-suicides/>> [Accessed 15th September 2014].
5. Sherman, T. (2011) Offender Health [Internet] North Somerset Council. Available from: <<http://www.nsomerset.gov.uk/Community/Partnerships/JSNA/safer+and+stronger/offenderhealth.htm>> [Accessed 24th November 2012].
6. Ministry of Justice (2013) Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform, London, The Stationary Office.
7. Ministry of Justice (2010) Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders, London.
8. Ministry of Justice (2013) 12 months supervision for all prisoners on release. Press release. [Internet] Ministry of Justice. Available from: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/12-months-supervision-for-all-prisoners-on-release>> [Accessed 16th February 2012].
9. Ministry of Justice (2010) Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders, London.
10. Niven, S. and Stewart, D. (2005) Resettlement outcomes on release from prison in 2003. Home Office Findings No. 248. London, Home Office.
11. Woodall, J., et al (2009). Healthier prisons: The role of a prison visitors' centre. *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education*, 47 (1) 12–18.
12. Ministry of Justice (2009) Reducing re-offending; supporting families, creating better futures. A framework for improving the local delivery of support for the families of offenders. London, Department for Children, Schools and Families.; Ministry of Justice (2013) Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending, Analytical Series 2013. London, The Stationary Office.

child relationships. The intervention was delivered in the form of an arts-based, extended prison visit. Codd<sup>13</sup> emphasises that prison visits are an important way to maintain family connections, while research by Nugent and Loucks<sup>14</sup> advocate the use of arts-based interventions in prison settings. The category B adult male prison is based in northern England and holds over 1000 prisoners remanded or sentenced by the courts. Approximately 55 per cent of the men have a child under the age of 18 years. The prison has an attached, purpose built prison Visitors' Centre which aims to improve family health and well-being for prisoners and their families. The Visitors' Centre was awarded a small amount of funding (from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)) dedicated to art interventions in prisons. The funding enabled two members of staff (a manager and a project lead) from the Visitors' Centre to co-ordinate the implementation of a drama project within the prison. Three drama practitioners from a third sector organisation (external from both the prison and the Visitors' Centre) were recruited to deliver the drama project. This involved facilitating, interactive games, relationship building through drama and helping families create a play they could perform at the end of the week to their family and friends.

The drama project invited a selected group of prisoners to spend time with their children under the facilitation of three drama practitioners and the supervision of a prison officer. The project was delivered over a week in the autumn of 2012; it ran for five days, from 10am to 3pm in the prison chapel. The project was advertised on posters throughout the prison. Prisoners then applied to attend the project; those that met security requirements were then enrolled.

### Aims and objectives

The study aimed to gain insight into perceived changes in family connections as a result of taking part in the drama project. The rationale for the project was

to provide opportunities for prisoners and their children to spend time together, develop deeper bonds and strengthen family ties. Three research aims guided the development and implementation of the study;

- To explore prisoner perceptions of the impact of taking part in the drama project, specifically to identify whether there were any perceived changes in family connections.
- To build an understanding of how the drama project was delivered and identify any suggestion for improvement in the future.
- To explore prison staff perceptions of the impact taking part in the drama project had on prisoners.

### Methods

One-to-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the six prisoners who participated in the project, the prison officer who supervised the project and the Visitors' Centre staff who helped to implement the project. One-to-one interviews were selected on the basis that they provide the opportunity to gather rich, in-depth information and to probe the responses of participants, enabling a detailed understanding of the issues of interest to be developed.<sup>15</sup> Semi-structured interviews were used to allow for consistency across interviews and to aid the researcher to keep fluidity of the

The rationale for the project was to provide opportunities for prisoners and their children to spend time together, develop deeper bonds and strengthen family ties.

interview and offer a loose structure for the researcher in order to gain a more detailed response from the participant.<sup>16</sup> The semi-structured interviews allow prisoners to talk about their own social situation in their own language and to convey their thoughts and feelings without being restricted to pre-determined quantitative responses.<sup>17</sup> Interviews are an inclusive way of collecting data as they do not discriminate against participants with low literacy levels and those who have difficulties with reading and writing. This is particularly pertinent given that 60 per cent of the prison population is said to have difficulties in basic literacy skills.<sup>18</sup> A standard topic guide was used to help focus the conversation on key issues in line with the proposed

13. Codd, H. (2008) *In the shadow of prison: Families, Imprisonment and Criminal Justice*. Cullompton, UK, Willan Publishing.

14. Nugent, B. and Loucks, N. (2011) *The Arts and Prisoners: Experiences of Creative Rehabilitation*. *The Howard Journal*, 50 (4) 356-370.

15. Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed, Thousand Oaks: CA, Sage.

16. Bryman, A. (2001) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

17. Sofaer, S. (1999) *Qualitative methods: What are they and why use them?* *Health Services Research*, 34 (5) 1101-1118.

18. National Literacy Trust (2008) *Literacy changing lives: The role of literacy in offending behaviour*. London.

research questions and provide an opportunity to probe and question.

Additionally, a focus group was held with three drama practitioners (who delivered the project). Initial contact was made through the project lead at the Visitors' Centre, as she was influential to implementing the drama project within the prison and was able to access the prisoner participants. Focus groups have traditionally been used in market research with credible and useful results.<sup>19</sup> The focus groups were used amongst the practitioners to try and encourage group discussion around their own views and those of their colleagues in relation to delivering a drama intervention in prison. Focus groups can be advantageous when used for evaluation purposes, Patton states: *'the group's dynamics typically contribute to focusing on the most important topics and issues in the programs'*.<sup>20</sup> Although it is noted that it is possible for conflicts may arise when participants know each other.

### Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from the interviews drawn on principles from Braun and Clarke.<sup>21</sup> Interview and focus group data were transcribed verbatim by the researcher which allowed familiarity with the content of the transcripts. Initial codes were generated by reading through the transcripts and making detailed annotation, this included manually colour coding the transcripts, highlighting, using post-it notes and writing notes on the text, followed by the grouping together of codes to identify themes. Based on this a coding framework was developed, codes were based on reoccurring themes interpreted as 'prominent issues' emerging from the data.

### Ethical considerations

Prisoners are a vulnerable sub-section of the population and it is clear that a sensitive approach is required when conducting research with this group.<sup>22</sup> The study conformed to recognised ethical practice by ensuring: informed consent, confidentiality, secure

information management, attention to risk reduction and the right to withdraw from the research. Written consent to undertake the research was gained from the Governor of the prison in northern England and the manager of the Visitors' Centre and ethical clearance was given by Leeds Beckett University Ethics Committee in 2012.

## Results

For ease of presentation, and to aid understanding, an overview of findings from the interviews and the focus group discussion have been collated and presented together. The findings of the interviews and focus group are presented as five broad overarching themes. Verbatim quotes from the data are provided for illustrative purposes and to support the interpretation and findings. In line with ethical considerations these have been kept anonymous.

### Theme 1 — Perceived benefits of taking part in the drama project

Most prisoners reported that the drama project differed greatly from standard prison visits. The project provided the prisoners with an improved environment and an opportunity to interact with their children in a more relaxed and natural way. This was welcomed by the prisoners as it was felt that their standard visits are restrictive and allow them very little physical contact with their children. The drama project helped to remove these environmental restrictions and families were able to freely interact.

*It is more personal you can speak to your kids without an officer coming and telling you let go and keep your hands off and stuff like that. There was no officers hovering over you or nowt. It was more personal like that and you've got to interact with other families as well. (Prisoner\_2)*

The study discovered that the project was as a method for giving prisoners a sense of normality,

Prisoners are a vulnerable sub-section of the population and it is clear that a sensitive approach is required when conducting research with this group.

19. Patton MQ. (1990) Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. (2nd ed). Beverly Hills, CA, Sage Publications.

20. Ibid.

21. Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2) 77-101.

22. Smith, C. and Wincup, E. (2002). Reflections on fieldwork in criminal justice institutions. Quoted in: Welland, T and Pugsley, L (Eds.) *Ethical dilemmas in qualitative research*. Aldershot, Ashgate.; Liamputtong, P. and Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

enabling them to feel like they are in a normal surrounding where they can interact as human beings and discover their identity as a father rather than simply being identified as a prisoner. An overwhelmingly positive finding was reported that some prisoners became so engrossed in the drama project and spending time with their children that they did not feel like they were in prison.

*With it being civilians and with the staff not in their uniform, they are in their own clothes and you kind of feel a little bit free. For the couple of hours that you do that you don't feel like you're in prison. (Prisoner\_2)*

In addition to benefits in terms of bonding and interpersonal relationships, prisoners benefited on an individual level. Several prisoners reported an increase in confidence as a direct result of attending the drama project. They reported feeling more confident in; their own abilities as a father, speaking to other people and in being able to relax and 'make a fool of themselves' in front of their children.

*'[The benefits were] Family time, quality time with my kids, I feel more confident doing things like that. I feel more confident as a person...Showing other people that you can do things like this and have a laugh. (Prisoner\_4)*

## **Theme 2 — The fathering role**

The family separation that occurs as a consequence of imprisonment is often unavoidable; one overarching theme to emerge was that the drama project genuinely allowed prisoners to re-establish their role as a father. This included both the positive and negative aspects of parenting, noted by prisoners taking on an active fathering role during rehearsals; evidenced through examples of prisoners feeling empowered to discipline their children when they misbehaved or alternatively praise them or offer guidance during the project. Findings indicate that the most valued aspect of the project was the opportunity to spend quality time with their children, and to bond and build on their relationship.

*You can feed me bread and jam, I am not bothered, it is about being with my family and doing something with my family. (Prisoner\_8)*

All of the prisoners valued the quality time they got to spend with their children. They explained that there were no other courses or opportunities within the prison that would give them a week to engage with their children. Prisoners identified how being on the project for a week with their children helped them bond and improve their relationships.

*The drama project is brilliant because it's just pure bonding time...it's helped while I have been in prison to bring them closer to me because the less you see them then you become distant. (Prisoner\_1)*

Some prisoners reported that the project had led them to consider the extent to which they had been involved in their children's lives in the past. With some admitting that they had not previously had a high level of involvement.

*It gives a different view of 'right I do need to spend a bit more time with my daughter or son. (Prisoner\_4)*

*It shows more to what I can do out there to my boy. I don't really do much with him out there. (Prisoner\_8)*

A common theme to emerge from the study was that participation in the project had led some prisoners to reflecting on their crimes and the resulting separation from their children. The engagement with their children during the project was a reminder of the family life they were detached from and it provided a reminder that they were missing out on seeing their children grow up. This had encouraged some prisoners to become more engaged in their children's lives. Several acknowledged that upon their release they hope to spend more time with their children.

## **Theme 3 — Perceived outcomes for children**

All of the prisoners who took part in an interview indicated that their children spoke very highly of the drama project. The main benefits mentioned were being able to spend time with their father, and being

A common theme to emerge from the study was that participation in the project had led some prisoners to reflecting on their crimes and the resulting separation from their children.

able to see their fathers having fun and dressing up in costumes. One father spoke about how his son had been less boisterous since spending a week with his father on the drama project. He said that spending this time with his son not only helped build upon their relationship but it also had a wider impact on other members of the family as his partner noticed a positive change in his behaviour at home.

*My little boy is a bit better within himself and he has just had a week with me.* (Prisoner\_9)

#### **Theme 4 — Perceived impact on rehabilitation**

The project prison officer spoke of the many benefits of the project in terms of prisoners building upon bonds and relationships with their children. It was highlighted that such interventions are a vital part of rehabilitation as they reconnect prisoners to their life outside of the prison. It was suggested that such interventions can be an incentive for good behaviour because prisoners are able to look forward to seeing their children and this can have positive effects on their mental health during incarceration.

One prisoner suggested that if the course was run several times a year it could encourage offenders' good behaviour as all of the prisoners who attended the course view it as a privilege.

*It would give a lot of the prisoners something to look forward to; it might make people think about their actions while they are in prison, so they might think I have to be a respectable person so that I can go on this project.* (Prisoner\_4)

One prisoner reported that since his participation on the project he is keen to increase his skill set and will be more likely to register for other courses and activities within the prison. A common theme to emerge was that the project has reconnected the prisoners to their children and encouraged them to think about the family life that they are missing out on during their time in prison. Several prisoners suggested that the project has made them want to become more involved in family life and given them something positive to focus on upon release.

*Hopefully it will make an impact on them not coming back to prison because they can see*

*what they are missing out on while they are in here...hopefully it will drum into them that there is more to life than coming to prison and they have children to think about as well as themselves. Hopefully it will stop them reoffending and committing more crime when they are released.* (Visitors' Centre Manager)

#### **Theme 5 — Delivery and implementation**

Prisoners credited the drama practitioners for treating them with decency, respect and dignity. The drama practitioners were described as 'polite' and 'friendly'. It was agreed that it is appropriate to use the drama practitioners (third sector organisations) to deliver interventions such as the drama project. There was a general consensus that the project would not have been as successful if it had been run by staff within the prison.

There was a general consensus that the project would not have been as successful if it had been run by staff within the prison.

#### **Overview of the findings**

There was a very positive response to the drama project from the prisoners who took part. They highly valued the time it enabled them to spend with their children. It helped them to maintain their family bond with their children. It was a fun and enjoyable experience for both fathers and children, that was enhanced by employing a third

sector organisation (external drama practitioners) to deliver the project. The drama practitioners were seen to be friendly and non-judgmental and offered a wealth of knowledge and experience of drama. The positivist findings should be treated with some caution for it could be argued that (despite being informed that the interviews were confidential) some prisoners might have been wary in giving their honest opinion of the drama project in case it affected them taking part in further projects and courses run within the prison. A sceptical opinion could suggest that the drama project offered the prisoners five days away from their 'normal prison routine', thus this could be their motivation for taking part in preference to spending time with their children. It is important to note that most prisoners who attended the project stated that they had a fairly positive relationship with their children prior to attending the project.

#### **Discussion and conclusion**

The study has identified the importance of maintaining family connections during imprisonment.

Whilst the study was small scale, it has attempted to add both prisoner and staff voices to the support of interventions delivered by third sector organisations. Taking part in the project has the potential to reaffirm or challenge the fathering identity. There is potential for the intervention to help towards reducing reoffending but further longitudinal research needs to be undertaken. The project can be delivered using very few resources to comply with security restrictions within prisons. The application process includes a vigorous security check to protect the safety of the prisoners and their families; however this does mean that non-compliant prisoners might be excluded from the project and thus miss out on the opportunity to bond with their children. Third sector organisations are key mechanism to ensuring the project is run in a fair and engaging manner. In order to reduce barriers to recruitment of prisoners, promotional leaflets must emphasise the project is focused on building bonds and relationships. In a broad sense, it could be suggested that the drama project potentially provides an opportunity for prisoners to contribute to their families, which in effect links with empowering prisoners, and encouraging generativity, to achieve a sense of competence and finally work towards rehabilitation.

The study was informed by a social constructionist perspective therefore the results reflect the unique perspectives of individuals; nonetheless the findings still have wider resonance and application to other prisons. If the intervention was to be implemented in other prisons the outcomes achieved will reflect the unique circumstances in each one for example; the way they are governed and the way the intervention is implemented. Although the potential benefits of such interventions are becoming increasingly recognised<sup>23</sup> there is no policy in place to make such interventions mandatory in prisons. However, the evidence suggests that these interventions have the potential to help to maintain family bonds which in turn can help to reduce reoffending an issue that current policy is focusing upon.<sup>24</sup> Policy makers should consider both the potential benefits for society and cost savings in terms

of reduced re-offending and the improved family outcomes.

## Limitations

The data presented in this study was limited by the relatively small sample size (n=12) however this was due to several limitations of the intervention that are listed below. The project was only delivered to a small number of prisoners (n=6) and all of these prisoners were offered the chance to take part in the research. Only one prison officer worked on the project and she provided a prison staff perspective on the project. It would have been advantageous to the research to interview other prisoner officers working in the prison to gain insight on their perspectives of such interventions but due to time constraints and the logistics of arranging further interviews inside the prison this was not possible. One limitation regarded problems encountered in the data collection process, whereby one prisoner transferred to another prison therefore he could not take part in the research.

## Recommendations for policy, practice and further research

The findings from this study should be considered for both commissioners and prisons wishing to implement similar interventions that build on relationships between prisoners and their children. The current provision for prisoners and their children during imprisonment can be improved upon therefore policy development should aim to promote maintaining family bonds. When developing policy related to such interventions, the following should be taken into consideration; the potential social capital gains for prisoners and their families, the potential cost saving of the interventions lead to a reduction in reoffending, better mental health from prisoners, and social outcomes for their children.

As a result of the research study, the following recommendations have been identified:

- Allow third sector organisations and independent practitioners to deliver interventions in prisons.

Although the potential benefits of such interventions are becoming increasingly recognised there is no policy in place to make such interventions mandatory in prisons.

23. Ministry of Justice (2014) Proven Re-offending Statistics Quarterly Bulletin: January to December 2012, England and Wales. London, Ministry of Justice.

24. Hunter, G. et al (2013) Intermediate outcome of family and intimate relationship interventions: a rapid evidence assessment: Analytical Summary. Institute for Criminal Policy Research and New Philanthropy Capital, National Offender Management Service.

❑ Within the prisons budget constraints, provide funding for interventions that support family bonds and relationship building. Implementing regular interventions may produce more positive outcomes than 'one-off' interventions.

❑ Encourage interventions to be delivered in relaxed environments as this helps remove barriers for both prisoners and their families, encourages interaction and provides a sense of 'normality'.

❑ Allocate greater resources to implement interventions that target disengaged fathers; encourage a mechanism for prisoners who might not qualify for the initial application process of an intervention.

❑ Try to minimise the barriers to recruitment when advertising family building interventions in prisons. Promotion leaflets should be clear, using visuals where possible to compensate for prisoners with low literacy levels.

The evidence suggests that interventions that allow prisoners to spend an extended amount of time with their children may contribute to stronger family ties although further evidence will be required to test this further. It is important to acknowledge that there

are definite gaps in the study where a more in-depth investigation could have provided a wider range of perspectives. Further research could include; a longitudinal evaluation that encompassed a specific focus upon the perspectives of children and prisoners' partners. The longitudinal evaluation could be combined with a quantitative element to measure outcomes around; reoffending, and the wellbeing of prisoner's and their children. Further investigation into external factors that can influence such interventions would offer additional insight. For example; exploring whether it made a difference at what point in a prisoner's sentence the intervention was delivered, would it be more effective to deliver at the beginning, middle or towards the end of a sentence. Furthermore, it would be interesting to provide a comparable group where prisoners could spend a similar amount of time with their children without the facilitation of a practitioner and a structured intervention, although this could be difficult to implement due to many factors such as finding a comparable baseline. For example it would be challenging to find prisoners with; similar lengths of sentence, similar pre-existing bonds with their children.

# Enhancing access to probation interventions

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## Introduction

**In 2012, Leeds Metropolitan University<sup>2</sup> formed a partnership with the West Yorkshire Probation Trust<sup>3</sup> in Leeds, enabling final year speech and language therapy students to undertake placements within the Trust. The opportunity enabled pairs of students to explore the need for Speech and Language Therapy within the Probation Service, working with high levels of independence, as there were no Speech and Language Therapists employed by the Trust.<sup>4</sup> This discussion will review evidence of the level and types of communication difficulties within the offender population, consider the impact of such difficulties, how issues have been addressed and reflect on our experiences as Speech and Language Therapists at Leeds Beckett University of working with the Probation Service in Leeds.**

Courts can award intensive community orders as an alternative to prison sentences. As part of community sentencing, the Leeds Probation Service runs a series of programmes. Attendance at the groups is compulsory and non-attendance can result in offenders returning to court for breaching the requirements of their sentence. Students were placed in three different settings; the Thinking Skills Programme; the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme<sup>5</sup> and the Skills for Work team (not a compulsory intervention). The placement aims were to observe and assess the communication skills of the offenders attending the programmes; to observe and assess the communication style of the facilitators running the programmes and to review the resources used on the programmes.

## Background

A body of literature has been growing, particularly during the last 20 years, which provides evidence of the significant number of individuals with communication impairments in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Much of the evidence has been drawn from the Youth Justice population, as there has been a push to identify and provide support for this group. Three recent studies illustrate this well. Half of the young offenders in a secure college,<sup>6</sup> aged 15-17 years were screened. The results showed 66-90 per cent had below average language skills (variation due to performance on specific subtests), with 46-67 per cent being classed as poor or very poor. A study of Service Users in the Bradford Youth Offending team,<sup>7</sup> found 74 per cent with a communication disability and only one of these individuals had previously accessed Speech and Language Therapy. Sixty five per cent of the young offenders screened in a Youth Offender Institution,<sup>8</sup> had language skills lower than the general population, with 20 per cent classed as 'severely delayed'. The range of difficulties encompassed listening and understanding, poor or limited vocabulary, struggling to explain things, poor interpersonal skills, poor eye contact, stammer and speech difficulties. The majority had difficulties in more than one area.

Literacy skills are developed on the basis of oral language ability, so it is unsurprising to also find poor literacy ability in the young offender population. In addition to their communication difficulties, 62 per cent of the young offender participants in a secure college<sup>9</sup> had literacy levels below Level 1, which is described as a minimum level of literacy. Ninety per cent of the

- 
1. Thanks are given to all the students who undertook the Probation placements and to all the Probation staff who supported them.
  2. Now Leeds Beckett University.
  3. Service now split and delivered by the National Probation Service and West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (CIC).
  4. Students were mentored by Probation staff and supported from the university by a Speech and Language Therapist.
  5. No longer running in the same format.
  6. Bryan, K., Freer, J., & Furlong, C. (2007) Language and communication difficulties in juvenile offenders, *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders* 42 (5), 1-16.
  7. Crew, M., & Ellis, N. (2008) *Speech and Language Therapy within Bradford Youth Offending Team*. Unpublished report: Bradford NHS & Bradford District Youth Offending Team.
  8. Gregory, J., & Bryan, K. (2011). Speech and language therapy intervention with a group of persistent and prolific young offenders in a non-custodial setting with previously undiagnosed speech, language and communication difficulties. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders* 46 (2): 202-15.
  9. Bryan, K., Freer, J., & Furlong, C. (2007) Language and communication difficulties in juvenile offenders, *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders* 42 (5), 1-16.

sample had left education before the age of 16. In addition to communication impairments, service users may have other difficulties of a specific nature for example dyslexia, or more global learning disability<sup>10</sup> with wider intellectual impairments, such as attention and memory difficulties.

An additional issue that needs consideration is that young offenders often have complex backgrounds of multiple disadvantages. The Prison Reform Trust provides a review<sup>11</sup> of the backgrounds of children attending 3 youth offending services. The profiles of 300 children (200 sentenced and 100 on remand) were obtained through interviews with staff and children. A picture of disadvantage is outlined that encompasses family, health, social and educational disadvantages. Of the sample, about 75 per cent had an absent father, 33 per cent an absent mother, 20 per cent were on the Child Protection register, or had experienced abuse or neglect. About 50 per cent were considered to live in a deprived household, or unsuitable accommodation and just under 50 per cent had run away, or absconded with 25 per cent having experienced the care system. Truancy, poor attendance or exclusions frequently disrupted education. There was frequently criminality or substance abuse in the extended family. The implication of this is that communication difficulties can be hidden amongst a range of other issues and, in addition, assessing the impact of interventions aimed at supporting communication is challenging, since many other issues affect outcomes such as reoffending.

Our experience is that the Probation population is very similar to that of the young offender population, which is to be expected, given the high levels of reoffending. The Speech and Language Therapy students found service users with a range of Speech, Language and Communication difficulties, often additional learning difficulties and health, social and family issues. Some service users had recognised Special Educational Needs, although many had never been

identified. A significant proportion of service users had mental health difficulties. A number had poor short-term memory and language processing for example delays in decoding information. Some of these difficulties are likely to be related to long-term alcohol or drug abuse. It is therefore evident that there are a number of barriers that may affect access to Probation interventions.

### **The impact of communication difficulties on access to interventions**

Language used in the Criminal Justice System is inherently difficult. An exploratory study in South Wales,<sup>12</sup> looked at the presence and perceived impact of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) among offenders completing community sentences. Ninety per cent of the small group of participants, aged between 21 and 49 years had some sort of SLCN. However, when asked to provide definitions for some specific terms associated with court or sentencing for example custodial, compensation, even those *without* identifiable SLCNs had difficulty understanding the vocabulary. When interviewed, some offenders reported that when going through the court process they had not understood the sentence they had been given, or some had pretended that they did.

In addition to the complexity of court language and sentencing language, difficulties have been identified in interventions designed to support and rehabilitate offenders. A review<sup>13</sup> of the oral communication courses aiming to develop language and thinking skills in prisons, found some evidence that these contributed to a reduction in rates of reoffending. These programmes are acknowledged to be challenging for participants and will be even more so for those with SLCNs.

Group courses run by the Probation Service, such as Thinking Skills, Anger Management and Domestic Abuse Programmes are designed to reduce reoffending

The Speech and Language Therapy students found service users with a range of Speech, Language and Communication difficulties, often additional learning difficulties and health, social and family issues.

10. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines learning disability as 'a reduced level of intellectual functioning resulting in diminished ability to adapt to the daily demands of the normal social environment.'

11. Jacobson, J., Bhardwa, B., Gyateng, T., Hunter, G. & Hough, M (2010) *Punishing disadvantage a profile of children in custody*. London: Prison Reform Trust. Available to download from <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk>

12. Iredale, R., Parow, B., & Pierpoint, H. (2011) Communication on probation. *Speech & Language Therapy in Practice*, Summer: 14-16.

13. Moseley, D., Clark, J., Baumfield, V., Hall, E., Hall, I., Miller, J., Blench, G., Gregson, M., Spedding, T., Soden, R. & Livingston, K. (2006) *Developing oral communication and productive thinking skills in HM prisons*. London: Learning and Skills Research Centre.

by tackling the root causes of offending and they frequently form part of an Activity Requirement agreed in a Community Sentence. The exact components of the Activity Requirement are determined after a post-sentence assessment by the Probation Officer in collaboration with the offender. A key concern is that the effectiveness of the programmes may be significantly compromised because of a mismatch between the potentially sophisticated spoken and written language required to understand and progress through them and the speech, language and communication profiles of those accessing the programmes.

Although the group interventions the Speech and Language Therapy students observed were well designed to prompt offenders to address their decision-making and change behaviour, some of the language was difficult for service users. Some important but complex vocabulary used in the Thinking Skills Programme was unknown to some service users for example 'vulnerable' and 'ambition'. Some of the techniques used required language levels and thinking skills that were challenging for service users. For example the symbol of a 'red flag' was used, to support group members to identify factors that might precipitate their offending for example drinking with mates might be identified as a 'red flag' that would lead to an episode of car stealing and joy riding. However, when one of the service users was asked, 'What is a red flag for you?' he answered, 'Flames', demonstrating that he had not understood the task, as the response was completely unrelated to his offence. Complex vocabulary used by tutors included, 'scrutinised' 'regrettable decisions', 'activating event' and their meanings were not always fully explained for the group members.

Comprehension difficulties were highlighted. For example, one service user did not appear to follow the tasks set and did not answer direct questions. He tended to let others speak for him. In contrast, another group member would volunteer answers, despite misinterpreting the question or conversation. Some confusion and frustration resulted. Difficulties of comprehension were evident, sometimes even after repetition, prompting and support were given. Service

users were more successful with shorter questions that required little interpretation.

Links have been made between communication difficulties and behaviour in young people for example at a special school for children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD),<sup>14</sup> 74 per cent of the children had behavioural difficulties. These behavioural difficulties may mask communication difficulties that may be overlooked by staff working with the children. Individuals with poor communication frequently also have poor social interaction skills for example avoidance of eye contact, which may suggest a lack of interest, boredom or rudeness, where this is not intentional. As Snow and Powell state, 'Unfortunately, such behaviours are easily misinterpreted as reflecting a lack of cooperation, rather than a lack of communication ability, and can thus incur a significant social penalty.'<sup>15</sup>

Students observed an interesting parallel in the Probation groups. Probation officers are skilled in delivering the programmes and in managing the challenging behaviours that service users demonstrate. However, students noted that frequently probation officers focused on disruptive behaviour and overt communicative behaviours, such as swearing. They were less likely to notice word finding difficulties or problems of sequencing in narratives, which may indicate

more significant language needs that require additional support. Staff may not recognise that individuals who are quiet and passive may also have communication difficulties and need encouragement, to explore issues pertinent to them, through appropriate attention and support.

One pair of students was placed in a Domestic Abuse Programme, targeting adult male domestic violence offenders. Group members were required to reflect on their own behaviour and complete a 'control log'. The men have to describe a situation where they have used an abusive behaviour, analyse their feelings, beliefs, intents and the effect it had on themselves, their partner and others. Students evaluated the control log for the accessibility of the language and organisation. They found it contained abstract concepts, for example 'minimisation', 'denial' or 'blame' and the questions were asked in a complex way

Some important but complex vocabulary used in the Thinking Skills Programme was unknown to some service users for example 'vulnerable' and 'ambition'.

14. Stringer, H & Lozano, S (2007) Underidentification of speech and language impairment in children attending a special school for children with emotional and behavioural disorders. *Educational & Child Psychology* 24: 9-19.

15. Snow, P C & Powell MB (2008) Oral language competence, social skills and high risk boys: What are juvenile offenders trying to tell us? *Children and society*, 22 16-28. (page 24).

for example 'What beliefs do you have that support your actions or intentions?'

The probation staff and the SLT students interpreted discussion of Service User behaviour differently. This was particularly evident in relation to one of the group members, when asked to think about effects of his offence on himself and his ex-partner and discuss feelings and emotions. Students noted that he became quite agitated and anxious and showed physical signs of this, such as sweating heavily and holding his head in his hands, saying he did not understand what they were asking him. When asked 'How do you think your partner *felt* when you hit her and knocked her tooth out?' he struggled to respond, eventually saying 'She might not be ok about going back to the bingo hall' (where the offence took place). He did not suggest some obvious effects such as fear or hurt. When asked to participate in a group activity naming emotions connected to the word 'anger', he found this very difficult and needed a lot of cues to come up with suggestions, using words that were not emotions, such as 'physical violence'.

In debriefing, the probation staff felt the man's actions could be intentionally obstructive or rude, whereas the students felt he did not understand common emotions, such as anger and fear and was showing genuine frustration. Of interest is that this service user had been suspended from the programme on a number of occasions, due to inappropriate behaviour. We have to question whether the intervention in this format was suitable for this service user and suggest that further specific assessment of his communication and social skills would have been helpful.

In order to understand the impact of their behaviours on others, the offenders needed to possess Theory of Mind. Theory of Mind refers to the ability 'to know and understand that other people have their own thoughts, feelings, and desires that are different from their own'.<sup>16</sup> It is the capacity an individual has to understand the mental states of others, such as beliefs, feelings, emotions, desires, hopes and intentions. Lacking Theory of Mind is thought to be one of the core characteristics of High Functioning Autism. It is possible that the service user described above may have the characteristics of this type of social impairment.

However, he had been in and out of foster homes as a child, had a rough childhood and a history of drug and alcohol abuse. All of these factors could have influenced his social skills and his psychological state. Even though a diagnosis may not be possible, or desirable, the Speech and Language Therapy students were able to recognise these crucial behaviours and raise awareness of the difficulties and potential strategies that could help. A helpful guide to Autism for CJS professionals<sup>17</sup> is available, which includes detailed information to assist in identification and support for individuals on the Autism spectrum.

### Addressing the issues

Evidence from both the literature and Speech and Language Therapy student placements suggests that many service users do have communication difficulties that can be a barrier to accessing programmes designed to support them. This raises the question of how these issues can be addressed and is discussed below, with particular reference to 3 aspects: screening and assessment, raising awareness through staff training and revision of support materials.

The role of the Probation Trusts in providing pre-sentence reports was included as part of the 2014 joint inspection of the

treatment of offenders with learning disabilities within the CJS.<sup>18</sup> Pre-sentence reports may be prepared on the day of the court appearance but Probation Officers can ask for an adjournment period, to allow for more in depth assessment. The inspection noted that some reports had been completed too rapidly, without an adjournment period and did not contain sufficient information to enable appropriate sentencing. The consequence is that the needs of offenders are not fully outlined, therefore the most relevant interventions may not be selected, nor the risk of harm to others fully evaluated.

The Offender Analysis System (OASys) is used in Leeds, to assess how likely the service user is to re-offend, to assist with management of risk of harm, and to measure changes the service user makes during their community sentence. However, at the time of the placements, the OASys lacked sufficient means of identifying any speech, language and communication

## In order to understand the impact of their behaviours on others, the offenders needed to possess Theory of Mind.

16. Burden, L. & Dickens, G. (2009) Asperger's syndrome and offending behaviour. *Learning Disability Practice*. 12 (9), 14-21.

17. National Autistic Society (2011) *Autism: a guide for criminal justice professionals*. London: National Autistic Society.

18. HMI Probation (2014) *Joint inspection of the treatment of offenders with learning disabilities within the criminal justice system – phase 1 from arrest to sentence*. Available from: <http://www.pwd.org.au/documents/pubs/adjc/2014-Jan-LearningDisabilities.pdf>

needs of service users. All the students who observed Probation interventions were aware that there had been no attempt to assess communication and only a brief exploration of literacy issues at the pre-programme assessments.

To address this gap, the students devised self-report questionnaires, which they trialled to gain service users' perceptions of their own communication. The results of the questionnaires were interesting. Some of the men seemed to be answering very honestly, whereas others rated themselves highly for example not indicating that their speech was clear, when observation suggested differently. There could be a number of reasons for these inconsistencies for example lack of awareness of their own communication, causing over or under estimation of ability, or possibly a useful strategy to cover up difficulties and perhaps avoid embarrassment. A couple of the service users stated that they did not like asking questions because they felt stupid, which has implications for understanding. One person said that he can be slow at thinking about what people say, but he 'gets it' later. This information had been hidden from the facilitators prior to the student questionnaire and could mean they have an inaccurate picture of service users' abilities and potential to access the programme content. The students therefore concluded that the self-report is useful as a technique to discover more about the individual's insight into their difficulties.

Access to Speech and Language Therapy in the field of offending is patchy across the UK and has been focused mostly on young offenders but there is evidence of the potential benefit. Where Speech and Language Therapy intervention is available, for example in Leeds Youth Offending service, young people can make changes to their communication and behaviour

and trained staff can have a big impact. Intervention was integrated into the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP),<sup>19</sup> with individual communication plans being put in place. Over 75 per cent of the cohort showed improvements in their language and communication skills when reassessed prior to leaving the ISSP, as evidenced by standardised assessment and staff observation.

The views of the staff in regard to this new initiative were sought.<sup>20</sup> They recognised the value of Speech and Language Therapy and their response to working with Speech and Language Therapists was positive. They were able to make changes to their style of interaction in a short period of time. However, it was noted that some staff had been initially resistant and not fully committed to the process of change.

A number of resources have been designed to support staff working in the CJS. The Department of Health produced a handbook<sup>21</sup> for professionals working with offenders with learning disability, which provides useful definitions and guidance, plus communication strategies and further references for resources. Crossing the Communication Divide<sup>22</sup> is for all staff working with offenders and provides guidance on different types of communication difficulty, plus 'Top Tips and principles to guide good practice in working with people with communication difficulties'. Sentence Trouble<sup>23</sup> provides information and resources to help support young offenders with their communication difficulties. It can be adapted for use with adults. A more formal approach has been taken by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) with the development of a three-part training package; The Box combines an e-learning tool, a 2-day face-to-face course and a screening tool, provided once the training is complete. A pilot study and evaluation<sup>24</sup> of The Box,

A couple of the service users stated that they did not like asking questions because they felt stupid, which has implications for understanding.

19. Gregory, J., & Bryan, K. (2011). Speech and language therapy intervention with a group of persistent and prolific young offenders in a non-custodial setting with previously undiagnosed speech, language and communication difficulties. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders* 46 (2): 202-15.
20. Bryan, K & Gregory, J (2013) Perceptions of staff on embedding speech and language therapy within a youth offending team. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* 29 (3) 359-371.
21. DH (2011 edition) Positive practice Positive outcomes A handbook for professionals in the Criminal Justice System working with Offenders with Learning Disabilities. Available from: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/youth-justice/effective-practice-library/positive-practice-positive-outcomes.pdf>
22. National Offender Management Service (2009) Crossing the Communication Divide: A toolkit for prison and probation staff working with offenders who experience communication difficulties. Available from: [http://www.rcslt.org/about/docs/crossing\\_the\\_communication\\_divide](http://www.rcslt.org/about/docs/crossing_the_communication_divide)
23. Communication Trust (2009) Sentence Trouble London: Communication Trust. Available from: <http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources-for-practitioners/>
24. Munton, A. An evaluation of the pilot for The Box, the RCSLT's criminal justice training package and screening tools. Available from: [http://www.rcslt.org/speech\\_and\\_language\\_therapy/docs/rtk\\_final\\_report\\_box\\_pilotbehaviour](http://www.rcslt.org/speech_and_language_therapy/docs/rtk_final_report_box_pilotbehaviour)

showed participants were better able to identify communication difficulties and to apply their knowledge to their work setting.

Student observations of Probation Interventions showed that programme facilitators used a number of skills that are likely to be helpful in supporting the communication difficulties. Areas for skills development included; reducing the amount and complexity of information presented verbally; increasing the use of visual aids and being mindful of cues that might indicate difficulties. Students were able to highlight the importance of close attention to service users' facial expressions, body language and interaction with other group members, which might indicate that service users have not understood the information presented. This strategy could also support the identification of underlying difficulties and need for support, such as the use of more specific questions or examples. Students recommended use of a seating plan, to ensure that less confident or able group members were in direct view of the facilitators, so encouragement and support could be given. Additional practical suggestions included explanation of all terminology and having frequently used terminology on the wall.

Students made adaptations to written resources for example simplification of vocabulary, sentence structure, use of pictures, and consideration of clear layouts. Without changing the essential content, the students simplified the instructions and adapted the design of the Control Log used on the Domestic Abuse programme. For example, the service users were asked to 'Briefly describe the situation and the actions you used to control your partner (statements, gestures, tone of voice, physical contact, facial expressions)'. The students replaced this with a more straightforward request, 'Describe an incident when you physically abused your partner for example What did you say? How did you say it? What did you do?' The alterations were implemented to make it easier for the men to answer the questions, to identify areas of change they needed to make and start the process of change. The feedback about the new control log was positive, with group members reporting that it was easier to understand and facilitators reporting that it was a big improvement on the old log.

As part of the placements, students provided training sessions for Probation teams, in order to raise awareness of communication difficulties and provide

supporting strategies. Probation staff recognized their lack of expertise and were receptive to the training and the recommended strategies. One pair of students designed a communication pack, as part of their training, which was well received by the staff and resulted in further training requests. Overall, the Probation staff found the student suggestions helpful and were very supportive of the placements.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

For offenders to receive fair and equal treatment and opportunities, all staff working within the CJS need to be aware of the possibility of communication difficulties, including what to observe and supporting strategies that can be offered. Group interventions that address offending behaviours need to be accessible for those with communication and learning difficulties and resources need to be designed carefully, with adaptations put in place when needed. Training would support CJS staff to identify communication and learning needs and to use strategies to support service users. Access to suitable screening and assessment at different points in the process of sentencing and intervention is essential. Probation staff also need easy access to specialist professional support, to enable full and accurate pre-sentence reports to be made, to receive advice and to support the provision of suitable intervention packages.

Although there is improving awareness of the numbers of service users with communication and learning disability in the population of offenders, challenges remain. There is some evidence of effective assessment and intervention. However, overall the pace of change is slow. Furthermore, service users have complex individual profiles and social circumstances and it is therefore challenging to know how to measure the effect of interventions and the impact on reoffending.

Speech and Language Therapy students asked the question, 'Is there a role for Speech and Language Therapy in the Probation Service?' Our conclusions are that Speech and Language Therapists are excellently placed to support the screening and assessment of service users, to produce and adapt accessible resources and to provide staff training in communication difficulties.

# Paying the Price:

## Sex Workers in Prison and the Reality of Stigma

*Gemma Ahearne is a PhD candidate at Leeds Beckett University.<sup>1</sup>*

**Sex workers are a hidden demographic of the female prison estate. The Corston Report<sup>2</sup> called for a new *Reducing Reoffending Pathway 9* for women who have engaged in prostitution. Yet this involves having to locate the women who sell sex and having the support in place inside prison. Those engaging in sex work have specific needs relating to health care, securing housing, engaging with charities who assist with safer worker practices and exiting support, and coping with the additional stigma of being a prisoner who also works in the sex industry, particularly in a street-based setting. This paper derives from my Ph.D research at HMP New Hall. There are no official records kept for the number of sex workers in custody. And despite the plethora of research on various elements of the sex industry,<sup>3</sup> there is little on the specific group of sex workers in prison.<sup>4</sup> My study seeks to be a small part of remedying that shortfall.**

### Methodology

My study had three broad research questions to frame each session:

1. How do female prisoners with a history of engaging in sex work feel about imprisonment?
2. How do they feel about exiting?
3. How do they feel about access to specialist services inside and outside the prison?

The questions were deliberately broad so that the sessions could be participant-led where possible, and to provide the women with a space to talk about their lives, opinions and experiences. I abided not only by the British Sociological Association, Leeds Beckett University and National Offender Management Services' Codes of Ethics, but also as influenced by my feminist standpoint epistemology that is deeply committed to the wellbeing and understanding of marginalised women. My ethical

responsibility to this highly vulnerable group of inmate meant I took written consent every week, verbally recounted the consent forms and issues every week, and reminded the women of the ability to delete chunks of data, throughout the process. I also ensured that I would not jeopardise future research opportunities for those sociologists entering the field after me, and that I would uphold the respect, dignity and textured understanding of sex workers at all conferences and events. All names have been changed to pseudonyms chosen by the women so that they can recognise themselves in the research, and the women were made aware that I will use our data in the form of direct quotations, their poetry, and through discourse analysis.

The research took place in the Together Women Project (TWP) centre at HMP New Hall. From October 2014 through February 2015. TWP occupies a unique and valuable position within the prison in that it is set apart from the main wings, and offers the inmates 32 different external agencies to support them with issues from housing, mental health and benefit advice. The centre is run by TWP staff. Our two-week pilot took place in one of the prison recreation rooms, and the women suggested that TWP would be a preferred environment, as it is removed from the wing and officers passing by, and is thus more relaxed. TWP offers the women comfortable seating which we arranged into a circle, has tables to put our biscuits, drinks and papers on, and the women are allowed to make their own hot drinks. Such points should not be trivialised, for it is important to understand the lived experiences of these women both inside and outside of the prison. I had naively underestimated what a luxury biscuits were in the prison, and the novelty of having tea, coffee and sugar offered to them. I was allowed to provide biscuits in lieu of the gift voucher or other payment one would normally offer participants. This created a positive environment for the group. It also meant that prison staff did not have to keep looking in to see

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1. Thank you to all the women who co-created this research, and the staff at TWP New Hall for your assistance.
  2. Corston J (2007) *The Corston Report: A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, London: Home Office.
  3. Sanders, T & Campbell, R (2014) 'Criminalization, protection and rights: Global tensions in the governance of commercial sex', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 14, 5, pp. 535-548; Sanders, T & Scoular, D (eds.) (2010) *Regulating Sex/Work: From Crime Control to Neo-liberalism?*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell; Sanders, T, O'Neill, M & Pitcher, J (2009) *Prostitution sex work, policy and politics*, London: Sage; Phoenix, J (2009) (ed.) *Regulating Sex for Sale Prostitution policy form in the UK*, Bristol: Policy Press.
  4. Clark, L (2009) *Sex Workers in Prison Project Evaluation Report*, The Griffins Society; Clark, L (2006) *Provision of Support For Imprisoned Adult Female Street-based Sex Workers*, The Griffins Society.

if I was ok, as TWP has several staff in the adjacent room.

My sampling cannot be said to be representative of all sex workers in custody, given that they are not a homogenous group, and that their personal and working practices differ considerably. Representative probability sampling of 'hidden populations' is widely understood to be difficult.<sup>5</sup> I also did not want to 'out' anybody and so made the decision to not use posters or promotional materials that could be a talking point of unsupportive staff members or women who verbally abuse those known to be sex workers. Instead, the *Pathway 9* co-ordinator told women who she knew about my study. These women were then free to tell their friends or cell mates. Participant information sheets and consent forms were sent in advance, so that women could discuss my study with friends, staff or family. Snowball sampling was then employed, in that women in Study One told their friends about the research, and some of these women came to Study Two. Women were emphatically told that taking part was voluntary, and that there would be no negative consequences for declining the invitation to take part. Indeed, given my method as outlined below, women were free to sit and listen and not speak. Or to comment only on the poetry and not the three broad research questions. This was a risk in terms of obtaining data but crucial for my commitment to feminist research and in building a trusting relationship with the women.

My chosen research method was reading aloud; using literature in the form of reading aloud to build a rapport and use literary language and thinking<sup>6</sup> to explore both the texts and the women's own life worlds.<sup>7</sup> My focus groups had space for up to ten women given that this is the maximum that would be

manageable in a group session. The women were also given the opportunity to write,<sup>8</sup> both to deliver to the group or to keep for themselves. The benefits of reading aloud are well documented,<sup>9</sup> and the benefits of literature-based interventions are supported by a wealth of research.<sup>10</sup> I wanted to provide the women with an opportunity to express themselves freely,<sup>11</sup> and the tool of literary thinking lent itself well to this.<sup>12</sup>

### Data Analysis

All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by myself. I listened to each recording twice before transcribing, and made notes as I transcribed. This was time consuming, but gave me a deep understanding of my data, and allowed me to familiarise myself with the different accents, colloquialisms, names for drugs, intonation etc. As I listened to each recording, I could visualise which women it was speaking, and any looks that were exchanged within the group, and other actions that affected the meaning. This was also crucial for my own reflections on my research practice, for inclusion within my reflexivity chapter. I am using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, and this paper will discuss an emergent theme from the initial stages of my data analysis.

### Stigma

Identifying this hidden demographic is the main barrier to research, with stigma<sup>13</sup> being a clear reason why women do not want to 'out' themselves as selling sex. It is clear that talking about being a sex worker in prison carries the risk of being constructed as doubly deviant, and being stigmatised by other inmates and some staff. This stigma and fear of judgement can prevent women accessing services relating to their

Women were emphatically told that taking part was voluntary, and that there would be no negative consequences for declining the invitation to take part.

5. Levy, J (2015) *Criminalising the Sale of Sex Lessons from Sweden*, Oxon: Routledge, p. 12; Sanders, T (2006) 'Sexing Up the Subject: Methodological Nuances in Researching the Female Sex Industry', *Sexualities*, 9, pp. 449-468.
6. Davis, P (2013) *Reading and the Reader The Literary Agenda*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
7. O'Neill, M (2001) *Prostitution & Feminism Towards a Politics of Feeling*, Cambridge: Polity Press; Sweeney, M (2008) 'Books as Bombs: Incendiary Reading Practices in Women's Prisons', *Theories and Methodologies*, pp. 666-672.
8. Brooks, A & Johnson, R (2010) 'Exposed Yet Unrevealed: Reflections on the Poetry of Women Prisoners', *Gender Issues*, Vol. 27, pp. 146-164.
9. Billington, J & Robinson, J (2014) *An Evaluation of a Pilot Study of a Literature Based Intervention with Women in Prison*, CRILS, University of Liverpool.
10. Billington, J; Dowrick, C; Hamer, A; Robinson, J & Williams, C (2010) *An investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and well-being*, Liverpool: Liverpool Health Inequalities Research.
11. Sweeney, M (2012) (ed.) *The Story Within Us Women Prisoners Reflect on Reading*, Illinois: University of Illinois.
12. *ibid.*
13. Goffman, E (2009) *Stigma Notes of the management of spoiled identity*, London: Penguin.

working status. Given that *Pathway 9* is a Reducing Reoffending pathway, this stigma can mean women reoffend due to a lack of support and appropriate frameworks being put into place prior to release.

*Yeah for one, I don't want the staff to know I came here, coz they'll wind me up, and the prisoners, a lot of them do it, but they will call you for it, and it's like, we're no different, and we're not bad people, and you get people on the out, saying look at that prozzy, look at that crackhead. (Billie Jean).*

*You get all lasses on the wing and that, calling you, ...and then you find out that have it done it, and it's like why you pretend. (Jessica).*

*You may cut me with your eyes, yeah, and it, it, the hate that people have for prostitutes and stuff, so you know what I mean. (Tilly).*

Far from being an abstract theoretical conception, stigma has real consequences for sex workers in prison. It can lead to increased stress contributing to mental health problems, and can increase social isolation contributing to further social exclusion.<sup>14</sup> It leads to women feeling ashamed, fearful and unwilling to report rape and other violence against them, and from sharing safer working practices openly.

### Legal position of selling sex

The legalities of selling sex are often confused, and it is little wonder that many sex workers in prison believe that selling sex is illegal and thus do not wish to disclose their working status. The Policing and Crime Act 2009<sup>15</sup> states that soliciting in a public place is an offence, as in kerb-crawling. Section 53a of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 states that it is illegal to buy sex from someone who has been subjected to force or deception. Brothel keeping also continues to be an offence,<sup>16</sup> which prevents women from working together as a safety measure, and prevents women

from talking about their work in prison given its illegality. Given it is the recommendations of *Paying the Price*<sup>17</sup> and its subsequent report *A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy*<sup>18</sup> that have been incorporated into this act, the abolitionist radical feminist framing is clear to see; that all prostitution is conflated with commercial sexual exploitation. This makes it very difficult for women to admit to wanting to continue selling sex, or for us to understand the complexities of buyer-seller relationships, particularly those which are long-standing and some whom the woman consider to be a friend. As such, vital opportunities to work with and support women in custody who sell sex, are lost.

Initiatives such as National Ugly Mugs to forewarn the women of dangers from 'dodgy' clients, and methods such as equipping the women with a sex work kit and sexual health advice targeted at working women prior to release, can help the women work more safely.

## Talking openly about safer working practices in a group deemed safe by the women, can also be beneficial in sharing working advice.

Talking openly about safer working practices in a group deemed safe by the women, can also be beneficial in sharing working advice. However such tools not permitted within the framework of all commercial sex as inherent violence against women. Moreover, women who are attacked in their line of work, by clients, passersby or vigilantes, will not report their abuse to prison staff and gain access to counselling if their work is going to be seen as the problem. All of

the women I spoke with have suffered severe trauma, and some know women who have been murdered during the course of their work. Safer working practices should be discussed alongside the option of exiting help and services, with the latter not being pushed on women over the former. Women making trusting relationships with staff from sex work outreach charities inside the prison gates have the option of continuing that support once they are released. Given the chaotic nature of these women's lives, having such support in place is invaluable. My participants spoke highly of sex work services they access 'on the out' some of whom also visit in prison. Making these connections before the women are released is crucial.

Stigma is reinforced by the abolitionist radical feminist approach<sup>19</sup> that aims to 'end demand'<sup>20</sup> by

14. Balfour, R & Allen, J (2014) *A Review of the Literature on Sex Workers and Social Exclusion*, London: University College London Institute of Health Equity, p.9.

15. Home Office (2009) *Policing and Crime Act 2009*, London: HMSO.

16. Home Office (2010b) *Home Office Circular 006/2010: Policing and Crime Act 2009 — New Prostitution Provisions*, London: Home Office.

17. Home Office (2004) *Paying the Price: A Consultation Paper on Prostitution*, London: Home Office.

18. Home Office (2006) *A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy and a Summary of Responses to Paying the Price*, London: Home Office.

19. Levy, J (2015) *Criminalising the Sale of Sex Lessons from Sweden*, Oxon: Routledge.

20. Eaves, (2008) *Big Brothel A Survey Of The Off-Street Sex Industry In London*, London: The Poppy Project.

criminalising the purchase of sex. This perspective rejects that sex work is labour<sup>21</sup> and instead frames it as abuse. But women who engage in commercial sex do not always exchange sexual contact for money. The relationships they are involved in are far more complex and can combine elements of poverty, need, trust, exploitation and even love. Boyfriends or friends who provide shelter in return for sporadic sex, create a grey area of the oft-implied direct transaction of sex and cash. Indeed, many such relationships may be seen as normative within the confines of that relationship and indeed the habitus<sup>22</sup> of street-based sex workers. In contrast to the predatory 'John' that many abolitionist radical feminists refer to, many street-working women have had their regulars for many years, and may socialise by taking drugs or drinking as part of a mixed group. Therefore telling women to simply 'stop contact' with those they consider to be their social circle, is problematic.

*So you just go down beat, all you see is ex prostitutes, your friends, your punters, do you know what I mean, you know everyone. It's just a big circle isn't it (Kate).*

A long-term friend who supplies alcohol, drugs or food, in return for sex, perhaps sporadically or intermittently, cannot be understood in terms of the simplistic 'John'. These women often do not define themselves as sex workers, nor see what they are doing as irregular from 'normal' relationships. Therefore caution must be taken not to 'other' the women by labelling them as sex workers if they do not identify as such, or as being in exploitative inter-personal situations, without highlighting the similarities between many of these relationships and the relationships of many women under patriarchy. Scouler makes the crucial point that it is not only

The relationships they are involved in are far more complex and can combine elements of poverty, need, trust, exploitation and even love.

commercial sex that has questions of power and inequality.<sup>23</sup> It makes more sense to view sex work in this context, as labour,<sup>24</sup> as neither inherently exploitative or free from exploitation,<sup>25</sup> and having underlying push-factors of poverty, as with any labour performed under capitalism.

### Licence to Fail

Another way of considering that abolitionist radical feminist approach is to borrow the term coined by Scouler and Carline (2014).<sup>26</sup> They write about the 'sweeping neo-abolitionism' in the governance of UK sex work, emphasising that Section 17 of the Policing and Crime Act, 2009 includes the promotion of 'rehabilitation' for sex workers' by the use of Engagement and Support Orders (ESOs) to 'rehabilitate' street-based sex workers.<sup>27</sup> Sanders also writes about rehabilitation drawing from the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill, 2008, that proposed a 'Compulsory Rehabilitation Order'.<sup>28</sup> Sanders argues that this proposal 'envisaged the direct criminalization of excluded and vulnerable women for a low level offence...'<sup>29</sup> This 'rehabilitation' is seen in the context of sex workers as offenders, and as such is seen as cleansing public space of an

undesirable activity and presence, rather than offering the women services that will work for them regardless of whether they wish to exit at this stage. This also reiterates the Prostitution Strategy's stance that exiting is the only valid outcome. Viewing all sex work through a lens as violence against women<sup>30</sup> is not only unhelpful and simplistic<sup>31</sup> but legitimizes punitive action against sex workers 'for their own good/protection'.<sup>32</sup>

21. Matthews, R; Easton, H; Young, L & Bindel, J (2014) *Exiting Prostitution A Study in Female Desistance*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
22. Bourdieu, P (1984) *Distinction*, Oxon: Routledge.
23. Maher, J; Pickering, S & Gerard, A (2013) *Sex Work Labour, mobility and sexual services*, Oxfordshire: Routledge.
24. Chapkis, W (1997) *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labour*, London: Routledge; Oerton, S and Phoenix, J (2001) *Sex/Body Work: Discourses and Practices, Sexualities: Studies in Culture and Society*, 4;4, pp.387-412; Phipps, A (2014) *The Politics of the Body*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 94.
25. O'Connell-Davidson, J (1995) 'The anatomy of 'free choice' prostitution', *Gender, Work & Organisation*, 2, 1, pp.1-10, p.8.
26. Scouler, J; Carline, A (2014) 'A critical account of a 'creeping neo-abolitionism': Regulating prostitution in England and Wales', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 14, 5, pp. 608-626.
27. Ibid, p.610.
28. Sanders, T (2009)'Controlling the 'Anti Sexual' City: Sexual Citizenship and the Disciplining of Female Street Sex Workers', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9, pp.507-525, p.512.
29. Ibid.
30. Farley, M (2003) 'Prostitution and the Invisibility of Harm', *Women and Therapy*, 26, 3/4 pp. 247-280.
31. O'Connell-Davidson, (1998) *Prostitution, Power and Freedom*, Malden: Polity Press, p. 110.
32. Atkins, H (2010) 'What Judges think about prostitution' *Assessing the considerations and measures employed by members of the judiciary for sentencing women who sell sex*, The Griffins Society, p. 17; Brooks-Gordon, B (2006) *The Price of Sex, Prostitution Policy and Society*, Devon: Willan, p. 64.

This means sex workers occupy a precarious position, they are both victim<sup>33</sup> and offender.<sup>34</sup> For those selling sex and in custody, it is easy to see why they do not want the additional deviance of the sex worker label. A consequence of this is sex workers preferring to stay 'under the radar' in prison, scared of the consequences of coming forward and saying they sell sex. This fear is a major barrier to accessing services that can positively impact woman's health, safety and lessen their risk of reoffending.<sup>35</sup> My research has also shown that the women are scared of 'rehabilitation' and want to engage with services on their own terms, and in their own time. Given the high prevalence of mental health issues within the female prison estate, trust is absolutely crucial in developing fruitful relationships with sex workers. 49 percent of women in custody are reported to suffer from depression and anxiety compared to 19 percent of women in general population<sup>36</sup> and half of women prisoners in one study took medication for the central nervous system, compared to just a fifth of men.<sup>37</sup> Of all the women sent to prison, 46 percent report they have attempted suicide at some point in their lives.<sup>38</sup> Despite accounting for only 6 percent of the prison population, women account for half of all self-harm incidents in prison<sup>39</sup> Arguably the prevalence of mental health problems in the female estate is much higher than studies suggest. Women are fearful of disclosing mental health issues for fear of losing custody of children upon release, or facing punitive action in prison such as segregation and strip searches. The emphasis on exiting means that the women feel pressured, judged and controlled and are willing to divulge their experiences.

Project workers have expressed concern at not wanting to be seen as enforcement agencies<sup>40</sup> and likewise, sex workers are concerned about the

intentions of support services.<sup>41</sup> Although seen by participants in Carline and Scoular's study as an improvement upon previous system of fines, the problems arose in terms of offering support for vulnerable women inside of an enforcement framework.<sup>42</sup> As such, Carline and Scoular argue that such orders can be seen in terms of enforced welfare.<sup>43</sup>

*It's like they recall you outside for missing an appointment or having a positive drug test, instead of helping you, instead of saying right we'll deal with it and get you off the drug, they just send you back to jail and they don't wanna help you (Sasha).*

This fits in with the neoliberal notion of individualization and the 'choice' to change. In this discourse the structural inequalities and conditions the woman experienced, past abuse, poor education, health problems, unplanned pregnancies, low self-esteem, engagement in sex work, substance misuse, poor housing or lack of housing, are erased from the debate. This discourse also informs policy that translates as women being coerced into 'rehabilitation'. The female offender must prove that she wants to be 'cured' of her ills, and make the right choices. Sanders and Scoular argue that interestingly, the prevalent victim model, whereby the woman must exit sex work to be deemed worthy, take place in a social context of punitive welfarism.<sup>44</sup> Women selling sex on the street are doing so to survive.

For women who have been sentenced due to breaching orders, or for crimes relating to the sex buyer, the law seems more muddled and 'against' them, and they are less likely still to trust the prison system and access support. They are fearful of divulging anything

This fear is a major barrier to accessing services that can positively impact woman's health, safety and lessen their risk of reoffending.

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- 33. Kingston, S (2014) *Prostitution in the Community*, Oxon: Routledge, p. 32.
  - 34. Campbell, J (2015) *First Women jailed for breaching order against prostitution in Hessle*, Hull: Hull Daily Mail, Available at: <http://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/woman-jailed-breaching-order-prostitution-Hessle/story-26864715-detail/story.html>
  - 35. Balfour, R & Allen, J (2014) *A Review of the Literature on Sex Workers and Social Exclusion*, London: University College London Institute of Health Equity, p. 9.
  - 36. Ministry of Justice, (2013) *Gender Differences in Substance Misuse and Mental Health Amongst Prisoners*, London: Ministry of Justice.
  - 37. O'Brien, M; Mortimer, L; Singleton, N and Meltzer, H (2003) 'Psychiatric Morbidity among young women prisoners in England and Wales', *International Review of Psychiatry*, 15, 1, pp. 153-157.
  - 38. Women in Prison, (2015) *Key Facts: Women in Prison*, Available at: <http://www.womeninprison.org.uk/research/key-facts.php>
  - 39. WHO [World Health Organisation], (2009) *Women's Health in Prison: Correcting Gender Inequality in Health*, Copenhagen, Denmark, : WHO Regional Office for Europe.
  - 40. Carline, A; Scoular, J (2013) 'Saving Fallen Women Now? Critical Perspectives on Engagement and Support Orders and their Policy of Forced Welfarism', *Social Policy and Society*, 14 (1), pp.103-112.
  - 41. Carlton, B & Segrave, M (2013) *Women Exiting Prison Critical essays on gender, post-release support and survival*, Oxon, Routledge, p. 43.
  - 42. Ibid.
  - 43. Ibid.
  - 44. Sanders, T & Scoular, D (eds.) (2010) *Regulating Sex/Work: From Crime Control to Neo-liberalism?*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 9.

that will further criminalise them, with Sasha calling it a 'licence to fail'. My participants spoke of the frequency in which women are sentenced with offences relating to their working status although it is not documented as such, for example 'theft' but in reality a client refusing to pay or wanting their money back, or violence when a fight happens between sex worker and buyer. Women feel like they are not listened to, and that their status as repeat offender and 'prostitute' spoils their identity and the police and courts do not care about their vulnerability. The 'respectable' man versus the heroin-addicted street prostitute is a narrative that was repeated throughout my research.

*I said you're saying he's vulnerable, what am I then? Coz he's taking advantage of me, thinking I'm gonna have sex with him for £20, but they didn't believe it (Dream).*

*Well he weren't vulnerable when he was kicking shit out of me, do you know what I mean (Billie Jean).*

*Well mine, even though I didn't burgle him, my barrister was saying coz all my offences are dishonesty, he said a judge won't give a shit, they'll look at your previous, see you're a*

*thief, and he'll slam ya. So he came to see me on Tuesday and said listen, I believe you never done it. I said listen, if I'd burgled him I'd have emptied his house (Jessica).*

## Conclusion

This research indicates that having non-judgemental support services inside the prison is necessary for sex workers. There needs to be a clear *Pathway 9* in the prison estate, and supportive partnerships with outside agencies who listen to what the women are saying, rather than pushing them to exit. It needs to be clear that involvement in sex work will not lead to punitive treatment or further criminalisation of these women, and staff must use non-stigmatising language and view the women's work in context of a declining welfare state and the feminization of poverty and social exclusion. Having the resources to provide holistic services in centres such as TWP allows the women to build trusting relationships with staff whom they can confide in. I suggest that *Pathway 9* Coordinators be given the time and resources to identify and engage with this marginalized group and that staff are given specialist training to understanding the underlying issues of engagement with commercial sex.

# On the Relevance of Police Organisational Culture Approaches to the Prison Context

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## Introduction

**Research into the occupational culture of prison officers has provided some important and enriching accounts of prisons, of the lives of those who live and work in them and the kinds of work that take place within them. Such accounts tend to use police occupational culture as a reference point, if not as a template for such observations. In many respects, this is understandable and a perhaps obvious choice given that prison officers and police officers both work within the criminal justice system. Similarly, the wealth of literature focussing on police occupational culture provides a foundation for understanding and exploring different occupational groups which function within the criminal justice arena.**

This paper, however, will explore some of the broader differences between the two occupations. The purpose of this is to assess the limits to the usefulness of police occupational culture as a means of understanding the cultural world of prison officers. This is not to understate the similarities between the two occupations and the ways in which these might contribute to similar or shared culturally driven experiences, perceptions and behaviours. What this paper will do, however, is to provide a brief overview of some of the areas of difference which might lead to different cultural reference points.

## Public Expectation and the Conditional Morality of Policing

One of the fundamental differences between prison and police work, at a cultural level, is the extent to which the latter interact with, for want of a better word, the 'public'. The inevitably public-facing and public service orientation of police work, as we move from the language of 'forces' to 'services', means that police officers are inevitably and ever-increasingly subject to a level of public scrutiny denied to prison officers and their work. Traditional accounts of police

culture have shown how police officers bring a 'sacred veil' over their work to shield their work and its practices from the public and that this plays a significant role in the occupational culture. Prison work, by its very nature, has a less publicly-oriented role and generally takes place behind prison walls. In terms of public expectation, prisons as a social institution enjoy emphatic public support. Policing, on the other hand, is regarded in a much more ambiguous way by the public. The sheer breadth of their role, not least in terms of the often uneasy combination of law enforcement and public service roles, means that the police undertake a range of tasks that have the propensity to bring them into conflict with the public. These include a number of potentially 'unpopular' roles which include the enforcement of motoring offences<sup>2</sup> which has traditionally been viewed as one of the key factors accounting for the decline in the middle class's relationship with the police. Similarly, public order policing has at times, as history attests, succeeded in polarizing relations between the police and sections of the working classes.

And whilst identifying direct causality when charting the impact of particular factors on occupational culture is always fraught with imprecision, it might be possible to advance some potential impacts on occupational culture. Scrutiny and external pressure have long been viewed as drivers of what has been termed the 'police working personality'.<sup>3</sup> For example, as far back as the 1960s it has been noted that police perceptions of anti-police sentiment, evidenced through external pressures, led to increases in the social solidarity of the occupation.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, this social solidarity can be evidenced by the 'siege mentality' noted by Reiner<sup>5</sup> that is caused by defensiveness and suspicion. I would argue therefore that many of the characteristics of police occupational culture are a result of such external pressures. Prison officer organisational culture is, arguably, essentially different as a result of the features of the occupation. There is broad public support for the social institution of prisons with many members of the public favouring an increase in the use

1. Manning, P.K. (1977), *Police Work: The Social Organization of Policing*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT.
2. Emsley, C. (1996), *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (2nd Edition), London: Longman.
3. Skolnick, J.H. (1994), *Justice Without Trial: Law Enforcement in Democratic Society* (3rd Edition), London: Wiley.
4. Whitaker, B. (1964), *The Police*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
5. Reiner, R. (1992), *The Politics of the Police* (2nd Edition), London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

of this form of punishment.<sup>6</sup> The fact that the prison is viewed by so many as a legitimate institution correspondingly imbues the work of the prison officer with a similar sense of legitimacy. Policing involves a broader set of functions which bring them into contact with the public during incidents often characterised by stress or conflict. Prison officers' work largely is removed from the complicating context of public interaction and has a core clientele of those to whom the criminal justice system has successfully applied the label of 'criminal'. For this reason, one would expect the occupational culture of prison officers to be less defensive than those of police officers as their work is largely invisible (to the public), is considered legitimate and focusses on the management of individuals who have been given custodial sentences as a consequence of their behaviour. This last point is especially important. So much of our interest in police culture is driven by many of the moral ambiguities that arise in this particular institution. These are inherent to the breadth of the police role rather than being necessarily symptomatic of any particular problem in the moral orientation of officers. This is supported by Harris' assertion that policing is essentially 'dirty work'. In a telling passage he notes:

'The low prestige of police work stems partly from the 'dirty' facet of policing: enforcing laws that support interest groups, but becoming scapegoats when things go wrong. That is, the respectables hire the police to do their dirty work for them... Although they are aware of the need for law and order, they refuse to take responsibility for their personal involvement: they do not train their children to respect the police; they keep information from the police; and they do not participate in police-community relations programs... If this is the respectables' perspective of the police, one may well ask what the public really means when it demands law and order'.<sup>7</sup>

This passage is important in that it draws our attention to some of the contradictions of policework

and the ambivalence with which such work is perceived and responded to by the public. It can therefore be argued that, culturally, the police operate within and between sets of tensions that do not exist in other occupational milieus. Not least, whilst law and order, conceptually, is often rendered in absolutist terms, real policework is couched in discretion, compromise and negotiation. Likewise, whilst the public expect some body or agency to undertake such 'dirty work' there is a reluctance to co-operate with, or take part in, those publicly driven processes that facilitate effective state police work.

Prison officers' work largely is removed from the complicating context of public interaction and has a core clientele of those to whom the criminal justice system has successfully applied the label of 'criminal'.

### **Contextualising Discretion in Prison and Police Work**

A fundamental aspect of police occupational culture is discretion and is described by Klockars<sup>8</sup> in the following terms, 'A police officer or police agency may be said to exercise discretion whenever effective limits on his, her or its power leave the officer or agency free to make choices among possible courses of action or inaction'. That this phenomenon has long been viewed as a core facilitator of behaviours associated with police culture is emphasised by much of the literature of this area and is important for a number of reasons. First, the issue of police discretion (and its use and impacts) provides a key distinguishing feature between

some of the more orthodox historical texts on police and those of a more critical sociological orientation. Second, police discretion is crucial to our understanding of the application of police powers through existing legal frameworks, from the Vagrancy Act of 1824 to the infamous 'sus' laws of the 1970s. The 'mandatory discretion'<sup>9</sup> that is integral to police work has been viewed by some scholars, such as Davis<sup>10</sup> and LaFave<sup>11</sup> as undermining judicial discretion. Thirdly, police discretion has become, if not synonymous with issues such as police racism and corruption, then at least as a key facilitating factor.

6. Roberts, J. (2008), Paper presented at the Commission on English Prisons Today's 'Public Opinion and the Media Seminar' 8 February 2008, Royal Institute of British Architects.
7. Harris, R.N. (1978), 'The Police Academy and the Professional Self-Image' in P.K. Manning and J. Van Maanen (eds) 'Policing: A View from the Street', Santa Monica, Ca. : Goodyear.
8. Klockars, C. (1985), *The Idea of Police*, Beverley Hills, Ca. : Sage. P.93.
9. Brogden, M. (1982), *The Police: Autonomy and Consent*, London: Academic Press.
10. Davis, K.C. (1975), *Police Discretion*, St Paul, Mn. : West.
11. LaFave, W. (1962), *The Police and Nonenforcement of the Law — Part II*, *Wisconsin Law Review*, 2: 179-239.

Similarly, academics have increasingly begun to explore the dimensions of discretion associated with prison officers. Liebling<sup>12</sup> provides a helpful account of the ways in which prison officers, like police officers, utilise occupational discretion as a means of translating policy and procedure into practice within a broad array of situations. Her work details a number of important and relevant themes. She notes, for instance, that discretion is widely used within the prison estate. Second, she makes the important point that discretion can be used to under-enforce regulations and effect 'positive' outcomes for prisoners. Third, she shows how prison officers' work allows for discretion to be exercised in very particular ways such as, for example, the distribution of privileges to prisoners.

It might be tempting to suggest that the three above points could be taken as prima facie evidence that the discretion used by prison officers parallels that used by police officers. At one level, of course, it would be valid to make such an assertion given that for both occupations discretion is widespread, can be used to effect widely-differing outcomes and is shaped by the opportunities provided by that particular role. However, the work of Chan<sup>13</sup> may allow us to unthread and identify some of the difficulties associated with understanding the relationship between occupational cultures and the contexts which they occur in. Chan draws upon Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' where the former refers to cultural knowledge and the latter to the structural conditions of police work. It can be argued accordingly that the nature and form of occupational cultures are intrinsically shaped by the occupational context. Whilst arguing against linear and a-cultural depictions of culture, not least in the way in which culture is shaped by occupational environments, underlying Chan's work is a sense of cultural fluidity where both the 'field' and numerous external factors can have cultural impacts within organisations. This suggests that different cultural reference points will emerge as responses to the different external factors that impact upon particular organisations. This, in itself, reminds us of the dangers of assuming degrees of cultural homogeneity between different occupational groups.

Whilst both police officers and prison officers occupy roles that are founded on broadly similar ideas

of control, it is patently the case that roles are essentially different. The outward facing elements of the police role ensure that the occupation is essentially viewed as a service role whereas, according to Liebling the prison role can, in many respects, be considered a care role. This fundamental difference in role leads to different forms of cultural responses. The work of Manning, amongst others, shows how the relationship with the public, and the scrutiny of the police organisation associated with this, leads to a drawing of a veil over police work. Because of this, I would argue that the cultural responses that evolve around these organisations are fundamentally different.

Thus, it can be argued that fundamental differences exist between the occupational worlds of police officers and prison officers and that these can be explained in terms of the different roles that are encapsulated by these two jobs. At the same time, the social context of policing, as an occupation, is tightly woven into the consciousness of the wider public to an extent that prison work is not. The following section will show this by exploring some of the non-organisational factors that impact on workplace culture.

It can be argued accordingly that the nature and form of occupational cultures are intrinsically shaped by the occupational context.

### **Symbolism, Crime and Politicisation**

The symbolic value of the police has drawn much commentary over the years, not least with respect to the concept of the Golden Age of Policing. The Golden Age of Policing remains to many the default and idealised depiction of policing and, somewhat unfortunately, draws much of its symbolic value, not so much from the actions of the police, but from its totemic positioning of police work as central to the optimism of the post-World War II social landscape. Whilst some might dismiss the notion of Golden Ages as part of the political rhetoric famously associated with the Macmillan era, many criminologists have sought to situate the symbolism of the Dixon of Dock Green era of policing within this post war landscape. And whilst the same criminologists have seemingly failed to locate any Golden Age of Prison Work, it should be noted that the canonisation of the police was, by the 1970s, a dim memory as, over a relatively short period of time, public faith in the police diminished. This, arguably, is important in explaining the different cultural dimensions of prison and police work. For those

12. Liebling, A. (2000), 'Prison Officers, Policing and the Use of Discretion', *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol 4(3): 333-357.

13. Chan, J. (1997), *Changing Police Culture: Policing In A Multicultural Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

working in the prison system, there is not quite the same level of symbolic baggage as there is surrounding the policework.

To properly assess the impact or importance of this, it is crucial to appreciate how Golden Ages and Dixon of Dock Green iconography have allowed the police to become one of the most politicised public services and to understand how this has served to create a particularly unique culture. Those working in the prison service (or indeed in education or healthcare) have certainly not been immune to the politicisation of their political arena and I shall return to address some of those areas where prison work and policework have been similarly impacted by the politicisation of their work later in this paper.

The extent of police politicisation is evident through the oft-cited example of foot patrol. Whilst routinely applauded and welcomed by the public, the work of academics such as Clarke and Hough<sup>14</sup> suggest that it is a generally ineffective means of achieving crime reduction. What this shows us is interesting. We have a core public service from which we demand increasing evidence of effectiveness. At the same time, we deplore those methods of crime reduction that are actually effective, if they do not coincide with our collectively held sense of what 'policing' should be. This gulf between public expectation and the often hidden 'realities' of police work is redolent of the symbolism that imbues our understanding of policework. Unfortunately, for the policing profession, this collision of expectation and reality rarely works well for the police as political players are drawn more to engaging with public expectation than the realities of delivering effective policing.

I will argue that the widespread politicisation of policing has been enabled by three closely-related issues a) the emotive nature of crime, vulnerability and state responses to it, (b) the ambiguity of police work and, c) what Densten<sup>15</sup> refers to as the 'paradox of accountability'.

In terms of the first, it should be noted that crime and, particularly, the policing of crime were

uncontentious areas prior to the 1970s. The inherent trust of the majority of the population (and the political classes) in the institution of policing ensured that for most of its formal history the police had not, as is the case nowadays, found their work to be subject to the vagaries of political will. However, as Morgan and Newburn<sup>16</sup> show, Margaret Thatcher's first administration came to power largely on a law and order mandate that proved popular with voters who for the first time were harbouring concerns (legitimate or illegitimate) around their vulnerability to crime.<sup>17</sup> Whilst it is debatable as to whether or not crime statistics were reliable enough to prove a valid barometer of one's chances of becoming a crime victim, these were seized upon to provide evidence for a problem for which the

Thatcher administration had a ready solution — a substantial increase in police numbers. When this increase in police numbers led, not to decreases in recorded crime numbers, but an increase the scene was set for the contemporary situation where policework is shaped by often cynical political interpretations of public sentiment. The second point, regarding the ambiguity of police work, is related to the first point. The sheer breadth of police roles means that it is often difficult to communicate straight forwardly to the public what policing is, what the challenges are and what our legitimate expectations of it should be.

When social problems or social policy issues are complex the process of their politicisation is often facilitated, a process evidenced, for example, in David Prior's work on the Anti-Social Behaviour agenda.<sup>18</sup> This is especially true in the case of the police where the combination of policy focus and the lack of a coherent or unambiguous knowledge base (in itself, a result of policing's capricious remit and sheer breadth of role) has meant that coherent dialogue around policing is often lost against the 'white noise' of the political background. Finally, intricately tied up with this is the notion of the 'paradox of accountability'. Densten uses this phrase to denote one of the peculiarities of police work whereby officers are held accountable for the actions that they engage in whilst fulfilling their

This gulf between public expectation and the often hidden 'realities' of police work is redolent of the symbolism that imbues our understanding of policework.

14. Clarke, R.V.G and Hough, M. (1984), *Crime and Police Effectiveness*. Home Office Research Study No 79, London: HMSO.

15. Densten, I.L. (1999), 'Senior Australian Law Enforcement Leadership Under Examination', *Policing: An International Journal Of Police Strategies and Management*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 45-57.

16. Morgan, R. and Newburn, T. (1997), *The Future of Policing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

17. Garland, D. (2001), *The Culture of Control*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

18. Prior, D. (2009), 'The 'Problem' of Anti-Social Behaviour and the Policy Knowledge Base: Analysing the Power/Knowledge Relationship', *Critical Social Policy*, 29 (1), 5-23.

professional roles, yet there is no explicitly defined measure of what is an acceptable or unacceptable outcome. This is, in large part, due to the situational specificity of what police officers do. The breadth of the police role, with its inherent discretion, means that police officers are empowered (and obliged) to take action whilst fulfilling a vast number of potential roles (including crime-fighting, public order and protection of property and life). Officers are held accountable for their actions despite guidance and protocols failing to articulate the breadth of situations they might face. Ironically, this 'paradox of accountability' is faced, predominantly, by the most inexperienced officers.

So, to recap, the politicisation of crime and its emergence as a 'social fact' has led to it taking an altogether more embedded role in the consciousness of the public. As this leads to increased fear of crime, the legitimacy of police actions is scrutinised on a regular basis making politically motivated interventions a regular occurrence and in politicising policing and policework. At the same time, the ambiguity of policework means that the public fail to respond to the police in a uniform manner. 'Policing by consent' retains political currency yet in pragmatic terms remains largely unachievable given the increasingly fragmented nature of public opinion. And whilst the public themselves are divided in their opinions of what good policing looks like, so too it appears are police organisations. As Densten's work shows, there appears to be little guidance to officers regarding what a 'preferred outcome' looks like. It is barely surprising that cynicism plays an important part in the cultural world of the police officer. It is for these reasons that I believe we can conceive of the political factors, and those of public expectation, acting upon prison and police officers as substantively different.

### **Conclusion: Rationalising Occupational Culture Between Prison and Police Officers**

It is probably fair to suggest that within both the police and prison sectors, occupational culture is impacted by occupational role, external influences and,

increasingly, the 'business' models adopted in each case by these institutions. I have made a case to suggest that core roles and external influences (such as, for example, politicisation and public expectation) vary greatly between prison and police officers and that this will necessarily impact on the type of cultural reference points that become embedded in these particular occupations. This is not to say that cultural reference points will necessarily be substantively different between the roles in every case but that they will get played out differently in particular occupational contexts and that this will, in turn, be reflected in occupational cultures. For example, discretion is undoubtedly a key cultural driver in both occupational

spheres. However, discretion will be utilised in different ways between the two occupations, with different groups of people and with different outcomes. Central in this respect, I believe, is that discretion within the police world is focussed on interactions with the public and, perhaps to a lesser extent, other players in the criminal justice system. To prison officers discretion is played out within a potentially smaller and less mobile 'population' and this will necessarily impact on what discretion means to prison officers.

What this brief paper has so far failed to address is those areas where there are similarities in occupational outlook between the prison officer and police officer roles. Increasingly, it appears to be the case that a significant driver of both organisational cultures is the increasing adoption of business models that reflect private as opposed to public sector values. Beattie and Cockcroft<sup>19</sup> illustrate how the discretion common to the roles of prison officer and police officer is being eroded by the advent of New Public Management (NPM) techniques and that these developments have met cultural resistance amongst those who see the 'professionalism' of their role being reduced. This, in turn, draws us to the 'professionalization' agenda. In terms of the ways in which this is being played out within a policing context, there is evidence to suggest that what we are witnessing is the increasing application of the rhetoric of 'professionalization' to describe a process whereby control is being enforced upon police officers from

Increasingly, it appears to be the case that a significant driver of both organisational cultures is the increasing adoption of business models that reflect private as opposed to public sector values.

19. Beattie, I. & Cockcroft, T. (2006), 'Square Pegs and Round Holes: Performance Measurement in the Police and Prison Services', *Prison Service Journal*, 168.

above (see Cockcroft).<sup>20</sup> The work of Fournier<sup>21</sup> and Evetts<sup>22</sup> is especially helpful in showing how 'professionalization' is increasingly being used as a means of encouraging practitioners to succumb to new forms of 'disciplinary logic' to ensure adequate occupational regulation. These processes can, and do, lead to unintended consequences of resistance which operate at a cultural level. An example of this can be seen in the work of Monique Marks<sup>23</sup> who demonstrates how such developments, in the police world, have led to a strict demarcation between managerial and practitioner cultures with the latter seeking, in response, to define itself in terms of,

'autonomy, discretion and legitimacy'. Given the cultural response of police practitioners to the imposition of private sector rationalities on an occupational world steeped in symbolism and tradition, it will be very interesting to see what form the cultural response of prison officers is to similar external drivers. This leaves us with perhaps a final irony in that it may merely be the re-shaping of public services through NPM that is providing the drivers for perceived cultural convergence between prison and police officers, rather than any shared experience of operating within the criminal justice arena.

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20. Cockcroft, T. (2015), 'Golden Ages, Red Herrings and Post-Keynesian Policing: Understanding the Role of Police Culture in the Police Professionalism Debate', *Nordisk Politiforskning*, 2 (2), pp. 182-195.

21. Fournier, V. (1999), 'The Appeal to 'Professionalism' as a Disciplinary Mechanism', *The Sociological Review*, 47 (2), 280-307.

22. Evetts, J. (2013), 'Professionalism: Value and Ideology', *Current Sociology*, 61 (5-6), 778-796.

23. Marks, M. (2007), 'Police Unions and their Influence: Subculture or Counterculture', in M. O'Neill, M. Marks and A. Singh (eds.), *Police Occupational Culture: New Debates and Directions*, New York: Elsevier. P.237.

# Planting seeds:

## A feasibility study of the social and economic benefits of 'seedS', a mobile therapeutic healing environment designed for prisons

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### Introduction

**Built for observation and control, little has changed in the ideology and architecture of prison design in the past 200 years, with staff observing prisoners and governors observing staff and inadequate thought given to the physical environment's impact on the health and wellbeing of prisoners or staff. The traditional radial design of four cell blocks around a central atrium has remained consistent despite the use of former military sites, stately homes and orphanages and new wave prison design in the 1970's and 80's. Indeed the recent design of the Government's Wrexham 'Super' Prison flagship evidences this continuing trend.**

The 94.15 per cent increase in prison population since 1993<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> and its associated rising costs has meant that across the estate space is at a premium, cells have become offices, workshops have been built on exercise yards and cells designed for single occupancy now house two or more inmates. These pressures and the reduction in staffing have impacted on both prisoners and organisations delivering services in prisons, in particular in terms of appropriate space for one-to-one consultations, therapeutic interventions and purposeful activity and due to staff .

This paper reports on the feasibility and social and economic benefits of 'seedS', a mobile multimedia therapeutic unit designed to provide more space in prisons. It is based on a review of existing literature and

evidence from a case study from HMP Leeds. seedS has been designed to improve health and wellbeing in prisons through facilitating on the wings increased patient contacts, reducing costs to the prison and health services of cancelled clinics, escorting officers and Did Not Attend (DNAs), and improving/increasing the range of therapeutic and other interventions on offer.

### Prisons

Prisons in the UK are facing major challenges according to the latest annual report from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. Deaths, assaults, and self-harm have increased significantly resulting in safety levels that are at their lowest in 10 years. The number of suicides is now 40 per cent higher than it was five years ago.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of March 2015, 60 per cent (70 of the 117) of prisons in England and Wales were overcrowded<sup>4</sup> with overcrowding levels between 165 per cent and 179 per cent in the 5 most overcrowded prisons.<sup>5</sup> With plans for increases in prison capacity falling below National Offender Management Service (NOMs) projections for the prison population in 2020, pressure on prison numbers looks set to continue. Overcrowding impacts on the numbers of prisoners sharing cells and the space available for activities, support mechanisms and rehabilitation programmes. Overcrowding causes and/or exacerbates mental health problems, and increases rates of violence, self-harm and suicide.<sup>6</sup>

1. Ministry of Justice (2013) *Story of the Prison Population: 1993 -2012 England and Wales*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/218185/story-prison-population.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/218185/story-prison-population.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
2. Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service, HM Prison Service (2015) *Prison Population Figures: 2015. 18 Sep 2015 -6* Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-figures-2015> (Accessed: 24 September 2015).
3. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England & Wales Annual Report 2014-15*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
4. Prison Reform Trust (2015) *Prison: The Facts Bromley Briefing Summer 2015*. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Prison%20the%20facts%20May%202015.pdf> (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
5. Ministry of Justice (2015) *Population Bulletin: monthly August 2015*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-figures-2015> (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
6. Penal Reform International (2015) *Overcrowding*. Available at: <http://www.penalreform.org/priorities/prison-conditions/overcrowding/> (Accessed: 11 August 2015).

There are now fewer staff looking after more prisoners. The number of staff employed in the public prison estate has fallen by 29 per cent over the past 4 years<sup>7</sup> with staff (grades 2-5) reduced by 36 per cent over the same period.<sup>8</sup> On top of less staff, prisons are faced with high levels of staff sickness. In 2013-14 the average days lost due to sickness were 11, compared to an average of 4.4 days in the labour market as a whole.<sup>9</sup> At the same time purposeful activity that contributes to rehabilitation and resettlement is also at its lowest level in a decade.<sup>10</sup> In only 25 per cent of adult male prisons were purposeful activity outcomes judged to be good or reasonably good, rising to 45 per cent for resettlement outcomes. The new core day and regime aimed at increasing prisoner work, activity and learning has been undermined by acute staff shortages.<sup>11</sup> There is a direct relationship between prisoners' perceptions of safety, their living conditions, availability of staff and their successful engagement in purposeful activities and rehabilitation work.<sup>12</sup>

### Reducing re-offending

Reoffending currently costs the economy between £9.5 and £13 billion annually.<sup>13</sup> Current challenges facing the prison service are in danger of undermining

the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' and 'Transforming Youth Custody' agendas.<sup>14</sup> Overcrowding and staff shortages impact on the physical availability of space and access to it by prisoners, reducing access to 'through the gate' services and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC).

The links between poor health and reoffending are well established. Many factors are interlinked and can create a vicious circle on release for example substance misuse, pro-criminal attitudes, difficult family backgrounds including experience of childhood abuse or time spent in care, unemployment and financial problems, homelessness and mental health problems.<sup>15</sup> Ex offenders with health problems are more likely to need support with housing, education or employment and find it more difficult to access mainstream help with increased health inequalities compounding their needs.

Drug users are estimated to be responsible for between 1/3 and 1/2 of acquisitive crime.<sup>16</sup> Heroin and cocaine dependence as well as polydrug use increase the probability of reconviction,<sup>17</sup> as does alcohol misuse.<sup>18</sup> Treatment can cut the level of crime committed by about half.<sup>19</sup> Symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and Anti-Social Personality Disorder (ASPD) also significantly increase the likelihood

7. Ministry of Justice (2014) National Offender Management Service Workforce Statistics Bulletin 31 December 2014. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/407245/noms-workforce-statistics-december-2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/407245/noms-workforce-statistics-december-2014.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
8. Prison Service Pay Review Body (2015) *Fourteenth Report on England & Wales 2015*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/412006/47256\\_Cm\\_9022\\_Prison\\_Pay\\_Review\\_2015\\_accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412006/47256_Cm_9022_Prison_Pay_Review_2015_accessible.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
9. Office for National Statistics Sickness (2014) *Full Report: Sickness Absence in the Labour Market, February 2014*. Available at: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_353899.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_353899.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
10. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England & Wales Annual Report 2014-15*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
11. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England & Wales Annual Report 2014-15*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
12. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England & Wales Annual Report 2014-15*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
13. Ministry of Justice (2015) *Policy paper 2010 to 2015 government policy: reoffending and rehabilitation*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-reoffending-and-rehabilitation/2010-to-2015-government-policy-reoffending-and-rehabilitation> (Accessed: 12 August 2015).
14. Ministry of Justice (2013) *Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform*. Available at: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/transforming-rehabilitation/results/transforming-rehabilitation-response.pdf> (Accessed: 12 August 2015).
15. Ministry of Justice (2013) *Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/243718/evidence-reduce-reoffending.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243718/evidence-reduce-reoffending.pdf) (Accessed: 12 August 2015).
16. MacDonald, Z. Tinsley, L., Collingwood, J., Jamieson, P. and Pudney, S. (2005). *Measuring the harm from illegal drugs using the Drug Harm Index*. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rdspdfs05/rdsolr2405.pdf> (Accessed: 13 August 2015).
17. Bennett, T. and Holloway, K. (2005), 'The association between multiple drug misuse and crime', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, Vol. 49 No. 1, pp. 63-81. Hakansson, A. and Berglund, M. (2012), 'Risk factors for criminal recidivism – a prospective follow-up study in prisoners with substance abuse', *BMC Psychiatry*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 111-18. Kopak, A.M., Dean, L.V., Proctor, S.L., Miller, L. and Hoffmann, N.G. (2014), 'Effectiveness of the Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust (RAPt) Programme', *Journal of Substance Use*, 2014.
18. Evidence from Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction Survey, as reported in table 3.18, Ministry of Justice (2010) *Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis* in Ministry of Justice (2013) *Transforming Rehabilitation; a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/243718/evidence-reduce-reoffending.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243718/evidence-reduce-reoffending.pdf) (Accessed: 14 August 2015).
19. National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (2012) *Estimating the crime reduction benefits of drug treatment and recovery*. Available at: <http://www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/vfm2012.pdf> (Accessed: 13 August 2015).

of reconviction one-year post release. Indeed depression should be viewed as a significant risk factor for reoffending.<sup>20</sup>

## Health

Prisoners' health and social needs are extensive and diverse, and many have poor physical and mental health with over 70 per cent of prisoners having two or more mental co-morbid conditions.<sup>21</sup> High proportions of prisoners come from the poorest and most socially excluded communities and suffer health problems linked to deprivation including chronic diseases, mental health and substance misuse problems.<sup>22</sup> An ageing population is increasingly challenging prisons. People aged 60 and over and those aged 50–59 are the first and second fastest growing age groups in the prison population with an increase of 146 per cent and 122 per cent of prisoners held in those age groups respectively since 2002.<sup>23</sup>

Against this backdrop current concerns for prisoners' health and wellbeing are twofold; access to healthcare in terms of appropriate space and getting to appointments and secondly the negative impact of the prison environment on prisoners' health and wellbeing and the potential knock on effect of this by placing increased demands on stretched healthcare provision.

In his 2014-15 Annual Report the Chief Inspector of prisons was 'very concerned to see health services having to adapt to the reduced availability of custody staff and correspondingly less flexible access to patients due to changes to the core day. This affected

therapeutic care.' Owing to the need for additional security and movement through wings only possible at limited and specific times it is also not uncommon for vulnerable prisoners' access to services to be cut.<sup>24</sup> As a result of lack of staff to supervise treatment programmes, there is an increased risk of overdose due to medications not being given at therapeutic intervals. In some cases large amounts of medications are being given in-possession due of lack of access to prisoners.<sup>25</sup>

Coupled with the challenges of less flexible access to patients is the physical availability of appropriate spaces necessary to deliver effective healthcare provision, be it screening, confidential one to one consultations or individual and group therapeutic programmes. The premium nature of space has meant that every available 'space' (office space, prison cell, wing based clinic room) is occupied.

As a result of lack of staff to supervise treatment programmes, there is an increased risk of overdose due to medications not being given at therapeutic intervals.

## Prison Environments

The prison environment, physical and social, plays a key role in the health and wellbeing of prisoners and presents unique challenges for healthcare practitioners. Prisons are not nurturing places; they are forbidding from the outside, grey and visually impoverished on the inside<sup>26</sup> and referred to as 'anti-therapeutic'.<sup>27</sup> Designed around an economic model of mass imprisonment, rather than rehabilitation, they are hard environments, starved of natural light and constructed from materials that amplify sounds and suppress the senses, affecting both staff and prisoners. Noise is one of the prison environment's most persistent problems.<sup>28</sup> Communication is difficult with conversations shouted

20. Josefiën J.F. Breedvelt, Lucy V. Dean, Gail Y. Jones, Caroline Cole and Hattie C.A. Moyes (2014) *Predicting recidivism for offenders in UK substance dependence treatment: Do mental health symptoms matter?* Journal of Criminal Psychology RApT VOL. 4 NO. 2 2014, pp. 102-115.
21. Singleton N., Meltzer H., Gatward R., Coid J., Deasy D. (1998) *Psychiatric Morbidity of prisoners in England and Wales* London: ONS in Borrill J., Taylor D. A., (2009) *Suicides by foreign national prisoners in England and Wales 2007: Mental Health and Cultural Issues* Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology 20(6) (pp 886-905).
22. World Health Organisation (2010) *Prisons and Health* <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/health-determinants/prisons-and-health> accessed 21st November 2010 in Shepherd H.C. (2010) 'Unlocking the meaning behind prison healthcare policy. Could or should prisoners receive healthcare equivalent to that in the community?' unpublished.
23. Prison Reform Trust (2015) *Prison: The Facts Bromley Briefing Autumn 2015*. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202014.pdf> (Accessed: 8 September 2015).
24. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2014) *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2013–14*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Available at: [https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisoners/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/10/HMIP-AR\\_2013-14.pdf](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisoners/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/10/HMIP-AR_2013-14.pdf) (Accessed: 12 August 2015).
25. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England & Wales Annual Report 2014-15*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444785/hmip-2014-15.pdf) (Accessed: 11 August 2015).
26. Ginn S. (2012) *Prison environment and health* British Medical Journal, 345 (Sep 17 1), pp.e5921-e5921.
27. Scott S. (2004) *Opening a Can of Worms? Counselling for Survivors in UK Women's Prisons*. Feminism & Psychology 14 (4):605-608.
28. Fairweather L., McConville S., (Eds) (2000) *Prison Architecture Policy, Design and Experience*. Oxford: UK Architectural Press.

and sleep often disturbed resulting in stress and discomfort.

### Environmental Design and Health

The healthcare industry recognises the impact of the built environment and architecture and design on wellbeing and performance. Design that is psychosocially supportive can stimulate and engage people mentally and socially, provide a sense of coherence and instigate a mental process that fosters positive psychological emotions and reduces anxiety.<sup>29</sup>

Architectural design focussing on comfort, safety, attractiveness and privacy can be therapeutic, restorative and improve treatment outcomes,<sup>30 31</sup> resulting in patients being more receptive to rehabilitation and employees, patients' families and other visitors feeling more relaxed, safe and secure in such settings.<sup>32</sup>

Colour palettes, soft and varied materials, better acoustics and natural light have been shown to have a positive impact on the emotional states prevalent among prisoners and staff, particularly anger, stress, anxiety, sadness and depression.<sup>33</sup> It is possible that colours can affect brain activity to create a sense of wellbeing.<sup>34</sup>

Evidence from The King's Fund's work has shown that improving the environment can significantly affect how people feel and make a significant difference for the people who care for them: violent incidents among patients can be reduced, while stress levels for staff decrease. In the prison environment, where the physical and mental health of offenders can play a critical role in their behaviour, improving healthcare environments can have wider positive benefits for staff teams and the prison population.<sup>35</sup>

#### seedS

Designed as a mobile therapeutic space for reflection, contemplation and self-development for prisoners and staff, seedS will enhance clinical provision within prison environments. Small and personal with a form taken from nature designed to protect and



seedS in HMP Leeds August 2015.

nurture growth; seedS break with institutional design of repetition and scale. seedS is portable offering multimedia space that can be moved to different areas and wings within a prison, thus alleviating access problems caused by reduced staff numbers. Equipped with living colour lamps and controllers that can be used for light therapies and audio visual equipment that offer access to guided interventions, seedS provides an appropriate space for confidential one-to-one meetings and small group sessions of up to 4 or 5 people.

seedS has been developed by architectural designer, Karl Lenton from SAFE Innovations working closely with NOMS, prison security, prison governors, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust clinical teams, prisoners and prisoner healthcare representatives, Stage

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29. Dilani, A (2008) *Design and Health — A Health Promoting Approach on Prison Environments*. Sweden: Karolinska Institute.
30. Grosenick, J. K. & Hatmaker, C. M. (2000). *Perceptions of the importance of physical setting in substance abuse treatment*. Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment. 18(1), 29–39.
31. Herzog, T. R., Maguire, C. P. & Nebel, M. B. (2003). *Assessing the restorative components of environments*. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 23, 159-170.
32. Edvardsson, D. J., Sandman, P-O. & Rasmussen, B. H. (2005). *Sensing an atmosphere of ease: a tentative theory of supportive care settings*. Nordic College of Caring Sciences, 19, 344-353.
33. Krueger J., MacAllister J.A. (2015) *How to Design a Prison That Actually Comforts and Rehabilitates Inmates*. Available at: <http://www.fastcoexist.com/3044758/how-to-design-a-prison-that-actually-comforts-and-rehabilitates-inmates> (Accessed on 15 September 2015).
34. Janssens, J. (2001). *Facade colors, not just a matter of personal taste: A psychological account preferences for exterior building colors*. Nordic Journal of Architectural Research, 14, 17-21.
35. The Kings Fund. *The Enhancing the Healing Environment (EHE) programme*. Available at: <http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/enhancing-healing-environment> (Accessed:8 September 2015).

One Creative services and University of Leeds. seedS has an easy to clean smooth internal surface to meet infection control standards. Staff and prisoner safety issues are addressed with an evacuation door at the rear providing a second exit route. This RIBA nominated design propagated through the Free Unit in The CASS School of Art Architecture and Design at London Metropolitan University is a catalyst for change and transformation of current UK prison design and a new model for health and wellbeing delivery.

The potential benefits of seedS are threefold, firstly improving the delivery of healthcare in prisons by providing sustainable access at the point of need. Secondly on benefits to the bottom line. Using seedS on prison wings brings economic benefits including direct cost savings in terms of reduced need for additional officer security during clinic times, reduction in the levels of DNAs, increased clinic time and increases in the number of patients seen as a result of reductions in time lost escorting prisoners to clinics. In addition, wing based availability of space for therapeutic activities increases both the potential of more patient contacts per year, the range of treatments available and the indirect savings from patients receiving treatment/support earlier that potentially negates the need for more expensive treatment options. Thirdly through increasing efficiency in use of staff time, resources could be used to more efficiently eg; to enhance purposeful activity.

Potential drawbacks of seedS might fall into three areas: confidentiality, staff and prisoners response to seedS and security. Medical confidentiality will require management; the visibility of prisoners attending appointments on the wing and the potential for others to make assumptions on their health issue could result in prisoners preferring not to attend appointments. Using seedS for a variety of purposes would improve privacy and reduce risk of stigma developing. Secondly, staff and prisoners may not 'take' to seedS. This might be due to their lack of knowledge of its purpose, lack of control over its use or for security reasons. Involving staff from all disciplines and prisoners in the introduction, uses and location of seedS in a new establishment increases their sense of ownership and control, empowering them to make utility decisions for seedS that best fit their particular service. Finally security is the principal factor in all secure environments; for the safety of staff and prisoners. seedS was designed with input from staff and prison security, with security alarm and two exit points. Staff would be expected to follow standard security risk procedures as they would in any other treatment room.



Rear view through evacuation hatch.

### Case Study HMP Leeds

A case study was undertaken in collaboration with the Prison Service and Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust (health care providers at HMP Leeds) to investigate the potential impact seedS could have on healthcare delivery in prisons. Leeds Beckett University researchers<sup>36</sup> analysed 3 years of data on DNAs (between April 2012- March 15) and just over 1 year's data on cancelled clinics (2014/15- June 2015). Each month around 10 per cent of all appointments were missed. At an estimated cost of £108 per missed appointment<sup>37</sup> and not taking into account any associated financial costs of potential increases in treatment/healthcare or costs to the prison service as a result of missed appointments, the cost of DNAs to the NHS over the three year period could potentially be in excess of £2m in HMP Leeds.

In terms of cancelled clinics at HMP Leeds, an average of 3.5 clinics per month (43) were cancelled in 2014/15 recorded as a result of benchmarking, that is a reduction in prison officers available to escort prisoners. Between April 2015 and June 2015, this figure increased to an average of 5 clinics per month

36. Ashley L., Davies W., Nichols H. (2015) *Data Analysis at HMP Leeds*.: unpublished.

37. NHS England (2014) *NHS England using technology to beat cost of missed appointments*. Available at: <http://www.england.nhs.uk/2014/03/05/missed-appts/> (Accessed: 16 July 2015).

suggesting a growing trend of cancelled clinics. All smoking cessation courses have been suspended as a result of the lack of availability of officers to attend. The availability of seedS offers the opportunity for wing based healthcare provision and therapeutic sessions, reducing demands on staff availability for escort and increasing efficiency in use of staff at clinics or sessions and promoting attendance at appointments for prisoners who for a variety of reasons have missed appointments.



HMP Leeds nurse with healthcare representatives in seedS.

### Other Potential Uses

seedS has the potential to provide a safe environment that is conducive to healing, 'transports' the patients out of the physical building blocks of a prison to a space of reflection and change. seedS can be used for a variety of purposes including:

- Confidential one to ones between patient and clinicians.
- Guided interventions for up to four/five people for example relaxation, mindfulness.
- Smoking cessations, one to one or groups.
- Health Promotion activities.
- Multi media facilitated therapies.
- Confidential Assessment.
- Drug and Alcohol group work.
- Resettlement services.

### Audio-visual Stimulation

seedS can facilitate the delivery of Audio-visual Stimulation (light and sound) to aid in the clinical care of a wide range of issues including: ADD/ADHD, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), Addictions, Sleep Disorders, Depression, Migraines, Stress and Anxiety, chronic pain/pain management, PTSD, skin conditions and Chronic Fatigue.

Research has shown that light therapy can benefit patients with dementia, increasing sleep quality, and total sleep time, reducing depression and agitation.<sup>38</sup> This approach could improve the wellbeing of prisoners with dementia and provide a cost effective non-pharmacological approach. Research indicates that prisons are ill equipped to manage the growing challenge of inmates with dementia.<sup>39</sup> seedS provides a safe and calming environment where anxiety levels can be reduced and familiar music and images can help to recall memories thereby improving wellbeing.

### Emotional Intelligence

Studies in offender psychology consistently show a distinct lack of emotional intelligence in prison populations and evidence suggests that emotional intelligence may be a factor in criminal behaviour.<sup>40</sup> Research shows that learning to regulate and enhance emotional management skills could be key factors in the successful rehabilitation of offenders<sup>41</sup> and is thought to lead to fewer incidences of violence and self-harm in prisons.<sup>42</sup> Despite the need to address emotional learning opportunities, little to no provision has been developed and there remains a limited range of activities within prison that provide any opportunity.

*Phototherapy* is a cost-effective method to provide a unique means of expression for those who are rarely given a voice, overcoming cultural and language barriers. Evidence shows phototherapy empowers those without emotional literacy or emotional intelligence and could be a helpful approach to therapeutic interventions in prisons in the future.<sup>43</sup> seedS is an ideal environment for delivering

38. Figureiro M et al (2014) *Tailored light treatment improves measures of sleep, depression and agitation in persons with dementia living in long term care facilities*. 28th Annual Conference of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies. Available at: [http://www.lrc.rpi.edu/programs/lighthealth/img/Figueiro\\_SLEPPPoster117\\_June2014.pdf](http://www.lrc.rpi.edu/programs/lighthealth/img/Figueiro_SLEPPPoster117_June2014.pdf) (Accessed:13 August 2015).

39. Moll, A. (2013) *Losing Track of Time, Dementia and the Ageing Prison Population, Treatment Challenges and Examples of Good Practice*. Mental Health Foundation Available at: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/content/assets/PDF/publications/losing-track-of-time-2013.pdf?view=Standard> (Accessed:13 August 2015).

40. Santesso, D. L., Reker, D. L., Schmidt, L. A. & Segalowitz, S. J. (2006). *Frontal electroencephalogram activation asymmetry, emotional intelligence*. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 36, 311-328.

41. Gaum, G., Hoffman, S., & Venter, J. H, (2006). *Factors that influence adult recidivism: An exploratory study in Pollsmoor Prison*. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 36(2):407-424. Saita, E., Acquati, C. & Kayser, K. (2011). *Famiglie, fonti di stress e capacità di fronteggiare gli eventi. Il caso della famiglia statunitense*. *Pensare alla salute e alla malattia. Legami tra mente, corpo e conteso di appartenenza*, 20:69-88.

42. Safer Custody Group (2002). *Safer Custody Report for 2001: self-inflicted deaths in Prison Service custody*. London: HM Prison Service.

43. *Lifelong Learning Programme — Phototherapy Europe in Prisons*. EU funded project 2013/14 Literature Review. Available at: <http://www.phototherapyeuropeinprisons.eu/literaturereview/> (Accessed:13 August 2015).

Phototherapy, facilitating increased self awareness, improved social skills, greater optimism, emotional control and flexibility — all of which has the potential to reduce reoffending, make prisons safer and reduce levels of violence, self harm and suicide.

**Mindfulness** The recent Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group inquiry recommended that the criminal justice sector develop and evaluate pilot projects to identify appropriate forms of mindfulness teaching and establish their acceptability and effectiveness for both prisoners and staff.<sup>44</sup> Mindfulness is correlated with emotional intelligence, good social skills and the ability to cooperate and see others' perspectives. People who practice mindfulness are less likely to be defensive or aggressive when they feel threatened, more in control of their behaviour and able to override habitual thoughts and feelings and resist acting on impulse.

**Mindfulness - Based Interventions (MBIs)** can be delivered through practitioner led courses or guided mindfulness application (apps), for example Headspace, which can be downloaded onto multimedia devices. seedS can enable the delivery of mindfulness interventions in a therapeutic space on wings with controlled access to multimedia facilities. In periods of lock down, seedS can be used to improve staff wellbeing by providing guided interventions or quiet reflection with the aim of reducing levels of stress, sickness and absence. In 2013-14 the average days lost due to sickness across the prison service was 11, compared to an average of 4.4 days in the labour market as a whole.<sup>45</sup>

## Education

As a portable multimedia space seedS could add significant value to the Transforming Youth Custody agenda. Figures suggest 86 per cent of young men in Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) have been

excluded from school at some point, and over half of 15–17 year olds in YOIs have the literacy and numeracy level expected of a 7–11 year old. Research indicates that 18 per cent of young people in custody have a statement of special educational needs.<sup>46</sup> seedS could enhance the learning experience, providing an engaging environment and facilitating creative approaches to teaching that motivate and inspire this often hard-to-reach group. seedS has the potential to impact significantly on numeracy and literacy levels, on visual learners and those with learning disabilities simply by providing the right environment to maximise learning. Providing high quality education to young offenders in custody is central to tackling high levels of reoffending.

## Deaths in Custody

Increasing access to healthcare provision/therapeutic programmes could reduce both levels of self-inflicted deaths and the economic and social costs associated with it. In 2011, the cost of a suicide in prison, including assessment of staffing, healthcare and mental health provision, costs of escorting the prisoner, days lost due to sickness absence, the cost of the inquest, the cost of the investigation following death, cost of the services of the Prison Liaison Officer, funeral

seedS can enable the delivery of mindfulness interventions in a therapeutic space on wings with controlled access to multimedia facilities.

contributions, visits and memorials was estimated at £1,210,000.<sup>47</sup> With an increase in the number of suicides by 40 per cent over the past 5 years, these costs are increasing. seedS can be located on wings to improve access to confidential care at the point of need with the potential of delivering a range of health and wellbeing interventions that may prevent suicides. SeedS can be quickly located on a wing where a suicide has taken place and used as a resource for counselling, reflection and promoting wellbeing in those affected. seedS has the potential to impact on both the rising economic and social costs of suicide in prisons.

44. The Mindfulness Initiative (2015) *Mindful Nation UK Interim Report of the Mindfulness All Party Parliamentary Group*. Available at: <http://www.oxfordmindfulness.org/wp-content/uploads/mindful-nation-uk-interim-report-of-the-mindfulness-all-party-parliamentary-group-january-2015.pdf> (Accessed:8 July 2015).
45. Office for National Statistics Sickness (2014) *Full Report: Sickness Absence in the Labour Market, February 2014*. Available at: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_353899.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_353899.pdf) (Accessed:11 August 2015).
46. Ministry of Justice (2014) *Transforming Youth Custody Putting Education at the Heart of Detention*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/181588/transforming-youth-custody.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181588/transforming-youth-custody.pdf) (Accessed:13 August 2015).
47. Ministry of Justice (2011) *Offending employment and benefits — emerging findings from the data linkage project*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/217428/offending-employment-benefits-emerging-findings-1111.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/217428/offending-employment-benefits-emerging-findings-1111.pdf) (Accessed:12 August 2015).

## Transforming Rehabilitation

For effective service delivery it is essential that Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) offer consistency and continuity of prisoner appointments, to build trust and understanding to ensure healthcare plans, housing, employment and resettlement are in place, to reduce reoffending on release. There is significant potential for through the gate/CRCs to use seedS on prison wings to access prisoners, with minimum disruption to regimes and provide a conducive environment to facilitate the discussions needed to ensure a smooth transfer back into the community.

## Conclusions

With financial restraints impacting on the prison service, evidence that therapeutic clinics are being cut and an increasing number of appointments being missed, it is likely that more behaviour and therapeutic programmes could be cut or not completed, leading to potential increases in the cost of reoffending to the economy.

Health and wellbeing matters in prisons because of its association with positive behaviour, its positive

influence on mental health, and on improving recovery from illness, the implications for treatment decisions and costs and ultimately its impact on reducing the healthcare and reoffending burden.<sup>48</sup>

The economic costs of health and wellbeing in prisons are high, but the economic and social costs of not getting it right are higher. With tightening financial restraints on services it has become more and more important to identify cost effective solutions to delivering services that improve prisoners health and wellbeing, make prisons safer environments to be in and reduce the risk factors associated with reoffending. Taking services to the prisoners on wings reduces the costs associated with DNAs and escorting prisoners.

seedS can provide the 'appropriate space' at wing level for therapeutic and behaviour programmes minimising the pull on already stretched staff resources. The first seedS has been planted into HMP Leeds; the task now is to evaluate the use, effectiveness and outcomes of seedS for prisoners, staff and prison management and to understand the potential for designers and architects to address some of the challenges faced by the prison service now and in the future.

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48. Department of Health (2014) Well-being : *Why it Matters to Health Policy*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/277566/Narrative\\_\\_January\\_2014\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277566/Narrative__January_2014_.pdf) (Accessed:12 August 2015).

# Prisoner education in the UK:

## A review of the evidence by Prisoners' Education Trust

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**'He who opens a school door, closes a prison'. Victor Hugo.**

**This article will provide an introduction to a selection of research looking at prison education in recent years, including research conducted by Prisoners' Education Trust (PET). It will first set the context in thinking about the purpose of prison education and move on to what the research into prison education does and does not tell us. It will also review some of the current strands of research on UK prison education and some important developments in the evidence that we might look for in the medium term future. Before doing that there will be a brief introduction to the work of PET and the role we play in bringing together research into prisoner education to influence policy and practice.**

### Introduction to the work of PET

Since 1989, Prisoners Education Trust (PET) has provided access to broader learning opportunities for prisoners, to enhance their chances of building a better life after release. We do this through an advice service and a grants programme which assists around 2,000 prisoners each year to study distance learning courses in subjects and levels not available in prison.

Through our policy work, PET raises awareness of the importance of education for prisoners in aiding rehabilitation and makes the case for better access to academic, creative, informal and vocational learning in prison. Key to this is incorporating the voices and views of prisoners towards education provision, using their experiences to influence policy and practice. A range of research methods are used to gather views from prisoners and former prisoners depending on the issue under investigation and the section of the population under study.

In 2012, PET also established the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA), which has a membership of 23 expert organisations involved with learning in the criminal justice system. The aim of the PLA is *'to bring together diverse non-statutory stakeholders with senior cross-*

*departmental officials, to provide expertise and strategic vision to inform future priorities, policies and practices relating to prison education, learning and skills'.<sup>1</sup> The PLA meet on a quarterly basis and meetings are attended by a range of senior officials from government departments, including Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and National Offender Management Service (NOMS). Current and former prisoner learners feed into the work of the PLA by speaking at the quarterly meetings. The PLA also hosts frequent roundtable events and an annual conference to gain views from practitioners, teachers, providers and other stakeholders.*

### What is the purpose of prison education?

Speaking at a conference held by the PLA in 2013, Clive Martin, Director of the charity Clinks asked the audience the question, *'What is prison education all about? What is the theory of change?'*<sup>2</sup> This is an important question for social researchers interested in the area of prison education and depending on what their interests are, will come at it from a different angle. The fact that there is no universal theory of change means that the purpose of learning in prison can be unclear. Is prison education all about making prisoners employable and improving their employment prospects? Is it about changing attitudes and behaviours? Is it about promoting desistance? Is it about reducing reoffending? Is it about helping people cope with their sentences? Is it simply about keeping people busy? Or is it about all of the above? At PET, we take a broad view to the purpose of prison education and believe that it has many benefits for prisoners, former prisoners, their families, prisons, prison staff and wider society.

In England and Wales, the focus of prison education under the current Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) 4 contracts is in practice focused heavily on basic literacy and numeracy and vocational qualifications at GCSE equivalent level or below (up to level 2).<sup>3</sup> According to the Skills Funding Agency, responsible for managing the education contracts in

1. Champion, N. (2013) Smart Rehabilitation: Learning how to get better outcomes. London: Prisoners' Education Trust. Available at: [https://fbclientprisoners.s3.amazonaws.com/Resources/PLA\\_Smart\\_Rehabilitation\\_Report.pdf](https://fbclientprisoners.s3.amazonaws.com/Resources/PLA_Smart_Rehabilitation_Report.pdf)
2. <http://www.clinks.org/community/blog-posts/what-purpose-learning-prison>
3. Skills Funding Agency and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (March 2015) Statistical First Release. Further Education and Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/428402/SFR\\_commentary\\_March\\_2015\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428402/SFR_commentary_March_2015_FINAL.pdf)

adult prisons, prison education is defined as allowing 'offenders in custody, according to need, to receive education and training. This in turn enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need to get sustainable employment and have a positive role in society'.<sup>4</sup> It is perhaps not surprising there is this focus when the cost of prisoners re-offending forms a significant portion of the cost of crime to society. In the UK, the cost of re-offending by all recently released prisoners during 2007-2008 was estimated to be between 9.5 billion and 13 billion.<sup>5</sup> Employment is regularly stated as a key factor in reducing the risk and the costs of re-offending.<sup>6</sup> However, the evidence suggests that it is not just any job that will lead to reduced re-offending; steady employment, particularly if it offers a sense of achievement, satisfaction or mastery, can support people to stop offending.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, employment alone cannot prevent offending and some people can desist from crime without employment.<sup>8</sup> Although OLASS providers are encouraged to think about employability, they are paid by numbers of accreditations rather than by outcomes of prisoners entering employment.<sup>9</sup>

Whilst PET acknowledges the valuable relationship between prison education and employment it also takes a broader view of the relationship between prison education and its wider rehabilitation outcomes. The view we take is similar to one shared by the Education and Skills Committee in 2005;

*'The purpose of education and training in prisons should be to play a key role in improving the employability of prisoners and therefore contribute to reducing recidivism. However, we would wish the purpose of prison education to be understood in broader*

## The purpose of education and training in prisons should be to play a key role in improving the employability of prisoners and therefore contribute to reducing recidivism.

*terms than just improving the employability of a prisoner. We would emphasise the importance of delivering education also because it is the right to do in a civilised society. Education has a value in itself and it is important to develop the person as a whole, not just in terms of the qualifications they hold for employment. The breadth of the education curriculum is important and employability skills should not be emphasised to such an extent that the wider benefits of learning are excluded'.<sup>10</sup>*

We also take a broad view of prison education research, acknowledging that a wide range of studies, both qualitative and quantitative, are needed to piece together the story of how prison education works in supporting people to desist from crime and participate constructively in society as engaged citizens. This article will now highlight some recent studies and new initiatives that have explored different aspects of prisoner education and the benefits that they bring as well as their limits.

### The Justice Data Lab evidence on PET applicants

Since the Justice Data Lab (JDL) was launched in April 2013, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has been giving organisations working with people involved in

the criminal justice system access to central reoffending data through the service<sup>11</sup> to evidence how effective their work is at reducing re-offending. The Data Lab service includes the following four defining characteristics;

- ❑ Not-for-profit organisations can access government-held data concerning their clients through the Data Lab.

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4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/olass-funding-rules-and-guidance>
  5. National Audit Office (2010) Managing offenders on short custodial sentences. London: National Audit Office.
  6. Hawley, J., Murphy, I., & Souto-Otero, M. (2013) Prison Education and Training in Europe. Current State-of-Play and challenges. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/prison\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/prison_en.htm)
  7. Farrall (2002) *Rethinking What Works with Offenders*, Cullompton, UK, Willan Press; Ministry of Justice (2013) *Analysis of the impact of employment on re-offending following release from custody, using Propensity Score Matching*. London: Ministry of Justice.
  8. Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph (2002) 'Gender, crime and desistance: Toward a theory of cognitive transformation', *American Journal of Sociology*, 107, 990-1064.
  9. Champion, N. (2013) *Smart Rehabilitation: Learning how to get better outcomes*. London: Prisoners' Education Trust. Available at: [https://fbclientprisoners.s3.amazonaws.com/Resources/PLA\\_Smart\\_Rehabilitation\\_Report.pdf](https://fbclientprisoners.s3.amazonaws.com/Resources/PLA_Smart_Rehabilitation_Report.pdf)
  10. House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2005) *Prison Education Volume 1. Seventh Report of Session 2004-05*. London: The Stationary Office.
  11. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/justice-data-lab>

- ❑ A comparison group can be established either through quasi-experimental statistics or by drawing on a previous process of random assignment.
- ❑ The impact of a not-for-profit organisation can be presented as a comparison of treated versus non-treated groups at an aggregate level—as a group, rather than as individuals.
- ❑ The results are then shared across the sector to build a body of evidence for what works to achieve particular outcomes.<sup>12</sup>

The JDL is pioneering work, for the first time giving the voluntary sector access to quantitative analysis, usually only available to the public sector. PET has submitted data to the JDL twice, first in January 2014 and more recently in September 2015. In January 2014, the findings suggested that overall the difference in re-offending rates between a sample of 3,085 prisoners who had accessed distance learning courses or arts and hobby materials through PET and those who had not from a matched control group was a quarter less (19 per cent compared with 26 per cent).<sup>13</sup> Similar results were found in September 2015 where, with a larger sample of 5,846 of PET's beneficiaries, the findings indicated that they again re-offended a quarter less than the control group (18 per cent compared with 25 per cent).<sup>14</sup> The analysis went further in 2015 by also looking at a smaller sample of prisoners who had applied for a grant but who PET did not go on to fund. These prisoners also demonstrated a significant reduction in re-offending, compared to a matched control group, suggesting that prisoners who aspired and were motivated to change their lives through education and pursue the process of applying to PET were more successful in moving away from crime. This is in line with desistance theorists who highlight the importance of providing hope and aspiration to people in prison.<sup>15</sup>

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However, although the JDL has many benefits, it is not without its limitations. The minimum sample size required to submit data for analysis is 60. However, in order to get significant results, the ideal size would be much more. Many smaller voluntary sector organisations do not have large enough numbers of service users to submit big enough data sets in order to produce significant results. Some of the early results from the Data Lab in 2013 from smaller organisations did indeed produce mixed results. Furthermore, although the JDL can give statistics on re-offending rates, they cannot give the whole picture and explain the how and why someone does desist from crime. Quantitative analysis needs to be supported by qualitative evidence.

Looking ahead however, there is potential for quantified data matching techniques to cast more light on the desistance mechanisms at work. The MoJ have successfully enabled a data match between the prison and police data and that held by the HMRC/DWP which gives information on individual's employment record. Further analysis could therefore show whether PET beneficiaries, in addition to showing reduced re-offending behaviour, were also more successful than the control group in securing employment. It could also show whether PET beneficiaries who had not yet secured employment showed reduced re-offending compared to a matched group who had also not secured employment. This would inform the question of the extent to which the link between education and reduced reoffending is mediated through an employment mechanism.

### Literacy and numeracy data

Prisoners' levels of educational achievement are generally found to be lower than in the general population. Published self-reported information from a MoJ survey of 1435 adult prisoners<sup>16</sup> showed that; just

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12. Gyateng, T., Pritchard, D., de la Casas, L. (2013) Creating a 'Data Lab' Increasing not-for-profit organisations' access to, and demand for, data for impact measurement. London: NPC.
  13. Ministry of Justice (January 2014) Justice Data Lab Re-offending analysis: Prisoners' Education Trust. London: Ministry of Justice. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/270084/prisoners-education-trust-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270084/prisoners-education-trust-report.pdf)
  14. Ministry of Justice (September 2015) Justice Data Lab Re-offending Analysis: Prisoners' Education Trust. London: Ministry of Justice. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/459470/prisoners-education-trust-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459470/prisoners-education-trust-report.pdf)
  15. Maruna (2001) Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives, Washington DC: APA Books.
  16. Representative of 90% of prison receptions. Prisoners sentenced between one month and four years in 2005/06. Reported in: Hopkins (2012) *The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners*. Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR). London: Ministry of Justice.

over half (53 per cent) of prisoners in the survey reported having any qualification, compared with the 85 per cent of the general population and 21 per cent self-reported needing help with reading and writing or ability with numbers. These findings do need to be put into context as levels of literacy and numeracy overall in England are low. In an OECD report from 2013,<sup>17</sup> England was ranked 22nd for literacy and 21st for numeracy out of 24 countries. Furthermore, 24 per cent of adults scored at or below Level 1 in numeracy compared with an average of 19 per cent across all OECD countries.

Although prisoners' educational levels are generally relatively low, there has been a lack of up to date and robust statistics available; the last well publicised statistics were from the 2002 Social Exclusion Unit's (SEU) report 'Reducing Re-offending of Ex-prisoners'.<sup>18</sup> PET questioned the statistics quoted in the report, that between 50 per cent and two thirds of all prisoners were at or below the literacy and numeracy levels expected of a ten year child, because the assessments they were based on were aimed at secondary school ages rather than primary. Due to this data being unreliable and over a decade old, PET had been calling for more up to date and robust statistics.

A recent development since August 2014 has been the roll out of stronger literacy and numeracy assessments at the start of prison sentences. The results of these assessments have recently been published,<sup>19</sup> based on the results of 74,300 prisoners assessed on entering prison since August 2014. The statistics show that 46 per cent of people entering the prison system have literacy skills no higher than those broadly expected of an 11 year old child. This is three times more than the 15 per cent of people with similar skills levels in the adult population generally (based on the statistics from the 2012 MoJ research).<sup>20</sup> 52 per cent of those prisoners assessed have the equivalent capability in numeracy which compares with 49 per cent of the general public. The statistics also show that 46 per cent of newly assessed prisoners have Level 1 and Level 2 literacy skills, (GCSE equivalent) which compares to 85 per cent

of the general population. In contrast, 40 per cent of prisoners assessed had the equivalent level of numeracy skills compared with 50 per cent of the general population. 8,880 (12 per cent) of those assessed were at the level of GCSE grade A\*-C, indicating that prisons also need to provide opportunities for them to progress in their education and gain accredited qualifications that employers are looking for. By doing so, they will inspire others and can provide additional support to staff by mentoring their peers. On the other hand, almost a third (23,550) of those prisoners assessed self-reported having a learning difficulty or disability, indicating that prisons need to provide new approaches to engage, incentivise and support them to get essential skills in English and Maths and then to keep learning.

## A recent development since August 2014 has been the roll out of stronger literacy and numeracy assessments at the start of prison sentences.

Whilst PET welcomes this new data, the mandatory assessments the data is based on only assesses the attainment of prisoners going into prison, most of whom are serving short sentences. The statistics are therefore not a reliable assessment for the snapshot population in prison at any one time, which has a higher proportion of prisoners serving long sentences, many of whom will have progressed and have a higher level of education. We also have concerns about the timing of the assessments, especially if they are done on the

first or second day of an individual's sentence when they are likely to be feeling vulnerable and in a state of shock and confusion. However, as PET has long called for better information on the education attainment levels of people in prison, this new data does signify a step forward.

One final note about literacy and numeracy is that it is often only discussed as being about the provision of 'basic' level, due to the low levels referred to above, instead of creating an understanding of the opportunities and benefits of progression. For example; there is no document which brings together research into desistance, employability and other benefits of literacy progression for prisoners. This is a potential gap in this area of research. The Reading Agency has recently been commissioned to carry out a large scale

17. OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills. OECD Publishing.

18. Social Exclusion Unit (2002) Reducing Re-offending by ex-prisoners. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

19. Skills Funding Agency and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015) OLASS English and Maths: participation2014/15. London: SFA and BIS.

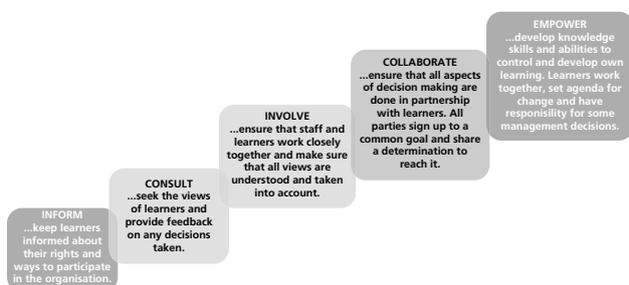
20. Hopkins (2012) *The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners*. Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR). London: Ministry of Justice.

research project on the benefits of reading programmes in the general population, but this will not include prisoners specifically. We therefore also eagerly anticipate the findings from the evaluation into OLASS 4, which is being conducted by Ipsos Mori in collaboration with Sheffield Hallam University and London School of Economics and has been commissioned by MoJ and BIS. The evaluation should help to understand how these changes to literacy and numeracy assessments have worked in practice, how they have led to educational progression and the impact on employment and re-offending outcomes.

## Learning Culture

One important aspect of prison education is the extent to which the culture of individual prisons promotes educational outcomes effectively. Between April 2014 and March 2015, PET worked on an innovative pilot project to support the development of rehabilitative cultures in eight prisons. A full evaluation of the project was conducted using action research.

In each prison the initiative involved: a one day training session for staff from a range of prison departments focused on 'Learner Voice' principles and activities; a further two facilitated meetings which saw staff work together with prisoners to co-produce initiatives based on the training, which were appropriate to the needs of each prison. Learner Voice is a means of enabling participation and promoting learners' involvement in various ways. It has been described as: *'developing a culture and processes whereby learners are consulted and proactively engage with shaping their own educational experiences'*<sup>21</sup> as well as *'considering the perspectives and ideas of learners, respecting what everyone has to say, taking risks, sharing, listening, engaging and working together in partnership'*.<sup>22</sup> The LSIS Ladder of Engagement<sup>23</sup> diagram below illustrates different levels of engagement:



The project design built upon our earlier publication: 'Involve, Improve, Inspire: A Learner Voice Toolkit'<sup>24</sup> and films which were used to inform the training for staff around Learner Voice. All prisons already had some level of Learner Voice activity at the beginning of the project; the aim was to push them further along the ladder of engagement, increasing the opportunities for prisoner involvement in meaningful learning activities. A further aim was to engage with hard to reach learners through the projects. Initiatives to come out of the prisons included: two prisons that introduced Prisoner Information Desks (PIDs) onto prison wings, one prison that introduced Skills Mentors to recruit those not engaged in activities into work or education, one prison that rebranded their education department to the college provider delivering the contract and another prison that set up a Learner Council to represent the views of learners.

The project aimed to fill in gaps in knowledge as limited research is currently available on the effectiveness of Learner Voice initiatives within prison environments. This study evaluated the effectiveness of the project in cultivating a rehabilitative culture using a multiple baseline research design. The evaluation included a baseline and follow up questionnaire for staff and prisoners; telephone interviews with a sample of staff; observations from all prison sessions; feedback from training participants; and focus groups with prisoner participants. PET worked with Dr. Auty at the Institute for Criminology at Cambridge to conduct the evaluation, including developing the survey to measure the learning and rehabilitative culture in the prisons. The survey is based on the design of the Measuring Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) and Staff Quality of Life (SQL) surveys. The methodology and structure of these questionnaires are well known as they are carried out across the prison estate either by the University of Cambridge Prisons Research Centre or by the NOMS audit team. Overall, throughout the project almost 1,200 prisoner completed questionnaires were collected but in some cases the sample sizes were quite small. Sample sizes for staff surveys were much smaller although some significant changes were measured too.

The survey was used to measure conceptual dimensions which we defined as being essential to a learning and therefore rehabilitative culture. These dimensions included: empowering, inclusive, aspirational, engaging and relevant and safe. Quantitative survey data was analysed by looking at the

21. Rudd, T, Colligan, F and Naik, R (2006). Learner Voice. Bristol: Futurelab.

22. Ibid.

23. LSIS (2012) Talking Learner Voice. Collaborating with and empowering learners in quality improvement. A practical guide for leaders, managers and practitioners. Coventry: LSIS. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130802100617/http://lsis.org.uk/sites/www.lsis.org.uk/files/LSIS%20-%20Talking%20Learner%20Voice%20A4.pdf>

24. Champion, N. (2013) 'Involve, Improve, Inspire': A prisoner Learner Voice Toolkit. London: Prisoners' Education Trust. Available at: <https://fbclientprisoners.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/PET%20Learner%20Voice%20Toolkit%20F.pdf>

difference in the dimension scores between the baseline and follow up survey results using t-tests. All analyses were conducted using statistical software packages SPSS and STATA. Qualitative data was analysed using a content analysis approach. All but one dimension (safe) held together and produced statistically significant increases for some of the prisons.

The project was informed by the diffusion of innovation theory developed by Rogers<sup>25</sup> which seeks to explain how, why and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. Rogers proposes the following factors determine the rate of adoption of innovations: the perceived attributes of the innovation itself, the type of innovation decision, communication channels, the nature of the social system and the efforts of the 'change agents' to promote the innovation. The innovation must be widely adopted in order to self-sustain. Within the rate of adoption, there is a point at which an innovation reaches critical mass. The categories of adopters identified by Rogers are: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. The project was also influenced by the Behavioural Insights Team EAST Model,<sup>26</sup> which states that if you want to encourage a particular behaviour, for example a new innovation, then it needs to be: Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely (EAST). This is based on the Behavioural Insight Team's own work and wider academic literature.

### Findings

Full and detailed results for the project and individual dimensions will be published in 2016. However, overall we found the intervention to be successful in supporting the development of Learner Voice activities in some of the prisons. The results suggested that in a similar fashion to Rogers's theory, prisons could be grouped into three main clusters:

- ❑ Visionaries and enthusiasts — Three prisons had quantified statistically significant evidence supported by qualitative evidence of improvements in some of the dimensions measured, even in the short timeframe of the project. These groups tended to embrace change and be internally motivated to change, for example: *'Our can-do attitude here at [prison] is what is driving us forward.*

Within the rate of adoption, there is a point at which an innovation reaches critical mass.

*We will carry on consulting with [prisoners] here to see how this culture is embedding. It's a really positive project and a privilege we can all be part of shaping their futures'* Staff member.

- ❑ Mainstream adopters — Two prisons had qualitative evidence of improvements but limited quantitative evidence in the period. This group tended to be pragmatists who accepted change but often out of necessity rather than choice, for example: *'It's better than it was. The desks have helped. Other prisoners can get through to prison officers now if they want anything'* Staff member.
- ❑ Resisters — Three prisons had qualitative evidence showing little or no improvements over the timeframe of the project and no statistically significant increases from quantitative findings. This group tended to be suspicious of new innovations and resistant to buy into new ideas, for example: *'We need reps in education. I would love to be one, but every time you ask you get nowhere'* Prisoner.

The overall findings led to the conclusion that Learner Voice activities can support the development and advancement of a rehabilitative learning culture, providing prisons meet the following conditions: good levels of prisoner involvement and engagement, good levels of staff involvement and engagement and effective communication systems are in place before starting this kind of work. The visionaries and enthusiasts group were characterised by: commitment from staff and prisoners throughout the project; effective communication between staff, between different departments and between prisoners and staff; there was buy in from senior members of staff including Governors and staff on the ground; there was consistency in approach throughout the project and control and autonomy was given to prisoners. One of the limitations of the study was the relatively short time frame and we predict that with longer time some of the prisons may have been able to achieve more change in their cultures.

PET is looking forward to further opportunities to develop the survey tool and work with more prisons to develop their rehabilitate learning cultures. We would also like to see opportunities for NOMS to develop this

25. Rogers, E. (1962) Diffusion of innovations. Glencoe: Free Press.

26. Service, O., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., Algate, F., Gallagher, R., Nyugen, S., Ruda, S., Sanders, M., Pelenu, M., Gyani, A., Harper, H., Rheinhard, J., & Kirkman, E. (2012) EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights. London: Behavioural Insights Team. Available at: [http://38r8om2xjhh125mw24492dir.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST\\_FA\\_WEB.pdf](http://38r8om2xjhh125mw24492dir.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST_FA_WEB.pdf)

area of work further by conducting research to test whether a more rehabilitative culture generates more effective rehabilitative outcomes as measured by rates of prisoner re-offending on release.

### **Other research strands: developing an academic network around prisoner learning**

Another area of work PET has been focusing on is building up a network of researchers and academics involved in the area of prisoner education. On the 9th June 2015, PET welcomed academics from around the world to the University of Cambridge for our second annual symposium, Academic Prisons. The aim of the event was to explore education in a wider sense exploring the programmes, benefits and research that is currently going on.

The three central themes of the day were: creating rehabilitative cultures through learning; bringing together universities and prisoner education and finally technological innovation; breaking the digital divide. This symposium built on the work of the previous year when we held our inaugural symposium at Oxford University. On the day we had international representation from the United States, Australia and Turkey. Below is a snapshot of some areas that researchers are currently looking at in relation to prison education.

#### **Working with Universities**

Professor Dreisinger, from John Jay College of Criminal Justice introduced a discussion on university and prison education initiatives, with an overview of the successful Prison to College Pipeline programme.<sup>27</sup> Combining prison-based teaching, holistic support on release and a guaranteed place at the City University of New York on release, the programme has been working with prisoner learners for the past four years. Central to the approach is seeing the purpose of prisoner education as outside of reducing reoffending and taking a broad view of the purpose of prison education. Improving access to education in this sense is viewed as a civil right and reparation for what prisoners should have received in the first place.

We also heard from Dr Amy Ludlow and Dr Ruth Armstrong from Cambridge University who had recently finished their first term of the Learning

Together project. Learning Together takes criminology students from Cambridge University into Grendon prison, to take part in a college based system in the prison. Sessions begin with a lecture from some of Cambridge's finest teachers, including Alison Liebling and Anthony Bottoms, on a range of selected topics in criminology, from legitimacy to desistance. Lectures are then followed by a seminar of shared learning and shared experiences. Over the course of the programme, students will take part in five substantive workshops, one essay writing workshop and a graduation. The project has the following aims; to create spaces of learning for students from different walks of life to learn together; to connect people who might not otherwise meet through shared learning experiences; to capacitate people to use their knowledge for social good. The project works to reduce stigma and social

distance between students and to help them to see greater fluidity in possible identities and behaviours. One student stated that *'Not only do I want to help people, I'm starting to believe that I can'* because of the *'completely genuine example of normalisation that has taken place here'*. As he pertinently explained, *'the more we feel like we are part of society, the more likely we are to continue to try and stay part of it'*.

#### **Technological innovations**

Speaking about technological Innovations and breaking the digital divide was Associate Professor Farley from the University of Southern Queensland in Australia. Farley is leading on a \$4.4 million government-funded project called 'Making the Connection' which is using digital technologies in prisons to increase access to higher education.<sup>28</sup> Building from a pilot scheme, which provided E-Readers for in-cell work, Farley is beginning work to roll out the provision of netbooks for the students to continue on their distance learning projects. Dr Anne Pike also discussed the Virtual Campus, a secure web-based learning environment which is used in the UK, and the opportunities and challenges that arise from this system.

#### **Creating Rehabilitative cultures through learning**

Professor Alison Liebling from Cambridge University began this session by talking about the work

Improving access to education in this sense is viewed as a civil right and reparation for what prisoners should have received in the first place.

27. <http://johnjayresearch.org/pri/projects/nys-prison-to-college-pipeline/>

28. <https://www.usq.edu.au/research/research-at-usq/institutes-centres/adfi/making-the-connection/about>

that the Prison Research Centre does with conducting the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) study in prisons across England. Education, she said, is work that goes on in the background and is not directly addressed by the work of the MQPL. However, she went on to cite many examples of prisoners and staff from her work who stated education as being one of the most important keys to rehabilitation. She went on to describe education as being *'like food and water inherently meaningful'* and having *'transformative power'*.

Along with main speakers we heard from many other workshop leaders sharing findings from their research on a range of topics, including the impact of responsibilities on peer mentors (Sophie Eser); the importance of student identity and community in helping learners resettle in the community after imprisonment (Dr. Anne Pike); creating rehabilitative cultures using theatre in prisons (Dr Bridget Keehan), using philosophy classes in prison to give learners the opportunity to access personal development and Dr Caroline Lanskey discussing caring educational approaches towards young people in secure institutions.

The work of the Academic Network will continue to grow with more events planned for the future. We will be collating the work of the 2015 speakers to develop an online compendium from the event and will be developing a formal academic network to keep the discussion as 'energetic', 'inspiring' and 'empowering' as delegates found it on the 9th June.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

Prison education is currently a focus of policy development in UK prison policy with the launch of the Coates review of Prison education in September 2015.<sup>30</sup> In this context this article has summarised some strands of recent and current research into:

- ❑ Links between education and outcomes such as employment and reductions in reoffending.
- ❑ Levels of basic literacy and numeracy attainment in prisons.
- ❑ Work in understanding learning culture in prisons.

Current strands of thinking by prison researchers as presented at PET's academic symposium on prison education have also been summarised.

PET looks forward to significant improvements in the evidence base in the near future from:

- ❑ The imminent publication of better data on prisoner educational assessment.
- ❑ Improved understanding through the application of data matching techniques of the links between education and employment and reoffending either through the Justice Data Lab or through the current major evaluation of the OLASS contracts and
- ❑ Further understanding of the relationship between aspects of the prison culture and prisoner outcomes.

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29. If you are interested in being a part of the academic network please do get in contact with PET at [info@prisonerseducation.org.uk](mailto:info@prisonerseducation.org.uk) or [clare@prisonerseducation.org.uk](mailto:clare@prisonerseducation.org.uk)

30. Ministry of Justice (September 2015) Review of Prison Education: Terms of Reference. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-prison-education-terms-of-reference>

# Education and Rehabilitation in a Category A Prison

Interview with Ed Cornmell, Governor of HMP Full Sutton

*Dr Bill Davies is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Leeds Beckett University. Helen Nichols is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Leeds Beckett University.*

**Ed Cornmell is the Governor of HMP Full Sutton. Ed joined the Prison Service in 2000 as a direct entry administrator and then the Accelerated Promotion Scheme. He has worked in a number of different establishments commencing as a Prison Officer at HMP Leeds. He has previously worked in Private Office and was the Governor of HMP Everthorpe overseeing the merger with HMP Wolds to form HMP Humber. Ed became the Governor of HMP Full Sutton in October 2014, having previously been the prison's Deputy Governor in 2007.**

**HN: What do you see as being the most important rehabilitative programmes at HMP Full Sutton and in what ways do these programmes help prisoners in the rehabilitation journey?**

**EC:** The most important rehabilitative work at Full Sutton is the overarching culture of the prison. As a High Security prison there is rightly a focus on maintaining a safe and secure environment. Full Sutton has an excellent security record and nationally leads the way. However security cannot override the good rehabilitation work that takes place within the prison and nor does it. We have some excellent offending behaviour programmes that address risk and are a key component of progression and change. We additionally provide a good range of work within as normal a working day regime as we can. Most importantly though, Full Sutton has joined with our High Security Estate colleagues to take forward our work on Rehabilitative Culture. Key within this are the 'conditions of success' which emphasise the need for effective communication, respectful relationships and the opportunity for constructive active participation from prisoners. Staff work hard to foster positive relationships and with the increased opportunities for prisoners to participate in the environment they live in through our new Prisoner Council and peer worker opportunities, this is proving to be an important foundation stone to helping prisoners find a new non-criminal identity and for progression. The environment is therefore the most important thing that we can provide for the prisoner and supports everything else

that we try to do to make a change and to deliver on rehabilitation.

**HN: To what extent is education differentiated at a Category A prison compared to training prisons?**

**EC:** The challenge of education in a dispersal prison and for long term prisoners in general relates to the time left to serve and the staging of the education. A great deal of focus around education in prisons is towards learning and skills that prepare the prisoner for release. As a former Governor of a Category C training / resettlement prison I wholeheartedly see the value of ensuring those that are nearing release are on the right pathway to employment and have the skills to move into further training or employment. Clearly when dealing with sentences of significant length, typically life sentence prisoners with 20 years plus to serve in custody the distance from release is considerable. There is therefore a need for a different focus and a different approach. The thing that unites all prisoners in all types of prisons is the need for basic skills and it is my expectation that we do all to ensure that all of our prisoners achieve these educational foundations. For us at Full Sutton, as opposed to the resettlement prison, this is often as much about starting the academic and learning journey and settlement of the man into his sentence as it is focused on resettlement which is too distant for many to comprehend. However additionally and most importantly education to me plays a very different role for those with a long time to serve. Education can be that medium for personal growth, renewal and reinvention. I see many prisoners in the prison now who have started from very different levels of education who are now wholeheartedly pursuing formal academic study as well as those learning and developing skills that give them a new focus in their life. This can create hope and can be a catalyst for change and personal growth.

**HN: Is there a need to further differentiate education at prisons of different categories?**

**EC:** I don't think categories are much of a reason to differentiate education whereas sentence length and time to study until discharge really is. Equally, in setting the curriculum for a prison we need to consider personalization and the individual much more. There is

no standard entrance exam or basic set of education qualifications that a school, college or university would require (other than a criminal conviction) to be admitted as a student in our secure learning environment. We therefore have to try and provide a broad range of educational qualifications at different levels and in different subjects to meet the need and the potential of those in our custody. Typically funding and practical considerations are a strain on providing a diverse range of subjects and we do not have the funding for higher education that many crave.

**BD: Are there specific activities at HMP Full Sutton that prisoners are particularly keen to engage in?**

**EC:** Considering the individual starting point and motivation of my prisoners there is no one size fits all. Many are focused on pursuing further higher education qualifications and seek funding and support for degrees and post-graduate qualifications. I find this really encouraging and for those engaged in serious study their cells seem to become mini libraries with text books and folders of work proudly on display, reflecting their commitment to personal advancement. It is equally rewarding (and a bit surreal) to talk to a prisoner within a High Security prison about their studies in International Development and their desire to progress from their current Masters degree to a Doctoral programme. It goes to show that education does allow the person to mentally progress from the cell to the wider world even on a long sentence.

**BD: What is your vision for the future of education at HMP Full Sutton?**

**EC:** It is really pleasing that there is a review underway of education in prisons commissioned by the Secretary of State and along with colleagues I await the findings. I am hopeful that from this there will be the opportunity for greater consideration of the needs of the long sentence prisoner and creation of opportunity for the individual person to be more central to the curriculum and qualifications rather than having to fit the person to the curriculum. The funding for support to study beyond level 2 and attain higher qualifications is a particular hope.

My vision for education at Full Sutton is that we use the Rehabilitative Culture we are developing to encourage engagement with education, be it basic skills or higher qualifications. That we create a learning environment that is supportive and can be allowed to work more with the individual to give them the space

to delivering those subjects that stimulate personal growth. Through this will come settlement, prior to the time when resettlement is more tangible. Through this will be the value of the time that the person is away, discovering potential and personally progressing during the sentence.

I would also add to this that my vision is that we look differently at what we can do. I am really motivated by the 'inside out' schemes that have run in America and a small number of UK prisons to allow external students and prisoner students to share tuition and tutorials.

**HN: How would you describe the current media on prison education?**

**EC:** There hasn't been much to my recollection in the past, which probably reflects that lack of appreciation of what can and does happen to someone serving a prison sentence. However, the one area that does stand out currently is the coverage of the Secretary of States speech at the Prisoner Learning Alliance event a few months ago. I was really heartened to read the coverage of the speech and the rightful focus on making the most of the opportunity that is present within our prisons- both with the time that prisoners have as well as the potential within the individual that must be unlocked.

**HN: How do you see the future of education in prisons in England and Wales?**

**EC:** That's a tough one to answer. I would hope that we can deliver on making more of the potential and opportunity we have. We have some excellent teaching staff within our prisons who are committed to our unique environment and I would hope that any coming changes will release their potential and free them to work more flexibly with their students. I see that we can better tailor the provision to the prisoner group and the person if we relook at the scale of our commissioning and our funding model. Looking longer into the future the one nut we need to crack is technology. The ever increasing access to online tuition, distance learning and even MOOCs (massive open online courses) and remote access to tutors is definitely the key to broadening the range of qualifications on offer that can be more tailored to the individual without breaking the bank. As legitimate in cell technology increases over the next few years, I hope this could provide ready in cell access to the learner and a real opportunity to use the time they have got to serve to their advantage.

# Reviews

## Book Review

### ***The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography***

By Deborah H. Drake, Rod Earle and Jenifer Sloane (eds.)

Publisher: Palgrave Handbooks (2015)

ISBN: 978-1-137-40387-2

(Hardcover)

Price: £135.00 (Hardcover)

Prison ethnography is a completely unique approach that gets close to the prison life that only prison staff and prisoners will usually experience. Although each researcher will share many of the same experiences, they will also have their own due to the variances within the prison estate such as prison categories, regimes, staff and security. Equally each researcher will develop their own perspectives of prison life shaped by their individual personalities, emotions and beliefs. Even those who have been incarcerated or worked inside prisons, can only ever be experts of their own experiences, however, every individual including staff, inmates and researchers, will experience the 'pains of imprisonment' (p.41) albeit at varying levels. With a foreword by Professor Yvonne Jewkes, the book is divided into four sections including 'About Prison Ethnography' which assesses methodological, theoretical and practical issues relating to the use of ethnographic and qualitative enquiry in prisons; 'Through Prison Ethnography' which considers the significance of ethnographic insights in terms of wider social or political concerns; 'Of Prison Ethnography'

which analyses different aspects of the roles ethnographers take and how they negotiate their research settings; and finally, 'For Prison Ethnography' which includes contributions that convincingly extend the value of prison ethnography beyond the prison itself.<sup>1</sup> To give as best of an overview as possible of the book, I have carefully selected chapters from each of these sections.

Prison ethnographers display an unwavering passion for their research while encountering many obstacles — both physical and emotional. David Scott, for example, in Part I talks about his study of prison chaplains giving an unusual insight into a group of individuals rarely (if ever) studied in the prison setting and focuses on the staff/prisoner dynamics (always a topic of contention) highlighting the 'pains of imprisonment' not just felt by prisoners but also prison officers (p.41). David Scott sees prison research and writings as subjective to the author who gives varying accounts of prison life, and therefore Scott approaches his study from the abolitionist perspective examining all human interactions and the dehumanisation of prison.

Also in Part I, Alison Liebling's workshops with dialogue groups demonstrate the dynamics involved between researchers, staff and prisoners with prisoners being referred to as 'the new budding criminologists' (p.78), bringing Cohen and Taylors<sup>2</sup> classic work firmly into the current literature which also echoes the contemporary convict criminologist perspective.<sup>3</sup> Liebling et

al. highlight problems of inequalities, social order, justice and humanity. The dialogue groups enable the researchers to see the prisoners as a whole and through intimate and sometimes intense discussion were able to gain an insight into the true characteristics of the men. Identity was raised several times, for example, some of the prisoners were keen to adopt a student identity. This highlights the importance of identities amongst prisoners consistent with other findings.<sup>4</sup>

Identities are continually negotiated throughout each researchers journey too, giving a deeper look into their psyche which includes several insider/outsider scenarios with each researcher reflecting on his/her own emotions, worries and fears. On this topic, Jamie Bennett, in Part III, draws on several identities where he categorises himself — in particular as a prison manager — researching within an environment where he holds a particular senior level of authority. This brings a much needed, fresh angle of the 'insider' ethnographer role where his identity as researcher/prison manager enables him to view his surroundings through different eyes while also encountering mixed responses towards his predicament from other staff members. Another interesting perspective on reflectivity comes from Abigail Rowe also in Part III who reflects on her own identity as a gay woman researching in a woman's prison. The dynamics surrounding her interactions with others made her question what researchers' should and shouldn't disclose which gives

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1. Palgrave Macmillan (2015) *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography*. [online] Available at: <http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/The-Palgrave-Handbook-of-Prison-Ethnography/?sf1=barcode&st1=9781137403872>
  2. Cohen, S. and Taylor, L. (1972) *Psychological Survival: Experience of Long-Term Imprisonment* (London: Penguin Books).
  3. Earle, R., (2014) *Insider and out: Making sense of a prison experience and a research experience*. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol 20 (4) 429-438. Sage.
  4. Pike, A, (2013) *Prison-based transformative learning and its role in life after prison*. PhD thesis. Open University; Bilby, C et al., (2013) *Re-imagining futures: Exploring arts interventions and the process of desistance* (Commissioned by Arts Alliance) <http://www.artsalliance.org.uk/re-imagining-futures-exploring-arts-interventions-and-process-desistance>

another unique perspective of how prison ethnography affects deep seated emotions and inner conflicts. In her narrative she quotes Alison Leibling: 'Our emotions do not need to be reconciled with our so-called data. They constitute data.' (p.351). The boundaries between researcher and participant can sometimes become blurred as Laura Piacentini discusses in Part 1, when she reflects on her field notes of one of her most uncomfortable personal experiences while socialising through what she describes as 'a by-product of deep cultural immersion' (p.89).

Privileged access offers an interesting aspect such as one study conducted by Rod Earle and Coretta Phillips on the 'dynamics of difference and their impact of social relations' (p.230). In Part II, this chapter shares an example where Coretta Phillips

identity as a black woman gave her privileged access to black participants. In a different way William Davies, Part IV, experienced this same privileged access through disclosing his identity as an ex-prisoner. Although Coretta Phillips gained this initial privilege through her physical identity, Bill Davies (a Convict Criminologist) gained the same courtesy through disclosing his insider status to prisoners. From the outset this enabled both of them to formulate a mutual trust and rapport with prisoners that otherwise may have been less productive and taken much longer. James Waldram, Part II, goes beyond the prison gates in his chapter, *Writing bad: Prison Ethnography and the problem of tone*, highlighting the pitfalls and obstacles of publishing what many viewed as contentious research on sex

offenders. Met with prejudice and resistance, he reveals how sex offenders were seen as 'not worthy of being celebrated' though research studies and publications (p.217) which brings into question the ethical dilemmas of inclusion and exclusion.

This book is a fascinating read in its uniqueness of rare insights and large collection of very diverse personal journeys and reflections from field notes and life stories, opening up a world most only ever hear about in the media. It is a must for those entering the field of prison research and would give the novice researcher an invaluable rich source of information.

**David Honeywell** is a part time Criminology Lecturer at Leeds Beckett University and a PhD researcher and tutor at the University of York.



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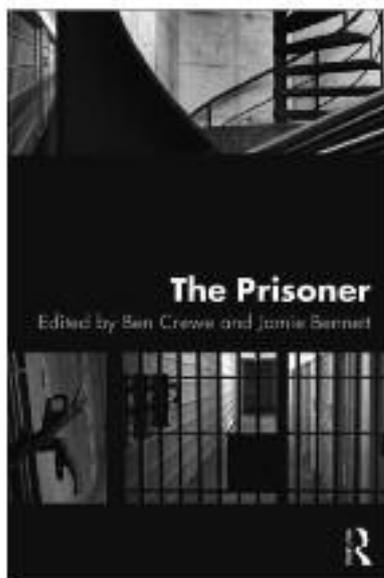
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The editor is responsible for the style and content of each edition, and for managing production and the Journal's budget. The editor is supported by an editorial board — a body of volunteers all of whom have worked for the Prison Service in various 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 2011 each edition is available electronically from the website of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. This is available at <http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/psj.html>**

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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 **[jamie.bennett@hmps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.bennett@hmps.gsi.gov.uk)** 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 **[jamie.bennett@hmps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.bennett@hmps.gsi.gov.uk)**.

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