

PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

March 2020 No 248



Learning Together

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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 6,500
ISSN 0300-3558
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Editorial Comment

This is the first opportunity Prison Service Journal has had to pay tribute to Saskia Jones and Jack Merritt, who lost their lives in the attack at Fishmongers' Hall in London on 29 November 2019, as well as to state our solidarity with the Learning Together community and all of those affected.

PSJ aims to draw connections between research and practice, it is concerned with the everyday experiences of those who live, work and are affected by imprisonment, and it promotes progressive penal values. These are characteristics that are shared with the Learning Together community.

Learning Together was started in 2015 by Dr Ruth Armstrong and Dr Amy Ludlow, both based at University of Cambridge. They set out to reinvigorate the connections between universities and prisons, in particular by bringing together people in criminal justice and higher education institutions to study alongside each other. As well as offering high quality academic sessions, the intention was to create meaningful social connections where people could learn with and from each other through dialogue and the sharing of experience. From those beginnings, there are now over 20 partnerships between universities and prisons across England and Wales.

The early evidence indicates that Learning Together can offer positive opportunities. For some people in prison, this can provide progression and pipeline opportunities to nurture individual growth and to challenge social disadvantage as a barrier to learning. Equally, university students individually benefit from learning with and alongside people who may have different life experiences but who, just like them, are seeking to expand their horizons and maximise their potential. Together they can form lasting academic friendships and support networks. Bringing people together in this way is at the heart of Learning Together. As Ruth and Amy

described in an article published in PSJ in May 2016, 'Learning Together is not trying to change people. We are learning with, from and through each other. This changes us all.'

The true spirit of Learning Together was seen in the aftermath of the terrible attack in November. The spirit was there in those members of the Learning Together community who put their own lives at risk to intervene and protect others. It was there in the actions of those who gave help to people who had been harmed. It continues to be there in the love and support that they offer to one another.

Jack Merritt and Saskia Jones were people who embodied all of the values and aspirations of Learning Together. They were both talented students, committed to working within the criminal justice system and promoting change from within. Both had completed the Learning Together criminology course at HMP Grendon while studying at Cambridge. Jack went on to become the Convener of the Butler Law Course, a Learning Together initiative involving students from Cambridge University and HMP Warren Hill. He published an article in PSJ in March 2018, in which he addressed the use of segregation for young people in British prisons. The article is a carefully constructed, clear sighted and forensic analysis of the legal, policy and medical issues. The article is also fired by a passion for justice, a desire to challenge the harms of the prisons system and promote change. In his work and writing, Jack's values and energy are plain to see. Jack's father, David, paid tribute to him, saying, 'Jack's death was a tragedy but his short life was a triumph'. Saskia also embodied a passion for helping others. During her studies she spent her free time working voluntarily to support victims of sexual abuse and during her time as a Learning Together student she helpfully disrupted binaries between offending and victimhood. Her continued involvement in the

Learning Together community showed her commitment to playing her part in building the kinds of communities that can help to reduce harm. Saskia was set for a career in the police, where she would have continued her quest to promote change from within the system, working directly with people and for progressive reform. Professor Lorraine Gelsthorpe, Director of Institute of

Criminology at University of Cambridge described Saskia's 'determination to make an enduring and positive impact on society in everything she did'.

This edition of Prison Service Journal is dedicated, with love and in solidarity, to Saskia Jones, Jack Merritt and the Learning Together community.

Men's experience of identity transition during the initial stages of Life Sentence Imprisonment: A Scottish perspective

James Kerr, Director of Operations, Scottish Prison Service

Introduction

In the absence of capital punishment, a life sentence is the most severe penalty available to UK courts.¹ A life sentence requires a minimum period of imprisonment, with no fixed release date. It defines a minimum period of incarceration and sets out an earliest possible date of release. The sentence sets a punishment part (commonly referred to as 'the tariff') as the minimum period which must be served prior to a first consideration of release. Progress through the prison system and the attainment of liberation are both conditional aspects of risk assessments. A final determination by Parole Scotland decides whether a person will be released, after due consideration is given to any risk to public safety. If release is directed, then liberty is conditional against a commitment to and positive evaluation of these restrictions. The conditions of liberty are then usually applied for the remainder of the individual's natural life.

Those serving life sentences in Scotland, like those in many other western nations, are now spending significantly longer periods in prison before being considered for release. The average minimum tariff awarded to a life sentenced prisoner in Scotland currently states that just under 20 years custody must be served, as a minimum, prior to a first consideration of release.² This represents a period of almost double that applied for a similar sentence at the turn of the century.

Issues surrounding survival, self-perception, self-adjustment, adaptation, maladaptation and identity tensions in response to these very long-term, indeterminate periods of imprisonment are well documented. However, the literature, within a Scottish context, is largely silent on this phenomenon. This

paper examines the effect of these sentences, how they impact on the self-perceptions of those penalised and the capacity they have to shape future self-identities, within the prison environment, to the satisfaction of public safety. This research will explore the 'known self', the 'adapting to survive self' and 'system expected self' features of evolving individuality, highlighting for some the stark choice between prison-based survival and system acceptance. The research will do this by exploring the impact upon personal identity applied through the omniscient challenges of facing the beginnings of very long-term, indeterminate imprisonment in Scotland. These experiences will be articulated through the voices of a number of men currently held in custody by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS).

Context

The definition and application of life sentence imprisonment has dramatically changed within the United Kingdom in recent years suggested that a life sentence was usually no longer than 9 years,³ whereas Hulley et al. found that early-stage life sentenced participants were 8 times more likely to be serving tariffs of '20 years or more' than the post-tariff group.⁴ Scotland is experiencing substantial growth in the volume of people who are serving a life sentence. The average period awarded by the Scottish Courts has also increased significantly and a larger percentage of these people have now served much longer than the minimum period of imprisonment originally set by the Courts.⁵

SPS is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government with a prison estate consisting of thirteen public prisons and two publicly owned prisons, operated by private companies on behalf of SPS. Penal

1. Walker, N. (2010). *Crime and Punishment in Britain*, Aldine Transaction.
2. The Scottish Prison Service. (2017), *Population and Accommodation Report*. February 2017.
3. Radzinowicz, L. (1968), *The Regime for Long-Term Prisoners in Conditions of Maximum Security: Report of the Advisory Council on the Penal System*. London Copyright.
4. Hulley, S. Crewe, B. and Wright, S. (2015). Re-examining the problems of Long-term Imprisonment. *British Journal of Criminology*. 1-24. Quote, Ibid: 10.
5. The Scottish Prison Service. (2017), *Population and Accommodation Report*. February 2017.

policy is devolved directly to the Scottish Parliament and currently there were approximately 7800 people held in Scottish prisons at the time of this research. The Scottish Government has a clear focus and strategy for reducing offending and increasing public safety. A national strategy for justice was first published in 2012.⁶ This strategy has recently been updated, setting out a vision for justice in the country as well as clear priorities and pan-organisational objectives for the period 2017-2020.⁷ Central to this vision is the consideration of the country's prison population — priority prisoner groups targeted include the development of a strategy for young people, an applied approach and a new estate specific to female offending and a policy and legislative emphasis on addressing issues surrounding short-term imprisonment and the development of alternatives to custody. Reductions in the prison population are to be welcomed, as is the political courage and creativity in applying an innovative legislative programme focused on continuing positive momentum. Scotland's justice system has been heralded as a reformist and responsive model, as recently noted by the Prison Reform Trust: 'There is much for England and Wales to learn from the progressive approach to punishment outlined today by Nicola Sturgeon. In particular, extending the presumption against short prison sentences from 3 to 12 months is a sensible way of reserving prison for those that really need it'.⁸

It is evident that the Scottish Government's priorities influence the delivery of public sector justice organisations. The plight of young people and women who offend are significant national challenges, as are the many thousands of prison receptions and short-term sentences awarded. However, against such a backdrop of the political priority surrounding these groups, the risk is that the (comparably) low numbers of people sentenced to life imprisonment may be lost. The annual numbers of people sentenced to a life sentence has remained relatively stable in Scotland over the last

10 years.⁹ However the duration of the sentences awarded are increasing as is the impact this may be having on people's ability to respond to custodial expectations. Increasing numbers of people appear unable, or unwilling, to respond to the applied risk-assessment paradigm and consequently remain in prison. As a result, this significant sub-population is one of the largest growing and most significant prisoner classification groups currently held in Scotland.

The current gap in the literature¹⁰ when combined with particulars of the Scottish context creates a humanistic, societal, organisational and financial phenomenon worthy of exploration. This research offers an important understanding of the relationship, influence, connectedness and tensions surrounding the aspects of the self-identity demands and adaptation

experiences faced. It is anticipated that this understanding will provide the Scottish Prison Service with an opportunity to further consider the individuality, vulnerability and risks related to the expressed experiences of people beginning a life sentence in Scotland.

Methodology

This was a qualitative study, and conducted as such in order to generate rich, complex and in-depth information from the personal perspectives of those involved.¹¹ Lived experiences

illuminated the issues being explored and a purposive sampling technique to define specific characteristics of relevant people.¹² An examination of the Scottish prison population at the time of the research was used to identify men over the age of 21 and under the age of 50, within the first 3 years of a life sentence. This sample was appropriate, representing the largest group exposed to the research topic. Age range was defined by the limit of the current young offender range and the general held classification of the elderly prisoner.¹³ At the time of data collection, there were 49 men within Scottish prisons who fit the sampling criteria.

The plight of young people and women who offend are significant national challenges, as are the many thousands of prison receptions and short-term sentences awarded.

6. The Scottish Government (2012), *The Strategy for Justice in Scotland*. Oct 2012.

7. The Scottish Government (2017), *Justice and Analytical Services report on Prison Statistics*. Feb 2017.

8. Prison Reform Trust (2017). Press release <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/PressPolicy/News/vw/1/ItemID/470>

9. The Scottish Government (2017), *Justice and Analytical Services report on Prison Statistics*. Feb 2017

10. With the notable exception of Maguerite Schinkel's research, Schinkel, M. (2015) 'Fair enough: Long-term prisoners talking about their sentence', *Scottish Justice Matters*, vol.3, no.1, pp.23-24. Schinkel, M. (2014) *Being Imprisoned: Punishment, Adaptation and Desistance*. Series: Palgrave studies in prisons and penology. Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke.

11. Strauss, A and Corbin, J. (1998), *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory*, California: Sage Publications.

12. Teddie, C. Fen Yu, CT. (2016), *Mixed Methods Sampling*, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*. Vol 1, Issue 1, pp. 77 - 100

13. Morton, J. B. (1992). *Administrative overview of the older inmate*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections

Study participants had an average age of 32 years and an average tariff of 19.2 years. Twenty people were approached and 12, who satisfied the sample classification, agreed to take part in a semi-structured interview. Men were engaged in a pre-interview discussion as a means of first contact. This was used to explain the research project, to scope willingness to be interviewed, the issues to be discussed and the range of protective factors provided. Interviews lasted between 25 and 65 minutes.

Data analysis

A process of thematic analysis, focusing on identifiable themes and patterns¹⁴ was used to surface and classify key issues captured during interviews. This technique was used to highlight, explore then group patterns of experience within language, phrases and reactions, expounding these into re-occurring feelings and meanings which may be less impactful if viewed on a singular level.¹⁵ Further consideration of these patterns and collective themes against existing literature then took place with a focus given to the evidence uncovered and its relativity to self-identity, survival and adaptation.

Findings and Discussion

This paper explored the reflections of men at the early stage of a life sentence in Scotland, with a particular focus on conflicting identities and portals to the past, pre-prison self. The men describe a variable response to imprisonment however, unilaterally linked a primary self-identity which was set outside prison. Seeing themselves not as prisoners but as the people they were before incarceration (defined largely through relationship, activity, profession and place). Imprisonment is described as an experience which then untethers individuality from the social bearings of self, creating feelings of loss which then combine with a perceived threat of prison-based violence in beginning to shape, what is seen as, a prisonbased identity. The acceptance of a system-defined future identity (defined through risk assessment) is an inconstant experience. Some see the classification of a pro-social self in direct conflict with the realities of self and enduring prison, offering a choice between survival and freedom. Finally,

we see how some men experience specific prison activity and place as temporary windows back to a previous self-identity. Described as portals to a lost and longed-for pre-prison self-identity. Portals which become progressively more difficult to pass through as a consequence of the passage of time and the consequential deepening and dreaded permanency of the prison-based self-identity.

The confliction of Identities

Various narratives during this research describe a confliction of identities, in essence between identities before and within custody. The reluctant loss of a previous pre-prison self, combining with the necessary development of a prison based identity, driven by safety and survival, both contrasting against a system- defined identity focused on pro-social citizenship and public safety.

The men described acutely experiencing a ternary of tensions set between the pre-prison identity, a prison-based identity and the pro-social, system defined identity:

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variable response to
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however,
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outside prison.

I'm putting myself out to be the right person, I'm trying to be the person that the Parole Board wants me to be.... but its 3 different people that you've to be, you've to tick 3 different

boxes all at the one time. You've got to try to be the family man, the person that you are on the outside, then the one that sticks up for yourself, nobody's fool and then try and keep yourself righteousness, not getting into bother. It's almost impossible... jail is like being down the pub with another 60 rowdy folk. As one of the prison officers says be at the show but just don't be on the stage...I think that's a good way of describing it, be at the show and have a laugh and a crack but just don't be the one on the stage. (Robert)

The men discussed the difficulty and polarity set between surviving prison and pro-social citizenship. Robert highlighted the ternary or identities he struggles with, continuing to be the father to his children, fitting into and responding to the subculture of the prison whilst balancing his behaviour to avoid 'being on the

14. Aronson, J. (1994). *A pragmatic view of thematic analysis*. Qualitative Report 2(1)

15. Leininger, M. M. (1985). *Ethnography and ethnonursing: Models and modes of qualitative data analysis*. In M. M. Leininger (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in nursing* (pp. 33-72). Orlando, FL: Grune & Stratton

stage'. This suggests a need to be 'nobody's fool' whilst the authority's focus on his behaviour may be counter to the 'righteous' person the system *requires* him to be and as such detrimental to his prospects for freedom.

John² and M take this tension a stage further describing the perceived impossibility of the conflation between the anti-social demands of the prison subculture and the pro-social citizenship demanded by the system. M describes the inherent difficulty of surviving the experience and the need to respond and engage with the subculture as a means of survival and the lack of system recognition for this: 'tell them I survived' (M). Creating an impossible choice between being *honest and judged or portraying a false identity*, 'you can't have both' (M). John² presents the ultimate dichotomy. In his mind the choice is clear: he must engage with and respond to the subculture, embracing the anti-social nature of the prison based identity as a means of survival — even if this prevents his release. 'I can either survive in here or get out, not both', he says (John²). He presents the definitive challenge and unimaginable choice of being safe (surviving) or sacrificing this to become what the system expects him to be (attaining his freedom).

Responses to vulnerability through the use of the carceral environment as relief has also been used to express niches or corners where those most susceptible might find solace.

connection can occur during longer visitation. We also see scholars highlight that whilst prison, by its nature, is cut off from wider society the extent to which the demarcation is total is less than absolute.¹⁸ Even Goffman expresses permeability within his description of the total institution, highlighting 'free spaces'¹⁹ as parts of the prison which are more relaxed, where personal guards or masks might be dropped. Other scholars describe distraction from the normative prison experience through prison run activities²⁰ or where mental escapism is possible through television, books or video games.²¹ Responses to vulnerability through the use of the carceral environment as relief has also been used to express niches or corners where those most susceptible might find solace.²²

This paper emphasises something different. A significant desire for sanctuary and solace which is focused more on self-expression and self-identity re-connection rather than a particular use of carceral space as escapism. The men described specific prison activities where it was possible to *transport* oneself back to the past, through 'portals' to a pre-prison version of their self, where action and interaction could be as they were before sentence and imprisonment, if only for a short

period of time. Allowing the men to 're-tether' to the identities they knew pre-prison.

Unsurprisingly, providing the earlier articulations of the importance of loved ones in shaping self-perceptions, these activities centred largely around family connection activities such as visits and telephone calls. Men expressed feelings of 'flicking a switch' (Robert) or '*travelling* through the visit room door' (Paul) as activities which actually transported them from one, current self-identity to a previous one. Travelling back to a lost and longed for identity which had

Portals to the past self — a window of early opportunity?

Previous studies have marked the importance of space within the prison setting — how it can shape reactions, behaviours and the vulnerability of those in custody.¹⁶ Specific spaces such as classrooms have been described as 'zones'¹⁷ where free expression and unguarded emotion is easier than it is in other parts of the prison. Moran describes the liminal advantage offered through visit rooms, as places where family re-

16. Crewe, B. Warr, J. Bennett, P. Smith, A. (2013). *The emotional geography of prison life*. Theoretical Criminology 2014, Vol. 18(1) 56 – 74. Moran, D. (2013). *Between outside and inside? Prison visiting rooms as liminal carceral spaces* Geo Journal, Vol. 78, No. 2, pp. 339-351.
17. Crewe, B. Warr, J. Bennett, P. Smith, A. (2013). *The emotional geography of prison life*. Theoretical Criminology 2014, Vol. 18(1) 56 – 74.
18. Jacobs, JB. 1977. *Stateville: The Penitentiary in Mass Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Bottoms, A.E. (1999). *Interpersonal Violence and Social Order in Prisons*, 26 Crime. & Just. 205, 282
19. Goffman, E. (1961) '*On the characteristics of total institutions: The inmate World*' in D Cressey (ed) 204
20. Milhaud O and Moran D (2013) Penal space and privacy in French and Russian prisons. In: Moran D, Gill N and Conlon D (eds) *Carceral Spaces: Mobility and Agency in Imprisonment and Migrant Detention*. Farnham: Ashgate.
21. Johnson, R & Dobrzanska, A (2005). *Mature coping among life-sentenced inmates; An exploratory study of adjustment dynamics*. Correction Compendium, 30 (6) 8-9, 36-38. Sliva, S.M. (2015). *On the meaning of Life: A qualitative interpretive meta synthesis of the lived experience of life without parole*. Journal of Social Work, vol 15 (5) 498-515.
22. Johnson R (1987) *Hard Time: Understanding and Reforming the Prison*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing. Toch, H (1992) *Living in Prison: The Ecology of Survival*. New York: The Free Press.

connection and activity with those loved ones, the connections and the related behaviours which defined the pre-prison self; a self which was seen by many to be in direct conflict to the identity they had to become within the prison setting:

It's a relief to get up and be with family. It's like a sigh of relief, the moment you sit down and you're with them, it's like thank god..... I suppose it is like flicking a switch or walking through a portal...you go back to being you... (Robert)

These contacts were described by the men as identity oases — places, periods and points of transportation back to lost activity and lost connection — back to a previous self.

It was also apparent that the longer some men spent in prison, the greater they felt the deepening permanency of the prison-based identity became. This crystallising identity, along with the complex adaptation, skills and understanding it demanded, was such that the short-term transition back to the previous, pre-prison self-became progressively more difficult. These experiences suggest a possible relationship between time-served, loss of pre-prison identity, development of a prison-based identity and permanency of change to what is then seen as the self-identifiable primary self:²³

She knows me, the way I am, but when I was phoning her I wasn't coming across as the me she knew. She got annoyed. My sister had seen a change. She was asking what are you acting like this for, what are you being like that for. I realised I was actually being the prison Paul with my sister. That's a worry. (Paul)

Paul's reflection on the conversation with his sister underlines to him the impossibly painful identification of the beginnings of permanent identity change. He describes the progressive deepening of a prison-based identity being such that he fears new beginnings of self-definition. He fears becoming a person his loved ones no longer relate to nor recognise as a result of his

pursuit of both prison based survival and eventual release. Paul describes a fearful dichotomy, caught between longings for a self he may lose as a consequence of responding to his new situation, as a life sentenced prisoner.

These results have highlighted a number of issues. We have seen how the experience of beginning a life sentence in Scotland varies. How for some it is similar to a social death whilst others view it as an opportunity to begin again. How men define themselves neither through prison nor the labels it offers. Also that whilst imprisonment regrettably separates most from the axis points of identity, many are driven to evolve a prison-

based self-identity as a means of surviving the threat of violence. In so doing, some of the men interviewed described a conflict between survival and the expected response to custody. Finally that some continue to seek out opportunities to contact the lost and longed for pre-prison self, but that this ability to transit between self-identities may be progressively lost through the passage of time.

Conclusion

The limited availability of any current academic examination of the transition into a life sentence and its impact upon self-identity in Scotland, is such that this paper offers insight into a relatively unexplored area. The dramatically increasing periods of imprisonment awarded to those given life sentences in Scotland has seen the examination of the lived experiences of these men achieved during a period of significant change. A period of change in the application of what constitutes the longest period of imprisonment within Scotland. The average tariff faced by the men in this paper was 19.2 years. This minimum term of custody represents an extent of captivity which is almost double that faced by people sentenced to life imprisonment in Scotland less than 20 years ago. Some of the men interviewed described a prospect of facing a period of imprisonment which was greater than their current age.

The men involved in this study, described a progressive difficulty in achieving a desired, temporary identity-switch. This difficulty was experienced as a result of the deepening permanency of the complex skill-set and behaviours demanded by the prison-based

Also that whilst imprisonment regrettably separates most from the axis points of identity, many are driven to evolve a prison-based self-identity as a means of surviving the threat of violence.

23. Hulley, S. Crewe, B. and Wright, S. (2015). *Re-examining the problems of Long-term Imprisonment*. British Journal of Criminology. 1-24.

identity, the concentrated application of it within the new prison environment and the distance (in time, place, activity and relationships) from the *pre-prison* self. These pressures were such that the permanency of the change was seen by some men as an inevitable consequence of the passage of time.

Men also described prison-based portals assisting in an identity-switch; as windows or oases which transported them back to a previous self-identity. These were seen as the small escapes of activity and place (primarily the visit room and the prison telephone) where connection and interaction with loved ones allowed a re-emergence (if only temporarily) of the previous self. Even here, however, the progressive deepening of the prison-based portrayal of self was such that the transition through these portals was becoming increasingly difficult. Offering, for some men, the profound concern of a correlation between time-served, permanency of identity change and loss of self.

Significantly, people described a direct confliction between the realities of surviving prison and the figment of the pro-social citizenship demanded by the system. Many held, with bitter experience, the person they had to become within prison to survive; where connection, humanity and personal engagement were to be, seen as signals of weakness and where propensity for significant violence was a foundation of self-protection. Self-survival was seen as primacy and as such this transition was seen as unavoidable by some. Many, therefore, experienced a polarity between the demands of surviving the experience of imprisonment and in becoming the person who could convince the authority of future law-abiding citizenship. A stark choice for many, was therefore set between the prospects of liberty or responding to the realities of surviving the environment.

Whilst positive in its philosophy and approach, if SPS considers its vision of 'Unlocking Potential and Transforming Lives' to be true for people beginning such unimaginably long periods of indeterminate imprisonment, much more may need to be done in understanding and responding to the specific individuality of the tensions surrounding the personal journeys into and through custody.

The men interviewed during this study highlighted a need to work hard to develop and hone the skills and human interactions reflective of responding to the perceived threats within the prison environment, as well as describing both a growing difficulty in transforming from this pretence identity back to their source identity. They also described a relationship between time served and the difficulty of transition. These descriptions provide a real risk of early and, potentially permanent, maladaptation for SPS. One which is at odds with the prospects of addressing issues such as progression, release and overcrowding. If the transformation these men are expected to undergo itself is to be survivable, even positive as well as being accepted by society, then a match between identity changes and a realistic prospect of a life beyond a life sentence must be achieved.

This study resulted in the author (the then Governor of the prison) establishing a programme of work which looked to reconsider and subsequently evolve the practice used to support people facing such sentences. This practice takes place within a specific internal facility, The National Induction Centre (NIC) within HMP Shotts. A subsequent programme of work, which involved significant contribution from men serving such sentences, focused on responding to the risks of early maladaptation, as a consequence of both the environment and the personal experiences of people beginning a life sentence. The work was undertaken in 2018 and developed the Custodial Assessment, Support and Transition (CAST) model. This model of case management and support now sees a holistic, multi-disciplinary and open approach to the early stage of this sentence. Offering people a constructive response to the articulated challenges faced during the early periods of very long-term imprisonment and providing a tailored response which underpins a supportive, adaptive beginning to the prison sentence. Recently completed research (2019) into the model, its practice and its outcomes are very positive and SPS are currently considering the potential to extent the CAST model to other sectors of the current prison population in Scotland.

Digital Privacy Behind Bars

Jana Robberechts is a doctoral researcher at the research group Crime and Society of the Criminology department of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium.

The increasing digitalisation of society has brought new dimensions to the concept of privacy. Thus, it is unsurprising, that the introduction of digital technologies within the enclosed environment of prisons has had a profound impact on understandings of privacy behind bars. Drawing on the findings from an ethnographic study on the use of the digital platform PrisonCloud in a Belgian prison,¹ this article explores the different privacy issues with regard to digital communication in prison, and suggests that the addition of a digital dimension to the prison context, the prisoners perceived digital privacy improved. However, the findings raise significant additional questions about the levels of data literacy amongst prisoners.

Introduction

Privacy? You are locked up (Interview prisoner 17)

The overall lack of privacy within prison systems has long been labelled as one of the 'pains' of imprisonment.² Although privacy in general is subject to many interpretations; it does embody a unique meaning in a prison setting. Benn and Gaus argue that every space in the prison setting is 'public'.³ While entering the penitentiary system for example, prisoners are subjected to the permanent surveillance of both prison staff and multiple CCTV cameras.⁴ From their inception, the construction of Belgian prisons was governed by the idea of permanent surveillance; designed as a star-shaped structure, that divided the prison into different landings, overlooked by a centrally

located block that can easily monitor those inside.⁵ Moreover, the concept of permanent surveillance shaped the way facilities were introduced in the penitentiary context. For instance, when the prisons were equipped with public phones in the 1980s, the Belgian Prison Service advised to locate them on the landings, near the centre of the prison, so that prison staff could easily monitor prisoners while making a phone call.⁶ Such design decisions have important implications for prisoner-officer interactions. Beijersbergen et al. found that prisoners in panopticon layouts — implying permanent surveillance — were less positive about officer-prisoner interactions than in other layouts (e.g. campus).⁷

The gradual infusion of digital infrastructure within penitentiary systems, has over time (re)shaped the traditional control mechanisms described above. The introduction of television in the 1980s for example, was for instance used to 'foster control with less direct intervention from staff and thus satisfying safer custody priorities'⁸, thus mirroring the idea of using technologies for purposes of control.⁹ Jewkes and Reisdorf argue that digital facilities became privileges, used to elicit good behaviour from prisoners as an exercise of soft power.¹⁰ More recently, digital technologies that allow interaction between prisoners and prison services or staff, have added a new dimension to prison life and the communicative processes between prisoners and staff. It has also raised the vexed question of access to digital information; who decides who can access it, use it, and for what purposes. This article focuses on the particular issue of privacy in the context of a digital prison.

1. This doctoral study results from a collaboration between the Vrije Universiteit Brussels and the National Institution for Criminalistics and Criminology, financed by the Research Foundation Flanders.
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6. The Collective letter No. 16/VII of 18 September 1989 regarding the use of telephone communication by prisoners.
7. Beijersbergen, K. A., Dirkzwager, A. J. E., van der Laan, P. H. & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2014) *A social building? Architecture and Staff-Prisoner Relationships*. *Crime & Delinquency*, p1-32.
8. Knight, V. (2015) *A Modus Vivendi – In-cell Television, Social Relations, Emotion and Safer Custody*. *Prison Service Journal*, (216), p19-20.
9. Johnson, R. (2005) *Brave New Prisons: The Growing Social Isolation of Modern Penal Institutions*. In *The Effects of Imprisonment* (pp.255-284). Willan Publishing USA.
10. Jewkes, Y. & Reisdorf, B. C. (2016) *A brave new world: The problems and opportunities presented by new media technologies in prisons*. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, p1-18.; Crewe, B. (2011) *Soft power in prison: Implications for staff-prisoner relationships, liberty and legitimacy*. *European Journal of Criminology*, 8(6), p455-468.

Digital Platforms And In-Cell Communication

Evolving digital technologies have also found their way into penitentiary systems. Recently, new technologies have been implemented in prisons that have moved the accessibility of facilities from outside the prison cell, to ones that are in-cell. A detailed discussion on the international evolutions of the digital penitentiary landscape has been previously given by Victoria Knight,¹¹ who argued that digital technologies such as radio, television and gaming consoles are now embedded in everyday prison life.¹² Similarly, new initiatives were taken by the Belgian Prison Service as a result of a private-public collaboration in 2014; this included the creation of a new digital platform for prisoners.¹³ The in-cell digital platform PrisonCloud,¹⁴ enables prisoners to access several digital services, such as ordering their canteen electronically, watching television, writing messages directly to internal services, and making in-cell phone calls. Other countries have already shown great interest¹⁵ in this digital platform, and it is strongly promoted by the Belgian Prison Service and their private partner. Currently, the PrisonCloud system operates in three — out of a total of thirty-four — Belgian prisons.

Significantly, the decisions of the local prison administration can have a bearing on the research findings. The way that PrisonCloud is configured, depends on the *à la carte* selection of functions chosen by an individual prison; prison governors can decide for example, which information is disseminated by PrisonCloud, which services prisoners can send messages to, and what limitations are imposed upon the communication system. Whichever form the implementation of PrisonCloud takes, it digitalises prison organisation and

daily routines, relocates the accessibility of facilities to the cell, and renders the activities of prisoners and prison staff traceable. The platform thus adds a distinctly digital dimension to the private aspects of prison life: a new environment where everyday aspects, such as internal communication, can now be exercised privately, and where other, specifically digital forms of interaction, become increasingly prevalent.

Methodology

This article builds on a study of digitalisation and the use of PrisonCloud in one Belgian prison, where the experiences of both prisoners and prison staff were considered. This article, however, focuses solely on the experiences of prisoners. The studied prison holds approximately 300 male prisoners, most of them serving long-term sentences. The majority of had been previously detained in other prisons, with the result that all interviewees had experience with at least one other non-digital prison.¹⁶ By asking the prisoners about their experiences in non-digital prisons, we were able to track the influence of the use of PrisonCloud.

Prior to undertaking 36 qualitative interviews in July and August 2017¹⁷, the researcher performed observations over a six-month period between January 2017 and June 2017.

Each interviewee confirmed his

participation in the research by sending us a message through PrisonCloud. This method led to an overwhelming application of prisoners on which we performed a pragmatic sample. The interviewees were selected based on the chronological order of their application. However, some variables were checked on the basis of pre-determined criteria, confirming, to the extent it was possible, that all groups were

Evolving digital technologies have also found their way into penitentiary systems. Recently, new technologies have been implemented in prisons that have moved the accessibility of facilities from outside the prison cell, to ones that are in-cell.

11. Knight, V. (2015) Some Observations on the Digital Landscape of Prisons Today. *Prison Service Journal*, (220), p3-15.

12. Knight, V. (2015) Some Observations on the Digital Landscape of Prisons Today. *Prison Service Journal*, (220), p3-15; Ribbens, W. & Malliet, S. (2015) Exploring the appeal of digital games to male prisoners. *Poetics*, 48, p1-20; Vandebosch, H. (2000) Research Note: A Captive Audience? *European Journal of Communication*, 15 (4), p529-544.

13. Beyens, K. (2015) PrisonCloud. Een ICT-platform voor de Belgische gevangenen. *Panopticon*, 36 (2), p122-126.

14. More information can be found on <https://www.ebo-enterprises.com/prisoncloud>.

15. Knight, V. & Van De Steene, S. (2017). Digitizing the Prison: The Light and Dark Future. *Prison Service Journal* (231), p22-30.

16. The interviewees had experiences within one to eight non PrisonCloud prisons.

17. Two test interviews were conducted in June 2017.

represented.¹⁸ While analysing the field notes, variant experiences relating to privacy, and their importance to the detention experience, were manifest. Consequently, this issue was addressed during the interviews, which in turn generated significant data on the question of privacy behind bars. This article discusses the meaning that *prisoners* give to their digital privacy as a consequence of the (un)intended outcomes of introducing digital technologies.

Digital Privacy

Characterized by its security goals, imprisonment by definition involves restrictions on (digital) privacy. Entering the digital prison, an incoming prisoner is given a login account on PrisonCloud. The local prison administration then gathers information on the incoming prisoner, and based upon this, he/she will be able to use PrisonCloud in their preferred language (Dutch, French or English). PrisonCloud functions on the basis of a central server which makes it possible for individual data to follow a prisoner, thus allowing transfers to another cell or prison to be seamlessly facilitated. It is important to note that *all* prisoners are given access to the digital platform and its services.¹⁹

Prisoner's privacy has been mostly limited to discussion about the need of individual cells allowing prisoners to withdraw themselves.²⁰ Whilst this is a noteworthy topic, the focus here is on digital privacy, and not general experiences of privacy in prison, even if they have a digital dimension. For the purposes of this article, *digital* privacy is described as '*the indefeasible right of an individual to control the ways in which*

Characterized by its security goals, imprisonment by definition involves restrictions on (digital) privacy.

personal information is obtained, processed, distributed, shared, and used by any other entity'.²¹ This is linked to an additional factor, namely data literacy, which Mandinach and Gummer define as '*the ability to understand and use data effectively to inform decisions*'.²² In other words, the concern is not simply one of control, but the extent to which prisoners are aware of their own data and how it is used?

Although the (inter)national attention for prisoners' rights has increased, discussions about the parameters of digital privacy in prisons remains limited. Furthermore, the experiences of prisoners regarding their digital privacy has seldom been addressed, whilst research examining access to digital technologies in prison are themselves extremely limited.²³ The greater

part of the prisoner population are systematically denied access to the majority of digital technologies, which leaves them as what Jewkes and Johnson describe as '*cavemen in an era of speed-of-light technology*'.²⁴ Similarly, Gangadharan argues that '*from data collection to data sharing to data analysis, members of historically marginalized groups are at risk of being stereotyped, exploited, or*

alienated'.²⁵ Prisoners already know many deprivations as result of their imprisonment.²⁶ The subjective value given to digital privacy is therefore significant. In this sense, I agree with Solove and Schwartz that '*(...) the value of privacy concerns its importance — how privacy is to be weighed relative to other interests and values*'.²⁷ When the topic of digital privacy was discussed, the interviewees referred mainly to the internal communication with the prison services and the external communication with the outside world by telephone through PrisonCloud.

18. The participants, whose ages fall between 21-64 years old (median: 31,5; one interviewee's age was not included), included both prisoners on the open regime (14), and prisoners on the closed regime (22), interviewees residing on a single cell (30), and interviewees sharing a cell (6). It should be noted that in the time between the application to take part in the interviews, and the interviews taking place, most prisoners had already changed cells. The interviews were conducted in Dutch (33), French (2), and English (1).
19. However, prisoners have to pay to use some services (e.g. television).
20. Maes, E. (2009). Van gevangenisstraf naar vrijheidsstraf. 200 jaar gevangeniswezen. Antwerpen/Apeldoorn: Maklu.
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23. Reisdorf, B. & Jewkes, Y. (2016) (B)Locked sites: cases of Internet use in three British prisons. Information, Communication & Society, p.1-17.
24. Jewkes and Johnston (2009) Cavemen in an era of speed-of-light technology: Historical and contemporary perspectives on communication within prisons. Howard Journal of Criminal Justice, 48 (2), p132-143.
25. Gangadharan, S.P. (2015) The downside of digital inclusion: Expectations and experiences of privacy and surveillance among marginal Internet users. New media & society, 19 (4), p597-615.
26. Jewkes, Y. (2008) The role of the Internet in the twenty-first-century prison: Insecure technologies in secure spaces. In K.F. Aas, H. Oppen Gundhus & H. Mork Lomell (Eds.), Technologies of InSecurity: The Surveillance of everyday life (pp. 171-188). Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
27. Solove, D. J. & Schwartz, P. M. (2009) Privacy, Information, and Technology (2nd Edition ed.). Panel Publishers USA.

Findings

The Traceability Of Internal Communication

'It is two-fold, everything is now traceable because of PrisonCloud'

(Staff member psychosocial service, Fieldnotes, January 2017)

The internal communication system of PrisonCloud was implemented in the studied PrisonCloud prison at the beginning of 2015. From that point on, prisoners were able to send electronic report messages²⁸ to the internal prison services through the digital platform. The introduction of the electronic communication system was not immediately adopted by all prisoners, some of them still preferred to use handwritten report notes. Prison staff were asked to raise prisoners' awareness, and to encourage the sole use of electronic communication in the future.²⁹

Electronic communication distinguishes itself from traditional written communication: using electronic report messages prisoners can *directly* communicate with some internal services, such as the psychosocial and medical services. This direct way of communicating was discussed when PrisonCloud was implemented and privacy issues were considered. A prisoner's request for healthcare for example, is only seen by medical staff.³⁰ The possibility of direct messaging to the corresponding service, was widely embraced by the interviewees.

The advantage of sending report messages through PrisonCloud is that nobody can read it. I mean, no prisoner can read it. I used to give my report notes in [a non-digital] prison, and the first thing the fatik [prisoner responsible for domestic work] did, was to read it. It was not meant for him. It was meant for the prison administration or somebody else (Interview 35).

In non-digital prisons, reports go through various staging posts, and several people are involved in

delivering the report notes to corresponding services. They are firstly collected by the prison officers who hand them over to the supervising officer. When all report notes of the wing have been collected, the report notes are distributed to the corresponding services. As a result, all those involved in the process are able to read the report notes. Furthermore, report notes sometimes get lost, which causes a great deal of daily discussions. The traceability of the communication through PrisonCloud means that report messages cannot get lost:

They no longer can say 'we have lost it' or 'we accidentally lost it'. They cannot say that. You have proof you have written it. They once tried to tell me that they did not receive anything. I told them I still had the message. I would not be that stupid to send a message and delete it immediately afterwards, because you will have nothing. Now, you have a guarantee (Interview 9).

The traceability of the communication through PrisonCloud means that report messages cannot get lost

In the studied prison, prisoners can write electronic messages directly to the following services: the supervising officer, the medical service, the psychosocial service, the welfare services, the workhouses, the accounting service, the local prison administration, the religious and moral services, the visits department, the reception and the porter. Contact with the Independent Monitoring Board, however, remains on paper. Although the Board believes that sending an electronic message would be regarded as more private with regard to fellow prisoners (knowing that no fellow prisoner will know they contacted the Board), they are somewhat sceptical about whether or not the electronic report messages are actually private.³¹

Some prison services are not directly accessible. For example, prisoners can only request an appointment with the prison governor when they write to the supervising officer and give a reason for wanting a meeting. In instances such as this, the supervising officer decides which electronic report messages are to be forwarded and therefore still has the option to handle the report message him/herself.

28. Traditionally, the communication system in non PrisonCloud prisons was done by written media, using the so-called 'report notes.' To clearly underline the distinction between the traditional written and electronically sent messages, we speak in terms of 'report notes' and 'report messages' in PrisonCloud.

29. Internal mailing by the local prison authorities (2015); Field notes (March 2017).

30. Knight, V. & Van De Steene, S. (2017). Digitizing the Prison: The Light and Dark Future. Prison Service Journal (231), p22-30.

31. Mailing with the Board (April 2018).

Throughout the research, it became clear that the digitalisation of the internal communication system resulted in an overload of report messages for the internal prison services. This can be linked to the 24/7 accessibility of the communication system, allowing prisoners to send report messages at any time. The overload of report messages was dealt with by setting limitations on the number of report messages to each service, which led to frustrations by the prisoners,³² and were perceived as undermining the prisoners freedom of choice. Interestingly, in order to bypass these limits, prisoners send report messages to other services, hoping that their messages will be either forwarded, or that the prison officer will contact the appropriate service themselves. Thus, prisoners still operate within the framework of an organization that implements technology according to its needs. However, prisoners will still use technology to meet their needs, which may manifest as somewhat different to that expected by the prison.

Within the digitalised communication system there is an inherent traceability of the user's actions. Even though prisoners can delete messages from their inbox, they are saved on the system and can still be consulted by the corresponding service. Bocklandt raised the possibility of report messages being systematically saved, which in theory can be used and requested by either prisoners, internal and external employees or the central prison administration.³³ Following the observations and interviews, we found that report messages are used as an informal means of evidence, although this is a mutual benefit; both prisoners and prison staff use communications in this way.

Prison staff can use the report messages as a source of information about the prisoner. Additionally, the content can be used as evidence by prison staff that prisoners wrote certain messages. The traceability therefore leads to less ambiguity about communicative provenance. The discussion on whether or not a prisoner has sent a message — which is common in prisons without PrisonCloud — can be immediately clarified.

Prisons are places with many opportunities for frustration and anger to fester. The 24/7 accessibility of PrisonCloud allowed prisoners to use the platform to vent their frustrations with greater immediacy on, among other things, the prison system. Interviewees stated that using handwritten report notes, prevented them from acting impulsively. With PrisonCloud, they no longer have to wait to hand over the report notes to the prison officer, instead they can send their messages immediately. The time gap between writing a report note and handing it over to the prison officer, gives prisoners a few moments to cool down and reflect on their course of action when they feel frustrated.

Although the internal services will often not react to angry messages, they can forward the abusive and/or threatening messages to the local prison administration, which can start up a disciplinary procedure.

The report messages can be added to a prisoner's file, and becomes a source of information for the other services, such as the psychosocial service, to make decisions. The PrisonCloud messages provide a ready illustration of a prisoner's behaviour, or his communicative manner, whether that is positive or negative. Relatedly, the content can be used to help in the diagnosis of certain mental health concerns (e.g. psychosis).

This can be deduced by how sentences are formulated, as they report messages can show the gap between the self-presentation for the Sentence Implementation Court, and a prisoners actual behaviour in prison. The core business of the members of the psychosocial service is for example, to provide advice to external institutions like the Sentence Implementation Court.

Prisoners sometimes pretend to be saints when appearing for the Sentence Implementation Court.³⁴ Using the report messages, it can be shown that the prisoner is not always a saint; 'It is easier to behave yourself in front of the Court for ten minutes, instead of behaving yourself for ten months in prison' (Staff member psychosocial service, Fieldnotes, January 2017).

Report messages
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staff use
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32. For example, prisoners are allowed to send one message a day to the psychosocial service and two messages a week to the library service.

33. Bocklandt, P. (2017) Prison Cloud ... mag het iets meer zijn? Fatik, 154, p11-16.

34. The Sentence Implementation Courts decide about alternative sentences such as conditional release and electronic monitoring.

On the other hand, the report messages written by prison staff are similarly used by prisoners. For example, a prisoner can print their report messages and use them to illustrate their efforts to pay the civil party to increase their chances to be conditionally released, to be put under electronic monitoring, or to show to prison officers as proof of an agreed event:

For example, you request a conjugal visit. They will give you an hour and a date. You will print this message because some prison officers will say that they are not aware of your conjugal visit and that you are not on the list to leave your cell. I am on that list, so I will print the report message. Because it says that my request is approved. This way, we [prisoners] can always prove it (Interview 5).

While the (lack of) prisoners' privacy has been widely discussed, the traceability of communication systems also impacts the working experiences of prison staff. This issue has been raised by Hancock and Jewkes, in discussing new forms of control resulting from the constant self-management by prison staff.³⁵ This was also perceived by the interviewees. Prisoners noted that as the use of the digitalised communication system was perceived as official, the prison staff had become 'more prudent' in their electronic communication, which needed to be reflective of a higher degree of professionalism.³⁶

External Communication: Suspicious Minds

Prisoners were very positive about the relocation of phones to their cells, meaning that they were no longer required to share the public phones on the landings like prisoners in the non-digital prisons. The central location of public phones in these prisons caused obvious limitations to prisoners' privacy; staff could easily monitor prisoners' conversations, and the close proximity of the public phones to the landings

also made it possible for fellow prisoners to overhear personal conversations.

In another prison I had to call on the landings. Two meters further, another prisoner was calling, and across the landing another one. Bottom-line, you don't have real privacy then to discuss something with your friends or family. It is not ideal to explain something with thirty ears around you. That is the advantage here (Interview prisoner 1).

Previously, prison staff were responsible for keeping track of each prisoner's phone calls; collecting information on the number dialled, the recipient, and the call date and time.³⁷ This information is now automatically tracked in non-digital prisons. However, Belgian law prohibits the recording or tapping of prisoners' phone conversations without an injunction issued by an investigating judge. These regulations apply for both digital prisons and non-digital prisons. Despite the interviewees' appreciation of the increased privacy of in-cell phone use, many expressed fears, or even presumed, that their calls were being tapped:

But of course, it is being tapped. I wasn't born yesterday (Interview prisoner 35).

Such presumptions reflect the distrust prisoners hold when making phone calls in the penitentiary context. Amongst other reasons, this widely held belief encourages the use of illegal mobile devices practices inside the prison, which although prohibited in the prison due to the impossibility of monitoring them,³⁸ prisoners still manage to have them smuggled in:

They [the prison administration] can request everything and check everything. They follow you. We [prisoners] know that and take this into account. Some people are too suspicious and bring mobile phones inside (Interview 5)

35. Hancock, P. & Jewkes, Y. (2011) Architectures of incarceration: The spatial pains of imprisonment. *Punishment & Society*, 13 (5), p611-629.

36. Whilst we assert the importance of constant management and the impact on, and reactions of, prison staff, detailed discussion is beyond the remit of this article which is primarily concerned with the experiences of the prisoners.

37. Ministerial Circular No. 1664/VII of 28 June 1996 regarding the use of telephone communication by prisoners.

38. Ministerial Circular No. 1642/V of 20 January 1995 regarding mobile phones.

The findings show that prisoners are unaware of what data the government is collecting from their phone calls. However, the digital infrastructure is not something prisoners can avoid in digital prisons, because they are *obliged* to use the digital platform as it is often the only way to access facilities such as the canteen, to communicate with the internal prison services, or indeed the outside world. The digital platform thus collects an enormous amount of data on prisoners. In addition, questions arise over the fact that the platform has been developed by a private company. A discussion in the Belgian Chamber of Representatives revealed that the same private company actually collects data — although ‘*it is not clear whether this data can be retrieved for privacy reasons.*’³⁹

The compulsory use of the digital platform, combined with the respondents’ general lack of knowledge about data collected from their telephone use, indicates an involuntary engagement with their data. However, data literacy is increasingly more important in an era of speed-of-light technology. Considerations of data literacy, discussed in section 4 above, helps to identify two privacy issues. Data literacy implies possession of a broad skill set and knowledge base in order to take well informed decisions.⁴⁰ The findings suggest a lack of skills and knowledge, indicating that choices are neither well informed nor even *bona fide* choices.

Conclusion

This article has explored the meaning of privacy for prisoners in the context of the (un)intended consequences of a digital communication systems with a digitalised prison. The findings emerged within the framework of a study on digitalisation in Belgian prisons and are based on both observations and qualitative interviews with prisoners.

Imprisonment involves a *de facto* restriction on privacy whether the institution is digitalised or not. The

emphasis on security ensures that prisons by their very nature are *privacy-poor* environments. However, the digital platform PrisonCloud, disturbs traditional notions of privacy within a prison setting by relocating several facilities to the domain of the prisoner’s cell. Gradually several services have been integrated into the digital platform so that every prisoner needs to use them in order to have access to essential facilities. It was found that the digital platform adds to the prisoners perceived sense of privacy. Prisoners found the in-cell access to the communication system, both internal and external, a positive one. PrisonCloud speeds up the communication between prisoners, prison staff and outside society. Although prisoners gain more privacy with the in-cell access to internal and external communication, the relocation has deeper consequences for life inside prison. The digitalisation allows for possibility to track the actions of its users and both prisoners and prison staff have responded to this traceability in ways that respectively question and exploit the capabilities of the system. Much of this relates to how the use of digital technologies in prison has elicited new issues around the questions of data literacy. The findings show unawareness with the data of prisoners as, for example, the presumptions of phone calls being tapped are all pervasive in the penitentiary context, and the option to give, or not give, data is absent. The shift in emphasis on *data giving*, instead of *data gathering*, sheds interesting light on the experiences of the prisoners which are central to this article. Moreover, if the prisoners data is key to the successful functioning of the digital infrastructure, it cannot be considered insignificant to assess their possession of necessary data literacy skills with which meaningful choices about digital privacy are made. Failure to do so will limit the comprehension and understanding of the detention experiences of prisoners in a digital prison environment.

39. The Flemish Parliament (2016) Question nr. 557 of Mister Piet De Bruyn of 27 May 2016. Attachment answer n° 4. Retrieved from docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1192578

40. Koltay, T. (2014) Data literacy: in search of a name and identity. *Journal of Documentation*, 71 (2), p.401-415.

It's Time to Go: Exploring Prison Life of Those Who Abscond

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Background

Often within the media the term 'escapee' is used in place of the official definition 'abscond' which has a dissimilar meaning. 'Absconding is generally taken to refer to breaking the conditions of regulated authorised absences'.² Generally the distinction between absconding and escaping relates primarily to the environmental, procedural and relational states of which the breach occurs. For example, 'a prisoner escapes from prison if they unlawfully gain their liberty by breaching the secure perimeter of a closed prison'.³ Whereas 'an abscond' is an escape that does not involve overcoming a physical security restraint. Thus, by meaning constitute different behaviour highlighting the fallacy of the media statements. Moral concern is born through such fallacy. The public are inclined to believe the phenomena is wider spread and more frequent than it actually is creating gratuitous fear and creating feeble ideologies of a 'failing prison system'.⁴

Rate of Abscond: Who and Why?

It is not easy to construct an expressive measure of absconding due to definitional issues, lack of standardised measures and the varied calculations/recording systems used across institutions. There are currently 84,364 offenders detained within the UK prison system.⁵ This is an increase of 1980 from the year previous.⁶ There were a total of 139 'absconds' in 2018 compared to 2017 where there were 86

'absconds' across the national prison estate (note: the static population at these times were 82,384 in 2018 and 84,746 in 2017).⁷ Therefore the absconding rate across these periods lies at less than <1.5 per cent (circa 0.1 per cent-0.16 per cent). Over the past 4 years (2015-2019) absconding has been at its lowest rate since 1995 (combined total of 511 over 4 years). Therefore, the rate of absconding is much improved.

The Prison Service vision is to '...prevent victims by changing lives'. HMPPS works collaboratively with providers and partners to achieve a transformed justice system with the aim to make communities safer, prevent victims and cut crime. This quadratic vision is bolstered by security (risk management) and decency (*rehabilitation and resettlement*) of the prison population. The aim is to establish a secure environment which seeks to reduce recidivism through a rehabilitative approach based upon the 'What Works?' charter.⁸ Literature has demonstrated that rehabilitation contributes not only to reducing recidivism but can aid composure and compliance within a prison regime.⁹

The majority of absconds (2018-2019) were adult male prisoners from an open prison followed by male young offenders from an open prison and then female prisoners from an open prison. The remainder being adult males from category B, C and Cluster prisons. Suitably risk assessed prisoners are allocated to open conditions so that they can be tested in conditions that are as close to being in the community as possible, to assist in safe transition and resettlement to the community ahead of their release.

1. BBC, [online] (8th April, 2019) Available at < <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/c4mld9r290t/prison-escapes> > [accessed 17th April, 2019]
2. Exworthy, T., & Wilson, S. (2010). Escapes and absconding from secure psychiatric units. *The Psychiatrist*, 34, pp. 81-82.
3. Ministry of Justice, (2012). National Offender Management Service Annual Report 2011/12: Management Information Addendum. Ministry of Justice Information Release.
4. Schichor, D. (1992). Myths and Realities in Prison Siting. *Crime and Delinquency*, 38: pp. 70-87
5. Ministry of Justice, (2019), Absconds, Available at < <https://data.justice.gov.uk/prisons/public-protection/absconds> > Accessed [18th April, 2019]
6. Ministry of Justice, (2018). Prison Population Figures: Population Bulletin December 2018. Ministry of Justice.
7. Ministry of Justice, (2018). Prison Population Figures: Population Bulletin December 2018. Ministry of Justice.
8. Martinson, R. (1974). What Works? Questions and Answers about Prison Reform. *The Public Interest*, 35, pp. 22-54.
9. Perlin, M.L. (2012). *Preventing Sex-Offender Recidivism Through Therapeutic Jurisprudence Approaches and Specialised Community Integration*. New York Law School: Be Press

Public protection units monitor risk of abscond to ensure public safety; this includes exploring prisoner characteristics in order to understand who is most likely to abscond. 49 cases of adult male prisoners who had 'absconded' or 'failed in open conditions' were investigated¹⁰ and of these cases it was found:

- ❑ 16 were life sentenced prisoners
- ❑ 33 were indeterminate prisoners
- ❑ the majority were post-tariff

Moreover of this sample 37 had 'failed in open' (and returned to closed conditions), 5 had 'absconded' and 7 had 'failed to return' (from ROTL¹¹). This behaviour occurred within the first 6 months of transferring to open conditions suggesting sentence type, psychological readiness and the change in environment may hinder a prisoner's stability.

However a study¹² of 207 young offenders absconds found that these offenders were commonly serving short sentences and were at the earlier stages of their sentences. Thus, suggesting sentence type or time served may not be significant factors when identifying the characteristics of an absconder. Further evidence demonstrates being younger at the time of conviction, previous absconding, larger offending histories and/or antisocial behaviour are all factors in predicting the likelihood of future absconding.¹³

Current Investigation

Since the Learmont Enquiry in 1995¹⁴ HMPPS has been criticised for its performance in maintaining security. As such HMPPS is keen to understand risk of abscond in the context of lived experience that is 'what prison life is really like'. In understanding this it is hoped that improvement in services can be attained. Thus, improving the quality of prison life and preventing the prison abscond. This research utilised Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore this phenomena.

Methodological Framework

IPA is an 'attempt to unravel the meanings contained in accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with the texts and transcripts'.¹⁵ Based upon IPA's internal structure and objective it is appropriate for the current research, allowing emphasis upon the importance of subjective experience.¹⁶

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used enabling the researcher to construct a homogenous sample. All participants were recruited on the premise they were long term prisoners or prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection (ISPP) who had absconded from a prison setting, given that these types of prisoners were overrepresented within the abscond data.

Procedure

Participants engaged in a briefing and informed consent session. Data from interviews was retrieved through open questions devised on a semi-structured basis. The tape recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher identified thematic clusters which were then independently reviewed, to ensure reliability.

Demographics

Participants were aged between 26-55 years old. Participant's had absconded from a different UK open prison, constituting 4 prisons nationally. Pseudonyms are used to protect the true identity of the participants.

Analytical Findings

The analysis detailed recurrent themes which were phenomenological in composition (9 superordinate and

IPA is an 'attempt to unravel the meanings contained in accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with the texts and transcripts.

10. Matin, N.nasrine.matin@hmps.gsi.gov.uk 2013. LT Prisoner Research. [email] Message to L M Chant (laura.chant@hmps.gsi.gov.uk). Sent Monday 16 September 2013: 15:29. Available at: <Criminal Justice Secure e-mail service> [accessed 16 September, 2013]
11. ROTL (Release On Temporary License) - is granted temporary absence from the prison as authorised by the prison service (as governed by Prison Service Order (PSO) 6300). ROTL's aim to assist with rehabilitation and preparing individuals for community resettlement.
12. Beck, G. (1994). Absconding from HMPYOI Thorn Cross: Summary. Psychology Unit Paper: HMYOI Lancaster Farms.
13. Richmond, I., Dandridge, L., & Jones, K. (1991). Changing nursing practice to prevent elopement. *Journal of Nursing Care Quality*, 6, pp. 73-81.
14. Woodcock, J. (1994). *Report of enquiry into the escape of six prisoners from special security unit at Whitemoor Prison on Friday 9th September, 1994. The Learmont Enquiry*. Home Office: Crown Publication.
15. Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in theory and Method*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
16. Spinelli, E. (2005). *The Interpreted World*. London: Sage Publications.

40 subordinate themes). Themes that are most relevant to the research objective are presented.

Our Reality

This derives from the participants' perception (how they view prison life, themselves and the world as *they know it*).

False sense of freedom

Joe: ...its conflicting you tell me I am here for more freedom, but the walls are still here I just can't see them.

This indicates a 'false sense of freedom' in that the physical restraint of the wall is no longer present. Yet 'freedom' remains suppressed by the conditions and rules of a prison environment.

A Waiting Game

Joe: Here, I know the times I am banged up I can judge time...without a watch, I can plan my day around this at D Cat I have to occupy myself...all day every day it's not easy especially when you're not in work right away days can drag ...it's more depressing.

Ahmed: if your family is well off, or you're still doing crime in Cat D or you can work then your fine... but if you're like me and don't fit in any of them... what can you do? Except sit on your arse waiting for your time to be over, it becomes very depressing actually.

'Time' is presented as a factor in the decision to abscond. They are waiting around which impacts their mood.

Category D 'as a simulation of the real world'

Johnny: ...the money is crap and its embarrassing really it's definitely not like the real world.

Ahmed: In the community I am expected to work which is what I wanted to do but no...in D Cat it's the other way round...how am I meant to become a citizen again when they

are always changing the rules, and treating you differently to how you would be as a citizen.

As Category D Prisoners Johnny and Ahmed are expected to reintegrate into society yet employment and finances are indifferent to that. So open conditions is only ever a simulation of the real world and they have difficulty adjusting.

Identity

Ahmed: ...although I am a prisoner and society doesn't care I am a person as well, with goals, dreams, regret and I sometimes need help.

Ahmed feels rejected by society which identifies him only as a 'prisoner'. He attempts to reinstate his social identity by maintaining goals and expressing remorse but feels others do not identify him by similar means.

Joe: I was number one on the servery...I come back from Cat D got my job and that back... .

Joe feels that within closed conditions he had a greater sense of identity, through his profile of a servery worker. Therefore, returning to closed conditions was not a deterrent, instead it reinstates a form of prosocial identity.

Kacper: you get pushed pillow to post you become a name.

...I hadn't had my own clothes well a full outfit for like 22 years or something so it was a massive thing for me.

Kacper feels he is identified by name only. This identity, too, shaped by the clothing he wears.

Lack of Control

This theme emanated from the participant's interpretation of specific incidence, encouraging them to believe they lack control of their lives. This appears to embolden an 'us vs. them' culture.

Dangling the Carrot

This indicates a 'false sense of freedom' in that the physical restraint of the wall is no longer present. Yet 'freedom' remains suppressed by the conditions and rules of a prison environment.

Joe: ...you are in limbo, you're stuck, it's strange...like you almost don't want to be there. I tell you what it's like, like dangling a carrot above the donkeys head. I mean I am sat there, not had any freedom for 7 years and I am watching people come in and go out.

Kacper: ...whilst I was confined to the grounds I had to watch him get up go out and most Saturdays go into town...it's like showing a baby a sweet and moving it away.

Both sought freedom and felt teased by having to watch others receive it whilst they were on their lay down period. Thus lacking control regards when they were able to essentially progress.

Status and Power

Ahmed: You're stuck in there. There's nothing you can do.

Johnny: ...the establishment, parole board, government, this sentence...makes it impossible to set goals and achieve them, we are told all the time set goals, mini goals you do...you work through them you get to the last mini goal parole say no and that's it, the end post has moved.

Ahmed feels powerless to a system he views as much bigger than him. Similarly, Johnny views these authoritative systems including his sentence (ISPP) as in control. This impacts his esteem and creates uncertainty of progression.

Kacper: ...the majority of prisoners at D Cats are determinate or in as white collar or blue collar criminals, and those who have loads of money, those who have an active network of criminality whilst they are still inside they can get clothes, drugs, alcohol, money you name it they can get it in so it becomes a very competitive environment, with leaders and people in debt with them which gives them power.

Kacper feels indifferent to his peers and outlines a system of control based on power as a result of sentence type, money and criminal ability. Whilst this

accentuates risk it also gives understanding of a lived hierarchical system.

Self-Preservation

Joe: ...prison is full of men who think they are hard, egos bigger than their brains and you have to learn to stand your ground.

The ideology of needing to protect results in Joe feeling controlled by the situation he finds himself in.

Let down by the system

Johnny: ...you can have the best interests...you can want to change like I have but you become so angry at the system because they don't support you ...

prison is full of men who think they are hard, egos bigger than their brains and you have to learn to stand your ground.

Ahmed: ...I just want to go to college, but nope knocked back. It pissed me off for ages, I was angry at the system I did think fuck it, and for a long time I was demotivated...it probably was part of my decision to run, to escape it...

Feeling let down by the system induced anger which encouraged prisoners to give up allowing the situation to consume them; thus contributing to a decision to abscond.

Restrictions

Johnny: ...it doesn't prepare someone because it's a community of criminals and you're still restricted you can't choose your life there.

Johnny asserts whilst open conditions attempt to prepare an individual for release it is restrictive as it is unlike the real world. Rather he is forced to further live amongst criminals; controlled by a system without choice.

Staff Support

This relates to the participants' experience and interpretation of their relationships with professionals.

Attitude and Decision Making

Joe: ...But as far as he was concerned, his attitude was I am the 'screw' you will do as you are told 1.

Joe feels that staff enforce an 'us vs. them' culture which he senses a lack of support.

Ahmed: ...when I actively asked for work their attitude is well you might become ill and sue us and the prison don't want that reputation or to lose money, so instead they let people fester but that's worse because that's when you get your absconds and people thinking fuck this off.

Ahmed believes staff have a poor attitude and make decisions based upon the reputation of the prison service. He feels staff do not trust him and assume he may litigate.

Relationship Dynamic

Kacper: ...thought well they don't really care why should I?

Ahmed: ... they haven't taken time to get to know you, they don't care about your problem and they just brush off or say they will help and months pass and nothing.

It is evident that the relationships between staff and prisoners break down as prisoners feel staff do not care. Resulting in withdrawal and distanced relationships.

Open vs. Closed

Kacper: ... staff, well in my experience, at the D Cat just don't have an interest in you as a person, they don't care. Here, I can go up to staff...talk to them, like a normal human being, I feel human here.

Kacper feels staff in open conditions are unapproachable. He also feels staff in closed conditions provide opportunities for him to express himself and are open in their feedback.

...staff...actively avoid talking to you it's very different to closed where staff will warn you and tell you before they write about you which gives you a chance to discuss it and explain yourself and apologize if needs be, D Cat staff don't.

Clearly prisoners perceive staff as unavailable. This appears to reduce prisoners' confidence in staff and they feel unsupported. Essentially, as presented within Ahmed's narrative it impacts their motivation.

Presence and Availability

Kacper: ...there isn't much patrol.

Joe: ...I have literally wondered around for about half an hour or so and there isn't one single officer on the unit, there is no one there...

Ahmed: ...staff you hardly see them, you see them on occasional walk rounds but hardly ever...My offender supervisor, I saw once or twice....Offender manager I only saw him at parole, probation don't care they don't come in and see you so you don't bother with them either.

Clearly prisoners perceive staff as unavailable. This appears to reduce prisoners' confidence in staff and they feel unsupported. Essentially, as presented within Ahmed's narrative it impacts their motivation.

Family and Friends Support

Personal support is paramount in offender rehabilitation.

This theme reinforces the importance of this, by identifying how access to family and friends and the quality of the relationships can act as a protective factor¹⁷ and indeed a promotive factor.¹⁸

17. Protective factors are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities or larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk (Centre for the Study of Social Policy, 2013). 3 Promotive factors are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities or larger society that actively enhance well-being (CSSP, 2013).

18. An 'indeterminate' prison sentence doesn't have a fixed length of time. This means no date is set when the person will be released they have to spend a minimum amount of time in prison (called a 'tariff') before they're considered for release by a Parole Board.

Geographic Proximity

Joe: ... it was too far from my family so I felt more trapped and isolated.

...You are being fucked off up north, without a second thought its destroying all bridges again with family, when you have worked so hard to rebuild them = that's the prison service failing on its own aims of on one hand saying they are here to prepare prisoners for release by helping them rebuild family ties but then fucking them off 500 miles up north, it makes no sense 3.

The distance between Joe and his family hindered his emotional state and his progression became meaningless. As such this may hinder rehabilitation on the basis of destabilisation and a lack of support.

Relationships

Joe: I was then getting angry a lot because of the stress. I didn't know anyone there.

...To build relationships, that's something prison doesn't teach you it's a false environment you only build detached relationships with people, people who mean very little most of the time you don't get visits so you are not in touch with real people so socialising which is a normal task to most, becomes very difficult for long term prisoners.

It is evident prison can be restrictive in the development of interpersonal relationships particularly for long term prisoners.

Risk and Victimisation

This superordinate theme is comprehensive, although commonly the manifestation of risk and victimisation is noted within the social milieu.

Substance Misuse

Joe: There were literally drugs everywhere.

...I wasn't there really smoking it, don't get me wrong I tried it...But I saw what it done to

other people, I mean the state of some of them they were in debt and everything¹.

Evidently substance misuse is a problem within open conditions. Joe states this impacts individuals and increases the risk of debt. Moreover, Ahmed feels predisposed to risk from determinate sentenced prisoners he feels the services provided to support prisoners are also at risk.

Ahmed: straighters trying to sell you drugs, drink or trying to get you caught up in something so there is more temptation...even one of the listeners I went to once was rattling his back out, clearly on crack or smack and he is asking me if I want to talk, I was like get out of my room you need more ... help than I do.

Gang Culture.

Ahmed: ...it's every man for themselves you don't really make friends unless you're...one of the druggies or...part of a gang or know people in from the out so you literally I have no one to talk to.

Whilst Ahmed's narrative identifies a lack of support it also emphasises a risk of isolation if you do not assign to a particular group thus, assuming gang culture existence.

Sentence Type

Joe: So that's the problem, for straight sentenced prisoners they treat it like a party they don't have anything to lose...it's like they don't care.

Ahmed: you have straighters who know when they are getting out so they come about all cocky trying to mess shit up... that's why people get to the point, thinking yeah fuck this I am off.

Joe feels determinate sentenced prisoners have nothing to lose and therefore behave inappropriately, as there is no perceived sanction for their behaviour. This can become aggravating for life sentenced prisoners (LSP) and Indeterminate Sentenced Prisoners (for public protection) (ISPP) 19 generating risky situations:

This superordinate theme is comprehensive, although commonly the manifestation of risk and victimisation is noted within the social milieu.

Joe: Some lifers get preyed on by determinates with money and contacts, and they end up in debt and face the consequences of that like having to do something in return it's a dangerous game mixing all different types of criminal's and sentence types and lengths with each other. Lifers and that can't refuse to help the determinates as violence may break out and there are much greater sanctions for lifers and IPPs than there is determinates and they know that, that gives them power.

Violence as an acceptable means

Joe: If you say your piece people will generally leave you alone. You can't be someone who lies there and takes it.

Johnny: It's scrapping, everyone for themselves.

Kacper: The only way to avoid trouble is to put on a front act dangerous.

Violence appears to be acceptable as a means of preservation within a seemingly volatile structure.

Peers and Social Suicide

Joe: I spoke to an officer, to tell them I didn't want to be around smoke, but he said unless I was willing to point out who actually was smoking then there was nothing he could do about it... I was like hang on, I am coming to you for help and you can't help because I won't say who it is he knows I can't say who it is, that's social suicide, I put myself at risk if I do...I say that I am an outcast, a victim.

Joe highlights how by liaising with staff about specific incidents can create a risk of victimisation. Furthermore, Ahmed's experience demonstrates how hostile thinking and anti-social behaviour can be reinforced by peers at the time of vulnerability; increasing risk.

Ahmed: I met up with this guy I knew from a hostel...I told him what I had done, he gave me advice to abscond.

Living Situation

The themes represented pertain to the participants' experience of residing within open conditions and services available to them.

Accommodation

Kacper: we have walls with holes in, dirty mattresses, flat pillows, tiny space smokers shoved with non-smokers...Some D Cats have shared toilets that are separate and these are awful like public toilets not cleaned well not inspected so although it's your home you can't make it feel like home. The walls in the dorms are thin you can hear through them, so it impacts your sleep and because there isn't much patrol people have music on until stupid o'clock which is shitty when you have to get up early.

Kacper experienced an uncomfortable living situation, particularly regards mixing smokers and non-smokers.

Facilities and Services

Ahmed: I stopped going doctors when I was ill because it was like the Spanish inquisition except no action they weren't interested in helping you they saw you to get their numbers up that's it.

Ahmed felt distrusted by doctors. He thought the service they provided was aimed at fulfilling audit requirements as opposed to an interest in his health and wellbeing. Both Ahmed and Johnny, found alcohol and drug services unhelpful believing these services could only assist in light of current issues.

Ahmed: You see in Cat D you expect to have loads of support services but you don't, not really like the only one there was CARATs which is for druggies and that and I am not so they can't even help you, so you do feel lost.

Johnny: ...there is absolutely jack they can offer you, like they talk to you but they just go over the same stuff you have already done and give you contacts and unless you're

Lifers can't refuse to help the determinates as violence may break out and there are much greater sanctions for lifers and IPPs than there is determinates and they know that, that gives them power.

currently on drink or drugs they don't really care like there's nothing they can give you.

Employment and Finances

Ahmed emphasises the importance of financial security in relation to rehabilitation and progression.

Ahmed: without work you can't have money and without money how do you do everything else town visits.

However, Johnny notes the difficulty of obtaining meaningful employment due to the competitive environment induced by prison procedure and control.

Johnny: You go to Cat D with all these plans and none of them are achievable well not for the first 6 months or something because like I said your waiting until you get your leave or whatever and everyone competes for the same job so you end up doing shit that's meaningless so it doesn't prepare you for the reality at all.

Transitional Stages

This superordinate theme is underpinned by factors hindering progression during the transitional stages.

Readiness and Adjustment

Joe: Staff need to just not sit there and think we are fully ready for this, or completely self-sufficient because we are not. Most of the time we haven't been given a chance to even set goals or a plan for cat D so we go into it blindly.

Kacper: ...because of security issues they don't always tell you when and where you're transferring so you can never really prepare yourself physically or mentally...

Joe feels staff have too great an expectation of prisoners that is perceived as ready and able to cope. However this is hindered by a lack of opportunity to plan for progression. Similarly Kacper feels mired by security regulations which restrict planning.

Institutionalisation

Joe: but yeah to be out at first it was different... nice... it was... refreshing. I could see sheep and see for miles, which screwed my head up a bit. I even saw a hedgehog, which was strange, as I had been inside walls for nearly all of my life...once the, I guess you could say the euphoria had worn off it was weird... it was like it's not that clear...

Johnny: ...when someone has come from closed after like 10 years or whatever its proper weird for us to adjust things change like, it sounds daft but its brighter than you remember, greener like cars that look different they definitely move quicker.

Noticeably, Joe and Johnny's world as they know it has clashed with the reality of outside; generating a euphoric and indifferent view of the world. This impacts their psychological state (becoming overwhelmed and confused) and they have difficulty coping.

Kacper: ...lifers and IPPs its riskier, and the transition after 7-30 years of institutionalisation is just too much, I don't understand why psychologists and governors and those at the top don't see that, it needs to be more gradual than it is.

Kacper states there is a heightened risk for the long-term prisoner. Identifying change as outsized leading to an inability to adjust.

Environmental Changes

Joe: There are other things that are strange too, they have actual council houses there for later on people who get to move into them to help prepare for their release, I'm thinking houses in a jail, it seems alien it's weird, I've just not seen houses for a long time, they seem a lot smaller than I remember. There are no bars on my window, everything like that is just like 'whoa' this is so different. I did feel it was too much, I told myself I need to take a step back here it was just really strange.

...without work you
can't have money
and without money
how do you do
everything else like
town visits.

The environment of open conditions is different to what Joe is used to. Kacper feels the removal of the wall is problematic to adjust to as temptation to leave is presented particularly at times of difficulty. Kacper states this is exacerbated by having to share living space with others and he becomes uncomfortable/confined.

Kacper: ...here because of lock up and individual cells where at worse you are sharing with one other you can get space away... D Cat it's a giant fish bowl you all chucked in there isn't any escape someone is always poking around that just isn't comfortable for me... it's tempting to just walk out of the perimeter just to get your space away from others, I remember in the last few days at D Cat I would walk round the whole jail, right close practically on the perimeter, just circle and circle like a stir craze donkey just so I could feel free.

Expectation vs. Reality

Ahmed: I had heard a lot about D Cat, read a lot about it and I got there and for me it was a total disaster... like how they help you get back into the community and help you find work and that. And how they support...long term prisoners in the prison, it's just not what you hope for. And, how we struggle to make ends meet, they don't care about that, we are another number to them, and it's not very supportive. So what I read it was all just a lie.

Kacper: You see when you get to this environment and it's sold to you by professionals as a progressive move when you haven't been to one before, whilst apprehensive you are open minded but you get there and it's very much...more of the same really.

Ahmed and Kacper feel the information they had prior to transition encouraged a different view of open conditions to what the reality was.

Discrimination

This theme highlights perceived experience of discrimination based on a number of factors on both a, personal and contextual level.

Health Issues

Ahmed: ...the work stuff well, there at D Cat its even worse than closed prisons because they look at me and because I have a health condition....epilepsy, and they always worry about if something happens to me and not because they care, but because they are scared I will sue their arse they don't want you to work.

Ahmed felt discriminated against as he was unable to obtain employment due to his epilepsy. Moreover, Kacper experiences bullying due to his appearance due to a lack of opportunity to have his glasses fixed. He feels this is indifferent to the health services he would be provided with in the community.

Kacper: ...look at the state of these...they are taped up at the sides here and the glass is as thick as jam jars and make you look a complete dork it does nothing for your self-esteem that's already rock bottom but it also makes you an easy target like your just laughed at all the time its bullying I guess, and a man of my age it's embarrassing

and it riles me...here I can lock myself away in D Cat you can't it's everyday, but opticians won't pay to thin the glass and fix them cheaply and they break again so I have given up, I have to wear them because I can't see but then I put up with snide comments again a victim of circumstance.

Judged and Labelled

Joe: ...the first thing he has said is so you are X and yeah I am X he said yeah I have just

...here because of
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individual cells
where at worse you
are sharing with
one other you can
get space away... D
Cat, it's a giant fish
bowl you are all
chucked in there
isn't any escape
someone is always
poking around
that just
isn't comfortable
for me...

read half your file I will be watching you, not you know asking questions or making me aware of his support it was a direct threat of I am watching you... it made me annoyed, he doesn't know me. I thought who do you think you

are? I have earned my place here, I have served my time, I have done my courses and reduced my risk, I deserve to be here.

Joe felt labelled based on his past and Johnny feels unable to seek support in fear he will be judged.

Absconding Intentions

This superordinate theme isolates specific factors that directly influence the decision to abscond at the point of actually absconding.

Escapism

Kacper: The only thing we have is escapism whether it's through reading, exercise or literally walking away.

Kacper feels 'escapism' in some form is the only option he has to cope with his circumstances. Both Ahmed and Johnny seek an alternative reality that is to feel free and they find this in leaving the premises and pursuing comfort in others.

Ahmed: I went on home leave one time and I met someone, and we starting talking we would have a laugh and I remember feeling less stressed and more happy well happier than I had been since being in prison.

Johnny: I just wanted some normality, like be able to speak to someone about how I felt or just to escape the shit for a bit.

Seeking Transfer

Kacper: I was thinking if I walked out I would have made a statement. I had been asking for a transfer since I arrived but got nowhere. So for me I guess it was like... if you are not going to do this I will do that. I knew it would get me back into a healthier place.

Ahmed: I used to write to my family told them I want to go back to closed, and that I was depressed and it was a shit hole...so yeah... that's that really.

Kacper and Ahmed's absconding intentions were to seek a transfer back to closed conditions.

Impulsivity

Whilst this subordinate theme is coded here (as it led directly to absconding) it is characteristically different to the other subordinate themes noted within 'absconding intentions'. Here, 'impulsivity' presents as a causal factor for absconding as opposed to a person absconding with the intention to be impulsive.

Kacper: you feel trapped nowhere to turn to, you become wrapped up in the anxiety, frustration and I guess anger to a degree and you don't think of consequences or think things through...

Ahmed: I don't remember thinking too much about it, I just went and walked to the bus and made my way to London, I was walking around London and thought I would just chill out for the day didn't think of the consequences or anything, I don't even think I was planning to run away I was just fed up.

Lack of Punishment

Kacper: ...the punishment of going back isn't really a punishment so people don't really care.

Joe: Prison becomes a way of life, no wait it becomes life so it's not a Hassel, it's not a punishment it's just a part of your life.

Both perceive a lack of punishment thus are not deterred from absconding. Interestingly, Joe perceives prison as a way of life as opposed to punishment which perhaps encourages an insensible attitude.

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from absconding.

Lack of Reward

Joe: ... I am just rolling with the punches it's fine, it only becomes a problem when you get to cat D and you begin to see the real life again, people going out, seeing more and hearing more and yet you are sat there not able to engage in that real life, you are still waiting I am not rewarded in any way.

Johnny: ...we are told all the time set goals, mini goals you do and you work through them you get to the last mini goal parole say no and that's it the end post has moved.

Both feel unrewarded and therefore become demotivated.

Proving a Point: Evoking Change

Kacper: ...we cannot prove ourselves because they don't believe in rehabilitation they believe in keeping a good reputation and these absconds are just out proving this...

Joe: ...I was thinking if I walked out I was making a statement.

It is evident that one of the intentions of absconding is to prove a point by making a bold statement that prisoners are not coping with their institutional and personal situation.

Discussion

Distinctively these findings outline a number of factors that contribute to absconding within the forensic population at both a contextual and individual level. For example: those that have absconded felt open conditions provide a false sense of reality, they felt powerless to their sentence and the establishment, they perceived a lack of support, and some absconded to 'prove a point'. They felt a lack of readiness in their transition to open conditions, and felt at risk from others particularly those whom are on a different type

of sentence. The risk of substance abuse and violence are also factors in their decision making process. It is the combination of these factors which perhaps heighten the risk of absconding.

The demographic of the sampled population supports previous research findings in that there is no one 'type' of prisoner that absconds or indeed fails in open, although ISPPs and LSPs are over represented. This distinction is noted heavily throughout the elicited themes in that ISPPs and LSPs appear to have difficulties coping in open conditions thus which may impact their decision to abscond. Prisoners feel denied opportunity and sometimes seek a transfer to closed estate; where support, structure and comfort can be found. The lack of gradual transition, little or no planning and withdrawal from personal and professional supports creates a vulnerable psychological state to which prisoners become susceptible to stress. These factors demonstrate the criticality of the transitional period to which most absconds occur (within the first 6 months).

Clearly characteristics of absconding are not idiosyncratic and therefore measuring this phenomena quantitatively poses a challenge. Seeking demographic patterns can be considered unhelpful and non-predictive; therefore, it is argued that focusing upon the exploration of the phenomena in its purist state (i.e. qualitatively) provides greater understanding of individual and socio-environmental factors that contribute to absconding.

This research outlines a number of important factors contributory to the rationale for absconding within the UK Prison system. It provides understanding of 'what prison life is really like' for long term sentenced prisoners. Whilst this provides rich and meaningful information, it can be considered limited as it collates experience from the perspective of four long term prisoners thus, not be wholly generalisable. Therefore, there is a requirement for further academic exploration as well as practical investigation and changes to assist in understanding, managing and preventing abscond. Further to this, it would be helpful to examine experiences of prison life between non-absconds and absconds to further understand the critical differences between their experiences; or indeed if there isn't a critical difference, explore why and how this then relates to the decision to abscond?

The Twinning Project: how football, the beautiful game, can be used to reduce reoffending

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Reoffending is one of the greatest socio-economic burdens currently facing the UK, costing taxpayers around £18.1 billion a year¹. Recent studies show that 48 per cent of ex-prisoners reoffend within a 12-month period, exacerbating the current prison overcrowding crisis². The benefits of reducing recidivism are obvious, but viable pathways to this outcome have yet to be elucidated and executed. The twofold solution to this problem is proposed in the present practice note. Firstly, we need to change the way prisoners think about themselves, aiming to bond prisoners more tightly to mainstream society and law-abiding values. In doing so, opportunities for employment become more viable. Secondly, we need to increase society-at-large's determination in bringing former prisoners back into the fold. The Twinning project is a new initiative that promises to help us accomplish both goals.

The Twinning Project

The Twinning Project, launched in October 2018, pairs prisons with their local football clubs to deliver training programmes for people in prison. The project builds on the ongoing efforts of many football clubs' prison-based community outreach programmes, by connecting even more clubs with their local prisons nationwide (Table 1). By the end of 2019, 45 major football clubs were paired with one or more prisons in the UK, with active interventions in over 40 prisons—including men's, women's, young offenders' institutes (YOIs) and categories D, C, B, and long term / high security. Crucial to the Twinning Project's success is its leadership by two pivotal figures across the football and prison sectors: David Dein, former Vice-Chairman of the FA (Football Association), Vice-Chairman of Arsenal, president of the Arsenal Ladies Team, and creator of the British Premier League in the 1990s; and Jason Swettenham, Head of Prison Industries, Catering and

Physical Education in HM Prison Service in England and Wales, with a responsibility for Physical Education nationally. The Twinning Project capitalises on some of the most powerful collective identities in the country—football brands and clubs—to deliver prison-specific, football industry-recognised training. The project has been welcomed by both the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), with many prisons eager to join the scheme.

Table 1. Quick guide to the Twinning Project

Number of associated clubs	46 across leagues (all FA clubs, Premier League and EFL)
How long do programmes last?	6-12 weeks, depending on club and prison preferences, 20 — 40 hours.
How are they structured?	Varied, depending on club / prison preferences, e.g. weekly / twice weekly.
Who are they delivered by?	Professional football coaches, with support from physical education instructor (PEIs) who are specialist prison officers
Are there incentives for prisoners?	Puma football kit, qualification (which may be recognised by FA), psychological benefits of allegiance to a club.
What programmes are offered?	Coaching is the most common programme (and the only FA-devised programme, that is Leadership in Sport), stewarding and refereeing offered at some prisons.
Is it just football?	Mostly, but there are some Rugby League and Rugby Union exceptions (presently two clubs).
What is the cohort size?	10-16, dependent on club / prison.
Is there any through the gate support?	Planned by many clubs, but yet to be formalised by the Twinning Project.
Who funds the programmes?	Initially via club trusts, new programmes also funded by the Twinning Project charity.
How are clubs paired with prisons?	Majority are connected via proximity and resettlement areas of the prisons involved, aside from a minority of former pairings pre-dating the Twinning Project.
Who is eligible?	Most participants are nearing the end of their term and a risk assessment is conducted to ensure that participants are suitable. This includes what risk they are to others and what incentive level they are on.
Who is excluded?	Prisoners on the basic level of the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme are excluded. Most clubs exclude people convicted of sexual offences due to their own legal and safeguarding requirements.
How are participants selected?	Prisoners are invited to apply to clubs through advertisement in the gym or on residential units. Clubs select on the merit of good behaviour and prison officer recommendations. A number of sites will use interviewing methods to build on the importance of participation and link to employability.

Specifically, the project relates to HMPPS' priority to reduce reoffending in adults and young people.

From practical assistance to changing identities

The initial aim of the Twinning Project was to offer people in prison opportunities to gain qualifications that could help guide them toward employment on release, thus reducing reoffending and associated costs

1. Newton, A. et al. (2019). Economic and social costs of reoffending. *Ministry of Justice analytical report*.
2. MacDonald M. (2018). Overcrowding and its impact on prison conditions and health. *International journal of prisoner health* 14: 65-68.

to the tax-payer. Employment opportunities are a well-researched factor associated with reoffending³, particularly when coupled with lack of accommodation⁴. Indeed, lack of employment appears to be a fundamental driver of the largest reoffending category—thief (over £9m a year, double that of the next largest reoffending category, violence)⁵. But this is only one of the challenges facing ex-prisoners hoping to change their lives.

As well as offering routes to employment, the Twinning Project offers participants something more: a positive social identity. According to social identity theory, central to reoffending behaviours are perpetrators' identities: their sense of self, the groups they belong to (or are excluded from), and the values associated with these identities⁶. Gaining employment after release depends, in part, on adopting alignments with law-abiding groups and values that have the power to motivate behaviour⁷. We already know that football is a powerful motivator, causing fans to travel across the globe for a game, and even put life and limb at risk to defend their groups⁸. Can this group passion be harnessed for social good? Could football foster positive social identities powerful enough to re-write prisoners' self-narratives? We are leading research at the University of Oxford to analyse the short- and long-term impact of

the Twinning Project and the role social bonding might play in its success.

Identity fusion

One particularly intense form of social bonding—which is deeply personal, and thus motivational—involves the fusion of personal and group identities. Identity fusion is a reliable predictor of charitable acts, loyalty to the group, and even willingness to lay down one's life for others⁹. Fusion has been studied in many special populations, including football fans and 'hooligans' across four continents¹⁰. In these highly 'fused' groups, individuals report family-like bonds. This 'psychological kinship' means that fused people deeply value the lives of all group members, are committed to the group, and want to stick by them¹¹. For ex-prisoners, a lack of social support—particularly in the form of a stable family—is a major factor contributing to reoffending¹². The Twinning Project may be able to provide a foundational set of experiences for re-building this void in social support and belonging.

Rosie Meek's work into prison service sports programmes has paved the way for academic research into sport's potential to turn prisoners' lives around¹³. However, just one academic study connecting reoffending and identity

The Twinning Project may be able to provide a foundational set of experiences for re-building this void in social support and belonging.

3. Graffam J and Hardcastle L. (2007). Ex-prisoners and ex-offenders and the employment connection: Assistance plus acceptance. *Vocational education and training for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia*: 47-66.
4. May C, Sharma N and Stewart D. (2008). Factors linked to reoffending: a one-year follow-up of prisoners who took part in the Resettlement Surveys 2001, 2003 and 2004. *Research Summary* 5.
5. Newton, A. et al. (2019). Economic and social costs of reoffending. *Ministry of Justice analytical report*.
6. Monahan, J. (2017). The individual risk assessment of terrorism: Recent developments. *The handbook of the criminology of terrorism*: 520-534; Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In: Austin WG and Worchel S (Ed.s) *The social psychology of intergroup relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks / Cole, 33-47.
7. Whitehouse H and Fitzgerald R. (under review) Fusion and reform: the potential for identity fusion to reduce recidivism and improve reintegration.
8. Newson M. (2017) Football, Fan Violence, and Identity Fusion. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*.
9. Swann W., et al. (2009). Identity fusion: The interplay of personal and social identities in extreme group behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96: 995-1011; Swann W., et al. (2012). When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion. *Psychological Review* 119: 441-456; Whitehouse, H., and Lanman, J. (2014). The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, fusion, and identification. *Current Anthropology* 55: 674-695.
10. Newson, M., Buhrmester, M., and Whitehouse, H., (2016). Explaining Lifelong Loyalty: The Role of Identity Fusion and Self-Shaping Group Events. *PloS one* 11: e0160427; Newson, M., et al. (2018). Brazil's Football Warriors: Social bonding and inter-group violence. *Evolution and Human Behavior* 39(6): 675-683; Knijnik J and Newson M. (Under review) Personal agency, identity fusion and football fandom in Australia: the case of Western Sydney. *Soccer & Society*; Bortolini, T., et al. (2018). Identity fusion predicts pro-group behaviours: targeting nationality, religion or football in Brazilian samples. *British Journal of Social Psychology*. DOI: 10.1111/bjso.12235.
11. Buhrmester, M., et al. (2015). When terror hits home: Identity fused Americans who saw Boston bombing victims as "family" provided aid. *Self and Identity* 14: 253-270.
12. Farmer, M. (2017). The importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime. *Ministry of Justice*.
13. Meek R and Lewis G. (2014) The impact of a sports initiative for young men in prison: Staff and participant perspectives. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 38: 95-123.

fusion has been conducted to date (in an Australian prison)¹⁴. Nonetheless, social identity theory has already shown that positive identity construction is critical to reducing reoffending in the criminology literature¹⁵. Fusion tends to be a stronger, more reliable predictor of pro-social behaviours, which the proposed intervention aims to achieve. With regards to desistance theory, whereby crime is reduced or entirely refrained from, fusion theory particularly connects to Maruna's second and third perspectives: life transitions and their associated social bonds, and narrative changes in both personal and social identities¹⁶. Specifically, the Twinning Project provides opportunities for the social resources required to identify and cement positive social identities and commitments¹⁷.

Equally important to reducing recidivism is a need to establish host communities that show commitment to ex-prisoners, supporting and encouraging their efforts to go straight. Football clubs, with their 'tribal' identities, are uniquely placed to help ex-prisoners back into the fold, with assistance by coaches and peers¹⁸. With this two-way fusion—or, social bonding—we expect to see a host of improved employability markers, increased self-esteem, and higher levels of cooperation and altruism. Even participants who score low on empathy¹⁹ or high on impulsivity²⁰, that is those at particular risk of reoffending, may be less likely to reoffend, provided that they have become fused to more positive social targets.

Next steps

Many factors contribute to recidivism. While we expect such a high calibre endeavour as the Twinning

Project to enjoy a great deal of success in reducing reoffending among its participants, it is likely that some people will still reoffend. For instance, people with stable families on the outside are less likely to reoffend, but whether this is due to fusion within families or other factors remains unclear. Can the Twinning Project provide the 'kinship' currently lacked by some ex-prisoners? Following survey, interview, and prison data evaluations, the Twinning Project will be better placed to advise on the through-the-gate programmes so many clubs are seeking to devise.

Looking forward, the success stories that may emerge from this project have the possibility to translate into peer-based coaching and community-led, post-probation initiatives under future strands of the Twinning Project umbrella. This might include, for example, a Fellowship of participants who remain in contact with their club post-release, or who go on to use their qualifications in the football industry or community. Grouping ex-prisoners in this socially desirable way would not only provide recognition for their achievements, but give stability to an emerging community. There is also scope to extend the programme both domestically and internationally. At home, evaluations will help reveal the

cognitive mechanisms underlying its success and limitations, which can be built in to future interventions. As the football market is truly international in scale, there is scope for cross-border communication and rehabilitation.

Evaluations will also help unpack the feasibility of offering randomly-allocated programmes, whereby eligible prisoners have equal opportunities of participation. In research, random allocation is a gold standard, but there are other merits that could

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14. Whitehouse H and Fitzgerald R. (under review) Fusion and reform: the potential for identity fusion to reduce recidivism and improve reintegration.
15. Shapland, J. and Bottoms, A. (2011). Reflections on social values, offending and desistance among young adult recidivists. *Punishment & Society* 13: 256-282.
16. Maruna, S. (2000) Desistance from crime and offender rehabilitation: A tale of two research literatures. *Offender Programs Report* 4: 1-13; Weaver, B., and McNeill, F. (2010). Travelling hopefully: Desistance theory and probation practice. In: Brayford J, Cowe F and Deering J (Ed.s) *What Else Works? Creative Work with Offenders*. Routledge: Willan Cullompton.
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contribute to the Twinning Project's long-term standing. First, random allocation would reduce reliance on prison and football staff selecting prisoners for the project, which could disadvantage some prisoners, especially with regards to 'good behaviour' (see Table 1). Instead, reaching prisoners at highest risk of offending, rather than only those who do well in interviews, could lead to impact with populations who are usually regarded as uncooperative or too challenging to rehabilitate. This initiative does not neglect the knowledge and expertise that prison officers offer when helping select participants, but

rather emphasises the potential of this nationwide reoffending scheme (endorsed and executed primarily by the Premier League) to rehabilitate the lives of those disenfranchised prisoners at most of risk of a lifetime of institutionalisation. With increased employment opportunities, health benefits of engaging in an active lifestyle, and an all-important family — albeit fictive kin, the 'football family' — sports initiatives such as the Twinning Project have the potential to access some of the hardest to reach and vulnerable prison populations for meaningful and lasting rehabilitation.

Plan B: Mindfulness for Reform:

A new approach to mindfulness in the criminal justice system

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With origins in Buddhism and other spiritual traditions, Mindfulness is ‘the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment’.¹ This is typically achieved through the application of different meditation practices which aim to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings and behaviour patterns with the hope that increased practice will support the development of the ability to be able to manage these thoughts, feelings and behaviour patterns.²

Mindfulness has become more common place in Western practice in the last 50 years, with the development of specific mindfulness-based courses (i.e. Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)^{3,4} and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)).⁵ In recent years the practice and application of mindfulness has developed within schools, healthcare services and the workplace.² Most interestingly is the application and development of mindfulness-based practice within the criminal justice system working specifically with offenders.

One such initiative is Plan B: Mindfulness for Reform, which is an 8-week mindfulness course specifically designed to meet the needs of men in custody. Developed with lived experience at its core, it is designed to bring mindfulness practice into the daily lives of prisoners in a way that they can understand and relate to. It aims to support the development of coping

skills to manage the custodial experience as well as develop and strengthen mental and psychological wellbeing.

This article discusses Plan B, explores the impact of Plan B drawing upon testimonials from staff and offenders and outlines the preliminary findings of an ongoing quantitative evaluation.

What do we know about Mindfulness Based Interventions?

The strength of mindfulness-based interventions lies in the capacity of mindfulness practice to enhance cognitive change, improve self-management, increase the skills of relaxation and develop skills in acceptance.⁶ It does this by focussing on the awareness and attention of one's experiences and learning to observe and accept these experiences free from judgement with a specific focus on the present moment.⁷ Bringing in skills of meditation and focus on the breath, mindfulness practice helps the person to identify their current mental, emotional and physical state and as such weaken the focus of attention on thoughts of the past and the future.⁸ Furthermore, mindfulness helps to increase awareness and understanding of emotional experiences allowing thoughts and emotions in such situations to be managed.⁹

The main current techniques used within mindfulness-based interventions are mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based

1. Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), 144-156.
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3. Kabat-Zinn, J. (1982). An outpatient program in behavioural medicine for chronic pain patients based on the practice of mindfulness meditation: Theoretical considerations and preliminary results. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 4, 33-47.
4. Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain and illness*. New York: Delacourt.
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8. Howells, K. (2010). The 'third wave' of cognitive behavioural therapy and forensic practice. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 20, 251-256.
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cognitive therapy (MBCT). Developed by Kabat-Zinn,^{10,11} MBSR is an eight-week group mindfulness intervention delivering one session per week and one full day session held towards the end of the intervention. Mindfulness exercises utilised include mindful movement, body scanning, awareness of the breath, walking meditation and sitting meditation. MBCT¹² is also delivered across an 8-week period and has a specific focus on the thoughts and experiences linked with depression.

Research has shown mindfulness-based interventions to have a positive impact on conditions such as chronic pain,¹³ anxiety,¹⁴ depression,^{15,16} management of stress,^{17,18} addictive behaviours,^{19,20} and within the treatment of emotional and behavioural disorders.²¹ As such mindfulness-based interventions are used widely in clinical settings and have been specifically recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in the treatment of depression.²²

Mindfulness-based interventions have also been identified as having a place within criminal justice with

the potential to address factors related to offending including self-regulation, emotional management and impulse control.^{23,24} Through the increased awareness of emotions and thoughts mindfulness encourages observation and acceptance over reactions suggesting increased control over behaviour.²⁵

Studies exploring the use of mindfulness-based interventions in the criminal justice field are based predominantly in America and provide some promising findings. One such study is the work of Samuelson and colleagues who evaluated the provision of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) to 1350 prisoners in America between 1992 and 1996. Using self-report measures at pre- and post-intervention points, they found decreased levels of hostility and mood disturbance and increased levels of self-esteem.²⁶ Similar

research has found mindfulness-based interventions to have had a positive impact on levels of stress, anxiety and depression in women.²⁷ Perkins found increased stress coping ability amongst woman who engaged in

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10. Kabat-Zinn, J. (1982). An outpatient program in behavioural medicine for chronic pain patients based on the practice of mindfulness meditation: Theoretical considerations and preliminary results. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 4, 33–47.
11. Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain and illness*. New York: Delacourt.
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an 8-week mindfulness-based program as compared to women in a control group.²⁸

Research within youth custody has provided similar positive results. Studies carried out within American youth correctional services have demonstrated a significant increase in self-regulation, and an improvement in areas of mindfulness, impulsivity and perceived stress following completion of a 10-week mindfulness-based intervention.²⁹ Barrett similarly found a positive impact on ability to cope with stress and manage emotions for male youths who engaged in mindfulness and yoga training.³⁰ Furthermore, a randomised control trial conducted in Iran of a MBCT programme found a significant reduction in aggressive behaviour following completion of the intervention.³¹

Other research focussing on approaches including meditation and mindfulness-based relapse prevention have explored the impact of mindfulness on self-reported substance use. Such research includes the work of Bowen et al who found that individuals who took part in a 10-day meditation-based intervention reported significant decreased drug use, lower psychiatric symptoms and increased optimism, all of which were sustained over a 6-month post-intervention period.³² Furthermore, a randomised control trial of a mindfulness-based relapse prevention programme with women from the criminal justice field in residential drug treatment found a significant decrease in the number of days using drugs when compared to standard relapse prevention treatment.³³ A further RCT conducted in Taiwan conversely did not find any

significant difference between the mindfulness-based intervention and treatment as usual although results were in the expected direction and the authors acknowledged a very small sample size and no follow up period.³⁴

Whilst the above studies are promising, what has been highlighted by the available research is a lack of studies based in the UK criminal justice system and the great deal of variance in the intervention methods (i.e. approach and intervention length). Therefore, more focussed research on what works with offenders will be helpful to strengthen the support for the use of mindfulness-based interventions. More specifically the Mindfulness All Party Committee (MPAG) have specifically recommended that Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs) should be implemented across the prison estate for individuals with recurrent depression and that further research should be completed to evaluate the effectiveness of such practice.³⁵

There is a specific focus on reducing stress related violent crime within custody, reducing drug use and reducing mental health conditions such as anxiety, self-harm and depression.

What is Plan B?

Plan B draws on existing mindfulness programs including MBCT (Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy), MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) and MBRP (Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention) and brings these together creating an intervention that 'speaks' to offenders and is relatable rather than using scripts from typical Mindfulness courses which are not suitable for the prison environment.

Plan B aims to give people the coping skills to navigate the harsh environments of prison life as well as strengthen their mental health and general wellbeing.

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There is a specific focus on reducing stress related violent crime within custody, reducing drug use and reducing mental health conditions such as anxiety, self-harm and depression. The discipline of mindfulness also improves focus and attention skills, productivity and motivation, and helps to build the life skills needed to engage effectively in the rehabilitation process. It is typically delivered in a classroom environment but has also been delivered on an individual basis to be able to reach those individuals who wouldn't be able to engage in a group setting.

It is delivered as three weekly sessions over eight weeks. The curriculum includes breath meditation, body scan meditations, sound meditation, Yoga practice and the teaching and development of emotional regulation techniques and exercises. Plan B also incorporates craft and creative writing. The intervention aims to help offenders manage difficult thoughts and feelings and develop an understanding of how these thoughts and feelings are linked to behaviour. There is a focus on development of awareness of pleasant and unpleasant experiences, nourishment and depletion in everyday life, improving relationships and communication with staff and peers, self-compassion and goal-setting. Sessions are accompanied by a work book containing reflective homework and meditation guides.

What makes Plan B different to 'just another' mindfulness course is the ethos behind it. Specifically it is led by individuals who have first-hand experience of the benefits of mindfulness which add a unique and beneficial dynamic to the programme. Secondly it aims to develop individuals to become mindful leaders, and mindful teachers of the Plan B program, enabling prisons to adopt a mindful culture, where mindfulness is peer led and far reaching.

All Plan B teachers are trained in at least one MBI which takes around 4 years of training and practice to qualify as a facilitator. Plan B also adheres to the good practice framework set out by the British Institute of Mindfulness which lays out guidelines and ethics that facilitators adhere to. Plan B spent 6 months working with the men at HMP Wandsworth to develop the program to ensure that the course was meeting the needs of the prison environment and that the delivery was relatable. Plan B currently runs group and 1:1 interventions across 5 UK prisons.

What do people say?

During the last two years, Plan B: Mindfulness for Reform has been delivered within four establishments accessing over 350 prisoners who have provided valuable feedback on the programme and how it has helped. One such individual summarised his involvement with Plan B:

Ever since I was a young boy I had severe emotional problems. When I first came to this country I was only 9 years old and couldn't speak English. I struggled to fit in at primary school and secondary school was where my bad temper showed. My poor mother was always in the head's office. No one told me how to manage my anger. I was told to control my anger, suppress my anger, but how? Instead their prescription was exclusion at 14 years of age.

At the age of 19, one midnight I bumped into someone I knew, he was at traffic lights and had cut my friend in the past. I pulled him out of his car and stabbed him several times. For this and another charge I was sentenced to 8 years. When I looked back on the incident — apart from feeling sorry for the victim, I would reflect on my actions and think "what have I done? Was I crazy? I would never do that again, I was hot headed then!"

Fast forward 7 years later and I ended back in prison. GBH... again, another 4 years. In the past I have done many different in courses in prison to rehabilitate myself, but all these courses just seemed to focus on the consequences of my crime, the ripple effect on society, community, family and friends. Now I am not saying that these courses weren't needed, they had their benefits. What I am trying to say is that there was something missing from my rehabilitation — ME! Who am I? How do I feel?

I'll explain... Let's go back to when I was 19, when I got out of my car and stabbed my victim. Looking back now, after my

The intervention
aims to help
offenders manage
difficult thoughts
and feelings and
develop an
understanding of
how these thoughts
and feelings are
linked to behaviour.

mindfulness course I know what was going on in my mind. My amygdala was on high alert, flight or fight! It hijacked my brain and by the time I got back 'into myself' — it was too late. Because in that split second, my actions were out of my control, because I let emotions take over I also became a victim of my anger, that's why I am back in prison again — despite everything I learned about the impact of my actions on my victim, the community. I learned nothing about me. Here is the good news, there is something you can do, something to control and be aware of your emotions, mindfulness! By practising mindfulness, you can actually reduce the size of your amygdala, which means you are less likely to react to stress, threat and emotions. In this course we don't just think about awareness, we practise it, and that is key to using it in stressful situations.

In mindfulness, we don't suppress or block our emotions, we accept them, welcome them in like an old friend. We don't shut them out — it only means it will come back harder. We observe our emotions and the physical sensations that it brings, we observe our breath, our surroundings, and sound — so that we can ground ourselves and not be carried away by stress, anger, anxiety. You learn to be with difficult emotions — so that you don't have to react to them.

I'm not saying I am cured, but I have an answer. I am not perfect, I have a long way to go, I have a lot of meditating to do, but at least now finally I am on the right path.

Plan B: Mindfulness for Reform Participant

Other feedback has identified that:

Plan B has made a massive difference to the way the men think, act and live together. It is a well-known fact that men will learn from their peers and we saw this effect. The sceptics were soon won over as we saw a more peaceful wing and better interactions. Men thought differently about how they want

to live their lives, and the prison became slightly better off as a result of the work that Sonya and her team did. Would I recommend it — 100 per cent — it was one of the best initiatives we did with our freedoms and the differences that it made are almost uncountable, if you are ever in doubt don't be — this is something you must do.

Ian Bickers, Former Governor at HMP Wandsworth

Plan B Mindfulness has filled a substantial gap in service provision for people in custody by providing an alternative option to traditional offending behaviour programmes; one that supports their own emotional needs. The conventional courses that prisoners are often expected to complete will help develop their understanding of their offending, and improve their knowledge of pro-social problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. Plan B then builds on this understanding by equipping them with practical tools to manage the negative emotions that often fuel poor problem-solving and aggressive conflict-resolution, particularly in the custodial environment. With incidents of self-harm,

substance misuse, and violent behaviour towards staff and other prisoners being so common across the prison estate, it is clear that people in custody require an intervention that aims to develop positive coping strategies, and helps them to deal with the unique stresses caused by losing one's liberty. The teaching offered by Plan B keeps individuals in the right frame of mind to engage productively with other interventions, and the programme's intensive nature acts as a real test of their commitment to change.

Adrian Nash, Probation Officer

Qualitative Research

As part of the implementation of Plan B, an evaluation of the impact of the intervention is being conducted alongside its delivery. This research aims to evaluate the 8-week mindfulness course exploring the impact of the intervention on a number of variables

including levels of anxiety, depression, core functioning, perceived stress, psychological wellbeing and mindfulness capacity. The research aims to evaluate whether the participation on the 8-week Plan B mindfulness intervention improves the quality of life of prisoners as well as having a direct impact on their behaviour and psychological wellbeing.

Participants

Our initial study has focussed on 44 participants who have engaged in Plan B between 2017 and 2018 (see Table 1 for demographic data). Participants ranged in age between 22 and 54 years old with a mean age of 35.95 (s.d = 8.58). Ethnicity breakdown is shown in Table 1. Participants were included in the research on the basis that they had engaged in Plan B and provided their informed consent to take part in the study. Suitability criteria for Plan B meant that offenders were excluded from the intervention if they presented with active symptoms of mental illness or where under the care of mental health services within custody, were actively engaging in drug services or did not meet basic educational requirements.

Table 1. Ethnicity Breakdown

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage (per cent)
Asian	4	9
Black	20	46
Mixed	4	9
White	15	34
Unknown	1	2
Total	44	100

Measures

Participants were asked to complete a number of self-report questionnaires at the start of the intervention and on completion of the 8-week mindfulness course. These measures were selected on the basis that they aim to measure factors relating to

mental wellbeing and core mindfulness have been widely used in both clinical practice and research. These measures are as follows:

Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation — Outcome Measure (CORE-OM): This 34 item self-report questionnaire is designed to measure commonly experienced symptoms/problems, risk to self and others, life functioning and well-being. Items are scored on a 5-point scale. Higher scores denote greater problems in that area.^{36,37,38}

Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ): This is a 39-item self-report measure looking specifically at facets of mindfulness including observing, describing, acting with awareness, not judging and not reacting. Higher scores indicate higher levels of mindfulness.³⁹

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): This is a 10 item self-report questionnaire designed to assess the perceived levels of stress relating to stressful incidents in the one-month preceding completion of the measure. It is rated using a 5-point scale with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress.⁴⁰

Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II): This is a widely used 21-item self-report questionnaire which aims to assess presence of symptoms of depression. It is scored using a 4-point scale. Higher total scores indicate more severe levels of depressive symptoms.⁴¹

Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI): This is a 21-item self-report questionnaire asking participants to rate items related to subjective, somatic or panic-related symptoms of anxiety on a 3-point scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of anxiety symptoms.⁴²

Results

This initial phase of the qualitative evaluation has identified significant differences between pre- and post-intervention measures on all measures used using repeated measures t-tests (see Table 2). These results indicate significant improvements in scores on each measure at the post-intervention stage. Specifically, significant differences were found on the CORE-OM scales of well-being, commonly experienced symptoms/problems and functioning. The subscale of

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risk was not significantly different however still demonstrated a trend indicating a reduction in self-reported levels of risk (Well Being: $t(43) = 2.032, p = .049$; Symptoms: $t(43) = 4.264, p = .000$; Functioning: $t(43) = 3.965, p = .000$; Risk: $t(43) = 1.687, p = .099$; Total: $t(43) = 4.461, p = .000$). In addition significant differences were found on measures of perceived stress ($t(43) = 2.736, p = .009$), symptoms of depression ($t(41) = 6.254, p = .000$), symptoms of anxiety ($t(43) = 3.770, p = .001$) and mindfulness skills ($t(44) = -3.352, p = .002$). These differences were all in a positive direction suggesting improvements on these self-report measures at the post-intervention stage.

measures. Firstly, there was a significant improvement in measures of wellbeing and functioning, and significant decrease in levels of psychological distress and commonly experienced problems or symptoms, as evaluated by the CORE-OM.⁴³ The pre-intervention data for the CORE-OM indicated, on average, 'mild levels' of distress with this reducing to 'low levels' of distress and subsequently falling below the clinical cut off point, at the post-intervention stage.⁴⁴ Whilst the CORE has not been widely used in this area of research, studies that have utilised it show post-intervention results in the expected direction but not at significant levels.^{45,46} Secondly, there was a significant reduction in levels of

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and repeated measures t-test p values for pre and post intervention scores

	Pre		Post		Sig
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
CORE-OM					
Well Being	4.77	3.13	4.00	2.54	.049*
Symptoms	17.72	9.35	12.60	8.52	.000**
Functioning	17.24	8.22	13.93	7.10	.000**
Risk	2.84	3.65	2.26	4.04	.099
Global Distress (Total)	42.56	21.60	32.78	19.63	.000**
Perceived Stress	17.37	7.12	14.49	6.84	.009**
Symptoms of Depression	13.44	8.72	6.80	6.04	.000**
Symptoms of Anxiety	11.66	10.76	7.28	9.00	.001**
Mindfulness Skills	129.10	20.76	138.00	17.71	.002

**Note: SD, Standard Deviation; CORE, Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation; * indicates a significant improvement from pre-intervention at p value of .05; ** indicates a significant improvement from pre-intervention at p value of .01.

Discussion

This article aims to explore the impact of a new mindfulness-based intervention being run in the criminal justice field. Having been delivered to over 350 prisoners, Plan B: Mindfulness for Reform has been described as being valuable to the emotional wellbeing of prisoners helping them to develop understand and strategies to cope with the demands of prison life. The quantitative evaluation presented here goes further to show that for prisoners who have completed the 8-week Plan B mindfulness intervention there was a significant improvement on a number of self-reported

self-reported stress, anxiety and depression following completion of the intervention. This supports previous research which has shown reductions in these areas post completion of mindfulness-based interventions.^{47,48} Finally, the results indicated that post-intervention there was an increased capacity for mindfulness in the areas of ability to observe, describe, increased awareness, being non-judgemental and non-reactive.

Previous research has suggested that mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to have positive outcomes both in youth custody and forensic adult populations demonstrating improvements in stress, self-regulation and ability to manage anger and

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emotions^{49,50,51,52} This research adds further support to the benefits of mindfulness in adult male populations in areas of psychological wellbeing which saw improvements following completion of the intervention. Explanation into why mindfulness based interventions have demonstrated an impact in these areas includes that by increasing exposure to thoughts and feelings this may in turn reduce fear or anxiety responses; that by developing self-awareness and motivation this may in turn support the development of improved coping mechanisms; and that by reducing autonomic arousal this in turn increases the ability to relax and as such impacts emotional resilience and coping.⁵³

It is also essential to consider the importance of these results against the backdrop of the current prison environment. Reports have highlighted concerns about conditions that prisoners are living in across the country with increased rates of violence, self-harm and stress.⁵⁴ Specifically in 2018, rates of self-harm increased by 23 per cent, rates of serious assaults rose by 20 per cent, rates of prisoner -on-prisoner assaults rose by 18 per cent and assaults on staff rose by 29 per cent.⁵⁵ As such, establishing ways to support the prisoners to manage in such environments and work to reduce emotional distress and increase coping skills is vitally important. Mindfulness has been shown to help recognise, label and accept the emotional experience,⁵⁶ and as such help to develop the ability to be able to cope with the demands of a harsh prison environment. The results presented here suggest that engaging in an 8-week mindfulness-based intervention seeks to improve levels of stress and wellbeing which it is hoped will in turn serve to improve coping and quality of prison life and beyond. Mindfulness has also shown to have the potential to address criminogenic factors including emotional management and impulse control.^{54,57} Whilst this research does not specifically explore these

dimensions, it does highlight the benefits on overall wellbeing and psychological functioning. Further research is warranted to further explore the impact of the mindfulness intervention in relation to these areas.

Finally we should consider what underpins the Plan B intervention itself, and whether in fact these factors have any specific impact. Plan B's ethos is focussed on ensuring that the intervention being delivered matches the prison environment. Specifically, facilitators have had first-hand experience of the benefits of mindfulness and have undergone 4 years' worth of training and experience; the language and exercises used are tailored to the prison environment and a wide range of methods and exercises are utilised to be responsive to the client group. Again, whilst beyond the scope of this research, it is important to consider the impact of the core principles of Plan B itself alongside the content of the mindfulness intervention.

Future Directions

It is evident that the results presented here are promising in terms of exploring the impact of the Plan B mindfulness intervention. However further research is needed in this area to explore the impact in more detail. Specifically, the results presented here rely on self-report measures. Further research is being conducted to explore behavioural change to see whether there is any behavioural shift post completion of the intervention. In addition, participants are being followed up at 3-6 month intervals post completion of the intervention to evaluate whether the positive changes identified here are sustained. Qualitative evaluation is also being conducted to explore the experiences of prisoners engaging in Plan B to further develop knowledge and understanding of the impact of this mindfulness intervention.⁵⁸

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Crossing Over- A Reflective Piece

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My experience of working within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) is somewhat two sides of the same coin; working in the same establishments with the same prisoner population yet in very contrasting roles. This article will endeavour to explore my experience and reflections of working as a Prisoner Custody Officer (PCO) and the transition to a Higher Assistant Psychologist (HAP). The article will consider the themes of compassion and trauma with reflection of how my view of these themes compare and contrast between roles. I chose Gibbs' reflective model as its cyclic nature offers a structured framework to evaluate experiences. Gibbs' reflective cycle includes six stages of reflection; description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. This model allows reflection on learning and planning for future events based on successes and drawbacks of the present experience. I will incorporate these into my own reflections of practice throughout the article.

The (CJS) is a collection of agencies and institutions which is directly involved in the apprehending, prosecuting and punishing of those suspected or convicted of committing a crime. Within these organisations and establishments, many more processes come into play such as victim support, prevention of crime and rehabilitation. The CJS can typically be divided into three main groups- police, courts and prisons. Within each of these divisions are different jobs which have specific agendas- each with distinct assets and skills required by the worker to competently carry out the role. Consequently, individuals working across different departments in the CJS may have differing values or have opposing reactions to the same experience within the system. Two themes which have emerged within the literature lately concern the importance of compassion² and the need to be sensitive to trauma.³ I have experienced striking variations in the levels of compassion present

and have been vicariously exposed to a range of trauma in my roles as a PCO and HAP. I have witnessed the positive power of compassion in a prisoner's journey and conversely the disabling impact of trauma within custodial environments. Alongside this I have become increasingly aware of the importance of self-compassion in working within this environment. Both felt highly pertinent themes that spanned the two roles.

Compassion

Compassion can be defined as 'the sensitivity shown in order to understand another person's suffering, combined with a willingness to help and to promote the wellbeing of that person, in order to find a solution to their situation'.⁴ The term compassion is heavily incorporated in the field of Healthcare and Mental Health- compassion features as one of the core Values for Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.

As for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), values include purpose, humanity, openness and together⁵; unlike the NHS, compassion does not feature as a value. A report for the House of Commons Justice Committee on Prison Officers states that rehabilitation requires a mix of both discipline and compassion.⁶ Arnold⁷ defines the 'ideal officer' as having capabilities of showing care and compassion⁵. Nevertheless, day to day as an Officer, this may take the back seat as risky or dangerous situations occur impromptu with the need to put discipline and physical intervention first.

I have always considered myself a kind and caring person who likes to help others so prior to me working within the forensic field, I would have easily labelled myself as compassionate. I believe this has been evident in my previous jobs working with children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD); compassion is something I found quite natural. When I first began my

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role as a PCO, I still believed this to be true however, when I look back on my journey as a PCO, I can see how I changed as a person over the course of the job.

It soon became apparent that compassion took a back seat in my job as a PCO. Reflecting back, it was easy to follow suit of other colleagues and adapt my behaviour to fit with fellow peers. In the beginning, I would like to think I displayed a true reflection of my personality. I remember a time a prisoner disclosed concerns around self-harm- the standard operating

procedure for this event would be to open a self-harm document. My response, I opened a form but also sat with this prisoner for a considerable length of time, seeing this as a priority and something that was fairly concerning. I got the prisoner crossword puzzles from a newspaper and regularly checked in on his progress. As time went on in the role, self-harm became less of a 'concern' and more of an 'inconvenience'. I think this shift in attitude was down to a number of factors. A 'prison culture' was clear with officers- self-harm could potentially be viewed as a behaviour from prisoners with intention to manipulate staff. From my experience, this 'manipulative behaviour' was viewed as an inconvenience- especially when prisoners were

seen to be wasting time and resources for their own gains for example superficially cutting and receiving paramedic or ambulance care due to reasons such as not wanting to wait at court. These incidents could also have potential to make shifts for staff longer than necessary. When shifts were already long, and the demands of the job were physically and mentally draining, it became somewhat easier to just do the bare minimum- open a form. At the time, I didn't consider there to be a problem, however, looking back, I am disappointed that the traits I prized myself on disappeared so quickly. Most likely because the job became draining (five shifts a week of 12-14 hours long) but also the behaviour and reaction of other colleagues was easy to imitate. Processes within the job

became 'normalised' where 'extraordinary situations are rendered seemingly ordinary'.⁸ Research has also noted the emotional demands of a job are likely to contribute to burnout.⁹ Reflecting back, it is apparent that emotional contagion was evident in my own presentation, whereby other colleague's emotions and behaviours triggered similar responses in myself.

On the other hand, beginning work as a HAP, compassion is a primary focus. This is depicted in the values of the NHS — my employer — but also

demonstrated vividly by the team I work in. As a member of the Mental Health Team, I am expected to show compassion to patients- to be there to listen, understand and provide treatment and support. This is something which I think is easier to do in a healthcare professional role. I believe this is due to the team sharing the same views and values therefore being influenced by fellow colleagues but also I find there is an expectation from prisoners that you (as a health care professional) will sit and listen to their mental health concerns. There is trust from the patient- you are seen as an agency which can and will provide help. However, acting as an officer, I feel prisoners don't have that same trust and do not wish to divulge their concerns to an officer. As a HAP, in civilian

clothes, there is a different relationship compared to an officer in a 'white shirt'. I have noticed prisoner/patients response and reaction to me has differed, depending on the uniform I am wearing.

At times, as a PCO, it was difficult to show compassion. As an officer, you were seen as a 'white shirt' which caused potential barriers and conflict. When a (CandR) incident would occur, it would be difficult to be compassionate as an initial response would have to be authority. Crewe, Liebling, and Hulley¹⁰ argues frontline staff are required to exercise judgment in deciding whether to use authority, and what kind of authority to use however in extremely high-stakes environments, with service users who are particularly dependent and complex, authority is

There is trust from the patient- you are seen as an agency which can and will provide help. However, acting as an officer, I feel prisoners don't have that same trust and do not wish to divulge their concerns to an officer.

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necessary over compassion.¹¹ Similarly, it was not uncommon to experience either physical or verbal abuse from prisoners- as a result of this, it was hard to be compassionate, especially if you or a colleague became injured as a result. I feel these attitudes were mirrored among others. In this authoritative position as a PCO, I was required to be the 'officer in charge' and be able to give orders to prisoners. This was reflected in my communication style which at times was assertive when needed. Reflecting on this, it is possible to see why prisoners would react in defensive or aggressive ways and why they wouldn't wish to share personal information. Even at times when I would try to be empathetic or compassionate, it was sometimes irrelevant as I had that 'white shirt' on and so automatically seen as the opposition. This perhaps contributed to why I became less compassionate over time as regardless of my individuality, I was still just an 'officer'.

However, as a HAP communication style, approaches and relationships are very different to that of a PCO. In my role now as a HAP, work with patients is collaborative and client led. I have a genuine concern for patients I work with and a real desire to support these men. Communication style is adapted to the patient and patient's needs. Work focusses on natural validation and problem solving in a safe environment. I believe there is more opportunity as a practitioner to build rapport with clients, to offer understanding and empowerment. Having consistent and frequent contact with a patient allows this to unfold. With patients I see as a HAP, regular contact allows me to gain a better understanding of the patient, to know what's going on for that person and to explore this with them. This gives me an opportunity to be flexible when the patient may be struggling as I have this background understanding. My role also has flexibility as to how many contacts myself and a patient will have depending on the patient need.

This was quite different in the role as a PCO. It was easy to forget about being compassionate as the job was completed under time constraints. There were

deadlines for collecting prisoners, taking prisoners to court, taking prisoners to prison and in this process it was easy to just get the job done. The tasks within the job were completed to a 'factory line' fashion and looking back, it was easy to forget what the impact was for the prisoner we were working with. To us, we were there to complete the job to time restrictions- the quicker this was done, the quicker we can clock off. Reflecting on this, as long as I got that prisoner out of court and to prison by X o'clock, it didn't matter. It didn't matter what that prisoner was going through, whether this was his first time in custody, whether he was scared... I just had to get him there. It surprises me how little compassion I had. If I could go back, I would certainly like to think I would handle things with a bit more consideration.

I believe there is more opportunity as a practitioner to build rapport with clients, to offer understanding and empowerment. Having consistent and frequent contact with a patient allows this to unfold.

Trauma

Trauma is the psychological impact or damage that occurs after a distressing event. Trauma can be subjective and whilst two people may have the same experiences, only one may become traumatised. The DMS-5 definition of a traumatic event involves 'exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violation' furthermore, a person can 'directly experience or witness the traumatic event or learn the traumatic event has occurred to a close family member or friend'. The experiences may be first hand, lone events or repeated.¹¹

Histories of trauma are more common among the prisoner population- this is reflected in high levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among imprisoned people.¹² Between 68 per cent and 95 per cent of male prisoners have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime.¹³ However, on the flip side, individuals working with prisoners may be subject to traumatic events themselves- the Prison Officer who is attacked with serious violence or the first response nurse who witnesses a death in custody.

Not surprisingly, prisoners may have their own agenda or judgments when interacting with different agencies within the CJS, for instance, attitudes may

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differ towards the arresting police officer compared to the defence lawyer. Similarly, the interactions from different staff and agencies towards prisoners may contrast due to the role and demands of the job.

My educational background is in Psychology and Forensic Psychology and from this, I believe I had a basic, if not good understanding of mental health, trauma and impacts it can have upon an individual. My knowledge of trauma and the impacts it has seemed to go out of the window when I was an officer despite working with people who are susceptible to triggers in custodial environments.

Work conducted as an officer was not trauma-informed. From what I remember of my basic training, mental health was covered in brief however there was no training on trauma. Training involved knowledge of self-harm and suicide and what signs to look out for and the subsequent processes to follow from this. The initial training was not delivered in a trauma informed way. At the time of receiving this training, I didn't give this much thought, and so assumed the training provided would be sufficient for the role I would be doing. It wasn't until I started in my HAP role that I realised how little consideration I had given to prisoners with mental health concerns, specifically around trauma.

Within my first few months as a HAP, I had already been given the opportunity to attend Trauma Informed Care (TIC) Training which, although was not compulsory, I was encouraged to attend. Within the mental health service, there is a huge push on offering Trauma Informed Care (TIC). The training I received on TIC demonstrated how to apply this to the patients I work with- especially when psychology interventions take on a trauma focus. From a mental health perspective, I feel it is assumed that other agencies/professionals would have an understanding of the impact of past trauma and triggering situations or environments however coming from an Officer role, this wasn't the case for myself.

There were times when I think back to my role as an officer which would be highly traumatic or re-traumatising for prisoners. The process of being searched would involve an officer physically touching/patting down a prisoner to obtain whether

any prohibited items had been concealed, this would then be followed by the officer handcuffing the prisoner (wrist to wrist). In my role of an officer, this procedure was crucial for minimising risk to the person, myself and others however, if a prisoner had experienced a traumatic event involving touch or restraint, this procedure could be extremely re-traumatising. This is similar for any CandR incident that occurred. Again, concerning risk, CandR would be used to restrain prisoners who were a risk to themselves or others- this could include acts of self-harm against

themselves or acts of harm/violence against others. As these processes were part of my job, little thought went into potential impacts for the prisoner. I would receive little information regarding the prisoner prior to receiving them in our care- I would certainly not be privy to information regarding historic trauma. Because of this, I was never mindful of the potential distress that could be caused to the prisoner.

Reflecting back, I should have had more of an awareness of how that prisoner could be impacted especially due to my educational background in psychology. In my role as a HAP, trauma work with a patient involves an understanding of triggers, emotions, behaviours and coping strategies. I am now aware, due to this role, that self-harm can be a coping strategy however views of self-harm as an officer were often seen as manipulative behaviours and officers would potentially have to

restrain someone to prevent self-harm. Looking back at this, it is evident why a prisoner would react negatively to restraint as we are now preventing them from self-soothing. Also, in my HAP role, I now have the understanding that a high percentage of the prison population have experienced some form of trauma in their lifetime. When a CandR incident occurred, a prisoner would be restrained by three officers- hugely traumatic especially if the original trauma had similar elements- being restrained/restricted movement/three against one etc.

Despite on reflection thinking I should have been more aware of potential impacts on the prisoner, CandR intervention was a last resort and primarily came down to risk therefore even if I had been consciously

In my role of an officer, this procedure was crucial for minimising risk to the person, myself and others however, if a prisoner had experienced a traumatic event involving touch or restraint, this procedure could be extremely re-traumatising.

aware of potential impacts, the physical intervention would still have been a necessity in that situation.

Working in a prison environment, it is assumed that staff may themselves experience vicarious trauma-experiencing trauma through the feelings or actions of others. In the roles I have worked in within custodial settings, I have been exposed to situations where I could potentially have been affected. As part of my PCO role, I would sit in the dock with prisoners for the trial duration- hearing details about the crime, seeing evidence, listening to testimonies. At times, this could have a significant impact upon my mental wellbeing, especially if the case involved gruesome or horrific elements. I believe part of the 'officer mentality' is that it's your job and you just get on with it, you can't let it affect you. There was little to no management support or services available for mental health wellbeing after being exposed to high levels of traumatic material. Despite this, I worked with a great team of officers who were always present. Upsetting content of trials, post CandR incidents and general stressful events in the work day were handled with fellow colleagues and more often than not used dark humour to get through the shift. However, as aspects of the job needed completing to time frames and staffing levels were low to start with, it wasn't unusual to experience a potentially traumatic incident yet have no time to reflect on this before having to continue with the task at hand.

Similarly, in a therapist role, vicarious trauma is not uncommon. I work with patients who have experience traumatic events and in some cases, this comes up in session. I believe this can potentially effect a practitioner however, I feel that I have built up a personal resilience

and I am able to deal with this myself to a certain extent. There are times, however, where a 'de-brief' is necessary. Being in a clinical profession, I am lucky to receive weekly clinical supervisions as well as group and peer supervisions. Having these resources is extremely beneficial in my work as I am able to off-load.

Conclusion

I feel my experiences as an officer have made a positive contribution to the HAP I am today. I have an appreciation for officers and can relate to the struggles they experience as I have once been there myself. My experiences, both educational and operational, have allowed me to develop my skills and be reflective on my practice. Throughout both of my roles and the transition between the two, I feel I have been on a journey with compassion and trauma. In regards of trauma, I believe my knowledge and experience was typical for the experiences I had at University and in previous jobs however over the course of my role as a PCO to my role as a HAP, I feel this increased over time. Compassion, on the other hand, took a slightly different path. I believed myself to be a compassionate person when starting as a PCO however, this clearly declined in some respects over the course of the officer job. I feel starting in the HAP role, my compassionate side increased once again, to how I felt before, if not more. Having a different perspective in dissimilar jobs within the criminal justice system has certainly made me reflect on my work and consider how to better my professional skills. I hope to take these reflections on through my career and have a consideration and awareness of my own practice.

Informing Prison Theatre Improvement through World Café Conversations with Prisoners

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Introduction:

This paper aims to acquaint readers with the participatory consultation and research method of 'World Café', in the context of evaluating a theatre project delivered in a UK prison with adult male sex offenders. World Café is encouraged within the prison service as a consultation tool with staff and prisoners for service improvement³. There is some evidence for this methodology being used by prison service practitioners and highlighted as best practice for prison consultation⁴. However, very little is documented about using this approach in criminology within academic research⁵. This paper discusses our experience of using World Café within a prison setting, providing an academic external evaluation of a prison theatre project. As such, the focus of this paper is on the strengths and limitations of utilising this methodology, in the context of this project, drawing upon wider experience of using similar methods in other settings⁶. Our prison-based study involved 12 inmates who took part in a World Café with a follow up questionnaire, following participation in a 2-week theatre arts project. The conversational approach to World Café⁷ enabled

us to collect qualitative data and build consensus, whilst allowing individual perspective to be shared and valued in a group context. Our prison participants reported the World Café method was an enjoyable mechanism to enable reflection upon their experiences.

Our research within a prison setting aimed to explore what impact the theatre project had on a) the health and well-being of the prisoners, b) the self-esteem and confidence of the prisoners and c) the ability to develop healthy relationships. We also wanted to explore what prisons and theatre arts companies could do to improve theatre project experiences in prisons to maximise impact. Researching the prison population is a positive thing if assisting the improvement of prisoner 'health and well-being'⁸. Our wider research aims to improve theatre project practice to enhance prisoner well-being and rehabilitation by conducting a series of data collection sessions. However, this paper focuses purely on the evaluation of the theatre project.

Arts projects in prisons have been identified as positively contributing to offender rehabilitation and learning. Stephenson and Watson demonstrate that theatre work in prisons with inmates can lead to 'behavioural-cognitive change', reducing 'depression'

1. With recognition to Scarlett Hunt and Kate Smith for research assistance at one event on this project and to Professor James Treadwell for research supervision and training.
2. The research funding for this project derived from Rideout from The Staging Time University of Warwick project, via the Wellcome Trust as part of *Prisoners, Medical Care and Entitlement to Health in England and Ireland 1850-2000* combined with additional Arts Council England funding, the W.E.D Trust, the Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust and Thomas Deane Trust.
3. Revolving Doors (2016) Improving Your Prisoner Involvement Systems: A ToolKit for Staff. <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/file/1863/download?token=1cQMWr1W> (accessed 27/10/2018)
4. Clinks (2011) BEST PRACTICE in service user involvement in prisons and probation trusts <https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/Service%20User%20Best%20Practice%20Sept%2011.pdf> (accessed 27/10/2018)
5. Page, S. & Temple-Malt, E. (2018) World Café: a participatory research tool for the criminologist engaged in seeking world views for transformation. IN the British Society of Criminology Conference Papers. Vol18, PP5-19.
6. Gratton, N. & Beddows, R. (2018) "Get Talking: Managing to Achieve More through Creative Consultation" In *From Austerity to Abundance?* pg141-160. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2045-794420180000006007>
7. Brown, J. & Issacs, D. (2005) *World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Williston USA
8. Bachmann, R.D., & Schutt, R.K. (2017) *The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice*. 6th Ed. Sage Publications, LA. P80.

and increasing 'self-esteem'⁹. Theatre also has helped in bringing 'healing' from past abused experienced by perpetrators¹⁰ as well as contributing to enhancing family connections^{11 12 13}. Jewkes¹⁴ links art-based projects to enhancing a therapeutic community in prison for rehabilitation and Liebling *et al*¹⁵ acknowledges the contribution of arts and creativity to positive prison experience and successful rehabilitation. Yardley and Rusu¹⁶ point out that arts projects can be a gateway for prisoners to start engagement in other prison educational programmes and can reduce re-offending. SPS¹⁷ document the positive impact of arts on Scottish prisons and highlight that arts are particularly aligned to '*sustained or improved physical and mental well-being*', '*improved literacy skills*', increased employability prospects and '*improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance in managing their own behaviour and understanding of the impact of their offending on victims and their own families*' (p7). Theatre work can have a powerful impact upon prisoner outcomes. Drama work being conducted with sex offenders has been successful for theatre companies such as Geece, where confrontational theatre training

Some of the participants would have experienced isolation due to non-diagnosed learning disabilities such as Autism and Asperger's, or from symptoms of early dementia.

approaches have helped engagement with male perpetrators¹⁸. Prendergast¹⁹ comments that inmates '*express over and over again... how the experience has been invaluable to their rehabilitation, self-confidence, and the ability to face the public with pride rather than shame or fear*'(p348). This is particularly important when theatre is being conducted in a '*penal system that is set up to isolate and shame*' offenders²⁰ (p348). It is argued that theatre can help to humanise individuals and the prison setting. Keehan²¹ surmises that '*... the purpose of applied theatre and drama in prisons can be to facilitate change on an institutional as well as individual level*' (p391), which poses challenges for capturing data.

The theatre project we evaluated in November 2018 with 12 convicted sex offenders included those who experienced isolation due to non-diagnosed learning disabilities such as Autism and Asperger's, or from symptoms of early dementia. A proportion of abusers have been abused themselves as a child, although other factors make the abused-abuser connection complex^{22 23 24}. A BBC media report²⁵ infers having a learning

disability makes a person more vulnerable to sexual abuse. Monsell *et al*²⁶ found those with learning

9. Stephenson, Z. & Watson, A. (2018) Scratching the Surface: A service evaluation of an applied theatre intervention for female offenders. *Prison Service Journal*. Vol239, PP16-31
10. *ibid*;P17
11. Fair, H. & Jacobson, J. (2016) Family Connections: a review of learning from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Prison Reform Fellowship Part II. The Prison Reform Trust. www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk (Accessed on 14/01/2019).
12. Thorpe, J. (2014) A Little Patch of Sky: The Use of the Arts to connect families affected by incarceration. A Winston Churchill Fellowship Report (2014). PP1-31. www.wcmt.org.uk (accessed 14/01/2019)
13. Barton, A. & Russel, A. (2018) Research Report: HMP/YOI Winchester Applied Theatre pilot 2018. www.artsevidence.org.uk (accessed 14/01/2019).
14. Jewkes, Y. (2018) In Place of Hate. *Prison Service Journal*. Vol239, PP48-49.
15. Liebling, A., Laws, B., Lieber, E., Auty, K., Schmidt, B.E., Crewe, B., Gardom, J., Kant, D. & Morey, M. (2019) Are hope and possibility achievable in prison? *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice* Vol 00(0) PP1-23. www.prc.crim.cam.ac.uk/pdf/hopeandpossibility (accessed 14/01/2019)
16. Yardley, E. & Rusu, D. (2018) Edmund Clark's Artistic Residency at HMP Grendon. *Prison Service Journal*. Vol239, PP50-57.
17. SPS (2015) Scottish Prison Service Arts Review April 2015. PP1-34. www.sps.gov.uk (accessed 14/01/2019).
18. Bottoms, S. (2010) Silent partners: actor and audience in Geece Theatre's Journey Woman. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. Vol 15(4), PP477-496.
19. Prendergast, M. (2016) Tracing the journey to here: reflections on a prison theatre devised project. *Theatre Topics*. Vol 26(3), PP343-349.
20. *Ibid*, P348.
21. Keehan, B. (2015). Theatre, prison & rehabilitation: new narratives of purpose? *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. Vol20(3), PP391-394.
22. Crow, I. (2003) *The Treatment and Rehabilitation of Offenders*. 2nd edition. Sage Publications, London. PP123.
23. Glasser, M., Kolvin, I., Campbell, D., Glasser, A., Leitch, I. & Farrelly, S. (2001) Cycle of child sexual abuse: links between being a victim and becoming a perpetrator. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol 197(6)
24. Jespersen, A.F., Lalmumiere, M.L. & Seto, M.C. (2009) Sexual abuse history among adult sex offenders and non-sex offenders: A meta-analysis. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. Vol 33(3), PP179-192.
25. BBC News (2015) Children with learning disabilities 'more vulnerable to abuse' <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34204824> (accessed 27/10/2018)
26. Monsell *et al* (1998) cited IN Edelson, M.G. (2010) Sexual abuse of children with autism: factors that increase risk and interfere with recognition of abuse. *Disability Studies Quarterly*. Vol 30(1) (accessed 12/01/2019).

challenges are twice as likely to experience sexual abuse. This group of offenders are likely to have experiences of victimisation, as well as exploiting victims. According to West²⁷ there is some evidence of links between mental health and relational building capacity issues within the sex offending population. Relational building issues may be symptomatic of autism²⁸, which could be undiagnosed. Research suggests that younger sex offenders have higher likelihood of autism related disorders than other offending groups²⁹. The prisoners on this theatre project were pre-selected by the prison. This practice is used in other prison arts projects to select participants³⁰. All participants on the theatre arts project were informed about the research evaluation whilst on the project and the voluntary nature of participation in our evaluation. Participation in this research did not impact upon whether they could take part in the theatre project.

One feature of the theatre project was the use of refreshments and exploring the topic of food and health in prisons from a historical perspective. Groupwork was used to facilitate theatre work, resulting in two final performances: one to prisoner family and friends and a second to prisoners. As with other prison-based theatre projects, the performance included interaction and engagement with those viewing the production³¹. There is recognition that those viewing a prison theatre performance may have little '*theatre-going experience*' (p481) and as such, may be more vocal and interactive³². There is recognition from prison theatre experts such as Thompson³³ that the new experience of theatre may evoke '*hostility, suspicion, anxiety and occasionally ridicule*'(p481). Inexperienced theatre-going prisoner

audiences tend to '*signal if they are getting restless or bored*'(p347), which makes it challenging for performers³⁴. Theatre in prisons developed and performed by offenders can help to '*break down the audience's preconceptions about who an 'offender' is and what he is capable of achieving.*'(p345), which means theatre can be rehabilitative for the offender and audience members³⁵.

The end of the theatre performance included '*talk-backs*'(p348)³⁶, where performers were encouraged to share what taking part in the project meant for them. There was also opportunity to gain feedback from the audience. Some talk-back comments were used as discussion prompts within our formal evaluation which took place on the 5th day after the theatre production had been performed. So, our evaluation from the World Café data reflects short term impacts. Further research is required to explore long term change.

Participatory action research, can still prove effective in some more challenging settings with considered pragmatic adaptations.

Using World Café within Prisons:

Participatory approaches in evaluation can help to co-construct new knowledge, if a safe space is created for stakeholders to speak openly about the project or service being evaluated³⁷. We were unable to adopt all participatory principles

in our research due to timescales and incarceration limitations. Cartland *et al*³⁸ argue that good participatory evaluation is underpinned by three principles: *Inclusion*, by which stakeholders are involved in the whole process of evaluation, from design to dissemination of findings; *Dialogue* through which community partners are consulted on the evaluation; and *Deliberation* in which a consensus about the evaluation process is established with stakeholders. However, participatory evaluation, like participatory

27. West (1996) cited IN Crow, I. (2003) *The Treatment and Rehabilitation of Offenders*. 2nd edition. Sage Publications, London. PP122.
28. Melvin, C.L., Langdon, P.E. & Murphy, G.H. (2017) Treatment effectiveness for offenders with autism spectrum conditions: a systematic review. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Vol 23(8), PP748-776.
29. Baarsma, M.E., Boonmann, C., Hart-Kerkhoffs, L.A., de Graaf, H., Doreleijers, T.A.H., Vermeiren, R.R.J.M. & Jansen, L.M.C. (2016) Sexuality and Autistic-Like Symptoms in Juvenile Sex Offenders: A Follow-Up After 8 Years. *Journal of Autism Development Disorders*. Vol 46(8), PP2679-2691.
30. Stephenson, Z. & Watson, A. (2018) see n.9
31. Bottoms, S. (2010) see n.18
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Prendergast, M. (2016) see n.19
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Cartland, J. Rush-Ross, H.S. & Mason, M. (2012) Engaging community researchers in evaluation: looking at the experiences of community partners in school-based projects in the US. In Goodson, L. & Phillimore, J. (eds) *Community Research for Participation*. Bristol. Policy Press
38. Ibid.

action research, can still prove effective in some more challenging settings with considered pragmatic adaptations³⁹. We adopted the creative and participatory consultation technique of World Café, which stipulated voluntary participation, encouraged all participants to be involved (regardless of literacy levels, or the presence of a learning disability) and provided a space for prisoners to speak freely about their experiences, while working within the restraints of a prison setting.

World Café is group discussion based, involving refreshments to provide an informal atmosphere for data collection as developed by Brown and Issacs⁴⁰. Whilst it is ideal to use World Café with over 15 participants, it is possible to utilise the approach with smaller groups (above 8) and get rich data. However, the format requires adjustment⁴¹. The World Café session opened with a short presentation including 'talk-back' comments and audience feedback from the performance. Prison security prohibited us taking a USB stick into the prison, so we presented via flip chart. The flip chart presentation worked with a smaller group of participants. However, this might be less effective with a larger cohort, or if working with visually impaired participants. The research aims and World Café process was also explained using flip chart prompts, so that everyone knew what would happen in the session. Participant rights were articulated and the research assistants (our table-hosts) went through the information sheet and consent forms in small groups. There was some debate over signing consent forms, with genuine concern from some inmates about anonymity and how the data would be presented in reports or publication(s). The environment of a prison is low trust⁴², which can have implications for research.

There was some debate over signing consent forms, with genuine concern from some inmates about anonymity and how the data would be presented in reports or publication(s).

Our World Café event lasted for approx. 2 hours and was conducted in the visitors meeting space, where the first theatre performance was delivered. We arranged a section of the visitors' space like a café, with paper tablecloths on coffee tables. We used three tables, allowing for 4 participants and 1 table-host per table. Felt-tip pens and information sheets about the study were put on the tables. However, we did not include the recommended 'menu' of the event order on the tables^{43 44 45}. We had a fourth table set up for participants who might want to withdraw at any point. Usual practice is for refreshments to be set up on tables in advance and accessible throughout the research process. The prison agreed to provide refreshments but there was an issue with getting refreshments to us for

the beginning of the session. So, part way through the session participants had a refreshment break from a drinks trolley. Sadly, no snacks were offered on this occasion. Having a mid-point break worked well but added time onto the event. Fortunately, our participants were able to re-focus on return to tables, and we started with a new research question to stimulate conversation.

It is advisable to keep the main questions to a minimum within World Café⁴⁶. We had 3 main questions and used a new tablecloth for each one to capture the data. We utilised table-hosts to scribe responses to accommodate literacy issues and to ask further prompt questions to gather more data. Literacy issues can be a barrier to participation in research that requires reading and writing⁴⁷. Table-hosts read out written documentation and wrote on behalf of the group. Group members were also invited to write or draw responses. World Café was designed to be participatory in nature by engaging participants as table-hosts. We have adapted the World Café approach

39. Gratton, N. & Beddows, R. (2018) see n.6

40. Brown, J. & Issacs, D. (2005) see n.7

41. Page, S. & Temple-Malt, E. (2018) see n.5

42. Liebling, A. & Arnold, H. (2012) Social relationships between prisoners in a maximum security prison: Violence, faith, and the declining nature of trust. *Journal of Criminal Justice*. Vol 40, PP413–424.

43. MacFarlane, A., Galvin, R., O'Sullivan, M., McInerney, C., Meagher, E., Burke, D., & Lemaster, J.W. (2017) 'Participatory methods for research prioritisation in primary care: an analysis of the world café approach in Ireland and USA'. *Family Practice*. Vol 34(3), PP278.

44. Ritch, E.L., & Brennan, C., (2010). 'Using World Café and Drama to explore older people's experience of financial products and services'. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. Vol 34, PP405–411.

45. Burke, C., & Sheldon, K., (2010). Encouraging workplace innovation using the 'world café' model. *Nursing Management*. Vol 17(7), PP14–19.

46. Brown, J. & Issacs, D. (2005) see n.7

47. Stephenson, Z., & Watson, A. (2018) see n.9

in other studies of utilising research assistants as table-hosts for scribing support purposes. This is particularly useful when working with vulnerable groups with low literacy levels⁴⁸. The prison community in the UK is known for lower literacy levels⁴⁹. Our research assistants for this project were undergraduate students who had received additional training to undertake the table-host role.

Academic leads facilitated the session in the 'presenter' role, introducing the main questions and allowing for approximately 15 minutes for groups to respond to each question before inviting participants to rotate. Rotations are where some group members move to other tables⁵⁰. The table-host welcomes new members and facilitates existing members in sharing what they have been discussing. New members comment and add additional insights from their previous groups' discussions. We asked our table-hosts to write 'agree' next to anything already written down that new members concurred with. We used one rotation per question, however, on the last question it was apparent that some participants were getting tired and indicated a further rotation would not be appreciated. We accommodated this request. A flexible approach to the number of rotations is important in order to keep participants engaged. As a presenter and facilitator of the World Café event, you need to

be able to observe participant responses to rotations and make a judgement call on whether to continue using them. Chang and Chen⁵¹ infer discretionary use of up to 3 rotations per question, however, we feel reduced rotations work better. The principle behind rotations is that they enable participants to gain a 'world view' from discussions and a cross pollination of ideas⁵². However, this is also achieved by the table-host offering a summary to the whole group at the end of each main question. We referred to 'rotations' as

So much so, that
they felt
comfortable
opening up in front
of group members
in their table
discussions about
personal impacts
from the project
concerning reduced
stress, improved
self-esteem and
confidence.

playing musical chairs (without the music), to help the prisoners understand the process. We directed movement, rather than a free-for-all on what table to go to. We typically invited one previous 'mover', and one previous 'stayer' to move to assist with mixing the groups up. When we felt sufficient discussion had occurred (before and after rotation), we invited the table-hosts to provide a brief summary of the conversations at the table.

The presenters were able to oversee the table-hosts and give support where required. For example, one participant needed a more detailed explanation of

how we would guarantee anonymity and later a participant shared something emotionally powerful that temporarily stopped the table-host scribing while she paused to process her emotions. We were able to help table-hosts capture conversation that they might have missed because it was contextual to prison life, rather than specific to our research questions. In this way the 'presenter(s)' become additional scribes.

We had two prison officers present as a learning opportunity regarding the application of World Café and this also provided safeguarding. World Café is perceived as cost-effective due to accommodating larger numbers of participants than traditional group/individual qualitative data collection approaches. However, utilising

research assistants as table-hosts is an additional resource consideration, along with ensuring adequate security. Although, it is still a cheaper mechanism than the security measures required for one-to-one or small group interview.

We used a questionnaire at the end of the World Café to capture data that participants did not want to express in group discussion and to elevate issues of what Garner and Sercomb⁵³ describe as '*social relations*'(p81). Follow up questionnaires are not part

48. Page, S. & Temple-Malt, E. (2018) see n.5

49. Creese, B. (2016) An assessment of the English and maths skills levels of prisoners in England. London Review of Education Vol 14(3), PP13-30.

50. Aldred, R., (2009). 'From Community Participation to organisational therapy? World café and appreciative inquiry as research methods'. Community Development Journal. Vol 46(1), PP57-71.

51. Chang, W., & Chen, S., (2015). 'The Impact of world café on entrepreneurial strategic planning capability'. Journal of Business Research. Vol68, PP1283-1290.

52. Brown, J., & Issacs, D. (2005) see n.7

53. Garner, M. & Sercomb, P. (2009) Research as Social Relations: Implications for Teaching Research Methods. IN Garner M, Wagner C & Kawulich B (Eds) Teaching Research Methods in Social Sciences, Ashgate Publishing Group, Surrey: PP81-91.

of the original World Café format but have been a useful additional tool for data collection in previous research⁵⁴. Questionnaires have been used as a sole tool to evaluate arts projects in other studies⁵⁵. We offered scribing support for questionnaire completion to accommodate literacy issues. We observed that participants also offered each other support in completing questionnaires. Interestingly, many omitted answers for demographic details such as age and ethnicity. This may be due to the concerns raised at the beginning of the session pertaining to anonymity.

Social relations in the context of a group of prisoners who have connected well over a two-week period, enhanced the collection of rich data. Effective collaboration work had clearly occurred whereby prisoners made positive relationships with one another during the theatre project. So much so, that they felt comfortable sharing about personal impacts from the project concerning reduced stress, improved self-esteem and confidence and how the theatre project had provided a welcomed distraction from personal issues. We observed vulnerability within the sharing of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. They also talked about how relationships generally in prison are more for 'survival' and involve less depth. Liebling and Arnold⁵⁶ discuss low trust and poor relations between inmates, as well as the '*prisoner hierarchy*'. So, selection of participants for a World Café requires some consideration when aiming to reduce '*gang-bullying*' behaviour described by Wood, Moir and James⁵⁷ (2009) and effects caused by '*prison subcultures*' and '*power relations*'⁵⁸(p59). Facilitating a World Café with a group of inmates who are less well known to each other may not produce the level of data we achieved in this session because of poor trust levels between inmates. Having an experienced presenter and table-hosts could be imperative in this situation to reduce bullying. Rotations may leave some prisoners vulnerable, if their 'survival' peer moves to another

Facilitating a World Café with a group of inmates who are less well known to each other, may not produce the level of data we achieved in this session if trust levels between inmates is poor.

table and a more hostile prisoner joins them. There needs to be risk management regarding invitations to a World Café event based on the prison service observations of social relations, prisoner hierarchy and social clashes between prisoners and staff who might be present.

We wondered whether the prison officers observing our World Café would create a power dynamic hindering data collection. However, the rapport between the officers and prisoners was apparent and data collection didn't seem to be obstructed. Mann's⁵⁹ interview findings evidenced that sex offenders with cultural capital are more likely to put on an act in front of staff and lie to ensure better treatment in prison. There is potential that accounts shared were not completely truthful, due to prison staff being present. Consideration is also required in the selection of prison officers involved in observing or facilitating World Cafés. The prisoners in our research talked about officers who were less supportive and were not approachable. Mann⁶⁰ reports that prison staff working with sex offenders (particularly child sex offenders), can be harsher with them than other offender groups. Therefore, some prison staff may not be suitable to the role of World Café observer, presenter or table-host, particularly if prisoners are asked to share personal thoughts

and feelings.

World Café does not lend itself to sensitive topics due to the group setting; alternative data collection methods are more suitable. However, it is particularly useful for topics where brief education input from the presentation at the beginning of the session to stimulate discussions would benefit participants. For example, drugs education⁶¹ where participants learn about substances and associated health risks. Prisoners are then able to make suggestions to inform better service provision for prisoners. However, questions need consideration as to whether a prisoner sharing 'inside' knowledge in a group setting could cause repercussions

54. Page, S. & Temple-Malt, E. (2018) see n.5

55. Stephenson, Z. & Watson, A. (2018) see n.9

56. Liebling, A. & Arnold, H. (2012) see n.42

57. Wood, J., Moir, A. & James, M. (2009) Prisoners' gang-related activity: the importance of bullying and moral disengagement. *Journal of Psychology, Crime & Law*. Vol15(6), PP569-581.

58. Matthews, R. (1999) *Doing Time: An Introduction to the Sociology of Imprisonment*. Palgrave, Basingstoke.

59. Mann, N. (2012) Ageing Child Sex Offenders in Prison: Denial, Manipulation and Community. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*. Vol 51(4), PP345-358.

60. Ibid

61. Page, S. & Temple-Malt, E. (2018) see n.5

from those benefitting from drug dealing or similar prison issues.

At the end of the World Café, following table-host summaries, we handed out follow-up questionnaires and upon their completion the presenter debriefed the group by talking through the 'debrief sheet'. We gave further assurances of anonymity and reiterated what would happen with the data and discussed how participants could request report and publication copies and how they could withdraw or make a complaint. Our aim is to publish the entirety of the findings from the wider 18-month arts evaluation project, so we wanted to manage expectations relating to timescales.

Prisoner Views of World Café:

A section on the follow-up questionnaire asked participants what they liked and disliked about the World Café session. Comments indicate participants liked World Café and found the opportunity to reflect useful and cathartic:

- ❑ *'I enjoyed the session'*
- ❑ *'It was enjoyable and fun'*
- ❑ *'I enjoyed the café as it was informal which helps you open up'*
- ❑ *'It was not as 'intense' as I thought it would be'... 'The feedback theme was useful, clear and positive — thank you'*
- ❑ *'This was great, it was like getting things (things) off your chest'*
- ❑ *'Great to reflect on what we done and achieved in two weeks'*
- ❑ *'It was good to reflect on the project, and think about how (it) impacted on me'*
- ❑ *'It was good to reflect about what we had done in the past 2 weeks'*
- ❑ *'It' good to share positives and negatives about the (name omitted) project and be able to share our opinions' x 2 people*
- ❑ *'A general debrief and the opportunity to decompress and express my thoughts and feelings about the project has been useful and appreciated'*

The informal approach to World Café was cited as an enabler to participants sharing information.

Quality of the Findings:

There is recognition that data quality from a World Café lacks the richness of interviews or focus groups yet provides more information than questionnaires⁶². To some extent the quality of data is determined by the quality of scribing, which is why utilising research assistants as table-hosts can be beneficial⁶³. However, it is not a panacea. Scribes can fall into the pitfall of only writing responses to the actual research questions and not capturing off-agenda topics that participants raise, causing the research to become researcher-led. Whereas, when audio-recording focus groups and interviews, unstructured conversation gets captured

amidst direct responses to questions and can be utilised in analysis. Having presenters supporting the table-hosts helped with recording additional participant-led information.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into detail of the impact of the theatre project upon inmates, staff and the wider prison setting. However, we wanted to include a sample of the findings from the World Café session to facilitate the appreciation of the quality of the data and enable those interested in developing arts projects and/or participatory research methods in prison some shared learning insights.

Theatre Impact upon Relationships and Prison Culture:

Inmates had cultivated supportive peer relationships in the group through undertaking the theatre project. Participants talked about how their judgements about others got positively challenged by working with people they wouldn't normally connect with. Empathy was established as they learnt about others. One person reported having *'... a better understanding of other people's situations'* and another said *'when doing the project different ages wasn't a problem, it was better working with different ages'* and another said that it helped them to *'chat to different people, opens your eyes to different opinions.'* There was a strong sense that participating on the theatre project had helped to address personal

Participants talked about how their judgements about others were positively challenged by working with people that they wouldn't have normally connected with. Empathy was established as they learnt about others.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

prejudice for example *'after getting to know people pre-conceptions and judgements were changed.'*

Communication skills and confidence increased: *'the one thing I learned was how to interact with other people'* which had assisted them in *'confidence building'*. Another commented that *'doing the project has made me more interactive with people'*. Taking part in the project reduced isolation and helped people who were new to prison to settle. They would welcome opportunity to do a similar project just prior to release. Prisoners commented that in workshop settings the opportunity to connect with others was limited for example *'In workshop never had a proper chance to talk to people.'* Overall, inmates reported that taking part had made them *'more open to new relationships, professional and personal, because less judgemental. Not 'judging a book by its cover' (and) really understanding a person.'* However, several inmates talked about how it *'Would be nice to maintain friendships and connections'* and they were concerned that in prison *'relationships get cut off and healthy relationships need nurturing to be long term. So, makes you feel there's no point.'* They talked about how most relationships in prison are for *'survival'* purposes and that undertaking the theatre project had given them a *'support network'* that they could not

utilise when the project ended if on separate wings which made them *'feel emptiness'*. However, inmates were also keen for us to understand that *'the benefit of the project is worth the cost of making new friends and then losing them on the outside.'*

Inmates talked about how there was improved *'closeness...with staff and residents'* and how taking part had *'broke(n) down barriers between officers and residents'* because it had given inmates a *'different impression of what they want from their job'*. They talked about how the project helped them to feel *'on a level par, no staff/residents, equal.'* They also talked about how *'the right staff were picked to oversee'* the project, who were enthusiastic about the benefits of the arts on inmates. Whereas, some officers were perceived less supportive to arts interventions. One

participant commented that it had given him *'more confidence to speak to officers'*.

Relationships with family also were impacted. One inmate talked about how this was the first time that his *'family (were) proud of me'* and another talked about how it had given *'peace of mind for family, showed them they are okay and happy — having a good time.'* One participant talked about how he noticed in the performance that there was *'...increased confidence*

seeing family'. Yet another talked about how they *'got emotional because I had no one there'* but that *'having strangers talk to us helped'*. Having other peoples' family members congratulate them after the performance benefited those who didn't have family in the audience. The positive feedback from the audience(s) had given them a *'massive boost'*. Others talked about how it had given them a *'sense of pride — 'not the label you have been given.'* There was appreciation for not feeling *'judged'* for the two weeks of the project. The feedback suggested the negative side to prison culture where some staff can be judgemental and negatively label prisoners which knocks esteem and confidence. Prison culture was commented upon in that *'prison takes a shot gun to self-esteem'* and this was reiterated in another comment that *'confidence is knocked in this environment'*.

Inmates described how health and well-being improved during the project but afterwards there was a *'crash'* from going back to daily prison routine: *'Health and wellbeing are covered until the projects are over, until you get back to reality — there needs to be something else or another programme to support 'the crash'.'* This statement was supported by a drawing of a car hitting a wall to symbolise the *'crash'*. They talked about how going back to a wing with unsupportive staff and none of the men from the project was hard in getting support for processing post-performance emotion. However, those with supportive prison officers on their wings and others from the project, felt the *'crash'* less explicitly. Furthermore, some participants were part of an on-going once a week theatre group and reported feeling less of a dip in emotion after the project due to

Inmates went on to talk about how there was improved 'closeness...with staff and residents' and how taking part had 'Broke down barriers between officers and residents' because it had given inmates a 'Different impression of what they want from their job'.

knowing they had a creative outlet where they could meet up with like-minded others.

Positive Approach of the Theatre Project Practitioners:

Prisoners talked about feeling *'more human'* during the 2-week project due to being treated as an *'equal'*. They said they got *'treated like a human, not a convict'*. The theatre facilitators successfully created a *'protected, safe space that helped me to open up'* and gave people *'the opportunity to speak'*, which was valued. Prisoners appreciated the *'structure'* of the sessions and how they were given choices when improvising and developing the script. They welcomed *'working together collaborating and creating'* and liked how they were given *'different options'* and encouraged to *'try more things'* and having *'shared responsibilities'*. They wanted *'more time'* to work on the scenes and to conduct *'research'*. Comments included *'had to do a lot of research as a big group, would have been nice to do individual work as well to focus a bit more'* and *'access to more research would have been good, more resources'*.

The Prison Governor was perceived positively and supportive of arts projects. Greater involvement of the wider prison senior leadership and prison officers would have been welcomed by the prisoners. The theatre project enabled supportive prisoner officers to build productive relationships with prisoners. Crewe^{64 65} points out that UK prisons acknowledge the value of relationship building between staff and prisoners in order to support prison *'decency, safety and security'*(p3). Hulley et al⁶⁶ exhorts the value of staff

demonstrating respect to prisoners. Evidently, the practice of the theatre team created an environment for relationship building and respect that facilitated prisoners in feeling self-worth. Prisoners talked generally about a prison system that negatively impacted them. Our findings concur with classical research about the impact of negative judgements and labelling⁶⁷, institutionalisation⁶⁸ and impersonal power⁶⁹ and more recent debate from Morris et al⁷⁰ that negative strained institutionalised prisoner experience leads to negative prisoner attitude and behaviour. This is particularly interesting due to the links between strain theory and sex offenders identified by Ackerman and Sacks⁷¹ to the context of this study. Mann's⁷² findings point to the harsher treatment that sex offenders experience from staff and the stricter prison regime. The theatre project helped to alleviate these tensions and could provide role modelling to some prison staff to ways of working that has positive impact and can contribute to enhanced prison security. However, there is also evidence from Mann⁷³ that inmates with cultural capital manipulate relationships with staff through acting. As such, theatre projects may not be suitable for certain inmates who may use theatre skills to enhance manipulative performances with staff and the wider community. Such inmates may benefit from other forms of art disciplines.

The theatre project helped to elevate these tensions and could provide role modelling to some prison staff about different ways of working that has positive impact and can contribute to enhanced prison security.

Conclusion:

Theatre arts projects in prison have capacity to positively impact upon a) the health and well-being of the prisoners, b) the self-esteem and confidence of the prisoners and c) the ability to develop healthy relationships with both inmates and prison staff. Theatre project staff facilitated

64. Crewe, B. (2009) *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation, and Social Life in an English Prison*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. P3.

65. Crewe, B. (2011) Soft power in prison: implications for staff-prisoner relationships, liberty and legitimacy. *European Journal of Criminology*. Vol 8(6), PP455-468.

66. Hulley, S., Liebling, A. & Crewe, B. (2012) Respect in prisons: Prisoners' experiences of respect in public and private sector prisons. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*. Vol12(1), PP3-23

67. Becker, H. (1973) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. The Free Press, New York.

68. Goffman, E. (1968) *Asylums, Essays of the Social Situations of Mental Patients*. Pelican, Harmondsworth.

69. Weber, M. (1948) *From Marx Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Ed Gerth H & Mills CW. Routledge & Kegan-Paul, London.

70. Morris, R.G., Carriga, M.L., Diamond, B., Piquero, N.L. & Piquero, A. (2012) Does prison strain lead to prison misbehaviour? An application of general strain theory to inmate misconduct. *Journal of Criminal Justice* Vol40(3), PP194-201.

71. Ackerman, A.R. & Sacks, M. (2012) Can general strain theory be used to explain recidivism among registered sex offenders? In *Journal of Criminal Justice*. Vol40(3), PP187-193.

72. Mann, N. (2012) see n.59

73. Ibid.

in a respectful style that contrasted with some prison officers. Unsupportive prison officers undermine the rehabilitative culture of prisons. There needs to be consideration to prisoner transition from taking part in a theatre project to going back to usual daily prison routines to ensure mental well-being does not take a significant dip. Having supportive prison staff that appreciate the arts and peers from the project on the same wing, with opportunity to engage in weekly ongoing drama-based activity after the performance, can assist prisoners transitioning from a concentrated arts project back into regular prison routine. We found inmates particularly appreciated taking part in the theatre project if they were new to the prison because it helped them to settle in. We were told by inmates (via questionnaire) that they would welcome doing a theatre project nearer to their release date. Prisoners talked about how the project made them feel '*human*' and helped family members who watched the performance to feel proud of them, which had positive impacts upon the prisoners. Theatre has the potential to help to rebuild families. A recommendation is for prisons to ensure that there are audience members to provide positive affirmation after an arts performance. This happened within this theatre project which helped to alleviate disappointment for those without family and friends in the audience.

Our experience of utilising the participatory consultation and research method of 'World Café' in the context of evaluating a theatre-based arts project in a UK prison setting, with adult male sex offenders, was positive. Prisoners regarded this data collection approach as enjoyable. The '*informal*' and '*fun*' environment helped facilitate the sharing of personal experiences and reflections on the project. The conversational approach to World Café as described by Brown and Issacs⁷⁴ enabled us to collect insightful data and build consensus, whilst

allowing individual perspective to be shared and valued in a group context. Formal evaluation at the end of a theatre arts project helped participants to '*debrief*' and '*get things off their chests*'. Some sensitive topics for investigation would not work for World Café in prisons and careful consideration is needed regarding which prisoners and prison staff to include at World Café events to maximise effectiveness of data collection and to reduce negative repercussions.

We adapted the World Café approach by reducing rotations, having a refreshment break (rather than ongoing refreshment supply on tables) and we accommodated prison requirements for our presentation format. Using table-hosts reduces elements of the participatory nature of the World Café but assists in capturing data where literacy levels might be a barrier to engagement. However, one limitation from recording data through writing is that responses tend to be captured in less detail than what was articulated in the discussion groups. Valuable participant-led anecdotal information is less likely to be captured. It would be interesting to explore enhancing the participatory nature of evaluation by engaging prisoners in shaping the research questions and becoming table-hosts. In a community setting, participatory approaches with engagement in design and delivery is empowering to those involved in the process and offers opportunity for skill development, self-esteem and confidence⁷⁵. With research skills being necessary for theatre-project scriptwriting, training inmates in research prior to the project could have enhanced scriptwriting research skills. This is an area for further research. Our participants talked about enjoying researching and developing the script and wanted more time to conduct research. Engaging offenders in the research process of evaluation could facilitate this and be enriching to those involved.

74. Brown, J. & Issacs, D. (2005) see n.7

75. Gratton, N. & Beddows, R. (2018) see n.6

Campaigning to Transform Justice

Interview with Penelope Gibbs

Penelope Gibbs is Director of Transform Justice. She is interviewed by Dr. Jamie Bennett, who is a Deputy Director in HM Prison and Probation Service.

Penelope Gibbs is the founder and Director of Transform Justice, a small charity set up in 2012 with the aim of helping to create a better justice system in the UK, a system which is fairer, more open, more humane and more effective. Transform Justice intends to enhance the system through promoting change — by generating research and evidence to show how the system works and how it could be improved, and by persuading the public to support those changes, and practitioners and politicians to make them.

This interview explores the issues that concern the charity, their role in criminal justice reform and generating public discourse. The interview took place in December 2019.

JB: Could you describe your professional background? How did you become interested in the criminal justice and penal systems?

PG: I almost fell into criminal justice by accident. I worked as a producer on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour and I covered many stories about justice. I was contacted by Families Need Fathers, who wanted the programme to reflect their concerns about the family courts. I became fascinated by family courts and decided to do something voluntarily to contribute to a fairer family justice system. So I applied to be a magistrate. It was a long and bureaucratic process but I made it in 2004 just as I left the BBC to start working for a charity, TimeBank. I sat part-time as a criminal magistrate for three years and stood down when I joined the Prison Reform Trust in 2007. There I led a five year programme — 'Out of Trouble' — to reduce the number of children and young people imprisoned in the UK. Juliet Lyon, then Director of the Prison Reform Trust, took a risk in employing me since I had little knowledge of the criminal justice system and 'Out of Trouble' was their flagship programme. But she believed, rightly I think, that the criminal justice voluntary sector needed 'new blood' — an injection of new ideas and experience.

JB: Why did you found Transform Justice? what was your aim?

PG: I founded Transform Justice in 2012 to work for a fair, humane, open and effective justice system. I have been and always will be a penal reformer, but my greatest interest is in reducing imprisonment, rather than what happens in prisons. The aims of Transform Justice are very broad and cover the whole justice system, but we have focussed most on the criminal justice system.

JB: How is your work funded?

PG: We are a very lean organisation. The team is small and all work virtually. The work is all funded by grant making trusts and foundations. Like other campaigning organisations, we would not take money from the government, so that we can always speak truth to power. We manage but, overall, I think the funding for criminal justice advocacy is inadequate. The criminal justice sector has a massive job to change the debate but our voice is small. Unless we can shift the debate, the delivery of services to those with convictions will forever be hampered.

JB: How effective is your approach as a reform strategy? How does it contrast or complement other methods such as grassroots activism, litigation or political lobbying?

PG: Different campaigning approaches should complement each other. Unfortunately the criminal justice sector is pretty under-developed in its approach to campaigning. We have virtually no grassroots activism and no community organising. We have hardly any social media campaigning. There is very little strategic litigation in criminal law. Transform Justice's approach so far has been to target those who influence policy.

We focus on a particular issue like diversion from prosecution, gather the best data and evidence and present pragmatic suggestions for change.² We are insider and outsider campaigners, using every means at our disposal to influence policy and practice. We do lobby in the sense of advocating with politicians for change, but we also try to engage civil servants, practitioners and the police. It's very hard to gauge success in campaigning, particularly when more than

1. <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Projectsresearch/Childrenandyoungpeople>

2. http://www.transformjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/November2017_Less-is-more.pdf

one organisation is advocating on the same issue and when achieving success can take a long time. Perhaps Transform Justice's biggest success is in raising awareness of the risks to access to justice posed by the government's £1.1 billion court reform programme. This programme involves closing courthouses and replacing them with video 'skype' hearings or online processes. Transform Justice was one of the first organisations to highlight the major changes proposed, and to suggest that the new processes may threaten defendants' and prisoners' rights. We did original research for and published a report on the use of video-links from prisons and police stations.³ This research suggested that defendants could not communicate properly over video links and that judges might have unconscious bias against those they saw on screen. I think we have helped raise awareness and concerns about the implications of the programme for access to justice. We have been particularly tenacious in getting hold (via Freedom of Information requests) of documents which the government had not published. The most important of these was a report commissioned by the government from the Boston Consulting Group in 2016, which cast doubt on the viability of the programme. It took me two years and an appeal to the Information Commissioners' Office to get it released.

JB: You have a number of longstanding interests within the penal system. For example, you led the Prison

Reform Trust's 'Out of Trouble' programme aimed at reducing child imprisonment. There has been an extraordinary transformation in the criminalisation of children. The number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system fell 85 per cent in a decade, from 110,817 in 2007 to 14,400 in 2018. Similarly, the average youth custody population has declined from 2,914 in 2007 to 894 in 2018, a reduction of almost 70 per cent. To what do you attribute this transformation and what was your role in this?

PG: When I started leading the 'Out of Trouble' programme the chances of success in reducing child

and youth imprisonment looked slim. New Labour had ended up being tougher on people who committed crime than on the causes of crime, and children were caught in this punitive net. Tony Blair launched a street crime initiative and a target for offences brought to justice which had resulted in the numbers in child custody rising to over 3000 by August 2006.

I knew little about youth justice when I started but I consulted three wise men — Chris Stanley, Enver Solomon and Rob Allen. They suggested starting local and trying to get incremental change in particular areas.

This proved to be a winning strategy. By advocating for individual Youth Offending Team (YOTs) to reduce their demand for child custody, we started a movement of YOTs competing to bring down their rate of child custody rate (the percentage of those convicted in court who are sentenced to custody). We even succeeded in Merthyr Tydfil. They had the highest child custody rate in the country, higher than cities like Newcastle. I travelled there to meet the heads of the YOT and the local council. I'm afraid they didn't know what had hit them. No-one had ever suggested that local magistrates were imprisoning the local teenagers too readily. But they also didn't like being 'named and shamed' as the most punitive area in England and Wales. From then on, their numbers began to fall. The Prison Reform Trust was fortunate that others were pulling in the same direction. The government abandoned the 'offences brought to justice'

police target in 2008 and the Youth Justice Board continued to push hard for a reduction in numbers. We didn't formally co-ordinate activities, but we supported each other and worked in parallel. The numbers of children in custody in England and Wales began falling in 2008 and fell pretty steadily for eight years. The numbers should be much lower still, but we achieved a lot. I think there has been a sea-change in attitudes to child imprisonment. The only thing I regret about the campaign is that we did not advocate for a change in primary legislation to make it more difficult to sentence a child to imprisonment. Children can still be, and are, imprisoned for non-violent crimes, like breaching a

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3. <http://www.transformjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Disconnected-Thumbnail-2.pdf>

community order or fraud. And the most used sentence for children is still the four month detention and training order, which involves a two month stay in prison. This length of sentence for a child achieves nothing and does a lot of damage. Reform of the legislation is unfinished business and I worry that serious youth violence may prompt a new punitive turn. I am working with colleagues in the Standing Committee for Youth Justice to campaign to narrow the criteria for using custody. We will be publishing proposals soon.

JB: What further reforms are, in your view, required in youth justice, particularly in youth custody?

PG: We need to prevent any child being imprisoned in a Young Offender Institution (YOI). They are not and never have been fit for purpose. Many YOI staff are good, but the prison service is dominated by an adult culture. The model of imprisonment is an adult one and prison officers get scant training to deal with challenging children. I am a supporter of the End Child Imprisonment campaign to have all children who are sentenced to custody accommodated in places staffed and designed for children's needs.

We also need to continue to embed the idea that less is more — that the sanctions applied to children need to be as light as possible and that the ideal is to divert from the formal criminal justice system. The review by the Campbell Collaboration of studies of 'juvenile processing' proves that system contact is criminogenic.⁴

I would bring in a higher age of criminal responsibility so that no child could be criminalised or imprisoned at the age of ten. I'd raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14, with a view to raising it still further progressively.

JB: Is the commissioning of the first secure school a welcome development?

PG: The proof is in the pudding for the first secure school. Will it be small enough? Will it look like a prison or a school? Will it be therapeutic? It's a good idea to break away from the old model of child custody and to try something new, but I fear the budget is not

sufficient for the kind of care needed. The children who end up in custody are deeply damaged. They need expert care and education in its broadest sense. We need to spend what this costs, and if it costs more than we have, we need to reduce the numbers in custody rather than compromise care. I really hope the new secure school can break the mould. But it's too early to say. And the decision to locate it in a building that looks like a prison (now Medway Secure Training Centre) is not the best start.

JB: You have also taken a close interest in the use of remand. Why is this an issue that has particularly been of concern to you?

PG: I've researched the use of remand for both children and adults.⁵ All unnecessary imprisonment is of concern but the over-use of remand seems particularly unfair. Depriving someone of their liberty is a major step, yet we imprison more people who are pleading not guilty than people sentenced to custody.⁶

JB: What have been the recent trends in the use of remand?

PG: Child and adult remand numbers have come down, but I still think we over-use remand. The fact that most of those remanded are released into the community at the end of their trial throws doubt on the original decision to imprison. Only those who really pose a real and serious danger to their community

should be imprisoned pre-trial. The current use of remand creates tragic cases. The woman whose new born baby died in Bronzefield was on remand. Unless she was accused of murder, I can't imagine why a heavily pregnant woman would be remanded.

JB: What alternative approaches or reforms have you promoted in relation to remand and bail?

PG: I think reducing remand needs a fundamental attitude shift away from risk aversion. Most people are remanded to prevent them committing crime while on bail or absconding. But very few people do either. I'm not sure judges and prosecutors really understand how grim it is in local prisons, nor the damage that can be done even by short periods on remand. We also need more options for accommodation for those awaiting

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4. <https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/formal-system-processing-of-juveniles-effects-on-delinquency.html>

5. http://www.transformjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/TJ-December-2018-PRINT_V2-December.pdf
http://www.transformjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/TJ_March2018report.pdf

6. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/842608/Receptions_Q2_2019.xlsx
table 2.1

trial. There is very little specialist bail accommodation so people get remanded because they are homeless. We also need better bail information in courts and prisons. Pre-Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) there were good probation services which helped put together bail packages for defendants. But bail information services just disappeared with TR. Unfortunately no-one in authority asked why they had gone. HMPPS are now trying to revive them and have run a successful 'pilot' in Preston Magistrates' Court. Such programmes are great and other 'nudges' could work, but ultimately if I were Lord Chancellor I would tighten up the legal criteria for using pre-trial detention.

JB: As a former magistrate, you have experience of working in the local justice system. What, in your view, has been the significance of the court reforms since 2010, which have seen over a third of court buildings closed, and a move towards greater use of technology?

PG: We still don't know the significance of the HM Courts and Tribunal Service court reform programme. Many courts have been closed but many more will be closed. The impact of this has been softened by the parallel fall in prosecutions. The crunch will come if police numbers are increased significantly and prosecutions shoot up. The shrunken court system may not be able to cope. The government wants to replace courts with 'skype' hearings where no-one is in the court-room⁷, but the technology (even if it were a good idea) won't be ready to be rolled out for years. Meanwhile the number of defendants and witnesses failing to appear for their court case is likely to increase.

JB: You have experience of being a magistrate and you have also researched the role. What do you see as the strengths of the magistrates system?

PG: The strengths of the magistrate system is that it brings ordinary members of the community into the heart of the justice system and offers judgment by peers. In the magistrates' courts, those members of the community sit on panels of three and decisions are made through discussion and, if necessary, majority decision. District judges sit alone, often without a legal

advisor. So an unrepresented defendant may be convicted and sentenced to custody on the decision of one person. I am concerned that no-one is infallible and investing so much responsibility in a single district judge risks miscarriages of justice.

JB: Are magistrates representative of the communities they serve? Has this changed in recent years?

PG: The challenge for the magistracy is that they are supposed to be representative of the people but aren't and never really have been. Magistrates were historically local gentry. They became more representative steadily through the 20th century but were still predominantly middle class, middle aged and white when Lord Falconer became Lord Chancellor in 2003.

He determined to broaden the intake of magistrates, modernised the way vacancies were advertised and began to make a difference. No-one since has taken a real interest in the diversity of the magistracy. Recently their numbers have been cut significantly and this has caused the average age to rise. So now over half the magistrates in England and Wales are over 60. Only 12 per cent are from BAME communities.⁸ We don't have data on class but this is probably where magistrates are least representative. Anecdotal evidence suggests most

magistrates are not just middle class, but professional, better educated middle class.

JB: What training and expertise do they have?

PG: Magistrates get three days initial training which is not enough. This training is topped up but the budget for magistrates' training has been cut back drastically. I sat as a magistrate 2004-7 and, looking back, I knew incredibly little about what I was doing, and I fear some of my colleagues were pretty ignorant too. The idea is that magistrates don't need legal expertise because they always sit with a qualified legal adviser. But it would be good if they (and paid judges) had training in basic criminology — in the science of what works to reduce crime and encourage desistance. I think magistrates would use fewer short prison sentences and remands if they had better training and development. Magistrates point out in defence that their decisions are seldom appealed. This is true, but is

The government wants to replace courts with 'skype' hearings where no-one is in the court-room, but the technology (even if it were a good idea) won't be ready to be rolled out for years.

7. <https://insidehmcts.blog.gov.uk/2018/07/30/realising-the-potential-for-video-hearings/>

8. <https://www.judiciary.uk/about-the-judiciary/who-are-the-judiciary/diversity/judicial-diversity-statistics-2019/>

not I think a measure of the quality of their decision-making. There are many systemic barriers to defendants appealing their conviction or sentence.

JB: How should the magistrates system be reformed? Do you believe it has a legitimate place in the justice system?

PG: My faith in the magistracy is wearing thin, not because I think the model is wrong but because it is not being implemented well. There is no point having lay magistrates if they are not recruited, trained and used effectively. And respected. Good magistrates tell me they are treated as 'free labour' and expected to put up and shut up. We need radical reform of, and investment in, the institution if it is to survive. As it is, I think the power to imprison should be taken away from magistrates since they simply don't have enough training.

JB: In your report on reframing crime and justice in England and Wales⁹, you focussed on public discourse and communication. In particular, the struggle that people in the criminal justice sector have in getting their agenda across to the public. How would you describe this problem?

PG: Advocates of penal reform — of a less punitive criminal justice system — have long felt they were hitting their head against a brick wall. They have been dismissed as soft liberals who don't understand what it's like to live on a crime ridden estate. The voice of the progressive criminal justice sector has been weak and has been drowned out by those who believe in being tough on crime. This means there has been no effective resistance to sentence inflation and to campaigns to introduce new offences, such as up-skirting.

JB: What was the approach you were advocating for reframing the debate?

PG: In 2014 politicians and the media were not listening to our pleas to reduce the prison population and reduce criminalisation. So I and colleagues in the Criminal Justice Alliance and Clinks decided to identify a better way of communicating. Led by Transform Justice we commissioned research from the international NGO, the FrameWorks institute on people's core beliefs about crime and justice, and what values and metaphors would be most successful. The FrameWorks research methodology is multi-disciplinary but relies most heavily on anthropology, neurology and

linguistics. Anthropologists teach that our cultural beliefs are at the root of our attitudes and views. So FrameWorks start by conducting anthropologically based interviews with a range of respondents. Their research on crime and justice in England and Wales revealed a profound belief in retribution and in deterrence. This is underpinned by a belief that those who commit crime are 'rational actors' who make a considered, calculated decision to commit crime having weighed up the potential benefits against the risks of being caught and sanctioned. The 'rational actor' belief is not limited to crime. Many people believe that those who are addicted to drink or drugs have made individual rational choices. These beliefs are very strong and prevalent across social groups. No single campaign will change those beliefs. We need to understand and acknowledge them and try not to trigger the rational actor and retribution beliefs. This is not easy.

The other key learning from the reframing research is that facts do not persuade, or at least not facts on their own. We need to use values and metaphors in our communications to engage people and persuade them of the need for progressive reform. Some values work better than others. FrameWorks found that if you use 'cost-effectiveness' as a value to persuade people of the use of alternatives to

imprisonment (as in 'we should use community sentences because they are cheaper than prison'), it backfires — people do not want to associate criminal justice reform with saving money. But pragmatism/problem-solving does work as a value. If we all communicated through using these values and metaphors we would, over time, be able to garner greater support for criminal justice reform.

Can this be achieved successfully in collaboration with the mainstream media? In the main, journalists hold the same beliefs as everyone else. They do not create public opinion, merely reflect societal beliefs. There is no point blaming the Daily Mail or the Sun for anything. We need to give the mainstream media newsworthy stories. But these stories should be chosen to reflect progressive criminal justice reform, and 'framed' with a value. Most of the recent fly on the wall documentaries about prison are counter-productive. They are edited to show prisons and prisoners at their most violent. The risk of such programmes is that they simply confirm the public belief that those who commit

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9. http://www.transformjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/UKCJ_MM_July_2016_Final-1-2.pdf

crime are bad people who deserve tougher punishment.

JB: Have you seen this done successfully?

PG: I think the Criminal Justice Alliance media awards¹⁰ show it can be done well. I judged this year's awards and all the finalists showed that good journalism can change the debate. Adele Robinson of Sky News made a documentary about Circles of Support. As the Criminal Justice Alliance said 'The documentary powerfully questions the widespread belief that perpetrators of sexual abuse cannot be rehabilitated and, by highlighting that most people with convictions for sexual offences are released from prison and return to their communities, shows the 'lock them up and throw away the key' response to be counter-factual'. The public already believe in rehabilitation, so documentaries like this reinforce that belief.

JB: What do you see as the current and pressing problems facing the criminal justice system? What projects do you have planned for the future?

PG: The political and media reaction to the murders of Jack Merritt and Saskia Jones showed that we have a long way to go in shifting the debate towards progressive criminal justice reform.

I think the greatest problem facing the justice system is the strong public belief that all transgressive behaviour can be 'cured' by criminalisation and ever harsher sentences. The criminal justice system can deliver punishment but there is scant evidence that

criminal sanctions change the behaviour of those convicted. Some people need to be locked up to protect others and/or themselves, but locking up the minority of those who commit a particular crime (most are never caught) will neither deter nor, probably, curb that behaviour. We need to look to prevention, designing out crime, changing public attitudes and nudging people to reduce harmful behaviour. An example is domestic abuse — a scourge on our society. The incidence of domestic abuse has been going down in the same period that enforcement and punishment have got tougher for perpetrators. Tougher punishment is unlikely to be causing this reduction in abuse since there is good evidence that criminal sanctions do not reduce abuse¹¹. So something outside the criminal justice system seems to have brought about a change in behaviour.

We also need to listen to victims. Most victims want the person who harmed them not to do it again, but don't necessarily want them to be given a formal criminal justice sanction. We need to build our knowledge of how to prevent and successfully support people to stop committing crime.

In 2020 Transform Justice will be using its reframing research to begin a three year programme to promote out of court disposals and approaches. These are comparatively effective, popular with police and victims, but are being used less and less. This project will aim to increase confidence in diverting the right people from prosecution.

10. <http://criminaljusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CJA-awards-brochure-2019.pdf>

11. <https://whatworks.college.police.uk/toolkit/Pages/Intervention.aspx?InterventionID=27>

Obituary

Geoffrey Lister — Governor and Director of Prisons

Brendan O’Friel is a retired former prison governor.

Working in the Prison Service from the end of the Second World War meant facing relentless and growing problems of overcrowding, poor accommodation and deteriorating regimes. Over the following decades, further shocks rocked the Service: security lapses, prisoner disorder and staff industrial action. It became a Service in crisis.

The task of grappling effectively with the many problems of the Service began in October 1979, with the publication of Mr Justice May’s Report of his Committee of Inquiry into the UK Prison Services. This Inquiry had been set up because of the very serious breakdown of industrial relations within the three UK Prison Services. The Report’s recommendations were the catalyst for many improvements — a process considerably aided by the appointment of Willie Whitelaw as Home Secretary following the Conservative victory in the 1979 General Election.

Whitelaw agreed to major changes to the Prisons Board, the body responsible for managing the prisons in England and Wales. Geoffrey Lister, Midland Regional Director was one of those appointed to the new Prisons Board, a position he was to hold until his retirement. Lister’s extensive experience of running prisons and young offender establishments helped to shape both policy and operational decisions at Board level. From 1980 to 1985 substantial improvements started to be delivered and new approaches to regimes and staffing developed. It was during these years that the foundations were laid for the radical improvements of 1987 when ‘Fresh Start’ began to transform the Prison Service through changes to the way staff worked which brought much needed improvements to prisoner regimes.

This final appointment was a fitting climax to Lister’s considerable career as a Governor. His formal education had been disrupted by war service but he returned to university in 1947 and graduated before joining the Service in 1950. In those days — in common with many other careers and professions — there were relatively few graduate Governors.

A committed member of the Church of England, Lister briefly contemplated a Church vocation taking up a place at the Hostel of the Resurrection in Leeds to train for the priesthood. His religious principles may well have influenced his ultimate choice of career and may

also have accounted for the importance he attached to taking the right decision. While some found him cautious about developing new approaches, almost everyone regarded him as a Governor with the highest principles: deeply committed to caring for both his staff and his prisoners. Although generally serious and very hardworking, he also occasionally displayed a very perceptive sense of humour.

He was involved in many improvements throughout his career for example developing one of the earliest pre-release courses for prisoners at Wakefield Prison. When working at Headquarters, he was heavily involved in the development of Control and Restraint Training — a vital and successful initiative to enable staff to control prisoner violence while remaining accountable for their actions.

Geoffrey Lister was born at Lightcliffe, a village near Halifax to Norman and Elizabeth Lister. His father worked as a Supervisor in a local carpet factory. He was educated at the local Church of England Elementary School and Hipperholme Grammar School. In 1943 — in the depth of the war — he volunteered for the Indian army as a schoolboy Officer Cadet from the University Training Corps. Commissioned from the Officers Training School, Bangalore, he became a Captain of an Air Dispatch Platoon. In 1944/45 at Imphal and Akyab in Burma he was involved in the supply by air drop to units of the XIV Army in their advance from Imphal to Rangoon and was mentioned in dispatches. At the end of the war he returned to India where he commanded a detached platoon at St Thomas Mount Airfield, Madras, and was the last British Officer to serve there prior to independence.

On demobilisation he returned to Leeds University and in 1950 was one of their first graduates in Social Studies. He quickly applied to join the Prison Service through the direct entrant Assistant Governor scheme and was accepted and posted to the secure borstal on Portland Bill in Dorset. While at Leeds University he had met Grace Cartwright from Tunstall who was training to be a Probation Officer. In November 1950 soon after commencing his duties with the Prison Service, he married Grace and they moved into Prison Quarters.

In 1956, he was transferred to Hollesley Bay Colony, the large open borstal near Woodbridge in Suffolk. He was seconded to take a course in Applied

Social Studies at the London School of Economics and then posted as Deputy Governor to Hull Borstal.

Promotion to Assistant Governor Class One followed in 1958 with a posting to Wakefield Prison, his first experience of working with adult prisoners. Alan Bainton, a very talented and influential Governor was in charge and encouraged Lister to develop some of the first pre-release courses in the service.

In November 1962, he was given his first command as Governor of Pollington Borstal near Goole, Yorkshire. Pollington was part of a national experiment to test the impact of different treatments upon young offenders. Three small open borstals ran different regimes with qualified young offenders allocated to each on a random basis. Lister's task was to run Pollington as a therapeutic community using group counselling techniques.

In 1967, he was appointed Deputy Principal of the Prison Service College at Wakefield.

In 1969, he was promoted to Governor Class Two and posted to Maidstone Prison in Kent. In July 1972, he returned to Hollesley Bay as Governor and in October 1973 was promoted to Governor Class One and posted to Stafford Prison, a very difficult overcrowded Victorian Training Prison. In 1976, he was transferred to take charge of Albany Prison on the Isle of Wight, one of the 'dispersal' prisons holding top security prisoners.

In 1978, he was further promoted to Assistant Director and appointed Head of P7 Division at

Headquarters, with personnel responsibilities, including promotions, postings and the training of staff.

In 1980, as part of the radical changes to Prison Headquarters following the May Inquiry, Lister was appointed Director of the Midland Region and to the Prisons Board. He held this post until his retirement in 1985.

He continued to be very interested in prison issues following his retirement to Lichfield and was involved in prison work for a number of years. He spent two years in Mauritius from 1986 — 1987 advising the Government on prison matters especially personnel policy; later he spent months in the Seychelles assisting the modernisation of their prisons. Nearer home, in 1990 he was asked to assist the Woolf Inquiry into the Strangeways — and other — riots. In subsequent years he also provided independent advice to Government on aspects of introducing private prisons within the UK, an innovation about which he had considerable reservations although he supported attempts to bring new methods into prison work.

Locally, he was active within the Lichfield Festival Association and was a member of the Guild of Stewards of Lichfield Cathedral.

Grace predeceased him in 2015. He leaves two daughters both now retired. Susan worked for the NHS as a Senior Nurse in Sheffield and Kathryn in Education first as a School Meals Organiser and then as a School Teacher in Harrow.

Geoffrey Lister died on 18th November 2019 aged 94. He was born on 20th February 1925.



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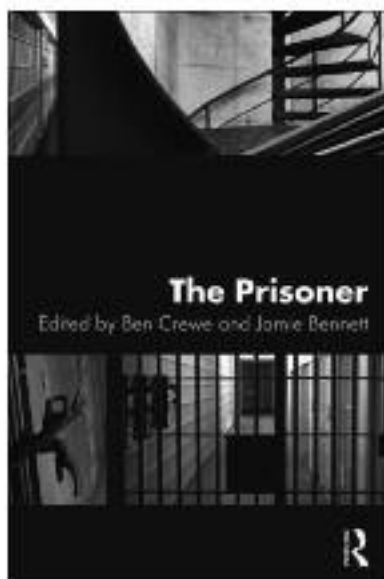
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Six editions of the Journal, printed at HMP Leyhill, are published each year with a circulation of approximately 6,500 per edition. The editor welcomes articles which should be up to c.4,000 words and submitted by email to **jamie.bennett@hmps.gsi.gov.uk**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

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