

Editorial Comment

This general edition of Prison Service Journal discusses contemporary issues and concerns, while engaging in thoughtful, in depth and evidence-based analysis of various topics of interest to our readership.

The first article focusses on prison regime. **Javier Sánchez-Díaz's** from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and **Lisa Edmondson's** from HMPPS, article focusses specifically on progression regimes. Progression Regimes in prisons in England and Wales are utilised for several groups, including men having difficulty progressing through their sentence via the usual routes, or those excluded from transferring to open prison conditions. These regimes are designed with the intention to be more enabling than traditional regimes, providing individuals with opportunities that more closely reflect life in the outside community. The article presents an examination of the behaviour of residents in progressive regimes in contrast to their behaviour in more traditional regimes; specifically, the study looked at positive and negative behaviour record entries, incidents of violence and self-harm, and proven adjudications.

Ministry of Justice and HMPPS staff, **Jo Greenfield, Flora Fitzalan Howard, Dr Helen Wakeling, Nicola Cunningham, Scott Lane** and **Jayne Kirkpatrick** worked collaboratively to complete an exploratory piece of research at a Male Adult Category C Prison — HMP Buckley Hall. Their research tested whether a new process and a template had the potential to change staff practices when replying to prisoner complaints. The study was based on the body of evidence on the benefits of procedural justice (PJ) and as part of this research they developed a tool that aimed to overcome the 'evidence to practice' gap that presents such a challenge in implementing and embedding evidence-based practice. The research findings reported that the proof-of-concept approach was beneficial and there was evidence that showed there was potential to increase the use of PJ within complaint responses by utilising a specially designed support tool for staff. The findings also identified some unintended consequences, but nevertheless, the authors advocate for further and more rigorous testing.

During the last two years, The European Prison Rules (EPR) (2020) have placed increased emphasis on the role of inspection and monitoring in European prisons. In their article **Dr Sarah Curristan** and **Dr Mary Rogan** both from universities in Dublin, report on the launch of the Office of the Inspector of Prisons, Inspection Framework for Prisons in Ireland. The Framework sets out five explicit areas by which prisons will be evaluated. This timely research documents the

findings of empirical research that included interviews with prison managers in the Irish prison system. The study captures their experiences of oversight and examined how engagement with inspection is experienced on the ground by prison managers. The authors analysed the way inspections carried out by the Office of the Inspector of Prisons were perceived by staff, staff attitudes towards the inspection process, and the different ways in which oversight obligations are understood as part of managerial work. The findings identify concerns about an area of inspection that is generally overlooked — the additional managerial responsibility of oversight through inspection. Their discussion also highlights ways in which trust could be bolstered through the inspection process to strengthen and improve engagement with this oversight body.

The question of who is to blame for deaths in custody is asked every time a person dies in prison. However, the role prisons play in the untimely deaths of prisoners is not straightforward, ergo deaths in prison stir a range of emotions for all involved including bereaved families, prisoners, prison staff and investigators. **Dr Phillipa Tomczak's** article reports her findings from a project collaboration between the University of Nottingham and the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. The project involved interviews with diverse stakeholders in England and Wales, although the present article focusses specifically on the experience of Coroners. The article sheds light on the under-researched experiences of this group, examining their perspectives on how the PPO seeks to effect change in prisons following a death, whether these actions had the intended effects, and if and how the PPO adjusts its actions to better effect change.

Dr Kirsty Deacon's study within the Scottish Prison Service, provides an insight into punishment within the familial context. The article focusses on family relationships where both members are serving sentences simultaneously. She discusses relationships in terms of care in the familial context, highlighting the duality of identities being a prisoner and a family member of a prisoner. These dual identities have not generally been considered in prior research of prisoner experience.

Ariane Amado's from the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in France, article introduces us to the dilemma that surrounds prisoners' access to assisted reproduction. She examined the academic literature on assisted reproduction and the policy guidance that exist in three countries — France, Belgium and the UK, illuminating the gap between the common principles of Family Law and their application

to the prison environment. This article explores the ethical and moral questions that arise, while providing insights into the obstacles that prisoners face when wanting recourse to assisted reproduction.

The final article brings together practitioners and researchers **Dr Lucy Baldwin** from De Montfort University, Leicester, **Katia Parent** and **Becky Wray** HMPPS social workers, and **Jo Mulcahy** from Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT). Their article discusses the role of social workers in women's prisons, which stems from a three-year pilot project that involved two Social Workers being placed in two prisons for women in the UK. The article also reflects on the first year of the Social Worker pilot, highlighting the impact and outcomes of the project, and supports recommendations for the project to be formally adopted and extended to other women prisons.

We are keen to incorporate a range of contributions, collaborations, and views in the PSJ. Our book reviews are intellectually honest and independent. In this edition, we have three book reviews, the first two reviews are of the same book: *Understanding the Educational Experiences of Imprisoned Men: (Re)Education*, by Helen Nichols was reviewed by **Angelique Mulholland** a Doctoral researcher at

University College London and **Glenn** a life sentenced prisoner at HMP Berwyn. The book explores how adult male prisoners interpret and give value to their experiences of education, presenting an opportunity to consider how education can be beneficial to prisoners, including and beyond the enhancement of employability skills. Both reviewers recommend this book for prison practitioners, academics interested in the field of criminology, social justice, and policy makers. The *honest politician's guide to prisons and probation*, by Roy King and Lucy Willmott provides a detailed historic account of policy and legislation changes over a 30-year period, combining commentary from those intimately involved in decision making and implementation of policy and legislation. This book was reviewed by **Dr Jamie Bennett** Chief Strategy Officer at the Youth Justice Board, he described this book as 'fascinating'.

The Prison Service Journal continues to offer a platform for practitioners, academics, and others with an interest to engage with the contemporary and enduring challenges of prison life, with the aim to examine those issues from both a theoretical perspective, but also encompassing the reality of the everyday experiences of those who live and work in prisons.