

# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

January 2023 No 264



# Contents

*Dr Sophie van der Valk* was a PhD researcher on the PRILA project, and *Dr Mary Rogan* is an Associate Professor at the School of Law, Trinity College Dublin, and Principal Investigator of the PRILA project

*Simon Venema* is a PhD candidate at Addiction mental health care Northern Netherlands (VNN) and is affiliated with the research group of Addiction Science and Forensic Care at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences.

*Eric Blaauw* is professor in Addiction Science and Forensic Care at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences and senior researcher at Addiction mental health care Northern Netherlands (VNN).

*Laura McKendy* is a former postdoctoral fellow at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

*Rosemary Ricciardelli* is professor and research chair of Safety, Security, and Wellness in the Fisheries and Marine Institute at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

*Matthew S. Johnston* is a postdoctoral fellow in the Fisheries and Marine Institute at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

- 2 Editorial Comment
- 3 **Complaining in Prison: 'I suppose it's a good idea but is there any point in it?'**  
Dr Sophie van der Valk and Dr Mary Rogan
- 11 **An exploration of imprisoned fathers' needs in the Netherlands**  
Simon Venema and Eric Blaauw
- 18 **Perspectives on the Employee and Family Assistance Programme for Correctional Workers in Saskatchewan: Challenges and Opportunities**  
Laura McKendy, Rosemary Ricciardelli and Matthew S. Johnston

---

## Editorial Board

**Dr Ruth Armstrong**  
University of Cambridge  
**Dr Rachel Bell**  
HMPPS Send  
**Maggie Bolger**  
HMPPS  
**Professor Alyson Brown**  
Edge Hill University  
**Gareth Evans**  
Independent  
**Dr Sacha Darke**  
University of Westminster  
**Dr Michael Fiddler**  
University of Greenwich  
**Dr Kate Gooch**  
University of Bath  
**Dr Darren Woodward**  
Arden University  
**Professor Anne-Marie McAlinden**  
Queen's University, Belfast

**Paul Crossey (Editor)**  
Digital Prisons  
**Flora Fitzalan Howard (Editor)**  
HMPPS  
**Dr Marcia Morgan (Editor)**  
HMPPS  
**Professor Karen Harrison**  
University of Lincoln  
**Dr Helen Nichols (Book Reviews Editor)**  
Hull University  
**Dr Jamie Bennett**  
Youth Justice Board  
**Dr Helen Johnston**  
University of Hull  
**Dr Bill Davies**  
Leeds Beckett University  
**Martin Kettle**  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons  
**Keely Wilkinson**  
HMPPS  
**Steve Hall**  
Independent  
**Dr Amy Ludlow**  
ShiFT

**Dr David Maguire**  
Prison Reform Trust  
**William Payne**  
Independent  
**Elizabeth Allen**  
HMPPS  
**Julia Anderson**  
Ministry of Justice  
**Christopher Stacey**  
Clinks  
**Ray Taylor**  
HMPPS  
**Mike Wheatley**  
HMPPS  
**Richard Garside**  
Centre for Crime and Justice Studies  
**Dr Lynn Saunders**  
University of Derby  
**Dr Rosie Travers**  
HMPPS  
**Dr Matt Maycock**  
University of Dundee  
**Dr Munazzah Choudhary**  
HMPPS  
**Jackson Joseph**  
HMP Leyhill

# January 2023

**29 Examining Correctional Administrator Perceptions of The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)**

Dr Creag Dunton, Dr Hayden Smith and Dr Frank Ferdik

*Dr Creag Dunton is based at Western New England University, Springfield, Massachusetts; Dr Hayden Smith is based at the University of South Carolina, Columbia; and Dr Frank Ferdik is based at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee*

**37 Interview with Amy Rees, CEO of HMPPS**

Amy Rees is interviewed by Dr Ruth Armstrong

*Amy Rees is the CEO of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). She is interviewed by Dr Ruth Armstrong who is a visiting scholar at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, a consultant for Prison Radio International, and a member of the Prison Service Journal's editorial board.*

**45 From strategy to street: Can resettlement policy really make a difference?**

Helen Ryder, Tajinder Singh Matharu, Ryan Walker and Dr. Ruth Armstrong.

*Helen Ryder is Head of Resettlement and Commissioned Rehabilitative Services within the Probation Reform Programme, Tajinder Singh Matharu is the Senior Responsible Owner for the Offender Management in Custody Recovery Project and Ryan Walker is Executive Assistant at the Howard League. They are interviewed by Dr. Ruth Armstrong.*

## Book Reviews

**55 Penal Servitude: Convicts and Long-Term Imprisonment, 1853-1948.**

By Helen Johnston, Barry Godfrey and David J Cox.

*Paul Finegan is the Curator of Dartmoor Prison Museum, HMP Dartmoor*

**56 Male, Failed and Jailed: The Revolving Door of Imprisonment in the UK.**

By David Maguire

*Dr Kate Gooch is Associate Professor in Criminology and Deputy Head of Department at the University of Bath.*

**57 Dementia in Prison: An ethical framework to support research, practice and prisoners**

Edited by Joanne Brooke

*Maggie Bolger CF FRSA is a HMPPS Specialist Adviser (Older Prisoners)*

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

© Crown Copyright 2022

## Editorial Comment

It is a proud moment that this edition of the Prison Service Journal encapsulates such a wide range of truly diverse content originating from many jurisdictions. The articles in this edition include; research exploring the impact of the importance of families and wellbeing on both prisoners and prison staff, articles on prison rape, and how to operate effective prison complaint systems, as well as interviews with very senior practitioners in HM Prison Service, including the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer.

The edition opens with an article by Sophie van der Valk and Mary Rogan, arising from a European Research Council funded study, focussing on prison complaints. Drawing on interviews with prisoners in Ireland, the authors explore the ways in which people in prison complain, as well as the implications of not having an effective or trusted outlet to make complaints. The article identifies significant challenges in how such a system operates in a prison context and may be of particular interest to those writing and implementing complaint policies and systems in custodial settings.

The second article, by Simon Venema and Eric Blaauw, examines the experience of imprisoned fathers in the Netherlands. This study provides a welcome insight into an important, but so far under-researched, topic: the needs and experiences of fatherhood and family relationships for people living in custody. The authors discuss the implications of their findings, including in relation to the principle of normalisation, and resettlement back into the community. The article provides important considerations for the development of family-focussed prison policies.

Laura McKendy, Rosemary Ricciardelli and Matthew Johnston's article presents their research relating to correctional staff's perspectives of the Employee and Family Assistance Programme in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada. In the context of the unique challenges faced by correctional employees, and the impact this can have on their wellbeing behaviour, the article examines users' perspectives of the systems and services intended to support them. Their analysis highlights the significance of the social and occupational context of prison-based work in influencing people's experiences and uptake of support services. Further, the findings demonstrate the need for health service providers to understand the nuances, complexities, and vulnerabilities of this specific occupation to design and deliver responsive services.

Our fourth article, by Creaig Dunton, Heyden Smith and Frank Ferdik, examines prison administrator views of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and its implementation in a South-eastern US prison system. The focus of PREA is to establish a zero-tolerance policy

for prison rape and sexual violence. Their findings may be of particular interest to those involved in the formation of policies designed to create safer and more inclusive institutional climates.

The edition includes two interviews. The first with Amy Rees, approximately one month into her new role as CEO of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), about what motivates her in her work, what she hopes to achieve, and how she will approach the changes she hopes to make. The interview questions were compiled from speaking with people who live and work in HMPPS, and academics who study this field, resulting in a probing and illuminating interview for our readers. The second interview, with Helen Ryder and Tajinder Singh Matharu from HMPPS and Ryan Walker from the Howard League, took place shortly after His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation issued a report on 'inadequate' probation services in London, and a day before inspectors published a report calling for a root and branch overhaul of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model. As well as covering this area the interview covers recovery from the Covid pandemic, severe shortages in front-line staff in the criminal justice system and beyond in related services, and the move to 'One HMPPS' under the leadership of Amy Rees, as discussed in the preceding interview in this issue.

As well as the main articles and interviews, this edition includes three book reviews of varied topics. 'Penal Servitude: Convicts and Long-Term Imprisonment, 1853-1948' by Helen Johnston, Barry Godfrey and David J Cox examines what passed for the Criminal Justice system for over 100 years, illuminating the lives of those who experienced long-term imprisonment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The central thesis of 'Male, Failed and Jailed: The Revolving Door of Imprisonment in the UK', by David Maguire, is that working-class men begin their journeys into prison many years earlier in impoverished neighbourhoods and institutional settings where they develop 'hard' masculinities that not only prepare them for "imprisonment but continue to 'trap' them 'in the revolving door of imprisonment.'" Finally, 'Dementia in Prison: An ethical framework to support research, practice and prisoners', edited by Joanne Brooke, is primarily aimed at healthcare professionals and prison staff and explores the challenges associated with dementia, which an increasing number of older prisoners are now experiencing.

This edition offers a wide range of material, aimed to reflect the eclectic interests of all of our readers and intended to stimulate reflection and debate about prison practices, and the needs of people living and working in this context.

# Complaining in Prison: ‘I suppose it’s a good idea but is there any point in it?’<sup>1</sup>

*This paper arises from a European Research Council funded study entitled: **Prisons: the Rule of Law, Accountability and Rights** (PRILA) grant agreement no 679362 at Trinity College Dublin.*

**Dr Sophie van der Valk** was a PhD researcher on the PRILA project, and **Dr Mary Rogan** is an Associate Professor at the School of Law, Trinity College Dublin, and Principal Investigator of the PRILA project

Recent years have seen a growth in formal complaint procedures in prisons, which are seen to be a key feature of enhancing the protection of the rights of those in prison.<sup>2</sup> Prisons are places where rights can be vulnerable and complaints procedures ideally provide prisoners with access to an independent body to review complaints, which is less burdensome and costly than the costs of going to court. Such mechanisms should also help resolve lower-level complaints, which may not reach the relevant thresholds for court proceedings. Prisoners are required to rely on others for their daily needs and access to services, such as the school or facilitating family visits. Complaint systems, in theory, give prisoners a tool to voice concerns they have about their treatment and prison conditions. In the prison context, however, complaining is not always straightforward and those in prison can face significant hurdles in accessing and using complaint systems even when they are in place. Research indicates that complaints procedures can have an impact on many aspects of life in prison. Beijersbergen and colleagues found that prisoners who felt that they were treated fairly and respectfully by correctional authorities during imprisonment were less likely to be reconvicted up to 18 months after release.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, those who reported having experienced a higher level of procedural justice reported fewer mental health problems and were less likely to engage in misconduct.<sup>4,5</sup> However, an ineffective complaint

system for dealing with prisoners’ problems can have an impact on prisoners of feeling ignored and not listened to. In this respect, Crewe has reported that people in prison felt that complaints systems were sometimes used by staff as a way of deflecting prisoner complaints and pushing the burden of responding to someone else.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, a US study conducted by Bierie highlighted the impact of an ineffective complaint system and how delays, as well as high levels of rejected complaints can contribute to violence in prisons,<sup>7</sup> pointing to the very serious consequences of poor complaints systems. How complaints procedures work in practice therefore merits attention.

This paper will explore the ways in which people in prison complain, as well as the implications of not having an effective or trusted outlet to complain. Drawing on interviews conducted with prisoners in Ireland, we will outline how prisoners went about complaining and their experiences of this. Additionally, we will describe how those who did not use the formal system dealt with their problems in prison. The findings have implications for how prison complaint systems are designed, as well as ensuring that mechanisms can be used by the intended beneficiaries.

## International Guidelines on complaint procedures in Prison

International human rights standards require complaints systems for those in prison, and those

1. Participant 23.
2. Council of Europe (2018). European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. 27th General Report of the CPT (p. 25).
3. Beijersbergen, K. A., Dirkzwager, A. J. E., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2016). Reoffending after release: Does procedural justice during imprisonment matter? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 43(1), 63.
4. Beijersbergen, K. A., Dirkzwager, A. J. E., Eichelsheim, V. I., van der Laan, P. H., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2014). Procedural justice and prisoners’ mental health problems: A longitudinal study. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 24, 100.
5. Beijersbergen, K. A., Dirkzwager, A. J. E., Eichelsheim, V. I., van der Laan, P. H., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2015). Procedural justice, anger, and prisoners’ misconduct: A longitudinal study. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 42, 196.
6. Crewe, B. (2009). *The Prisoner Society: Power, adaptation and social life in an English prison*. Oxford University Press.
7. Bierie, D. M. (2013). Procedural justice and prison violence: Examining complaints among federal inmates (2000–2007). *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 19(1), 15–29.

standards provide us with guidance as to how such systems in prisons should look. For example, the Council of Europe's European Prison Rules,<sup>8</sup> and the UN Mandela Rules,<sup>9</sup> contain relatively detailed guidance on what the principal elements of a complaints system should be. Key features include an independent appeal procedure,<sup>10</sup> which can provide remedies should a complaint be upheld, as well as a requirement that procedures should be confidential. The European Prison Rules also note the importance of mediation as a tool for resolving complaints to avoid the potential hostility of imposing a decision which those involved in the complaint have not agreed to.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore these rules emphasise the need for people in prison to receive information on the complaint system. They place a responsibility on prison services to provide information in a manner which those in custody can understand, whether in a different language to that primarily spoken in the prison, or orally in the case of those who face literacy challenges.<sup>12</sup> An effective complaints system takes into account the context in which it is being designed, and the importance of understanding what complaints mean for those using it cannot be ignored.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the aforementioned requirement, however, literature is only emerging on how these processes are experienced by those whom they should be protecting. The work which exists suggests that these systems may struggle to meet the needs of those in prison and may be inaccessible to those most at need.<sup>14</sup> We seek to contribute to our understanding of complaining in prison by exploring qualitatively how those in prison experience this process. We use the case

of Ireland as a country with a relatively small prison system, and a relatively recent formalisation of the complaints system, to examine how those in prison experience complaining and their views of this system.

### Irish Prisons and Complaints System

Ireland has a prison population of 4,148, with prisoners held in 12 prisons across the country.<sup>15</sup> The Irish prison population has a high number of prisoners serving shorter sentences.<sup>16</sup> As discussed below, these features of the Irish system can have implications for learning about and engaging with rights-protecting bodies, such as complaint procedures.

Prisoners in Ireland have formal and informal avenues through which they can complain. The current formal system was introduced through legislation in 2013 and further policy in 2014.<sup>17</sup> The legislation sets out rules to be followed in the case of serious complaints categorised as Category A complaints, while the policy further expands this and adds different categories for complaints considered less serious. Prisoners in Ireland can complain through the written procedure which involves submitting a complaint form, and depending on the nature and severity of the issue is dealt with

by different officers. Visiting Committees can also deal with prisoners' complaints. These are external bodies consisting of laypeople and are comparable to the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMB) in English and Welsh prisons. Each prison has a different committee consisting of between six and 12 members. However,

An effective complaints system takes into account the context in which it is being designed, and the importance of understanding what complaints mean for those using it cannot be ignored.

8. European Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules.
9. United Nations (2016). United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2015. UN Doc. A/RES/70/175.
10. Rule 70.3 European Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules.
11. Rule 70.2 European Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules.
12. Rule 30.1 European Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules.
13. van der Valk, Sophie and Mary Rogan, Prisoner Complaints Mechanisms: Assessing Human Rights Requirements and the Role of a General Ombudsman (2020) 26(4) European Public Law p.801 – 822.
14. van der Valk, S., Aizpurua, E., & Rogan, M. (2022). "[Y]ou are better off talking to a f\*\*\*\*\* wall": The perceptions and experiences of grievance procedures among incarcerated people in Ireland. *Law & Society Review*, 56(2), 261.
15. Irish Prison Service, Daily Prison Population 1st July 2022 available at: [https://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents\\_pdf/01-July-2022.pdf](https://www.irishprisons.ie/wp-content/uploads/documents_pdf/01-July-2022.pdf)
16. Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, Report on Penal Reform and Sentencing May 2018 (House of the Oireachtas 2018) 10.
17. See footnote 14: van der Valk, S., Aizpurua, E., & Rogan, M. (2022). 261.

the recommendations issued by Visiting Committees who investigate complaints are not binding on the prison system.<sup>18</sup> Further to this, a prisoner can request to meet the governor of the prison or write to the Director General or the Minister.<sup>19</sup>

The Irish complaint procedure has been subject to criticisms both domestically and internationally, with the Committee for the Prevention of Torture, Inhumane and/or Degrading Treatment and/or Punishment describing the procedure 'as not fit for purpose' following their 2019 visit to Ireland.<sup>20</sup>

### Study

The present paper draws on a broader study which examines the experiences of people in prison of oversight through complaints, inspection and monitoring, and the courts. The analysis presented here examines how those in prison experience and view the complaint system in Ireland.

The study consisted of interviews with 45 prisoners, located in three prisons in Ireland. Participants were male, currently serving a sentence, and had been in custody for at least one month at the time of the research. Participants were randomly selected from those serving a sentence on the first day the researcher arrived at the prison. This involved randomly generating numbers based on the number of people in custody and matching these to the list of those individuals. Those identified were approached by the researcher and informed of the study. An information sheet was provided, as well as an opportunity to ask questions. Potential participants were given a minimum of 24 hours to consider whether they would like to participate, and then approached for a second time for an interview. The data was gathered and transcribed by the first author, with frequent meetings and discussions with the second author during the analysis stage, to discuss and review the codebook and themes in the data. The interviews for this paper were analysed thematically using Nvivo software.

### Experiences of using the formal Complaint System

Similar to our previous work, prisoners who took part in this study had a negative perception of the complaint system.<sup>21</sup> However, despite this, prisoners, in particular those serving longer sentences and those on restricted regimes, used the system as a means of resolving issues in prison.<sup>22</sup> Here, we describe common themes found in our interviews with people in prison about their experiences of the complaints system. Participants spoke of a lack of faith and trust in the complaint system, having low expectations in relation to what prison should be like, and feeling constrained in how they could use their agency in prison, which was a critical calculation in the decision whether to make a complaint.

#### Lack of faith in the system and its bases

A strong and widely held view was that the complaints procedure did not merit trust. Participants spoke of a lack of faith in the system working for prisoners, as highlighted by participant 11:

*'No, it was not worth the hassle, they [the prison] win in the end ... you are only going to cause yourself grief because once you start giving grief here then you are moved on and god knows where you are going to end up because there are loads [of prisons].'*

A strong and widely held view was that the complaints procedure did not merit trust.

Some referred to a lack of response when a complaint was submitted, while others felt that they were actively discouraged by staff from submitting complaints. One participant spoke of staff members coming to speak to prisoners after complaints were submitted to find a way of resolving the complaint in person rather than through the formal system.

Participants discussed a sense of paranoia amongst prisoners if they were seen to put in a complaint and that prisoners might turn against them for using the

18. Prison (Visiting Committees) Act 1925.

19. Rule 55 to 57 of the Prison Rules 2007.

20. Council of Europe (2020). Report to the Government of Ireland on the visit to Ireland carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 23 September to 4 October 2019().

21. van der Valk, S., Aizpurua, E., & Rogan, M. (2021). Towards a typology of prisoners' awareness of and familiarity with prison inspection and monitoring bodies. *European Journal of Criminology*, doi:1477370821998940.

22. See footnote 21: van der Valk, S., Aizpurua, E., & Rogan, M. (2021).

system. As discussed by participant 15, 'in prison you have to have your wires around you like, you know, you have to ... watch what you are saying.' This participant highlighted the low levels of trust evident in prison culture,<sup>23</sup> and the potential implications this can have on speaking up about problems or putting in a complaint. Currently in Ireland, submitting a complaint involves putting a completed form into a box at the top of landing and this would be highly visible to others in the area. One participant discussed putting a complaint in while going to collect meals as it would be more discreet when the area was busier.

Participants also felt that putting in a complaint could potentially worsen instead of improve their situation in prison, as discussed by participant 15:

*'[T]hat officer that you filled in a complaint form about he won't forget that. And then when you are getting a visit or you are getting your phone calls, they even knock them off.'*

Prisoners spoke about different repercussions of submitting complaints which could impact on family visits or progression in the prison. Transfers to other prisons were seen as a particularly severe but potential consequence of putting in a complaint, as well as more subtle breakdowns in relationships due to being seen as a 'troublemaker'. There was also a sense, among some participants, and linked to the overall prison climate and power in prison, that at times something that might be merely coincidental could be perceived as a consequence of complaining due to the tensions and atmosphere of the prison itself.

Another issue discussed by prisoners in relation to the written complaint system was the time-sensitive nature of some problems in prison. Participants spoke about the importance of getting a quick answer to more simple complaints and a sense that you do not know if the complaint has reached the intended person when it is written down and handed over. The issue of delays can serve to dissuade prisoners from complaining as responses are not received in time. For example, before the prisoner leaves the prison, or when the family visit (which was the subject of the complaint) could be long-missed. This created a sense of futility and pointlessness to bringing a complaint, as illustrated

by participant 35: 'listen, do you think they'd be reading them [complaint forms]? Nah. They wouldn't.'

This sense of futility was also evident in the case of participant 17 who outlined:

*'Why would you go near it? It's a very easy to hash it. Say you put in a complaint, they don't care. They just get [paid every month] and they couldn't give a shit about you.'*

There was also a negative perception of complaining among some participants, as highlighted by participant 32:

*'I don't be taking much notice of people when they complain, because that's all that people do inside here, complain about different things.'*

## Learning about prison systems and complaints procedures takes time, as information on the process is often not an immediate concern upon entering prison.

The sense that complaints would be ignored unless a prisoner was persistent, or would incur long delays, meant that those serving short sentences did not view the system as worthwhile. Learning about prison systems and complaints procedures takes time, as information on the process is often not an immediate concern upon entering prison. Additionally, due to expectations about prison, presenting as

'tough' in prison and prisoners' sense of self-worth, some prisoners may be prepared to tolerate certain conditions. Therefore, those on short sentences may not have time to learn how to use the formal complaint structure and may also be less willing to complain about substandard conditions.

Some participants spoke of a preference to engage with someone in person, both to ensure that the person who could handle the complaint received the message, but also due to concerns about expressing themselves clearly and making sure nothing was missed in the written paperwork. This was particularly the case for those with literacy issues, who did not feel they could get their point across on paper or needed someone they could trust to help them fill out a form. Delays in dealing with complaints, or simply not receiving responses to complaints, was seen as disrespectful and to show a lack of concern for the wellbeing of prisoners. It seemed to prisoners to communicate a lack

23. See footnote 6: Crewe, B. (2009).



of interest in resolving issues in prison or minimising the problems experienced by those in custody. This can further engrain the overall perception of lack of worth of prisoners, as the system which is supposed to help protect their rights instead does not recognise their concerns.

### Expectations of prison: 'prison is okay'

When discussing rights in prison and prison life, it was clear that there was a disconnect between prisoners' expectations of what prison could and should be like, and what is actually available to them in prison. This had implications for what prisoners perceived as being worth complaining about, as some things were simply considered part of 'prison life'. This resonates with Sexton's work on penal consciousness, which highlights how our expectations of a specific environment can shape our experience of the severity or intensity of an environment, regime or existence.<sup>24</sup> In the penal context, this means that those who have low expectations of what prison should be like, such as the expectation that prison should be 'tough' or that certain treatment was acceptable, may see poor treatment as being in line with their expectation of prison. As a result, they may not see their treatment or conditions as problematic or worthy of complaint, or in the language of the legal mobilisation literature,<sup>25</sup> what are in fact problems do not get 'named' as such,<sup>26</sup> and the person takes no action to seek to remedy the problem as a result.

There was a feeling among some prisoners in the study that prison is quite good in the sense that their basic needs are met, and life in prison can only reach a certain standard. This feeling can be attributed in part to their low expectations about the quality of prison life and their poor experience in relation to their rights. Many of the participants, and prisoners in Ireland more generally, come from backgrounds where they may not have experienced full or even partial vindication of breaches of rights, and this shapes how they view

prison and their treatment in this context. As demonstrated by participant 5:

*'At the moment, I think prison is okay at the moment. The way it is like the prisons in general today. There are no more stabbings in prison like there used to be. If there are problems today it is just people get a hiding that would be it. Getting stabbed the way they used, like the last time I was here there was 3 or 4 stabbings a day ... every day nearly. Prison is grand these days.'*

This participant accepted a certain level of violence as being part of the prison experience. In fact, the absence of more extreme forms of poor prison conditions, stabbings and physical violence, is viewed by many prisoners as being the benchmark for acceptable treatment. This sets a low threshold for an acceptable prison environment and brings into sharp focus the expectations of those in custody. With such a low bar for what constitutes 'bad treatment', it is not surprising that we see prisoners not making formal complaints about what happens to them; they simply 'get on with it'.

The idea of what was 'good' in prison was also framed as being relative to how prisons had changed over time and the improvements participants had noted. In Ireland, this was particularly clear when participants spoke about 'slopping out' and the almost elimination of this practice in recent years.<sup>27</sup> This visible change was seen as a significant improvement and therefore prisons were viewed as 'good' now. We see the impact expectations can have on prisoners' perceptions of the prison environment as explored in Sexton's work on penal consciousness. This insight is manifested in our data. As discussed by Sexton, the punishment gap between expectations and reality of prison life plays a significant role in how prisoners perceived their experience.<sup>28</sup> We see that when it came to identifying problems in prison and making complaints, low

When discussing rights in prison and prison life, it was clear that there was a disconnect between prisoners' expectations of what prison could and should be like, and what is actually available to them in prison.

24. Sexton, L. (2015). Penal subjectivities: Developing a theoretical framework for penal consciousness. *Punishment & Society*, 17(1), 114.  
25. Hull, K. (2016). Legal consciousness in marginalized groups: The case of LGBT people. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 41(3), 55; Merry, S. E. (1985). Concepts of law and justice among working-class Americans: Ideology as culture. *Legal Studies Forum*, 9(1), 59; Engel, D. (2012). Vertical and Horizontal Perspectives of Rights Consciousness. *19 Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 423, 424.  
26. Calavita, K., & Jenness, V. (2015). *Appealing to Justice: Prisoner Grievances, Rights, and Carceral Logic*. University of California Press.  
27. The practice of using a bucket as a toilet in a cell and emptying it in a communal area on a landing.  
28. See footnote 24: Sexton, L. (2015).

expectations of prison life create a disconnect between the standards set by international and national human rights frameworks and how prisoners perceive the prison environment. As a result, people in prison may not see what happens to them as a breach of those standards. These expectations were shaped by various factors such as prior experience, experiences shared with prisoners by people they knew, or their own life experience of institutionalisation. Therefore, prisoners' sense of tolerable prison conditions may be quite high, a finding which also has implications for the next theme we discuss: that of agency.

### Using agency

As noted by Behan, 'imprisonment confines, restricts and prevents an individual from the freedom of choice necessary for agency, building trust, developing social capital and engaging in networks of engagement essential for robust citizenship.'<sup>29</sup> Similarly, participants in the current study experienced challenges in building trust and had limitations placed on their agency. As discussed by Crewe, such restrictions increase the significance of staff-prisoner relationships in accessing services in prison.<sup>30</sup> These limitations can create challenges in willingness to use the complaint system, especially in instances where prisoners have limited information on the process and how it operates. In situations

where people have limited agency plus concerns about exercising the agency they retain, care will be taken in deciding when to use this. Prisoners may prioritise interactions where they have a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of engaging, or focus on specific issues which have increased significance for them. As noted by participant 19, *'I try push the line as far as I can with the visits and stuff'*.

Additionally, certain specific issues were identified among participants as worth speaking up about and something which interference with was less likely to be tolerated. Family contact was a key area where participants were more likely to complain when a

problem arose and is clearly important to those in prison. As discussed in prison literature, family support is an important connection for those in prison.<sup>31</sup> One participant (31) who spoke about never having complained, despite having served several sentences, and who was highly averse to 'ratting', was much more activated and less tolerant when discussing the issue of family visits:

*'I have never complained to anyone or ratted on anyone in jail or anything like that or complained about anyone or anything. I have never once put anything in them boxes.'*

There was a sense of pride for this person in not being 'a complainer' in prison. This feeling, however, was in sharp contrast to the frustration and upset at the violation of family life when speaking about complaining about issues of visits and the exposure to prison procedures of his partner and young child: *'the only complaint I have ... I ever had is my visits.'* A key consideration in this analysis was that family members had not committed an offence and the treatment they were receiving, whether it was particularly invasive searches on visits or being on screen visits due to suspicions around drugs, was a punishment which they did not deserve. This created a feeling among prisoners, who might otherwise tolerate disrespectful treatment themselves, to speak

Prisoners may prioritise interactions where they have a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of engaging, or focus on specific issues which have increased significance for them.

up and push back.

Additionally, some participants felt that while some complaints could be resolved using a written complaint, it was not a suitable avenue for all complaints. As also found by Calavita and Jenness, complaints about staff were considered something that could not be resolved via a complaints system.<sup>32</sup> As will be discussed further below, this was something which participants felt could only be managed through looking for ways to avoid engaging with a staff member, or simply 'putting up' with the issues.

This sense of limited agency may result in issues perceived as minor or not as important being

29. Behan, C. (2020). No longer a 'collateral consequence': Imprisonment and the reframing of citizenship. *European Journal of Criminology*, 1, 11.

30. See footnote 6: Crewe, B. (2009).

31. Hutton, M. (2016). Visiting time: A tale of two prisons. *Probation Journal*, 63(3), 347.

32. See footnote 26: Calavita, K., & Jenness, V. (2015).

overlooked or not perceived as worth wasting agency on. The concept of 'wasted agency' therefore is based on the underlying concerns of those in prison and the perception of how far one can push the line or exercise agency before the risk of reprisals increases beyond what is acceptable to the prisoner for the right at issue or one's energy is burnt out. Not speaking up is also a form of self-protection from being repeatedly refused one's request or feeling that one's sense of worth is being undermined by those in prison. When choosing to engage with complaint systems, having information on the risks and benefits of interacting are key especially for those in low trust environments, such as prisons. However, in the case of participants in this study, participants also reported having limited information on the system and how it operated, and they therefore found it difficult to assess the benefits of an interaction. As noted by participant 31: *'I would only go to him if I know ... if I had a good chance of winning my case.'* This reiterates the importance of having a clear understanding of the system and how it operates in deciding whether to use the limited agency retained by those in prison on an interaction with a complaint body. It was evident in the present study that prisoners make calculations in deciding when to act and, in the absence of clear knowledge about the complaint system, this assessment is done based on prior experiences or information available to prisoners. In many cases, the negative effects of exercising agency may often outweigh any potential gain and is not worth the 'waste'. Having timely and accurate information on how a complaint system works throughout the duration of a person's time in custody is important to build trust in the system.

### Seeking other ways to complain: Informal complaints

The data gathered as part of this study focused on usage of the formal complaint system. However, in interviews, it became clear that the majority referred to resolving complaints through either a prison officer on

the landing or the governor of the prison. Prisoners did not rely exclusively on the formal complaint system to resolve problems they experienced in custody. As set out above, prisoners could also complain through seeking to speak to a governor or a member of a Visiting Committee and these were seen as preferable ways of resolving a complaint by some. Reasons for this centred around the face-to-face interaction involved, which meant prisoners knew that the person had received the complaint and they could, in some cases, explain themselves better than they were able to in writing. This was highlighted by participant 45:

*'I can read and write but I can't spell properly so I'm finding it hard enough if I was on my own like because I want to say more but I wouldn't be able to spell the words you know what I mean so you're just kind of making it shorter.'*

The concept of 'wasted agency' therefore is based on the underlying concerns of those in prison and the perception of how far one can push the line.

This participant highlights the limitations of a written form of complaining without additional support, and a sense that phrasing complaints in a particular way can play a role in how they are perceived by those handling them.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, while not viewed by all prisoners as independent, the Visiting Committees are outsiders to the prison system, an element which the current complaint system in

Ireland lacks.<sup>34</sup>

Alternative ways of resolving complaints also highlights the important role of relationships in prison. Several research studies attest to how informal actions by staff can defuse tension, resolve problems, and avoid the escalation of issues.<sup>35</sup> While formal complaints procedures have a role to play in vindicating human rights in prison, they do not replace the need for decent conditions, fair treatment and good relationships which obviate the need for the use of complaints procedures in the first place.

### Conclusion

Complaint systems are held by international human rights standards to be important tools for

33. See footnote 26: Calavita, K., & Jenness, V. (2015).

34. Work is underway at the time of publication to introduce the Ombudsman as an independent appeal body for the prisoner complaint system.

35. Beijersbergen, K. A., Dirkzwager, A. J. E., van der Laan, P. H., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2016). A social building? Prison architecture and staff-prisoner relationships. *Crime & Delinquency*, 62, 843; Liebling, A., Price, D., & Elliott, C. (1999). Appreciative inquiry and relationships in prison. *Punishment & Society*, 1, 71.

prisoners to bring problems to the attention of the prison service. However, as set out in this paper there are significant challenges in how they operate in this setting. The key principles of procedural justice of voice, neutrality, respect, and trust are evident across the themes discussed in this piece. Those in prison need to feel heard in the procedure, as well as treated with respect both in prison and as part of the complaint procedure to build trust in using these mechanisms. Neutrality is vital in encouraging those in prisons who wish to file a complaint to feel that they can trust the complaint procedure to be fair in considering their complaint. These criteria can be seen in the need to embed rights and normalising complaints in prison, which require a shift in prison culture itself. This is connected to the prison expectations discussed above, both in terms of what prison can be like and trust in a complaint system to work for them. For complaints systems to act as an effective process for people in prison, it is important that they are fully informed about their rights in prison and that these are reinforced through experiences in the prison. This can involve ensuring information on complaint systems and rights are provided on arrival and throughout a person's time in prison, to remind those in prison of where they can turn to.

Additionally, complaint mechanisms need to consider the experiences and backgrounds of those they are intended for. In the prison context, accessibility is a key consideration given prevalent literacy challenges, but also the power dynamics and culture of prison itself. It is important that support is offered to those in prison so that complaints can be made by everyone and prisoners do not need to rely on each other to access the system. This can be achieved through maintaining a system which does not require the use of written paperwork, and where those in custody can meet with and set out their complaint to a dedicated person. Proper recording of such complaints would be important for transparency and oversight of such a system.

In designing and implementing rights-protecting mechanisms, such as complaint procedures, for those in prison it is important that the experiences and views of those they are intended to protect are included. As set out in this paper, prisoners may have low expectations of prison and their rights, as well as a lack of trust in the prison system and authorities. Overcoming these barriers is fundamental to ensuring that prisoners can effectively access a complaints system and so this provides an effective tool for prisoners to raise their concerns.

# An exploration of imprisoned fathers' needs in the Netherlands

**Simon Venema** is a PhD candidate at Addiction mental health care Northern Netherlands (VNN) and is affiliated with the research group of Addiction Science and Forensic Care at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences.

**Eric Blaauw** is professor in Addiction Science and Forensic Care at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences and senior researcher at Addiction mental health care Northern Netherlands (VNN).

## Introduction

**Roughly half of all men in prison are fathers of minor children.<sup>1</sup> Despite the high prevalence of fatherhood in prisons, little is known about imprisoned fathers' needs regarding fatherhood and family relationships. In prisons for men, limited attention is given to men's roles as fathers and the difficulties they and their families encounter. Prison policies generally prioritise safety, security, and good order rather than promoting men's identities as fathers and supporting families experiencing paternal imprisonment.**

Research suggests that paternal imprisonment has negative consequences for children's wellbeing. Paternal imprisonment has been associated with increased internalising problem behaviours (e.g., depression, anxiety, and withdrawal), externalising problem behaviours (e.g., aggressive, violent, antisocial, rule-breaking, and delinquent behaviours),<sup>2</sup> and decreased educational performance.<sup>3</sup> It is often hypothesised that the negative impact of paternal imprisonment on family relationships is one of the key

mechanisms in the link between paternal imprisonment and children's negative outcomes.<sup>4</sup> Family relationships may be harmed by paternal imprisonment because of the physical separation between fathers and their families, and the limitations on quantity and quality of family contact. In prison settings, family contact takes place in restrictive environments which may inhibit developmentally promotive father-child interactions.<sup>5</sup>

Studies have shown that children with a father in prison often miss their fathers and face significant barriers for maintaining father-child relationships.<sup>6</sup> Here it is important to note that paternal imprisonment may provide relief for children and families in harmful and abusive family situations. However, research suggests that many fathers in prison were actively involved in their children's upbringing before imprisonment.<sup>7</sup> When combined, these notions imply that while paternal imprisonment may be harmful for many children, it may be beneficial for other children. The question, then, is what prisons can do to support imprisoned fathers and their families. In the current study, we explore the imprisoned fathers' needs regarding fatherhood and family relationships.

1. Henneken-Hordijk, I. and van Gemmert, A. A. (2011). *Gedetineerd in Nederland 2011: Een survey onder gedetineerden in het Nederlandse gevangeniswezen*. Den Haag; Maruschak, L. M., Bronson, J. and Alper, M. (2021) *Parents in prison and their minor children: Survey of prison inmates, 2016*. Available at: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmcspi16st.pdf>.
2. Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2008a), Parental imprisonment: Long-lasting effects on boys' internalizing problems through the life course. *Development and Psychopathology*, 20(1), 273–290. doi: 10.1017/S0954579408000138; Murray, J., Farrington, D. P., & Sekol, I. (2012). Children's antisocial behavior, mental health, drug use, and educational performance after parental incarceration: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(2), 175–210. doi: 10.1037/a0026407.
3. Anker, A. S. T. (2021). Educational consequences of paternal incarceration: Evidence from a Danish policy reform. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*. doi: 10.1007/s10940-021-09531-8
4. Murray, J. and Farrington, D. P. (2008b). 'The effects of parental imprisonment on children', in Tonry, M. (ed.) *Crime and Justice: A review of research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 133–206. doi: 10.1086/520070.
5. Dennison, S., Smallbone, H. and Occhipinti, S. (2017). Understanding how incarceration challenges proximal processes in father-child relationships: Perspectives of imprisoned fathers. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 3(1), 15–38. doi: 10.1007/s40865-017-0054-9.
6. Boswell, G. and Wedge, P. (2002). *Imprisoned fathers and their children*. London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers; Sharratt, K. (2014). Children's experiences of contact with imprisoned parents: A comparison between four European countries. *European Journal of Criminology*, 11(6), 760–775. doi: 10.1177/1477370814525936; Venema, S. D., Haan, M., Blaauw, E., & Veenstra, R. (2022). Paternal imprisonment and father-child relationships: A systematic review. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 49(4), 492–512. doi: 10.1177/00938548211033636.
7. Dennison, S., & Smallbone, H. (2015). "You can't be much of anything from inside": The implications of imprisoned fathers' parental involvement and generative opportunities for children's wellbeing. *Law in Context*, 32(1), 61–86. doi: 10.26826/law-in-context.v32i0.73; Tasca, M. (2018). The (dis)continuity of parenthood among incarcerated fathers: An analysis of caregivers' accounts. *Child Care in Practice*, 24(2), 131–147. doi: 10.1080/13575279.2017.1420040.

## Fatherhood and imprisonment in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, families have various options to maintain family contact during imprisonment, including face-to-face visits, parent-child activities, telephone calls, video calls, and mail. Depending on their behaviour, prisoners have the right to one or two visiting hours per week. Regular visits take place in visiting rooms, which are split into two sections by a low barrier. The visitors and imprisoned person are seated on opposite sides of the barrier. There is a maximum of three visitors (children under the age of two are not counted) and visits are supervised by prison guards. Visiting times, rules, and facilities for children may differ between prisons.<sup>8</sup> Prisons also offer the possibility to make use of family rooms for visits for one hour once per month, which take place in a private room. Access to the family room is conditional on good in-prison behaviour. Telephone calls generally take place on prison wings, although some Dutch prisons have telephones in prison cells. Video calls generally take place in the visiting rooms or video calling booths, which serve as an alternative for face-to-face visits. Volunteer organisations organise parent-child days in all prisons in the Netherlands, during which imprisoned parents can spend time with their children in a child-friendly area for the duration of one hour. The frequency of parent-child days differs across prisons, ranging from four times per year to once every month.<sup>9</sup> During these moments, fathers and children can play games, and are largely unrestricted in their movement. Lastly, families can send each other mail and postcards to maintain contact.

As part of a special family approach project, two prisons (Veenhuizen and Leeuwarden) provide the possibility for visits in child-friendly visiting rooms which aim to create a homely atmosphere. In the family approach project in Veenhuizen and Leeuwarden, participating fathers are placed on a family unit on which only fathers reside, can make use of a private

family-friendly visiting room, and can make video calls from their prison cell. This programme was inspired by Invisible Walls Wales in HMP Parc Prison.<sup>10</sup>

## Methods

To explore imprisoned fathers' needs regarding fatherhood and family relationships, we used data from a study in the Netherlands on the impact of paternal imprisonment on families, involving both a quantitative and a qualitative component. The quantitative component consisted of a questionnaire study carried out with 139 fathers in Veenhuizen prison. The qualitative component consisted of 39 in-depth interviews with fathers in Veenhuizen and Lelystad prisons. For this article, we examined the responses to

questionnaire items and interview questions which were relevant to exploring fathers' needs regarding fatherhood and family relationships. Participants provided informed consent for both components of the study. All study procedures were approved by the Ethical Review Board of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. The data were collected between November 2021 and April 2022.

For the quantitative section of the study, all fathers in Veenhuizen prison were approached to participate in a questionnaire study on fatherhood and imprisonment. In total, 68 per cent of the approached fathers participated. We restricted the analyses to 109 fathers who had a focal child of 18 years or younger. In this article, we made use of seven items from the parent-child contact scale of the Dutch prison survey which measures fathers' satisfaction with support and facilities for maintaining family contact during imprisonment.<sup>11</sup> Participants could answer on a 5-point scale, with answers ranging from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree'. We added two additional questions specifically relating to fatherhood: 'I find it difficult to fulfil my role as a father from prison', and 'I need more support to fulfil my fathering role from prison'. We further added two questions about

Prisons also offer the possibility to make use of family rooms for visits for one hour once per month, which take place in a private room.

8. Berghuis, M., Palmen, H., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2020). Bezoek in Nederlandse gevangenissen. *Proces*, 99(2), 110–132. doi: 10.5553/proces/016500762020099002004.
9. Berghuis, M., Palmen, H., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2020). Bezoek in Nederlandse gevangenissen. *Proces*, 99(2), 110–132. doi: 10.5553/proces/016500762020099002004.
10. Clancy, A., & Maguire, M. (2017). *Prisoners' children and families: Can the walls be 'invisible'? Evaluation of Invisible Walls Wales*. Available at: <https://icpa.org/library/prisoners-children-and-families-can-the-walls-be-invisible-evaluation-of-invisible-walls-wales/?download>.
11. Henneken-Hordijk, I., & van Gemmert, A. A. (2011). *Gedetineerd in Nederland 2011: Een survey onder gedetineerden in het Nederlandse gevangeniswezen*. Den Haag.

how often respondents spoke with prison staff and with other fathers in prison about children or fatherhood, to which participants could answer 'never', 'sometimes' or 'often'.

For the qualitative part of the study, we analysed 39 interviews with fathers in prison, which were recorded and transcribed. Participants were selected by prison staff based on their knowledge of whether prisoners had children. The interviews covered fathers' perceptions of fatherhood and family relationships, the impact of paternal imprisonment on family relationships and children's wellbeing, and participants' thoughts and ideas to mitigate the negative impact of paternal imprisonment on family relationships and child wellbeing. Of particular relevance to this study were questions directly relating to fathers' needs: 'Do you encounter any difficulties as a father in prison? Can you tell me about this?', 'What could this prison or an external organisation do to support you, your children, or other fathers in prison?', and 'Is there anything you need during this imprisonment period regarding fatherhood or family contact?'. We conducted an inductive thematic analysis to identify patterned responses and meanings regarding imprisoned fathers' needs.<sup>12</sup> After data familiarisation, the transcripts were coded using Atlas.ti 22 (software for qualitative data analysis).

## Results

### Questionnaire study

Fathers' responses to the quantitative measures are displayed in Tables 1 and 2. As can be seen, only one

item was rated positively: the majority of fathers (63.4 per cent) evaluated prison staff's treatment of visiting children positively. Other aspects of prison life were evaluated more negatively. Most notable was that the vast majority of fathers (79.4 per cent) experienced difficulties in fulfilling their role as a father from prison. Around half of fathers (50.5 per cent) reported requiring more support in fulfilling their fathering role from this setting. Furthermore, the majority of fathers (63.8 per cent) experienced the visiting areas as unsuitable for children. More than half (55 per cent) stated that it is difficult to see their children due to difficulties with visiting times. A little less than half (46.7 per cent) stated that prison does not provide sufficient support to maintain contact with their children, and a similar proportion (45.7 per cent) preferred their children not to visit them in prison. Almost half of the fathers (44.6 per cent) reported that their children cannot visit them often enough. A similar proportion (42.2 per cent) reported that they could approach prison staff with questions regarding their children. However, the majority of fathers (51.4 per cent) did not do so, as they reported to never speak with prison staff about children or fatherhood. Only 7.3 per cent of fathers reported speaking often to prison staff about children or fatherhood. Speaking to other fathers in prison about children or fatherhood was more common; 46.8 per cent of fathers reported sometimes speaking with other fathers about this topic and 35.8 per cent reported doing so often. A minority of fathers (17.4 per cent) stated they never spoke with other fathers about children or fatherhood.

Table 1: Imprisoned fathers' experiences of family-related issues in prison (N = 109)

Questionnaire item	Response		
	(strongly) disagree	Neutral	(strongly) agree
This prison provides sufficient support for me to maintain contact with my children	46.7 per cent	16.8 per cent	36.5 per cent
Prison staff treats visiting children well	22.0 per cent	14.6 per cent	63.4 per cent
The regular visiting areas are suitable for children	63.8 per cent	10.6 per cent	25.5 per cent
I can ask prison staff when I have questions regarding my children	36.3 per cent	21.6 per cent	42.2 per cent
My children can visit me often enough	44.6 per cent	7.6 per cent	47.8 per cent
It is difficult to see my children because of the visiting times	34.1 per cent	11.0 per cent	55.0 per cent
I prefer my children not to visit me here	45.7 per cent	11.4 per cent	42.9 per cent
I find it difficult to fulfil my role as a father from prison	10.3 per cent	10.3 per cent	79.4 per cent
I need more support to fulfil my fathering role from prison	36.2 per cent	13.3 per cent	50.5 per cent

12. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). 'Thematic analysis', in Cooper, H. et al. (eds) *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological*. Washington: American Psychological Association, pp. 57-71. doi: 10.1037/13620-004.

Table 2: Degree to which fathers speak about children or fatherhood with other people in prison (N = 109)

Questionnaire item	Response		
	Never	Sometimes	Often
Speaks with other fathers in prison about children or fatherhood	17.4 per cent	46.8 per cent	35.8 per cent
Speaks with prison staff about children or fatherhood	51.4 per cent	41.3 per cent	7.3 per cent

### Interview study

By analysing, categorising, and connecting all coded extracts pertaining to imprisoned fathers' needs, three overarching themes were constructed. We labelled them as: i) facilities to promote everyday family life, ii) support from others, and iii) gradual transition to release.

#### Theme 1: Facilities to promote everyday family life

The first theme related to fathers' needs for family interactions in prison to mimic interactions outside of prison as closely as possible, and to resemble everyday family life at home as much as possible. Across the interviews, many fathers commented on the facilities for family contact during imprisonment or the lack thereof. Although fathers valued the moments of family contact, many underscored limitations of the frequency of such contact. Furthermore, they felt that the prison context in which family contact took place impeded meaningful, high-quality contact. Many of the fathers' needs within this theme focused on in-person visits from children. The following interview excerpt illustrates this particularly well:

*'It would be nice if you could just be with your kid for a while, and live a normal life for a while, like you do at home. Instead of sitting across each other like you do here [...]. Because you want to keep that connection with your child.'*

High frequency contact was often considered a prerequisite for maintaining or developing a father-child bond. In line with this, many fathers expressed the need for more frequent face-to-face contact in particular. Some fathers noted that more family contact would have positive consequences for their in-prison

behaviour and assist them with coping with confinement. Fathers expressed a strong preference for more father-child days in particular, as these provide a setting for better quality contact. Other fathers noted that the duration of parent-child days was too short. High frequency contact seemed particularly relevant for fathers with younger children who had limited time to build a connection with their child before imprisonment, and were dependent on face-to-face father-child interactions whilst in prison to develop a relationship:

*'[my child] recognises me and [when he's here] he knows; 'this feels familiar'. And I enjoy that a lot, and it's also important. And yes, I'd like to keep it that way, that's why I want more contact with my little one.'*

Perhaps even more important than the frequency of contact was the quality of contact. Fathers described various factors that negatively affected visiting quality: restriction of free movement, lack of physical interaction, lack of privacy, unfriendly attitudes of some prison staff towards children, limitations on the maximum number of visitors (particularly for fathers with many children or children with multiple mothers), unpleasant atmosphere of the prison and visiting area for children, and lack of facilities for children (e.g. toys and a play area). Fathers expressed the need to be able to interact, play and be active with their children during visits; much like father-child interactions at home. Other fathers expressed the wish for educational toys, such as abacuses or toys that support children to learn how to read.

*'If you could play a game together, then it won't be all just about talking. [...] [Visits] are also about being together, and doing things you'd also do at home. And that's pretty bad, here.'*



*'During visits, I can't touch them, they can't sit on my lap, I can't draw with them, I can't count with them, I can't write down the alphabet. I like to teach my children things. I don't always just want to play with them.'*

Various fathers expressed the desire to have visiting moments which are specifically dedicated to visits for children. Fathers suggested that these visits could take place in a private room like the family room, with the preference that this room would be decorated in a child-friendly manner and would give a homely feeling. Other fathers suggested having such visits outside or in the gym area, as is done with father-child days in some prisons in the Netherlands. Some noted that participation in such days should be based on the fathers' motivation for maintaining family bonds and on their good behaviour in prison. Many expressed the need to allow the child's mother to participate in these child-focused visits, and also in parent-child days, as this would enable full family interactions. This need seems rooted in the desire for family interactions in prison to resemble family interactions outside the prison walls.

The limited privacy during visits, video calls, and telephone calls was further experienced as inhibiting meaningful family interactions. One father described that he wanted to discuss a serious matter with his family, but would not do this in the visiting room due to the lack of privacy. Various fathers also expressed the need for more privacy during video visits.

*'So you're busy with your kids, and then perhaps two other people are watching along, then you can't.. uhm.. be yourself.'*

*'When you're video calling in the regular visiting area, there's lots of other people around you. They can hear you talk. You're wearing headphones so luckily they can't hear your family talk. And then there's also four prison officers sitting at a distance. I don't like that'*

## **Theme 2: Support from others**

The second theme we identified centred around support from other people with family-related

issues. Fathers identified a wide variety of needs for support from others, which depended on their personal family situation. Support could come from various sources, such as prison staff, qualified professionals, volunteers, or other fathers in prison. Support could also come in various forms, such as parenting courses, support groups, talking with prison staff, support for family members at home, and support from qualified professionals in family services. However, a relatively large group of fathers explicitly stated they did not need any support from others.

Some, but not many, fathers expressed an interest in attending parenting courses. One father noted that he would be interested if the course also involved his family. Another father stated that he would be interested in exchanging fatherhood experiences in a

support group-setting. A third father expressed interest in learning about first-aid for children. Other fathers, however, did not consider courses to be relevant for them as they considered themselves to be good parents and did not experience any major difficulties in life, such as addiction or violence in the home.

*'A course could help, but I think I'm a good father, so I don't know how they could help me. You know, I'm not addicted or anything.'*

*'I think I'm a good father, and I don't think I need another person's help. [...] A course on 'how to love my child' is not on the top of my list. [...] But I can imagine that other men in here need this, because they've never created a bond with their child because they were never there. But that's not the case for me.'*

Some fathers felt they lacked parenting skills and knowledge. One explained that his daughter was only four weeks old when he was arrested. He talked of knowing little about childrearing, except for what he's experienced in the prison visiting room. Another father expressed difficulties about talking to his child: *'he's 18, and he reacts very differently than a 12 or 13-year old'*. These two examples suggest that the amount of time spent with the child before imprisonment, combined with the amount of time spent away from the child, influenced fathers' perceptions of their own parenting skills and knowledge. However, such reflections on their own parenting skills and knowledge were relatively

rare, and not necessarily linked to the need for a course to learn about parenting.

Some fathers expressed that it could be useful to speak to someone in prison about their family situation at home. One father stated that prison staff could play an active role in supporting fathers and children, and making family-related matters a part of the reintegration programme. Others felt there was a need for specific expertise, such as from a peer mentor. One father talked of needing someone *'who knows what's going on inside here, and knows how I interact with my children'* to mediate between him and the foster care agency. Fathers in more complex family situations were more likely to require specialised expertise, which was not perceived to be available in prison.

Interestingly, there was a relatively large group of fathers who explicitly stated they did not need any support from others during imprisonment. These fathers generally expressed confidence in being able to manage their family-related situation themselves.

### **Theme 3: Gradual transition to release**

The last theme related to release and re-entry back into family life, and centred around fathers' need for a gradual transition back to family life outside of prison. Fathers experienced the transition from fatherhood in prison to fatherhood outside as abrupt, which could lead to feelings of fear and anxiety. This seemed particularly salient for fathers with longer prison sentences, who had been away from home for a long period of time. One father expressed the central concept of this theme well:

*'What do I know about dealing with children during dinner, or when they have to go to sleep? I know nothing. I'll be going outside, and they leave me to my own devices. This could lead to tensions and stress in the family, discussions with my wife. I think [the transition back home] should be easily introduced in the reintegration programme. [...] I've got a job, a house. I just want to bring the bond with my family back to the level it was before.'*

When asked about family life after imprisonment, many fathers expressed optimism, believing that their family relationships would go back

to normal, and expressed the intention to spend more time with their family after imprisonment and *'make up for lost time'*. Others talked of fearing the sudden change for them and their family on their release.

*'When I'm outside I'm going to do my best to catch up. Do fun things with him that I should've done much earlier.'*

*'They're totally used to life without me, and then I'll be there again all of the sudden. That's not a small thing.'*

The fathers gave suggestions to tackle the abruptness of this transition. One suggestion related to gradually increasing the frequency and duration of father-child contact towards the end of their term of imprisonment. Another proposed organising special events for families towards the end of the imprisonment period, to help prepare families for re-entry.

*'Maybe that when you reach the end of your sentence, that, perhaps, he can be here more often and longer. To build it up. First two and a half hours, then four hours.'*

*So you can get used to the situation at home.'*

Some fathers expressed feelings of frustration and uncertainty regarding temporary prison leave. Prison leave was seen as a key way to achieve a gradual transition into family life outside of prison. Some fathers explained that their requests for prison leave for family-related motivations were denied. Another explained that the rules within prison regarding prison leave made it difficult for his family to prepare for his release. This complicated a gradual transition towards family life outside of prison.

*'I think they don't take fathers and children into account with prison leave requests. I'm at the end of my sentence. I could request prison leave, and did so various times, to restore the bond with my daughter. But they're rejecting my requests. That's not good.'*

*'There's new rules. This gives me a lot of stress. You think you can go on prison leave, you file a request, that's being approved. Then you tell your family: 'I'll be home on [date]'*

Fathers in more complex family situations were more likely to require expertise, which was not perceived to be available in prison.

*and in the end you hear that your request is denied because there's some file missing or whatever. So you got your kids all excited, but then it's all for nothing. You can't keep your promises.'*

## Conclusion

In this study we explored family-related needs of fathers in prison. The majority of fathers (79.4 per cent) reported experiencing difficulties in fulfilling their father role from prison, and 50.5 per cent reported requiring more support. Fathers' needs centred around three themes. The first referred to their need for family life during imprisonment to resemble family life outside prison as closely as possible, in order to support father involvement and maintain meaningful family relationships during this time. This theme echoes the principle of normalisation, which refers to prison life resembling, as far as possible, life outside prison.<sup>13</sup> The finding that many fathers are dissatisfied with the facilities to maintain family contact is consistent with this theme also. The second theme referred to fathers' need for support from others. Support from others could come in various forms and depended on each person's individual family situation. It is important to underscore that not all fathers in this study felt they needed such support. Our study showed that in practice, many fathers in prison did not often speak to others about fatherhood or their children, and did not speak about this topic with prison staff in particular. The third theme referred to fathers' need for a more gradual transition from custody to community, back into family life. The abrupt transition could lead to feelings of fear and anxiety. Fathers suggested gradually increasing the frequency and duration of family contact towards the end of their sentence, to help smooth this transition.

An important caveat of our study is the emphasis on family visits. In the qualitative component of the analysis, fathers' needs regarding family visits and parent-child days were highly prevalent. However, in an additional analysis of the questionnaire data (not presented in this article) we found that 44.8 per cent of

fathers reported not receiving visits from their children in prison at all, and 71.2 per cent of fathers reported not participating in parent-child days. We acknowledge that our qualitative data in particular is subject to selection bias, given that prison staff's knowledge of parental status was derived from participation in activities relating to fatherhood (e.g., participation on parent-child days, activities, and courses). It is possible that fathers who are not visited by, or do not maintain contact with, their children during imprisonment have unique family-related needs and require a different approach than indicated in the current study. This is an important avenue for further research.

The need-domains identified in this study provide an important foundation to build upon when developing family-focused prison policies. Such policies need to be tailored to families' needs in order to be effective. Family-focused prison policies could support father involvement and positive family relationships during imprisonment. This is important, as maintaining positive family relationships during imprisonment has been associated with increased child wellbeing and positive re-entry outcomes for fathers.<sup>14</sup> However, it is crucial to take the best interests of children into consideration when developing family-focused prison policies. These policies should be sensitive to the fact that increased family contact may not always be in children's best interests. One way to achieve this is by actively involving children and families in decision-making procedures and policy development regarding family-related matters. When tailored to families' needs, family-focused prison policies have the potential to alleviate the negative consequences of paternal imprisonment for families, and support fathers' re-entry back into the community.

## Acknowledgements

This study was financially supported by FNO GeestKracht (grant number 103.907). We are grateful to the Dutch Custodial Institution Agency who made this project possible. We further thank Petrick Glasbergen for his meaningful contributions to this project.

- 
13. van de Rijt, J., van Ginneken, E., & Boone, M. (2022). Lost in translation: The principle of normalisation in prison policy in Norway and the Netherlands. *Punishment & Society*, 1–18. doi: 10.1177/14624745221103823.
  14. Lösel, F. et al. (2012) *Risk and protective factors in the resettlement of imprisoned fathers with their families*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge; Ormiston Children's and Families Trust. Available at: <https://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/system/files/documents/final-report.pdf>.

# Perspectives on the Employee and Family Assistance Programme for Correctional Workers in Saskatchewan: Challenges and Opportunities

*Laura McKendy is a former postdoctoral fellow at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Rosemary Ricciardelli is professor and research chair of Safety, Security, and Wellness in the Fisheries and Marine Institute at Memorial University of Newfoundland.<sup>1</sup> Matthew S. Johnston is a postdoctoral fellow in the Fisheries and Marine Institute at Memorial University of Newfoundland.*

## Introduction

The physical and psychological hazards of correctional work are varied, intense, and compounding, contributing to its conception as a form of 'dirty work,'<sup>2</sup> that is, work that is perceived as physically and/or symbolically degrading and morally tainted in some capacity.<sup>3</sup> Alongside a myriad of occupational stressors, exposure(s) to potentially psychological traumatic events (PPTs), including witnessing and experiencing physical/verbal violence, suicide attempts/completions, self-injury and other types of harm,<sup>4</sup> is a regular feature of work in certain correctional settings.<sup>5</sup> The demands that many correctional workplaces put on employees contribute to adverse mental health outcomes, such as burnout, mental health disorders (e.g., Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), General

Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)),<sup>6</sup> and an increased and disproportionate risk of death by suicide,<sup>7</sup> or suicidal thoughts and behaviours,<sup>8</sup> when compared to the general population and other public safety personnel.<sup>9</sup>

In response to adverse impacts of correctional work on staff, a growing number of workplace initiatives have been implemented to support the health, well-being, resilience, and perseverance of correctional staff internationally, including Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs).<sup>10</sup> Such programmes, while varying in form, typically include services for employees and their families to assist in areas of personal concern that may also be affecting their job performance. While research outside of correctional services documents positive outcomes associated with EAPs such as increased presenteeism,<sup>11</sup> there remain

1. Please address correspondences to Rosemary Ricciardelli, Fisheries and Marine Institute, Memorial University of Newfoundland. W3023, 155 Ridge Road, St John's, NL. A1C 5R3, Canada. Email: rricciardell@mun.ca/rose.ricciardelli@mi.mun.ca
2. Hughes, E. C. (1951). Work and the self. In J. H. Rohrer & M. Sherif (Eds.), *Social Psychology at the Crossroads* (pp. 313–323). New York: Harper & Brothers.
3. Chenault, S., & Collins, B. (2019). It's dirty work but someone has to do it: An examination of correctional officer taint management techniques. *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology*, 8(1), 1-22.
4. Denhof, M. D., Spinaris, C. G., & Morton, G. R. (2014). Occupational stressors in corrections organizations: Types, effects and solutions. *US Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections*, 54, 71-82.
5. Ricciardelli, R., & Carleton, R. N. (2021). A qualitative application of the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) to contextualize the occupational stress correctional workers experience. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 1-17.
6. Regehr, C., Carey, M., Wagner, S., Alden, L. E., Buys, N., Corneil, W., ... & Randall, C. (2019). Prevalence of PTSD, depression and anxiety disorders in correctional officers: A systematic review. *Corrections*, 1-13.
7. Genest, C., Ricciardelli, R., & Carleton, R. N. (2020). Correctional work: Reflections regarding suicide. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18, 4280.
8. Johnston, M. S., Ricciardelli, R., & McKendy, L. (2022a). Fight or flight? Exploring suicide thoughts, experiences, and behaviours among correctional workers and their interventions of agency. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 44(9), 1500-1516.
9. Lerman, A. E., Harney, J., & Sadin, M. (2022). Prisons and mental health: Violence, organizational support, and the effects of correctional work. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 49(2), 181-199.
10. Roche, A., Kostadinov, V., Cameron, J., Pidd, K., McEntee, A., & Duraisingam, V. (2018). The development and characteristics of Employee Assistance Programs around the globe. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 33(3-4), 168-186.
11. Joseph, B., Walker, A., & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M. (2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of employee assistance programmes: A systematic review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27(1), 1-15.

minimal empirical insights regarding the perceived utility and efficacy of EAPs among correctional staff, especially in the provinces and territories of Canada.

Drawing on qualitative, open-ended survey response data from provincial correctional workers in Saskatchewan, Canada (n=55), we explore staff perspectives of the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) available to provincial correctional employees. While the open-ended survey questions did not specifically pertain to this programme, numerous respondents referenced this in discussions of workplace mental health and well-being. Their responses demonstrate discrepancies between normative expectations of the programme versus actual experiences with EFAP, which points to an appetite for more robust and specialised staff services that are tailored to the diverse needs of correctional workers. Unfavourable perceptions, however justified, of EFAP may contribute to strained bottom-up workplace relations insofar as the perceived shortcomings of the initiative are viewed as symbolic of the lack of recognition, representation, and support paid to correctional workers in their workplace and beyond.

## Literature Review

### The mental health crisis in correctional work

The impact of correctional work on mental health and well-being is captured by studies documenting the high prevalence of mental health disorders such as PTSD, GAD, and MDD among correctional staff.<sup>12</sup> A study in the province of Saskatchewan found that 80 per cent of staff had experienced a PPTe at work, often with a high degree of exposure (i.e., multiple incidents). The study also found that around one-quarter of participants (26 per cent) reported symptom levels of

PTSD that met the criteria for clinical diagnosis.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with symptoms of PTSD were also found to experience a lower quality of life and were more likely to experience problems across several well-being domains, as well as in the workplace, such as inter-personal issues and higher rates of absenteeism.

An issue identified by Stadnyk and others<sup>14</sup> is the extent to which mental health disorders remain undiagnosed among staff, which can result in failure to receive effective treatment and support, thus leading to prolonged suffering and symptomatic periods.

Impediments to mental health treatment-seeking among correctional staff are varied, but may include factors such as financial considerations or burdens, logistical constraints (shift work/schedules), perceptions of self-sufficiency (i.e., that mental health matters are an individual responsibility), emphasis on resiliency (i.e., that one does not need treatment or interventions), lack of available and corrections-specific mental health services,<sup>15</sup> and stigma — including gendered perceptions of treatment-seeking as indicative of ‘weakness’ or other traits non-favourable in correctional work environments.<sup>16</sup>

### Organisational structures and staff well-being

Rather than buffering the impacts of stressful work events, researchers point to how correctional organisational climates can, in certain cases, precipitate further stress. Stressors within correctional social milieus include, for example, labour and work issues (e.g., overtime, excessive workload, staff shortages), inter-personal conflicts, and strained/stressful organisational social relations in general.<sup>17</sup> An example of the latter is the conflictual relationships that can materialise between frontline workers and senior management.

# The impact of correctional work on mental health and well-being is captured by studies documenting the high prevalence of mental health disorders such as PTSD, GAD, and MDD among correctional staff.

12. Carleton, R. N., Ricciardelli, R., Taillieu, T., Mitchell, M. M., Andres, E., & Afifi, T. O. (2020). Provincial correctional service workers: the prevalence of mental disorders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 2203.
13. Stadnyk, B. L. (2003). PTSD in corrections employees in Saskatchewan.
14. Johnston, M. S., Ricciardelli, R., & McKendy, L. (2021). Suffering in silence: Work and mental health experiences among provincial correctional workers in Canada. *Corrections: Policy, Practice and Research*. 1-19.
15. Johnston, M.S., Ricciardelli, R., & McKendy, L. (2022b). Improving the mental health of correctional workers: Perspectives from the field. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. 49(7), 951-970.
16. Ricciardelli, R., Carleton, R. N., Gacek, J., & Groll, D. L. (2020). Understanding needs, breaking down barriers: Examining mental health challenges and wellbeing of correctional staff in Ontario, Canada. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1036.
17. Brower, J. (2013). *Correctional officer wellness and safety literature review*. United States Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center.

Some researchers have emphasized how frontline staff (e.g., correctional officers) may perceive management with suspicion and distrust, while viewing themselves as socially devalued within and beyond the organisation.<sup>18</sup> Underpinning a sense of distrust and scepticism are views that the administration values prisoners' perspectives above staff's, and fails to understand the perils of correctional work, incorporate staff opinions, and make themselves visible within front-line operations.<sup>19</sup> Among other burdens, this perceived lack of support can lead to increased job stress.<sup>20</sup>

By contrast, perceptions of strong organisational support are positively associated with well-being measures and job satisfaction.<sup>21</sup> Specifically, researchers suggest organisational support can improve well-being outcomes among correctional staff even in the face of inevitable operational stressors such as violence. For example, based on a large survey of correctional officers in California, Lerman, Harney and Sadin found that problematic outcomes associated with exposure to violence at work were mediated by perceived organisational support (POS).<sup>22</sup> More positive perceptions of supervisors and management, and access to quality stress management training, were associated with a lower likelihood of reported mental health concerns. Other organisational factors that mediated mental health outcomes included perceptions of managerial and institutional responses to instances of violence, adequacy of safety equipment, and the availability of mental health resources and treatment options for staff.

Perceptions of organisational support may also impact the likelihood of staff accessing support services, as Tucker found in her study of police officers—a distinct but relatable sector of public safety professionals to correctional workers— 'officers who feel supported by the organization and believe that the organization

supports the use of stress intervention services are more willing to use services' (p. 308).<sup>23</sup> Conversely, concerns about confidentiality of services as well as the stigma and fear associated with service access impeded staff utilisation of support services. The implication is that constrained employer-staff relations—often marked by a lack of organisational trust by staff—can contribute negatively to employee well-being by serving as an impediment to accessing support.

### **Interventions and solutions for correctional workers: What do(n't) we know?**

Within correctional organisations, there are a growing list of interventions to promote staff well-being, such as training programmes, peer support groups (e.g., Critical Incident Stress Management Program [CISM]), resources for self-help, and EAPs.<sup>24</sup> At the heart of many EAPs is a recognition of the interplay between employee well-being and organisational well-being — that is to say, the performance of the organisation is influenced by the mental health and well-being of its staff. While employee assistance models vary across jurisdictions, initiatives typically involve access to a limited number of counselling sessions with professionals (such as psychologists or social workers), which may occur on-site, at an offsite service provider location, or remotely (e.g., by phone). The focus of support includes different matters of personal well-being, whether tied to work or non-work matters, that may implicate work performance (e.g., addiction, mental health, relationship issues, traumatic incidents, financial issues, and legal matters). While EAPs can be 'in house' (internal to the organisation), many are privately run, though sometimes fully covered by staff insurance plans.<sup>25</sup>

More positive perceptions of supervisors and management, and access to quality stress management training, were associated with a lower likelihood of reported mental health concerns.

18. Crawley, E., & Crawley, P. (2008). Understanding prison officers: Culture, cohesion and conflict. In J. Bennett, B. Crewe, & A., Wahidin. (Eds). *Understanding Prison Staff*, 134-152. London: Willan Publishing.
19. Arnold, H., Liebling, A., & Tait, S. (2012). Prison officers and prison culture. In *Handbook on prisons* (pp. 501-525). Routledge.
20. McCarthy, W. D. (2012). *Causes of correctional officer stress and its consequences*. Indiana State University.
21. Liu, L., Hu, S., Wang, L., Sui, G., & Ma, L. (2013). Positive resources for combating depressive symptoms among Chinese male correctional officers: Perceived organizational support and psychological capital. *BMC Psychiatry*, 13(1), 1-9.
22. Lerman, A. E., Harney, J., & Sadin, M. (2022). Prisons and mental health: Violence, organizational support, and the effects of correctional work. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 49(2), 181-199.
23. Tucker, J. M. (2015). Police officer willingness to use stress intervention services: The role of perceived organizational support (POS), confidentiality and stigma. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, 17(1), 304.
24. Ferdik, F. V., & Smith, H. (2017). *Correctional officer safety and wellness literature synthesis*. US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.
25. Roche, A., Kostadinov, V., Cameron, J., Pidd, K., McEntee, A., & Duraisingam, V. (2018). The development and characteristics of Employee Assistance Programs around the globe. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 33(3-4), 168-186.

There remains limited knowledge, however, regarding the extent to which mental health and wellness programs are experienced and perceived by correctional workers, and more generally, how the mental health vulnerabilities associated with correctional work can be mitigated through such organisational features. One exception is research by Willemse,<sup>26</sup> which examined perceptions of an EAP among correctional officers in South Africa. Willemse found that staff experienced different barriers to EAP access. One central barrier was perceived issues around privacy and confidentiality; specifically, officers feared that information provided to employee assistance personnel could be shared. Cultural stigma surrounding use of employee assistance (i.e., fear of being 'labelled' mentally unwell) was another impediment to use. Such obstacles surrounding confidentiality and stigma have been similarly noted by Tucker in relation to police.<sup>27</sup> Willemse also noted perceptions tied to programme referral were indicative of negative views of a staff member — explicitly the notion of the help-seeking staff member being 'weak'. Quality of service issues prevented or undermined use of employee assistance, including lack of familiarity among personnel of the realities inherent to correctional work.

Overall, there continue to be structural barriers to both the implementation and utilisation of support programs within correctional organisations, including lack of understanding of correctional workplace hazards, and cultural sentiments shaping the occupational climate. Given the high prevalence of mental health disorders among provincial correctional staff and the often highly stressful nature of correctional work,<sup>28</sup> the current study contributes to an understudied yet important phenomenon in correctional work by building understanding of the perceived efficacy and utility of current supports for employees, and identifying service gaps and areas for improvement.

## The Current Study and Programme Background

The current analysis examines correctional worker views of the EFAP available to them in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Having recently undergone changes,<sup>29</sup> the programme is now delivered by a third-party (LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell) and includes access to short-term counselling and other specialised services (e.g., legal, financial, health, and career-related). Services are also available for managers/supervisors seeking ways and resources to support staff. Accessing EFAP can be done online or by contacting the call centre. There is no cost for employees seeking to use services through the programme, and, despite concerns surrounding privacy documented in the extant literature, as well as in our findings section, it remains a confidential service.<sup>30</sup> Drawing on open-ended survey responses, we identify key themes shaping staff views of the programme, and theorise our findings in relation to the social dynamics that mediate experiences in correctional organisations. Our analysis does not represent a systematic evaluation of the programme; rather, we highlight staff perspectives shaping views and experiences of it.

One central barrier was perceived issues around privacy and confidentiality; specifically, officers feared that information provided to employee assistance personnel could be shared.

## Methodology

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Saskatchewan Correctional Workers Mental Health and Well-being Study was conducted among correctional workers in the province. The survey was administered through a web-based survey platform, Qualtrics, and asked respondents to report on a variety of different phenomena tied to their mental health, well-being, work experiences, and support-seeking. Survey recruitment occurred with the support of the ministerial and union representatives, who contacted potential respondents using email listservs. The recruitment email directed potential participants to the informed consent page of the survey. Following provision of informed

26. Willemse, R. (2021). An investigation into the South African correctional officers' experiences of their work and the Employee Assistance Programme. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 51(4).
27. Tucker, J. M. (2015). Police officer willingness to use stress intervention services: The role of perceived organizational support (POS), confidentiality and stigma. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, 17(1), 304.
28. Konyk, K., Ricciardelli, R., Taillieu, T., Afifi, T. O., Groll, D., & Carleton, R. N. (2021). Assessing relative stressors and mental disorders among Canadian provincial correctional workers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(19), 10018.
29. Government of Saskatchewan (2021). Available: <https://taskroom.sp.saskatchewan.ca/how-do-i/access-employee-programs/employee-and-family-assistance-program>
30. Government of Saskatchewan (2019). Available: <https://taskroom.sp.saskatchewan.ca/Documents/EFAPQandAs.pdf>

consent, participants could then commence the anonymous online survey. Participants were granted a unique access code that enabled completion of the survey over multiple sittings, if desired. Participants, on average, spent between 25-40 minutes completing the survey, however, completion time varied due to built-in skip patterns and differences in the length of open-ended responses. At Memorial University of Newfoundland and at the University of Regina, research ethics boards approved the study. Research approval was also received from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections, Policing, and Public Safety. Participation was voluntary and there was no incentive provided for participating other than having one's voice heard, however, the survey could be completed during paid working hours.

A combination of closed and open-ended questions formed the survey. Questions pertaining specifically to EFAP were contained with closed-ended questions only, meaning no open-ended questions were included in the survey that specifically asked respondents about EFAP. However, many respondents used open-ended spaces in other questions to discuss EFAP. Responses across the various survey questions that pertained to EFAP constitute the data for the current analysis. In total, 840 individuals commenced the survey; however, the open-ended questions that form the data basis of the current study were all optional within the survey. We identified 55 responses that spoke directly to the EFAP programme, corresponding with 37 distinct participants (several respondents commented on the programme in more than one section). Some of the open-ended questions provided spaces for general comments following themed sections of the survey (e.g., exposure to correctional events, mental health experiences, suicide thoughts and behaviours) as well as the at the end of survey, while others were more directed/focussed in nature (e.g., 'Please state or explain any additional concerns or experiences you have had or any other information (e.g., workload issues)'; 'Please tell us what changes in your current work environment could have a positive impact on your mental health'; and 'Please tell

us how you think your job contributes positively to your overall well-being and outlook on life').

Correctional workers included staff across a range of positions, though correctional officers were the largest group (n=19). Other groups included probation officers (n=9), managers (n=6), and non-correctional staff (n=3). Due to small numbers within occupational groups, job descriptors are not presented for quotes so as to protect participant identities. Within the survey, women were more likely to speak to EFAP than men (i.e., the sample included 24 women and 12 men; in one case, gender was not specified). The greater attention paid to the programme by women respondents may speak to gendered experiences (e.g., women possibly being more likely to access the programme), although gendered elements were not explored here.

The qualitative responses examined for the current analysis varied in length, some being a sentence or two, others being a few paragraphs. Data was coded using a constructed semi-grounded emergent theme approach.<sup>31</sup> Our approach required the primary identification of emergent themes, which then underwent secondary and tertiary coding processes to elucidate nuances across participants' words within broader themes.<sup>32</sup> We grouped the thematically analysed data into a single working document, which we discussed collectively, before focusing on the salient themes across participant responses.<sup>33</sup> Quotes drawn from the data presented herein have, where necessary, been edited for spelling and grammar without compromise to the vernacular or content. We have also elected to paraphrase many quotations in cases where permission was not granted to directly quote the respondents.

Certain key methodological limitations are worthy of note. First, as open-ended questions did not specifically pertain to EFAP, it is possible that respondents who spoke to this question may have relatively strong views on the programme, which may or may not reflect views more generally among the larger population of correctional workers in the province. Second, because the data was collected by survey, rather than interviews or focus groups, we had

The qualitative responses examined for the current analysis varied in length, some being a sentence or two, others being a few paragraphs. Data was coded using a constructed semi-grounded emergent theme approach.

31 Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.

32 Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Weidenfield & Nicolson.

33 Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.



no opportunity to probe for clarification or to follow up on the participant responses. Third, we cannot for certain determine a sampling frame, given there is overlap between institutional and union listservs and because there are potential participants who were on leave at the time of data collection. Also, of note, some respondents referred to EAP, rather than EFAP, however, we recognise that respondents are actually referring to the same programme, as EFAP is the programme offered by the Ministry. A methodological advantage to the current study was the opportunity for staff to put forth sensitive matters privately and anonymously, as well as the discretionary room enabled by the nature of open-ended questions.

## Findings

### Negative Connotations and Perceptions

Reaching out for mental health support can be a daunting process; during this initial step, experiences of shame, stigma, guilt, anger, and/or the burdens associated with reporting and substantiating mental health suffering can potentially deter subsequent treatment-seeking.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants in the current study described certain impediments to taking the first step of accessing their EFAP programme, tied to both personal feelings (e.g., feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of initiating contact with a new counsellor) as well as social responses. Regarding the latter, some expressed negative connotations associated with the programme, particularly that it was not socially acceptable in their work environment (e.g., there is a 'negative stigma'), which could place in them in a position of social vulnerability, forced to 'justify' their need to access services. Their concerns parallel those expressed in previous studies, namely that accessing EFAP can have negative connotations, thereby impeding EFAPs use by correctional staff.<sup>35</sup>

Negative perceptions of EFAP appeared to be, for some, tied to a broader sentiment of distrust within the organisational environment. Specifically, this sense of distrust appeared, for some, to colour perceptions of the employer-provided programme, with concerns that

the programme was not, in fact, private and confidential. Here, concerns were expressed that employers were aware of who was accessing the programme and even the information shared in the context of this access. Illustratively, one respondent cited a previous negative experience, whereby, in their view, confidentiality was breached through information requests by managers of EFAP information, leading to a sentiment of distrust towards the programme. Although we are unable to verify (e.g., we could not probe the participant for clarification), in their view, access is not confidential — i.e., access is known to employers — thus deterring some from future access. While the programme is intended to serve as a confidential service, staff operating in an environment marked by mistrust may feel that they could be 'outed' regarding their accessing of EFAP, or that information

they share may not be kept private—and could even be used against them in the future. These sentiments evidence how organisational mistrust, combined with mental health stigma, can impede access to EFAP as an employer-provided support.

### Negative perceptions of EFAP appeared to be, for some, tied to a broader sentiment of distrust within the organisational environment.

### Service Quality, Continuity, and Limitations

When staff do overcome the personal and social obstacles associated with reaching out for help (e.g., stress, shame, guilt, stigma), some may face disappointment, frustration, and anger when the quality of services does not match their expectations. Highlighted by respondents who had accessed counselling through EFAP, participants felt the services available were not responsive to their mental health needs or provided in a way that made the support accessible and/or effective. Specifically, some respondents noted that EFAP counsellors were not attuned to the types of occupational stress injuries correctional workers may incur. For instance, a respondent commented on the lack of 'awareness and knowledge with many EFAP counsellors on how to deal with PTSD and deep trauma,' while another similarly expressed their disappointment with the limited 'access to mental health professionals that specialise in trauma disorders and have experience with first responders.'

34. Corrigan, P. W., Druss, B. G., & Perlick, D. A. (2014). The impact of mental illness stigma on seeking and participating in mental health care. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 15(2), 37-70.  
35. Willemse, R. (2021). An investigation into the South African correctional officers' experiences of their work and the Employee Assistance Programme. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 51(4).

Again, paralleling the findings of Willemse, their words speak to a sense that staff face unique occupational realities and work hazards, and thus EFAP services should be tailored and equipped to provide mental health interventions that are responsive to these experiences.

When a worker is faced with an immediate and urgent mental health need following exposure to a work stressor, they may struggle with negotiating and performing the emotional labour required to establish contact and rapport with a new counsellor whom they trust to listen to, who understands their concerns, and can effectively respond to treatment needs. For some, the format of EFAP was not necessarily conducive to an effective service provider-client relationship. Specifically, some expressed concern with restricted options and lack of choice in services, which could render it difficult to find a counsellor who is viewed as a good match. Participants expressed that pre-existing or preferred service providers were not accessible through EFAP following changes to the programme. They described how the restructuring of the programme had served to interrupt services due to changes in providers, potentially creating a barrier to treatment. For example, one respondent recalled how they had established a rapport with a previous EFAP counsellor, but due to changes in the programme, that counsellor was no longer an associated provider and they did not wish to start anew with a new provider. They, like many others, described this interruption as compounding their mental health needs: 'It made the process of accessing supports following a traumatic event much more difficult and stressful'.

Another constraint to establishing a positive therapist-client relationship and efficacy in treatment was identified as lack of continuity in care. Specifically, a common theme was issues tied to quantity, namely a cap on counselling sessions that resulted in insufficient assistance. While EFAP is not necessarily intended to provide robust or long-term treatment, respondents expressed frustration that the number of sessions offered was perceived to be insufficient for addressing their needs and concerns, as the service includes a few short sessions with a mental health professional. In the words of one respondent, available counselling sessions do 'not even come close to helping staff,' as the number of sessions 'barely addresses issues.' Responses indicate the sense that the duration of support was too

limited, failing to provide enough sessions to successfully support the development of skills necessary to develop an understanding of techniques to manage mental health concerns. Underpinning these assertions is an assumption that EFAP should serve as a comprehensive care strategy, which does not necessarily reflect its current or intended role.

Other participants further discussed the sense of insufficiency described by the above participant — that the support required for the occupational stress injuries experienced by staff failed to align with the quantity of the services provided. One respondent explained how their sources of mental distress arose from work-related incidents, yet work-provided supports through EFAP were inadequate to assist with such stressors. Participants who compared occupational stress injuries

with physical injuries, described a sense of incompleteness in service access: 'You wouldn't half treat a physical complaint, like an infection.' Like others, they lamented the seeming incompleteness of treatment provided through a small number of sessions: 'you need more than the few they supply. It should be until you feel better. Why provide a health related support and not follow all the way through?' Their words speak to a recognition that mental health injuries, like any type of injury, must be treated comprehensively ('until you feel better'). Responses express that

generalised policies capping and limiting the treatment of any occupational stress injury may contribute to the sense that mental health-related work injuries continue to be conceptualised as categorically different in comparison to physical injuries. Again, the expectation among respondents appears to be that EFAP is an organisational solution to systematically addressing work-based injuries.

Another concern tied to access to services was the perceived wait times for services. Some expressed experiencing delays in accessing counselling services provided via EFAP, emphasising the importance of immediacy. Echoing others, a respondent exclaimed: 'WE NEED IMEEDIATE ASSITANCE WITH THERAPY, NOT IN A WEEK!' They expressed that delays in service access could contribute to avoidance tendencies among certain staff: 'When someone needs to talk, there needs to be a professional available NOW. Because we are good at burying our problems if you make us wait a week; it won't seem important again later.' Their words suggest the window for intervention does not always align with the time required to access services,

Underpinning these assertions is an assumption that EFAP should serve as a comprehensive care strategy, which does not necessarily reflect its current or intended role.

and further points to a tendency of stoicism among correctional workers that can result in overlooking, downplaying, or ignoring emerging mental health problems. Some called for immediate interventions following stressful incidents, interventions that go beyond what is currently available (e.g., CISM).

As evidenced in the words of some respondents, beyond CISM, EFAP is understood to be the only form of support offered to staff aside from insurance benefits, which are not accessible to all staff, and are likewise viewed as insufficient in terms of covering the full costs of treatment services (e.g., counselling). The perceived insufficiency in mental health supports to offset the impacts of stressful or potentially psychologically traumatic work events and situations may leave staff feeling they are responsible for their mental health as an individual or localised problem.<sup>36</sup> One respondent, for instance, described how limitations in support structures and services left staff 'to try [to] deal with the impact individually or amongst colleagues.' For those who pursue support privately, the result of funding caps on services leaves them 'pay[ing] out of pocket for mental health support for mental health injuries sustained at work.' Perhaps in response, some respondents viewed initiation in mental health treatment via EFAP as potentially complicating access to care as the services initiated through the programme are seen as quite expensive (i.e., if users continue beyond funded sessions) and yet, not sufficient in quantity. The need to privately fund mental health supports can impede access; as one respondent explained, 'I will be paying for services which will affect my level of access.' The frustration expressed with these limitations in treatment funding sheds light on the expectation of respondents that occupational injuries fall within the realm of employer responsibility.

A factor possibly shaping expectations surrounding mental health care is that the mental health needs of correctional staff occur alongside those of correctional populations, leaving staff in a position to compare their relative quality of care. Comparisons within this context were drawn by some participants, expressed in terms of incarcerated persons having greater access to mental health services, precipitating a sense of injustice. While

there are likewise barriers to mental health care among incarcerated and justice-involved populations,<sup>37</sup> respondents reflected on the seeming availability of mental health services without cost to incarcerated persons as indicative of the low value placed on the mental health of staff.

### Perceptions of Support and Social Worth

Across responses was the sense that although mental health concerns, including PTSD, are pronounced among correctional workers, supports are still lacking, with implications for both staff well-being and job performance. Some respondents discussed how, in the absence of adequate mental health supports, correctional work took a considerable toll on the well-being of staff: 'This is a difficult job, even when with the appropriate resources. When we don't have the appropriate mental health resources, it has devastating consequences for our mental health.' One respondent succinctly described how mental health was the cost of correctional work: 'We all take the safety of the public, inmates and our role as Peace Officers very seriously, but are finding that we have to forfeit our personal mental health to work in this environment.'

In some ways, perceptions of the EFAP can aggravate employee tensions insofar as shortcomings of the programme are seen as a reflection of broader, cultural, systemic issues. The anger and frustration with the programme, illustrated by reference to this as 'dysfunctional', 'ineffective' 'embarrassing' and 'a joke,' may speak to larger occupational tensions. As described earlier, the occupational field of correctional work, particularly front-line workers, is often shaped by a cultural script of distrust and opposition towards management. In this context, perceived failures of support programmes can be interpreted in relation to this cultural script, illustrated in the words of one respondent, who explained that the EFAP programme 'makes staff feel like the government does not care about us.'

Perceptions may also tie into the sense of social alienation that correctional workers may feel in relation to the wider public. As noted by previous authors,

When we don't  
have the  
appropriate mental  
health resources, it  
has devastating  
consequences for  
our mental health.

36. Johnston, M. S., Ricciardelli, R., & McKendry, L. (2021). Suffering in silence: Work and mental health experiences among provincial correctional workers in Canada. *Corrections: Policy, Practice and Research*, 1-19.  
37. Reingle Gonzalez, J. M., & Connell, N. M. (2014). Mental health of prisoners: Identifying barriers to mental health treatment and medication continuity. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104(12), 2328-2333.

correctional workers (particularly officers) often perceive themselves as not respected by the public or held in high esteem.<sup>38</sup> Commenting on this sense of social estrangement, one participant explained, 'we are a hidden entity. We are not visible from the public, nor are considered a vocation that has public support, thus do we have the authority for advocacy in improvements to practices with our mental health, even though we are likely the group that needs the most support based on our job duties.' As evidenced in the respondent's words, the invisibility of correctional work compared to other criminal justice and public safety professions (e.g., policing) may render the mental health plight of workers more difficult to shed light on, and from the respondent's perspective, advocate for change.

## Discussion

Our findings highlight that correctional workers experience challenges in mental health service provision through EFAP. Such challenges are, in large part, tied to social perceptions of the programme reflective of larger organisational tensions, as well as deviation between normative expectations (perceptions of what the programme ought to be) versus the actual or intended purpose of it. Emphasised in their responses is the extent to which supports could be better suited to the needs and circumstances of correctional workers, as current gaps and potential drawbacks of services may result in negative experiences in the context of treatment-seeking. The sometimes difficult, conflictive, and burdensome social contexts and relationships informing correctional work environments, the stigma underpinning mental health, and the cultural space that shapes correctional work, all inform how the mental health programming and services are both perceived and experienced.<sup>39</sup>

Sentiments of distrust were tied to interpretations of and concerns around confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity when accessing mental health support or disclosing information in the context of such access. Organisational distrust is common within correctional organisations, particularly emanating towards upward

## Organisational distrust is common within correctional organisations, particularly emanating towards upward senior management and the correctional administration.

senior management and the correctional administration.<sup>40</sup> Specifically, this research indicates that correctional staff, particularly front-line workers, may find themselves socially situated against managers/employers, feeling vulnerable to blame and scepticism, while being deprioritised relative to prisoners/clients. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that organisational suspicion would taint views of employer-provided supports. Combined with organisational distrust is the stigma surrounding mental health issues and resulting treatment-seeking behaviours. The prospect of shame and embarrassment, should one's usage become revealed, may deter accessing the programme (and other available programmes). Here, we see how staff may perceive a need for mental health supports, yet simultaneously are wary about social perceptions in accessing such supports.

Perceptions of the quality of services, specifically as being non-responsive to complex and occupational specific mental health issues, represents a barrier to treatment seeking experienced by many correctional workers. Willemse too found that correctional officers felt disconnected from EAP personnel, i.e., they felt that staff did not understand their needs or work experiences. Brower also identified the availability of specialised professionals attuned to the different mental health needs of correctional staff (and the realities of correctional work) as a key component of successful EAPs in correctional contexts.

Continuity of care was another challenge identified by participants. For some, EFAP provides a venue to commence the treatment-seeking process. While not intended to be a long-term of continuous service, it is clear that many respondents expected that the programme would (or should) facilitate more robust and comprehensive care. Respondents were discouraged by the limits in available EFAP sessions and the caps on private sector service use — they found themselves in a position where they would need to 'start over', explaining again their concerns and challenges, as well as paying out of pocket for sessions

38. Crawley, E. M. (2004b). Emotions and performance: Prison officers and the presentation of self in prison. *Punishment and Society*, 6, 411–427.

39. Chenault, S. (2010). *An ethnographic examination of correctional officer culture in a Midwestern state* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Nebraska at Omaha.

40. Bennett, J. S. (2012). *Working lives of prison managers: Exploring agency and structure in the late modern prison* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Edinburgh.

that exceeded funding allotment. Such challenges can discourage workers from continuing or seeking new avenues of treatment.

What is noteworthy is how the locus of responsibility for mental health is perceived as an organisational problem both in origins and impacts. In particular, respondents perceived the employer as having at least some responsibility for facilitating treatment of injuries that occur as a direct result of work incidents or conditions. This is notable given the cultural and often gendered orientations in correctional services (e.g., strength and resiliency) that may encourage staff to demonstrate an ability to withstand harsh working realities.<sup>41</sup>

On top of providing mental health intervention, initiatives like EFAP serve as an opportunity to demonstrate employer support, which symbolically communicates the importance and value of staff. However, when programmes are seen negatively by employees, the result can be a reinforcing of notions that employees are neither supported nor valued by their employer. This can elicit sentiments expressing moral injury, illustrated by comparisons between mental health service access among incarcerated populations versus the staff who work with them. Future research is needed to unravel the complexities of correctional worker-prisoner relationships and how these relations steer perceptions of mental health services and access in prison environments.<sup>42</sup>

### Recommendations

In the current study, respondents pointed to the need for health service providers who understand the nuances, complexities, and vulnerabilities of the correctional occupation. Familiarity with the correctional context would enable the service provider and client to begin (to a certain extent) with a common foundation of knowledge, allowing focus to be on problems at hand, rather than explanations of the

context in which such problems arise. Further to this point, from the perspective of respondents, there is an appetite for more robust psychological services that are more comprehensive and continuous over time, as well as specifically tailored to the nature of correctional work. Assertions for more robust employer-funded counselling sessions through EFAP reflect the sense that mental health services should respond sufficiently to the impacts of stress and mental health symptoms that staff may experience from their exposure to stressful work events and/or conditions.

Of course, it is difficult to conceptualise a service that might be responsive to all facets of correctional worker needs, as no mental health program can always fulfil the diverse mental health, logistical, and social needs of clients. For example, rendering services more available (e.g., on-site) may simultaneously make them less private. While not without limitations, built-in, automatic and ongoing support mechanisms which do not require individuals to navigate service access could assist both in reducing stigma surrounding mental health access, and remove some pressure from individuals in terms of deciding if and when to access necessary supports. Such a system could also increase discussions around

mental health, which, when brought to the forefront and discussed more openly, may help to reduce the stigma around treatment-seeking that plagues much correctional work and public safety work more broadly.<sup>43</sup> There is also a comfort in getting to know a service provider, thus regular and routinised access could help build the rapport necessary between employee and service provider. Rapport may, at least for some employees, increase the likelihood for the employee to visit the provider in times of need — and also provide an avenue to normalise service use.

### Conclusion

The hazards of correctional work may extend far beyond what a new recruit might assume they are

On top of providing mental health intervention, initiatives like EFAP serve as an opportunity to demonstrate employer support, which symbolically communicates the importance and value of staff.

41. Ricciardelli, R. (2017). Canadian provincial correctional officers: Gender strategies of achieving and affirming masculinities. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 25(1), 3-24.  
42. Johnston, M.S., & Ricciardelli, R. (2022). Invisible ghosts of care and penalty: Exploring Canadian correctional workers' perceptions of prisoner well-being, accountability and power. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*. 1-22.  
43. Gurda, M. (2019). *Barriers that Prevent Correctional Officers from Seeking Help for Extreme Work Stress: A Qualitative Exploratory Case Study* (Doctoral dissertation, Ashford University).

'signing up for.' Correctional work involves a fundamental aspect of bearing care and responsibility for other human beings;<sup>44</sup> as such, staff are entangled in the lives of others and the incidents and situations that unfold in the course of their duties. The impact of the emotional layering and labour underpinning correctional work cannot be disregarded or diminished.<sup>45</sup> Yet correctional work has traditionally been marked by occupational cultures with an emphasis on social values associated with masculinity, including outward toughness and strength — cultures not necessarily conducive to open discussions of the emotional and psychological impacts of work.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, studies of mental health disorders and well-being measures highlight that correctional work does indeed impact staff in profound and diverse ways.<sup>47</sup>

Our analysis demonstrates the importance of the social and occupational context of correctional work in shaping experiences of support programmes like

EFAP; specifically, we found that ongoing tensions within the occupational climate (e.g., mistrust) shaped dispositions towards accessing the programme, while perceived shortcomings of the programme, such as issues with the quantity and quality of services, tended to aggravate employee tensions and lead to perceptions that the offer fell short on supporting well-being. While many criticisms of the EFAP programme were raised, responses highlight an appetite for mental health services that reflect the needs of correctional staff; i.e., timely, robust, confidential, and responsive to occupational injuries and stressors. In a context where structural features of correctional culture that may impede mental health treatment-seeking, and perpetuate stigma around mental health issues, the appetite for mental health interventions perhaps highlights how individual understandings surrounding mental health and work may be more nuanced, revealing complexity, change, and room for positive change.

- 
44. Tracy, S. J., & Scott, C. (2006). Sexuality, masculinity, and taint management among firefighters and correctional officers. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 20(1), 6-38.
  45. Nylander, P. A., & Bruhn, A. (2020). The emotional labour of prison work. In J. Phillips (ed.), *Emotional labour in criminal justice and criminology* (pp. 69-84). Routledge.
  46. Brandhorst, J.K. (2018). *"Don't show any sign of a chip in your armor": The communicative co-construction of mental health in correctional work*. Dissertation: University of Missouri.
  47. Jaegers, L. A., Matthieu, M. M., Vaughn, M. G., Werth, P., Katz, I. M., & Ahmad, S. O. (2019). Posttraumatic stress disorder and job burnout among jail officers. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine*, 61(6), 505-510.

# Examining Correctional Administrator Perceptions of The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

**Dr Creag Dunton** is based at Western New England University, Springfield, Massachusetts; **Dr Hayden Smith** is based at the University of South Carolina, Columbia;<sup>1</sup> and **Dr Frank Ferdik** is based at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee

**In this article we highlight the key themes that emerged following training on preventing sexual violence in prison for high-level administrators in the United States. This included reference to the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), which was designed to prevent, detect, and respond to all acts of sexual harassment and sexual assault occurring within the American correctional system. The findings related to institutional safety have relevancy for both American and UK prisons, particularly due to a lack of research that overlaps both systems.**

## Introduction

For a significant portion of correctional history, the issue of sexual violence within corrections has been ignored or treated with ridicule.<sup>2</sup> This has been fuelled by mass media and public perceptions that sexual violence is a consequential risk related to incarceration.<sup>3,4,5</sup> In the United States, the issue of sexual violence occurring in prison received increased and needed attention following the publication of a 2001 Human Rights Watch report. Based upon accounts from 200 incarcerated persons throughout 37 states in the USA that self-reported victimisation, the report detailed systemic flaws inherent within the American correctional system with regards to accurately identifying and

responding to reports of sexual violence, as well as staff indifference and barriers to reporting.<sup>6,7</sup> Publication of the report generated public outcry over how the issue of sexual victimisation was being handled by corrections officials, leading the United States Congress in 2003 to unanimously pass the *Prison Rape Elimination Act* (PREA). This article will first discuss the context in which PREA was developed, how it has been implemented, and how the context differs from the United Kingdom. Following that there will be results presented of how prison administration in a Southeastern US prison system perceived the establishment of PREA.

A primary approach of PREA involved education and training initiatives for corrections staff and incarcerated persons.<sup>8</sup> While the focus of PREA was to establish a zero-tolerance policy for prison rape and sexual violence, there was a concurrent effort to standardise data collection, ensure accountability, and develop measurable outcomes. Administrators of the corrections system, including wardens and other high-ranking officials, play pivotal roles in initiating and enforcing prison regulations. The success or failure of this policy fundamentally rests in the hands of these individuals, and for this reason, increased scholarly attention concerning how they interpret this federal policy becomes all the more warranted.

To date, only two studies, one conducted immediately before the passage of PREA<sup>9</sup> and one

1. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Hayden Smith, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, 1305 Greene St, Columbia, 29205. Email: Smithhp@mailbox.sc.edu
2. Dumond, R. W. (2003). Confronting America's most ignored crime problem: The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 31(3), 354–360.
3. Smith, B. V., Walton, R. B., Kaneb, J. A., Aiken, J. E., Fellner, J., Nolan, P., Puryear IV, G. A., Struckman-Johnson, C., Chiara, M. M., Trovillion, J., & Dempewolf, J. (2009). *National Prison Rape Elimination Commission Report*.
4. Smith, H. P. (2020). Evaluating the Implementation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA): A 'Lessons Learned' Approach. *Evaluation & Program Planning*, 83, 1-8.
5. Smith, H. P. (2021). Inmate and Correctional Officer Perceptions of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA): A Thematic Analysis. *Journal of Crime & Justice*, 44, 213-225.
6. Mariner, J. (Ed.). (2001). *No escape: Male rape in U.S. prisons*. Human Rights Watch.
7. See footnote 6
8. Smith, B. V., Walton, R. B., Kaneb, J. A., Aiken, J. E., Fellner, J., Nolan, P., Puryear IV, G. A., Struckman-Johnson, C., Chiara, M. M., Trovillion, J., & Dempewolf, J. (2009). *National Prison Rape Elimination Commission Report*.
9. See footnote 8

several years afterwards,<sup>10</sup> have directly assessed the perspectives of correctional administrators regarding both PREA and the extent of sexual violence occurring within carceral settings. Of the two studies discovered that feature warden impressions of PREA, one was authored by Hensley and colleagues immediately preceding the passage of PREA. Here, it was found that wardens perceived their policies around sexual violence as being notably less effective than direct training of correctional officers, with a mere 6.7 per cent of wardens reporting that they believed their policies to be effective.<sup>11</sup> In a study published six years after the passage of PREA, Moster and Jeglic found that wardens were successful in identifying incidents of sexual assault involving physical and coercive contact via hypothetical vignettes, but less so when coercion was vague. In this study, only 29.3 per cent of the participants believed that PREA policies for an institution could be completely effective in the prevention of sexual violence. These wardens routinely favoured increased staff supervision as the most effective means of addressing sexual violence.<sup>12</sup>

To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to capture administrator views of both PREA itself, and the implementation process as it was being introduced across an entire state-run corrections department. Our results may help guide the formation of policies geared towards creating safer and more inclusive institutional climates.

### **Prevalence and Consequences of Sexual Victimization Within Corrections**

Only within the past few years has the issue of sexual violence within corrections come to the forefront

Only within the past few years has the issue of sexual violence within corrections come to the forefront of public attention.

of public attention, yet this problem has plagued the penal system for quite some time. In a 1960s study that examined the extent of sexual victimisation within Philadelphia jails, it was estimated that 2,000 of the 60,000 (3 per cent) individuals studied were the victims of sexual coercion.<sup>13</sup> More recent estimates, since codification of PREA, indicate there were 27,826 allegations of sexual violence throughout all forms of US correctional institutions in 2018, an increase of 14 per cent from 2017.<sup>14</sup> Rape and other forms of sexual violence are neither unique nor exclusive to the American correctional system. Reports have been published by various scholars documenting a high prevalence of sexual misconduct within jails, prisons and other custodial settings across the world.<sup>15 16 17</sup> Even the United Kingdom has witnessed a surge in the number of incarcerated individuals disclosing victimisation experiences.<sup>18</sup> After surveying 408 formerly imprisoned persons in England, 1 per cent of

them reported being forced to perform sexual favours for another inmate, while another 4 per cent indicated they were subjected to invasive, inappropriate, and overly aggressive drug searches by corrections staff that fit the description of unlawful sexual contact (based upon the researcher's assessment).<sup>19</sup> A recent Ministry of Justice report uncovered how the number of sexual assaults between inmates that came to the attention of

English and Welsh Prison Service officials rose from 14,511 in 2012 to 16,218 in 2017, representing an 11.7 per cent increase.<sup>20</sup>

In response, and starting in 2013, HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) issued, for the first time in the history of England and Wales, a survey of corrections officials

10. Moster, A. N., & Jeglic, E. L. (2009). Prison warden attitudes towards prison rape and sexual assault: Findings since the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). *The Prison Journal*, 89, 65-78.
11. Hensley, C., Dumond, R. W., Tewksbury, R., & Dumond, D. A. (2002). Possible solutions for preventing inmate sexual assault: Examining wardens' beliefs. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 27(1), 19-33.
12. Moster, A. N., & Jeglic, E. L. (2009). Prison warden attitudes towards prison rape and sexual assault: Findings since the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). *The Prison Journal*, 89, 65-78.
13. Davis, A. J. (1968). Sexual assaults in the Philadelphia prison system and sheriff's vans. *Trans-action*, 6(2), 8-16.
14. Buehler, E. D. (2021). *Sexual Victimization Reported by Adult Correctional Authorities, 2016-2018* (Special Report NCJ 255356). US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
15. Banbury, S. (2004). Coercive sexual behavior in British prisons as reported by adult ex-prisoners. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 2, 1-11.
16. Sondhi, J., Hunks, S., & Smith, H. (2018). *Sexual Assaults Reported in Prisons: Exploratory Findings from Analysis of Incident Descriptions*. Ministry of Justice. URL: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/737991/sexual-assaults-reported-prisons-exploratoryfindings](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/737991/sexual-assaults-reported-prisons-exploratoryfindings).
17. Charlie, K. (2018, May 22). 'In the UK, the epidemic of male prisoner rape and lack of support services'. Citizen Truth. <https://citizentruth.org/uk-male-prisoner-rape/>
18. Banbury, S. (2004). Coercive sexual behavior in British prisons as reported by adult ex-prisoners. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 2, 1-11.
19. See footnote 18
20. Sondhi, J., Hunks, S., & Smith, H. (2018). *Sexual Assaults Reported in Prisons: Exploratory Findings from Analysis of Incident Descriptions*. Ministry of Justice. URL: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/737991/sexual-assaults-reported-prisons-exploratoryfindings](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/737991/sexual-assaults-reported-prisons-exploratoryfindings).



and incarcerated individuals to gather more reliable and accurate figures on the prevalence of sexual victimisation within prisons across England and Wales. Further, Andrew Neilson, assistant director of the Howard League, has claimed that estimates of sexual violence within prisons is surely underestimated: 'The issue of rape in prison is one which barely receives any attention in this country, whereas in the United States it is seen as a part of everyday prison life...No one is claiming that we have that kind of problem in the UK, but the official line that prison rape is almost unheard of here seems highly unlikely.'<sup>21</sup>

Following a thorough scan of the Official UK Legislation Website (<http://legislation.gov.uk>), along with multiple published literature databases, it does not appear that either England and Wales, or the entire UK for that matter, possess a national piece of legislation that is similar to the USA's Prison Rape Elimination Act. While it is referenced as part of overall Prison Instructions and Frameworks, as well as reflected in HMPPS' published Safety in Custody statistics, it has not been singled out in a way similar to the PREA in the USA.<sup>22</sup> As explicitly stated by Brown and colleagues, '[m]ale rape literature is limited in the United Kingdom, with little public attention and limited research about prison officers' perceptions.'<sup>23</sup>

### Current Study

The current study addresses a gap in research that examines perceptions of correctional administrators occurring during the actual implementation of PREA. Directors, wardens, and other administrative stakeholders have a key role in the development and implementation of correctional policy. This study is the first to the authors' knowledge to examine the perceptions of the implementation by key administrators in a US state prison system. Results from this research effort not only add to the limited body of literature on administrator views concerning PREA, but may also hold potential policy implications in terms of guiding efforts to create inclusive and safer institutional environments in the USA and other countries.

The issue of rape in prison is one which barely receives any attention in this country, whereas in the United States it is seen as a part of everyday prison life.

The study site was selected because one of the members of the research team served as the principal evaluator for the state prison system under study. As such, the researcher had significant access to and buy in from practitioners. The researcher served as the principal evaluator for an eight-year period, during which time the PREA was implemented.<sup>24</sup>

This research details the perceptions regarding PREA training and implementation of 95 staff members of a state-level Department of Corrections prison system. The goal of the training was how to use PREA standards to create a safer working environment, with the training specifically tailored toward agency administrators. Data were collected, via survey, at the end of a two-day-long training event in 2014 led by Just Detention International that was mandatory for key administrators and included experts from the state Department of Juvenile Justice, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, and the state-level Department of Corrections. For the purposes of this study, these various components will be described collectively as the 'PREA training'.

### Sample

The sample included all key administrators for an entire state prison system located in the Southeastern US. This included a total of 103 staff members, including 98 in administrative positions and five executive staff members. Surveys were completed by 95 participants with all surveys being usable. This represents a response rate of 92.3 per cent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants, only details of their current position and length of employment were asked for. Participants had a mean of 21.6 years of employment with the Department of Corrections, with a maximum of 48 years and a minimum of one year.

### Method and Data Analysis

Following the training, the research team distributed a survey that contained both closed- and open-ended questions designed to assess the PREA

21. Doward, J. (2021, May 1). 'My son was raped in jail-nothing was done'. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2010/may/02/male-rape-prison-jail-howard-league>
22. Ministry of Justice, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (2020). Managing prisoner safety in custody: PSI 64/2011. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-prisoner-safety-in-custody-psi-642011>
23. Brown, H. L., Tzani, C., Fumagalli, A., Reynolds, A-L., & Williams, T. (Accepted/In press). Prison Officers' Perceptions of Prisoner Male Rape Victims in England and Wales. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*.
24. Smith, H. P. (2020). Evaluating the implementation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA): a 'Lessons Learned' approach. *Evaluation & Program Planning*, 83, 1-8.

training (i.e., delivery and content), as well as perceptions of prison administrators about the training materials. All surveys contained a cover letter that underscored study protocols, particularly the research being anonymous and confidential. A convergent parallel mixed-methods approach was employed, utilising a survey of quantitative and open-ended qualitative items. A mixed methods approach is suitable for this study as it allows for analysis of qualitative data to further explore themes that emerge from quantitative analyses.<sup>25 26 27</sup>

The quantitative questions first addressed the delivery of the training and were based on a modified Likert scale, eliminating the 'neutral' or 'no opinion' option. The open-ended questions centred around three topics: strengths (i.e., opportunities for positive change), challenges (i.e., limitations and barriers), and opportunities for the correctional agency (i.e., current strategies already being used) (see Appendix A: Participant Survey Form). Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS, while ATLAS.ti was utilised for the thematic qualitative analysis.

## Findings

Participants endorsed the pace of the training, use of training aids, site arrangements (i.e., room/food), group discussions, preparation and professionalism of trainers, and trainer knowledge at very high levels (i.e., 97 per cent 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with each statement). The variable measuring length of training received 87 per cent 'agree' or 'strongly agree' responses, as some participants found the new information to be intense and would have preferred the training to be spread over a longer period. Additional Likert-scaled questions assessed the content of the training, with participants also responding positively. These sessions were ranked 'very useful' or 'somewhat useful' in the following manner: Talking about Culture Change: Where Are We? (94 per cent); PREA as a Tool for Positive Culture Change (95 per cent); Communicating Effectively and Professionally (95 per cent); Promoting a Safe Environment for LGBTQI Inmates (94 per cent); Warning Signs of Inmate-on-

Inmate Sexual Abuse (85 per cent); and What Would You Do? 3 Scenarios (89 per cent).

Analysis of the qualitative data produced three key themes. These findings are described next, with reference to the participant number associated with quotes.

### Leadership, Communication, and New Reporting Procedures

Participants commonly expressed a linkage between PREA and the need for leadership. However, most responses featured the use of the term 'leadership' using a third person narrative. For example, one respondent wrote, *'The challenge is simply that leaders of this organization. This agency must lead by example to make an everlasting impression'* (A. 32). A smaller subset of responses expressed leadership in the first-person as such, *'As a leader, I intend to complete the following PREA tasks by example'* (A. 10). Leadership was also linked to a need for clear and definitive communication that extended throughout the prison system. Participants expressed concern that the implementation of PREA could fail due to a lack of consistency in communication, with great variability between individual prisons.

A related subtheme involved estimates of how changes to the reporting of sexual violence would be received, processed, and shared. As one participant stated, *'there is currently no way of ensuring everyone is reporting the same way and receiving the same information afterwards'* (A. 77). Participants perceived the training materials would support changes to reporting policies: *'the training can assist with simple and clear reporting procedures and to increase the sharing of information amongst staff'* (A. 54). Related to reporting procedures were concerns surrounding future audits of facilities following the implementation of PREA. Participants perceived the means of ensuring compliance as being unclear and placing significant demand on the correctional staff. One participant wrote, *'PREA requires staff time to implement and get audit ready. This is a part-time additional duty'* (A. 33).

Participants perceived the means of ensuring compliance as being unclear and placing significant demand on the correctional staff.

25. Greene, J. C., & Caracelli, V. J. (2003). Making paradigmatic sense of mixed methods practice. In *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research* (pp. 91–110). Sage Publications.
26. Hanson, W. E., Creswell, J. W., Clark, V. L. P., Petska, K. S., & Creswell, J. D. (2005). Mixed methods research designs in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 224–235.
27. Trahan, A., & Stewart, D. M. (2013). Toward a pragmatic framework for mixed-methods research in criminal justice and criminology. *Applied Psychology in Criminal Justice, 9*(1), 59–74.

Additional points of interest related to standards of practice, as a participant described, *'With standards, PREA provides a focal point and specific goal to improve. This has been needed since the agency no longer does ACA accreditation'* (A. 66).

### Dynamics of Abuse and Vulnerable Populations

Positively, participant responses indicated an appreciation for training materials that defined sexual assault. This included the dynamics of abuse, reinforced by discussions of aetiology, manifestation, and responses to sexual violence occurring in corrections. Participants valued the educational materials that clearly defined the identification of sexual assault, and consistency with prescribed responses, as seen here, *'the training assisted in helping standardise methods of responding to prison rape, particularly with the tools and resources provided'* (A. 47). This theme also encompassed appropriate methods for addressing survivors of sexual assault, with one participant writing,

*'When confronted with an issue of sexual abuse or any instance of a PREA related subject. I have no idea on what to ask the victim. I know what not to ask, but I'm not sure what I need to ask to get information'* (A. 3).

This theme further contained references to materials related to vulnerable populations, particularly incarcerated LGBTQI persons. A number of participants found this topic to be intriguing and recommended additional training because *'more emphasis was needed on LGBTQI inmates'* (A. 2). Others expressed concern in the dissemination of this information to frontline staff, stating, *'the training on LGBTQI was an eye opener. A lot of employees are not going to want to hear it'* (A. 5). Only one negative comment was received, though it was considered noteworthy by the researchers, with a participant arguing that the training should, *'not force feed [sic] the gay mantra down our throats and just treat inmates as people'* (A. 59). It is of course hard to discern if this is truly a marginal perspective, or one held by others but not shared due to issues of social desirability.

### Culture Change

The most general theme to emerge centred on the need to change organisational culture. This largely involved a need to *'break the code of silence'* (A. 2), *'get buy-in from all staff'* (A. 64) and acknowledge that *'some employees will be resistant to change or still unwilling to comply with standards'* (A. 43). Culture change featured perceptions of existing bias in other staff, though this reflection was also personalised, as evident here:

*'We have to get out of the mindset of 'oh, he killed his children or raped young boys, he deserves to be raped once he gets to prison' — I am included in that mindset. No, it will not happen overnight, but this training is a good start'* (A. 5).

The theme of culture change encompassed perceptions that PREA provided an opportunity for enacting systematic improvements for safety.

The theme of culture change encompassed perceptions that PREA provided an opportunity for enacting systematic improvements for safety. This is exemplified by this account:

*'The training provides further aid in developing a culture that promotes safety from all people and reinforcing personal accountability at all staff levels; blending traditional security practices into all aspects of prison operations. PREA provides renewed opportunity to refocus on staff and inmate safety and in shaping acceptable organizational attitudes and values'* (A. 32).

### Discussion and Conclusion

Estimates of the extent of sexual victimisation within correctional institutions indicate that this problem is endemic to many corrections systems.<sup>28 29</sup> As a response to this issue, the United States Congress in 2003 unanimously passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act to serve as a comprehensive means by which to eradicate entirely from correctional facilities any and all acts of sexual misconduct. Such a manoeuvre would seem to represent the first of its kind across the globe, at least with respect to the United Kingdom. PREA's

28. Banbury, S. (2004). Coercive sexual behavior in British prisons as reported by adult ex-prisoners. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 2, 1-11.  
29. Charlie, K. (2018, May 22). 'In the UK, the epidemic of male prisoner rape and lack of support services'. Citizen Truth. <https://citizentruth.org/uk-male-prisoner-rape/>

success is fundamentally driven by whether correctional administrators express support for this policy. To date, only a handful of studies have empirically examined the perceptions and viewpoints regarding PREA held by this professional workgroup.<sup>30 31</sup> Given the influence they wield within correctional confines, studying their judgments becomes all the more important because these are the individuals who shape institutional policy. The findings from our research therefore offer insight into a largely understudied topic, and may be of importance to those correctional officials strategizing ways of preventing sexual violence within their facilities.

Before discussing the implications of this research, it is important to initially highlight some of its methodological shortcomings. To begin, participant reactions to a new policy may carry the risk of social desirability bias.<sup>32 33</sup> Participants had the space to complete the survey privately, though they were in a large room together and the impact of this should be considered.<sup>34</sup> The mixed methods approach may minimise these concerns as the open-ended qualitative comments prompted elaboration on the quantitative survey responses. The focus solely on upper level administration employees also reflects the need for future studies to compare multiple perspectives simultaneously, particularly middle administrators, frontline staff, medical/mental health staff, and individuals experiencing incarceration, as all play vital roles in the correctional system. Also of note was the lack of demographic data collected, though this was to ensure confidentiality and anonymity protocols. Considering the influence of demographics on perceptions of PREA may yield important additional findings. Limitations aside, our study still offers several relevant discussion points.

In short, they appreciated the opportunity to increase knowledge on the definition, manifestation, and response to sexual violence.

This study offers insight into understanding PREA training and administrator responses. The high response rate of this study is certainly a strength at 92.3 per cent and is unique in that it featured the entire upper administration of a state prison system, constituting a population-based survey. Participants had long-term tenure in prison settings, significant experience as administrators, and were responsible for interpreting, modifying, and applying policy. Also, the delivery and content of the training was perceived as valuable, relevant, and pragmatic.

Administrators were optimistic and responded positively to definitional approaches to sexual assault. In short, they appreciated the opportunity to increase knowledge on the definition, manifestation, and response to sexual violence. This included a focus on vulnerable groups, including LGBTQI persons. This supports previous research findings that suggest PREA serves as a conduit to institutional safety for staff and the incarcerated.<sup>35 36</sup> This increased institutional safety, reinforced by expanded knowledge regarding sexual violence, may lead to a cultural shift that can positively impact institutions.<sup>37 38</sup> The role of culture emerged as a broad concept related to the implementation of PREA. In a previous qualitative study in six prisons, correctional staff were found to often view PREA as an administrative, safety, and cultural burden. Male correctional staff in the study believed that PREA produce inequality where female staff would 'get in the way, take their jobs/positions, and/or hurt them occupationally' (p. 255).<sup>39</sup> This misalignment of institutional logics suggests that administrators may utilise the term 'cultural change' to reflect concern that

30. Hensley, C., Dumond, R. W., Tewksbury, R., & Dumond, D. A. (2002). Possible solutions for preventing inmate sexual assault: Examining wardens' beliefs. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 27(1), 19–33.
31. Moster, A. N., & Jeglic, E. L. (2009). Prison warden attitudes towards prison rape and sexual assault: Findings since the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). *The Prison Journal*, 89, 65–78.
32. Fowler, F. J. (1995). *Improving survey questions: Design and evaluation*. Sage Publications.
33. Krumpal, I. (2013). Determinants of social desirability bias in sensitive surveys: A literature review. *Quality & Quantity*, 47(4), 2025–2047.
34. Stocké, V. (2007). The interdependence of determinants for the strength and direction of social desirability bias in racial attitude surveys. *Journal of Official Statistics*, 23(4), 493–514.
35. Smith, H. P. (2020). Evaluating the Implementation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA): A 'Lessons Learned' Approach. *Evaluation & Program Planning*, 83, 1–8.
36. Smith, H. P. (2021). Inmate and Correctional Officer Perceptions of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA): A Thematic Analysis. *Journal of Crime & Justice*, 44, 213–225.
37. Hensley, C., Dumond, R. W., Tewksbury, R., & Dumond, D. A. (2002). Possible solutions for preventing inmate sexual assault: Examining wardens' beliefs. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 27(1), 19–33.
38. Moster, A. N., & Jeglic, E. L. (2009). Prison warden attitudes towards prison rape and sexual assault: Findings since the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). *The Prison Journal*, 89, 65–78.
39. Rudes, D. S., Magnuson, S., Portillo, S., & Hattery, A. (2020). Sex logics: Negotiating the prison rape elimination act (PREA) against its' administrative, safety, and cultural burdens. *Punishment & Society*, 23(2), 241–259.

the implementation of PREA could impact the daily activities and function of frontline staff. As such, PREA training would benefit from group interactions where more specific concerns are shared between different staff groups.

One unexpected finding was the consistent use of the term 'leadership' using third-person terminology. The paradox of leaders distancing themselves from the role of leadership requires further research, and it appears the term was used as a code word to describe a multitude of concepts such as specific to role expectations or job descriptions that may not accurately reflect how they approach their roles. For practical purposes, future PREA-based training may benefit from sessions that explicate the role, function, and duties of prison administrators. The potential for PREA-reporting procedures to be changed also raised questions from administrators, with these participants seeking

reassurances of standardisation, consistency, and fairness in policy.

While more work is needed, the current study demonstrates that the perceptions of prison administrators are a valued, though under researched, component of the implementation of policy. The current study is the first to assess administrator perceptions during PREA implementation with findings providing theoretical and practical insights. Future work would benefit from collaborative research partnerships between the USA and prison services in other countries (including England and Wales) to identify overlapping themes. While there are certainly differences in the demographics of staff and incarcerated persons by geographical location (as well as staff structures, types of prison facilities, available resources, etc.), there is enormous potential in finding generalisable themes that can fuel effective policies to reduce sexual violence occurring in prison worldwide.

### Appendix A: Participant Feedback Form

#### Using the PREA Standards to Create a Safer [Redacted]: A Workshop for Agency Administrators

Please take a few minutes to complete this participant feedback form.

#### Section I of IV. This section asks about your current job.

What is your current job title(s) (e.g., Warden, PREA coordinator, etc.)?

How long have you been employed by SCDC?

#### Section II of IV. This section asks about the delivery of the training.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Length of the training was just right	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pace of the training was just right	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training aids (Powerpoint) were valuable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site arrangements (room/food) were satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Group discussion segments were valuable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainers were open to feedback/questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainers were professional and prepared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainers were knowledgeable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Section III of IV. This section asks about the content of the training. Please rate the following sections in terms of usefulness for your job.

	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Very Useful	Not at All Useful
Talking About Culture Change: Where Are We?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PREA as a Tool for Positive Culture Change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating Effectively and Professionally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promoting a Safe Environment for LGBTI Inmates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exercise: Yellow Light, Red Light	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What Would You Do? 3 Scenarios	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section IV of IV. This section asks about your perceptions of today's training and the future of PREA-related efforts at [redacted].

- a). **Strengths:** After receiving this training, how do you think SCDC can use the PREA standards to strengthen the agency? What opportunities for positive change do you see with PREA?

Explain:

---

---

---

---

---

---

- b). **Challenges:** After receiving this training, what do you think are some of the limitations or challenges facing the implementation of the PREA standards? How could the training be improved upon?

Explain:

---

---

---

---

---

---

- c). **Opportunities:** Can you briefly describe any PREA related activities that have worked well at your facility?

Explain:

---

---

---

---

---

---

If you have any questions about this participant feedback form, please contact:  
[Redacted]

# Interview with Amy Rees, CEO of HMPPS

*Amy Rees is the CEO of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). She is interviewed by Dr Ruth Armstrong who is a visiting scholar at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, a consultant for Prison Radio International, and a member of the Prison Service Journal's editorial board.*

**One month into her new role as CEO of HMPPS, Amy Rees talked with Dr Ruth Armstrong about what motivates her in her work, what she hopes to achieve, and how she will approach the changes she hopes to make. Ruth's interview questions were compiled from speaking with people who live and work in HMPPS, and academics who study this field. We hope this interview will give all our readers a sense of who is leading the organisation and what this might mean for the future.**

**RA: Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview Amy. As one woman to another, can I begin by congratulating you on this appointment, but also admit that while I was delighted by your appointment, I did wonder why on earth you would take on this role? Can you tell our readers something about you that will help us to understand who you are as an individual and what motivates you in your work?**

**AR:** That's a good question, and the first thing that motivates me in my work are all the people I work with. In this job you hear lots of things about the people who work here. You hear a lot about service and our values and our ethics, but what you hear less about is the courage of people who work in HMPPS. People might talk about our values and our ethics, but very few people use the word courage and I think that everyone in my organisation has courage to do what we do in lots of different ways. I know when you think about that, you might think immediately, about kind of physical bravery and courage, and for sure there is some of that, but I think there is a courage that comes every day with carrying the risk of what we do that very few people can really appreciate, and that is from the OSG on the gate, to a probation practitioner in the community, to my job, to Phil Copple's job. It might manifest itself in slightly different ways between people who work in prisons and in probation, but everyone in our service will know about the kind of moments when your stomach flips. It's worrying about serious further offences, it's the responsibility and the risks that people carry every day.

So, what makes me want to do this job is so bound up in that word, courage. I can't imagine many other

things where you would feel such pride about the people who work for you. That's not to be confused with an attitude of 'and we are doing everything brilliantly', but in a way, the more that the organisation has challenges, the more pride that I feel, and the more courage is required to try to turn the ship. So, I guess that's a long way of saying I think this work matters, and of course there are other jobs that also really matter, teaching and nursing etc. but it is definitely one of those professions that matters.

And then added to that, there is something in the heart of what we do, which is again a word that's not very fashionable and we don't use, and that's redemption. We believe in redemption and all that redemption means. So that doesn't mean you don't have to pay back, that is a part of redemption, but it also means there is an opportunity for change and for me, belief in redemption and working with courage is a powerful and compelling combination.

**RA: I hear you Amy, and I know so many people in HMPPS who work with such moral courage, but what I'm trying to think about is what is it about you and what drives you personally that means you want to step up to do this high-pressured job. I'll be honest, as I listen to you, I'm imagining you growing up at school playing team sports, and you're five nil down, and you're saying to your team-mates 'heads up, come on, we are in this together, we can do it' ...**

**AR:** You are spot on with that! I was a big hockey player and yes, absolutely, I have that kind of mentality. You know, I definitely am a 'when the going gets tough, the tough gets going' kind of person. I'll admit it is definitely not the easiest job you can do, and I don't do it just because I'm incredibly proud of the people I work with, I do it because it is a part of me, the organisation is in my blood, you know, I mean, I feel like I grew up in this service.

I was at university in the days when there was still 'milk rounds' [job fairs] in universities. I didn't really know what I was going to do. I studied economics, philosophy, and public policy. So, I could have done anything really, apart from being a doctor. And I went to this 'milk round' and I saw the prison service there. And it is the closest thing I can describe to a calling. I

can't explain to you what happened to me that day. I knew without a shadow of a doubt that that is what I wanted to do. And for every tough day between now and then, well, I have never thought 'I don't want to do this'.

To say something really honest, I often wondered in the pandemic, you know, would I still be leaving my two small children and doing a really crap job at home schooling, which I definitely was, if I didn't think this work really, really mattered? If I was making my money in some faceless global corporation, and I don't think I would have bothered to be completely frank. But for me there was no choice. That wasn't even a choice in my head during the pandemic because so many good staff were continuing doing important things, things that really matter to the society we live in, and that is a real motivator for me.

**RA: Well, I think so many working parents reading this interview will identify with that! And could I also be nose about your use and definition of the word redemption? Because sometimes people understand redemption as something wishy washy. They don't necessarily understand it as something that can have accountability as part of it. Sometimes it gets confused with the religious concept, and you said it in a very practical and grounded way, 'Yes, we want people to change, we believe in different futures, and there's an accountability aspect to that'. Where does your understanding of redemption come from?**

**AR:** So, first of all, I think one of the reasons it's falling out of fashion is because it's kind of very associated with Christian religion. But I do actually mean it in the religious sense, though not because I'm religious. What I mean by that is, I think the religious sense is very clear in exactly what redemption is — there is an accountability part as well as a new futures part. So, for me it isn't a fluffy concept, it includes the fact you've got to be accountable. There is personal responsibility. There is punishment involved. But there is also the idea of change and moving forward, and a future. And where does that come from? I remember when I was still quite junior in the job, Claudia Sturt was governor of Belmarsh. There was a big double page spread article in the newspaper about her. It wasn't really about anything negative, which is fairly

There is personal responsibility. There is punishment involved. But there is also the idea of change and moving forward, and a future.

unusual. It was a profile piece on a female governor who was running this high security prison, which was still odd enough then to be a double page spread. I forget which newspaper, but I remember that she talked about her understanding of the concept of redemption, and I remember being really struck by it and thinking that was a good articulation of what I believed and why I was doing what I was doing.

**RA: I could talk with you forever about understandings of redemption, and how HMPPS can support or hinder it, but we must move on, because I need you to explain to me and our readers what exactly your role is and why has it been created? And also, on what basis the restructure that resulted in your role was determined as needed/beneficial right now? We tried to bring prisons and probation together under NOMS back in 2008, if it didn't work then, why will it work now? What is different this time?**

**AR:** In many ways the job is no different from the one that Michael Spurr did — it's the Chief Executive Officer of HMPPS. It's the whole organisation, it's prisons and probation. But most of the time, and in fact for a lot of the time when Michael did it, there was only one director. Now Phil Copple will be the Director General of Operations for the Prisons, the Probation Service and the Youth Custody Service (YCS), so all of the operations will come underneath him, and we will work together in a partnership that really is similar to the way the organisation ran for a lot of years. And I know we have had all sorts of structural changes, but in the period where there were three of us heading up the organisation, to be honest, that was the anomaly.

So, there has been a period of lots of change within HMPPS, but in some ways this is a return to the way things have been. We are trying to say prisons and probation should be in one organisation. And to be clear, this is all we're trying to say. I am not trying to say we should have one identity or one culture and we should all be the same person and do the same job. We are saying it's important that prisons, probation and the YCS are part of one organisation. What we're not doing, which was what happened in 2008, is anything to do with commissioning. So, we're not trying to say money is going to flow through the organisation differently. This is purely about line management.



And the other thing I would say to you is this is not in-theory. This model has been tried and tested. It is the one I managed in Wales and has been in place for six years there. So, it is prisons and probation working to the same executive director. They still have the same professional and very distinct identities, but they work to one boss. And what I think that does is drive much closer alignment.

And I have a vision for how this alignment will work, and you'll be wondering what on earth I mean by this, but it's a vision of rockets and boats.

**RA: You're not wrong!  
What do you mean by that?**

**AR:** It is about what we want to do and how we are going to achieve it. My number one priority is improving operational delivery on the front lines. We want prisons, probation and the YCS to deliver and to improve, and to do that, we want to make things better for staff. That is what we want to do. That is our sole objective.

This is where the boats come in. Do you know that famous line the boatman Ben Hunt Davis said was the key to the rowing team winning gold in the 2000 Olympics? He said the one thing that brought that team together was that every single day for the two years training before that race, they all asked themselves the same question about everything they did: 'Will it make the boat go faster?' If the answer was yes, they did it, and if it was no, they didn't.

For me, in my role, my sole objective, my sole question, is asking: Will it make us improve operational delivery at the frontline? I've got two things that I think are equivalent to tinkering with the boat that can make us improve. The first is the way we pay and support our people. We need a modern working offer. We need to think about pensions and pay. We need to think about doing that differently. And the other thing we need to do to redesign the boat to go faster is to find a way to do some long-term financial planning. Our planning cycle is very short term at the moment, and things like building new prisons which is big infrastructure, are very difficult to do on a short-term planning cycle. So those are the kind of two redesigned strategic things I'd like to do to the boat.

But the main thing I can do to make that boat go faster is chuck out a load of stuff from the boat, that

might make it go slower, right? We are one of those boats that are filled with bits of, I don't know, old cushions and umbrellas and disused wood at the bottom in the bows. There's quite a lot we can do to make this boat go faster by stopping doing some things we don't need to do any more, things that are not making our boat go faster. That's one of the things we are trying to achieve with moving back to one HMPPS, we're trying to make the decision makers much closer to the frontline operational staff. And one way to achieve this is to reduce the size of headquarters. That is an explicit aim for me. I want to try and get rid of the stuff that just makes the boat a little bit too heavy.

And then there is the rocket. And that is also related to having one united HMPPS. And it may be a trite and old story, but I'm motivated by the story of the President of the USA visiting NASA, who stops to speak to the man who is sweeping the floor in the space station and says to him, what do you do here? And the man responds: 'I'm putting a man on the moon'. That is all I want from one HMPPS. We might have three different parts of the organisation and have some cultural differences between them, and do different parts of the job, but ultimately, we are all doing exactly the same thing — protecting the public and reducing reoffending. That's what I want everyone in this organisation to think all of the time. What am I doing towards

We might have three different parts of the organisation and have some cultural differences between them, and do different parts of the job, but ultimately, we are all doing exactly the same thing — protecting the public and reducing reoffending.

that? What am I doing to protect the public and reduce reoffending?

**RA: That's a very helpful analogy, and the obvious follow up is to ask you, if that is what you want to do — to be sure you invest in front line operational staff so that everything the whole organisation does will better protect the public and reduce reoffending — how will you actually achieve that? What are your priorities for this role, in the short/medium and long term?**

**AR:** How am I going to improve operational delivery on the front line? By stopping doing a lot of stuff. So, we've got a lot of change programs, way too many in my view. I want to cut those. One HMPPS is a way of making that boat go fast because it is a way of making the decision maker closer to the frontline rather than further away and also a way to remove some of

the apparatus of headquarters. I wouldn't want that to be construed as me thinking people in headquarters lack commitment or do not add value because I do not think that. What I think is they produce a lot of good, even excellent work, but more than the frontline can absorb, so it becomes a self-defeating circle, rather than a self-improving one. We need the frontline to be able to absorb what is happening. And in terms of how we are going to do it, I would just repeat the main message, so people are not confused. I am going to put a great team around me, and I am going to focus on the two strategic issues we have already discussed: How do we have a better offer for staff, number one, and how do we have long term financial planning, so things don't get put in the 'too difficult' box.

There is of course a practical question about how I am going to do this. When I took this job my lead non-exec director said to me, 'Amy, every single CEO I have ever worked with in this job has said to me they're going to be strategic, but then they struggle to be strategic because they end up firefighting each day, you know, poor performance in one prison, things that have happened with staff in another, governments change, new politicians and the rest of it.' And they are right. It is very difficult to be strategic with these day-to-day pressures. So, one of the reasons we've designed ourselves as we have is so that Phil Copple, as Director General of Operations for Prisons and Probation, and his team will absorb a lot of the day-to-day stuff which happens in our organisation and must be managed, and I will manage a team that will not always get sucked into that day-to-day stuff and we'll manage the strategy. We are still in the transitions phase at the moment, but by January 2023 that will be the structure and that is how we will move ahead, and I don't think we've actually had a go at doing that in the organisation for quite a long time.

**RA: One of my main take-aways from conversations with HMPPS staff ahead of this interview is that currently there is an overwhelming sense of disillusionment among prison and probation staff. Your staff are, on the whole, committed people, and especially in probation, people who don't just do a job, they have a vocation — their disillusionment with a whole new restructure makes me wonder if now is a good time to be doing this, arguably on the back**

**of a massive waste of public money in separating out prisons and probation and fracturing the probation service through privatisation? Is this a good time for the restructure, and what can be done to bring staff along?**

**AR:** One of the things that can really help when bringing people along with change is being clear at the delivery unit level. Let me be absolutely clear what I mean by that. I mean, anyone operating in a probation delivery unit or in a prison, this will mean zero change. So, in their working life, zero change, nothing will happen. The biggest impact to people on the front line is who is their Regional Probation Director (RPD) or their Prison Group Director (PGD) who sets their direction, because what I'm trying to do here is to have less stuff

coming from our headquarters so that those RPDs and PGDs are much closer to the delivery unit. But there is no structural change for people delivering within a prison or within a Probation Delivery Unit (PDU), zero structural change whatsoever. And that isn't just for operational people. It will be the same for anyone who works in those environments, whether you're a caseworker, or whether you do admin in a prison, they should notice zero structural change. So, you might say well, why bother? Well, like I say, it's to try and move resources out of

How do we have a better offer for staff, number one, and how do we have long term financial planning, so things don't get put in the 'too difficult' box.

headquarters and into the frontline and conversely, to protect the frontline, from things coming from the centre.

But one area where I do want to see some change, that I hope will positively impact the day-to-day realities of the work of frontline staff, to make it easier for them to do the jobs they have always done, is to improve the handoffs in the organisation. They are not good enough. As you know, there is a porous boundary between community and custody. People come in and they go out. They serve bits of their sentence in prison and in the community. We must get better at handing on information. I'm hoping that this re-structure will mean that's the only change frontline staff feel. For them, no change to the structure of their daily working life, but prison colleagues will know their probation colleagues' names, and probation colleagues will know their prison colleagues' names. They will know the people doing pre-release sentence planning and they will work together to work out how to make those things happen well. That's what the frontline should feel, the rest of it should be really the same day to day

to anyone on the frontline, and that includes Prison Governors and Heads of Probation Delivery Units. Quite a big chunk of the organisation should feel no day-to-day change.

**RA: Obviously that kind of information sharing and partnership working feels hugely important, especially to me, but can you just explain to our readers, how does the operational change in the centre and moving resources to the frontline both keep everything the same but also help to bring in what is essentially a cultural change, where people suddenly have the capacity and orientation to know each other's names, to pass on information?**

**AR:** It's a good question, and it's about both culture and capacity, and the answer is that the re-structure itself won't change anything, it won't put boots on the ground directly, but it can free up some budgets to make this happen in the way I've explained. We need more prison officers, probation officers, case admin, you know, admin in prison, we need all of that. And you've got to get all of that stuff done. Otherwise, we can restructure ourselves a thousand times, but nothing will change. You need capacity, but you also need culture change, or you won't get the kind of benefits that we're talking about. In Wales I saw it was possible. People do know each other better. Why? Because they sit around the same table. They report to the same boss. They go to the same Senior Leadership Team meetings. And what they really do in those meetings is they hear the problems. They hear the problems, and they think, you can fix that. What we need is to think together, we could fix that.

And the other thing that happens that is so important to understand is that prisons are, by their nature, closed environments, right? Probation staff grow up in their jobs engaging with partners from day one; engaging with others is part of their daily job. They go out, they speak to police forces, they speak to the Police and Crime Commissioner, they speak to local authorities, they've got to. That's their job. We're only really going to reduce reoffending and tie things up when we work as part of a wider system. Probation has the links to do that in a way that prisons never will. I really want them to, but if they're sat in the same team, then they can go and make those connections that can support people into the community. This will be difficult. Stuff doesn't get fixed by me in Whitehall. It

gets fixed by people who know who runs Burnley council.

**RA: Can we stick to this day to day working realities for a minute, because strikingly, when I asked colleagues in prisons and probation what to ask you, their questions aligned, and were directly about both recruitment and retention of both prison and probation staff because of how they impact the day to day. A prison governor, who was previously a prison officer, said 'At present it feels hard to see beyond our staffing issues and subsequent lack of regime, so would be keen to hear Amy's thoughts about the way ahead.' A probation officer, with 33 years' experience, wanted to know what is being done about staff retention and especially about keeping staff in front-line case management roles. He was concerned that probation staff go into the job to do this casework, but often find it so hard they find themselves looking for a way out of case management sooner rather than later. So, what are your plans around recruitment, retention of recruits, retention of longer-term staff, and also making the criminal justice profession something your team can feel passionate about and proud of once more?**

They hear the problems, and they think, you can fix that. What we need is to think together, we could fix that.

**AR:** I totally agree. But the trouble is those things — recruitment and retention — are interconnected with pay and pensions and with a job that feels and is doable, that you can feel proud of, because there's a powerful combination of things that motivate people. And I don't think for one minute it's pay and pensions solely, because no one would choose this job just for money. You'd go off and do something else. But you do need to remunerate people properly and fairly. And they need to know what they're going to be paid over the next 3 to 5 years. And they need to be able to financially plan. And that is just part of being a good and reasonable employer for all the other things that we've talked about. And if you do these things, staff are in. I hear stories like that all the time and my working assumption is that the thing that's concerning people is probably workload. Right now, workload is directly driven by how many other people I can get to do that job. So, pay and pensions matters because it matters to recruiting staff in a wider market into the organisation in the first place, and retention of all staff matters, because it matters to workload, to how well people feel they can do their job. I mean I've got to

have the right number of people so that the workload is manageable and they feel like they have a shot at managing that risk we talked about right at the beginning, because if there's too many [people on each caseload], it's very difficult to do that and then they don't stay after we give them quite a lot of training, particularly on the probation side.

All of this is definitely bound-up with a modern job offer that people feel is at least right and reasonable, and with getting the workload back in check by chucking stuff out of the boat. Right? Don't get that person to do a load of stuff that doesn't really help either reduce reoffending or protect the public. And I do think we have overlaid a few too many things on the role. But I'm always nervous when I say that to staff because then they think I have unrealistic expectations about all the things we can stop doing. And that is a careful, tricky thing to do. But there are things we can stop doing. That is my view, but that will need careful picking through.

But the main thing I want people working in prisons and probation to know is that we're really focused on it. There are a few things I would just say about that. So, the first thing is you can definitely reassure your readers, we are eyes wide open about the problem of recruitment and retention and we are, you know, back to my sole purpose which is to improve frontline delivery. We know the very first problem in frontline delivery is recruitment and retention and it is actually retention over recruitment because we still recruit quite well. We need to improve retention.

First thing I would say to you is that we are looking at the data. The early signs in July is that retention is just starting to level off, and maybe even dip down. We won't know until after Christmas if that's looking a lot better, because August you can't tell because most people don't change jobs in August, and then there's a data lag, and there is a couple of wider trends going on, which is I think the same in all workforces, which is we have zero movement rate during COVID. Now it's very interesting because what we don't yet know is whether what's happened is a sort of natural storing up of all the people who naturally wanted to change their jobs and all the rest of it or whether we've got a permanent accelerated rate, and it's very difficult for anyone to know that. So, we're really interested in the data.

The best way to learn is to talk to people, so we have done lots of work on why people are exiting. Pay

is in there and you know we've talked a bit about that already and we have signed a three year pay deal for probation and we have got a decent pay award on the prison side that got paid this month, and probation gets paid at the end of October. So, it will be interesting to see genuinely what impact that has for people. But I was only speaking to a probation lead this morning who told me that two of her caseworkers had rescinded their notice and two would come back because of the pay award because they really like the work, but they just didn't get paid enough to live on [in their location] before the pay award. This is just an anecdote and pay is definitely not the sole problem or the sole answer. We have also got a lot of what I term 'hygiene factors'.

I mean things like people having somewhere to buy their lunch, people having somewhere to park their car, people being welcomed properly on the first day. And I think one of the issues is we have had such a lot of recruitment and turnover and COVID, we haven't done some of those basics very well.

But the main thing we have still got to crack is, you could call it mentoring, but really it is feeling like someone loves and cares about the staff. That is hugely impactful. We haven't quite cracked that. We tried lots of different things. Is it the line manager who should do it? Should it be a dedicated team? You know, that's the managing new prison officers or PQUIPs (probation officers in training) or whatever. But we've definitely got to make people feel more valued. That is the bottom line. And we've got to address workload.

The other thing is workplace, I'd like to share a quick story, which is true. When I got the staff survey back right from probation last year, I couldn't really compare it to anything because it's the first year we've been a full organisation. So, there were 7000 people who had never been in the organisation before. So, you can't do a baseline. So, we just looked at what had happened over the group and band 4 probation officers were noticeably less happy than everyone else. This stood out. So, I went around the country and did a series of deliberately small events that people signed up for, and I started off by saying 'just tell me how it feels for you.' I went to Reading, which is one of the worst places for our recruitment and retention because it's not quite London, so you don't get some of the benefits of London, but it's extremely expensive. I had eight probation officers in there who were all relatively

We know the very first problem in frontline delivery is recruitment and retention and it is actually retention over recruitment because we still recruit quite well. We need to improve retention.

young. I would say, you know, the oldest was about mid 30s, and mostly women, not exclusively, but mostly and they were self-selecting. They were there to tell me they were unhappy that was the point of this group, and of the eight of them, three of them had left and come back. What they really told me is that they went to do something else for the same money, which was easier, but it didn't matter as much. They just didn't feel the same kind of love for the work. But they also said they don't want to work 55 hours a week and carry a caseload that's too big — they can't really do that either. And I'm not being falsely positive, it was a hard meeting, I had to take a breath going in and a deep breath afterwards, but I did ultimately feel positive, because I can fix the 55 hours and the workload if I can get the right people into the organisation and train them. I might not be able to fix it quickly, but I can fix that. And what I heard is that underneath it all, I have a work force who are doing a job they want to do, and that's what made me feel positive. The fundamentals are absolutely there, we've got to fix these other things so that people do stay and they feel like they're doing a meaningful job. What I really feel all the time is that we're walking down this tunnel, and I need to keep pointing people towards the light. I really do believe it does exist. But you've got to keep facing that way.

**RA: We are getting towards the end of this interview, and I know I haven't left you enough time to answer these last questions, but I don't want to miss them out, so could I ask you to briefly comment on them because I also asked some people in prison and on probation what they would ask you. One person was very concerned about what he saw as political interference in prisoner's progression through the prison system, to open conditions and to release. He wanted to know what you think of these developments, and what you are doing to address people's concerns [at this point Amy kindly pushed her next meeting by ten minutes to be sure she had time to address these questions, but please understand readers, it was my bad timing, not hers, that means these answers are more succinct]?**

**AR:** We live in a democracy and part of my job is to work with Ministers who have a mandate from the ideas in their party's manifesto. And I do think there is

a very strong place for our professional expertise being heard properly, and this is what I hope will be reassuring for your readers. There is a right and proper tension, but we do get heard on our professional expertise and then between us we [the criminal justice professionals and the politicians] have to work out what the right thing is to do. That is true over a million policy things, not only in justice. We have professional expertise. We have a conversation. We do what we do, and then it's our job to implement policies in the best way that we can.

**RA: Someone recently released from prison and on probation had a more specific question, which relates to a broader topic of rehabilitation. He wanted me to highlight the challenges of digital exclusion — how hard it is to get to grips with life when you have been excluded from technology while in prison. Specifically, he wanted to know not just how this can be remedied, but also how HMPPS might harness technology to support people through the gate, for example through an app that people could use in prison to prepare for release and to access support post-release. I know technology has been on the agenda for years, but what progress has been made and when there aren't even enough staff to get people out for meals and showers, is**

**it realistic to think things like technological changes that support rehabilitation can be implemented?**

**AR:** We have done a lot of work on that and a big focus in the Target Operating Model is to do better on that transition between prison and the community. And as I said before, One HMPPS is about that as well — about how you do better handovers from prison to the community. We've got a really clear vision and strategy and along with that we have the £550 million that we received to deliver reducing re-offending outcomes — that will really make a difference to making it possible to implement that strategy. But there is a lot more work to do to make the system work as we would want it to, and we haven't had the clarity of focus on it between staffing challenges and transitions, I accept we haven't quite got it. There are parts of it that are starting to come together, like pre-release teams starting to work in prisons, but there's a lot of things we still need to do and one of our senior managers, Helen Ryder, is leading on this work to make that happen.

They were there to tell me they were unhappy that was the point of this group, and of the eight of them, three of them had left and come back.

**RA: I know we are really out of time Amy, but one final question if you can squeeze it in, from colleagues in the academic community, who wanted me to ask you what do you think a commitment to rehabilitation and reintegration entails, and how do you intend to minimise the harms that prison does to people inside, to their families and to communities? And to really push it, the one thing I wanted to know, is what is the one thing, when you're retired and meeting up with your friends for a tea and a scone, or chatting with your grandchildren about what you did in life, that you want to be able to say you achieved in this role?**

**AR:** I think rehabilitation and reintegration are intertwined with reducing reoffending and protecting the public which, as I set out earlier, are the things we are all here to achieve and should underpin everything we do. I want everyone who comes into custody to experience safe and decent prisons with constructive regimes and the right support in place for their release into the community.

As I mentioned, by prioritising frontline delivery and bringing prison and probation staff closer together, we will be able to provide better services for everyone

we work with whether they are in custody or the community and in turn, achieve better outcomes for victims, communities, and the public.

I spoke earlier about this work being my calling and that is something I still hold strong and will be with me throughout my career. I want to be able to look back in years to come and know that in every role I have held, I served the public and the staff I have been responsible for well and to the utmost of my ability and by doing so, I will have contributed to making the communities my grandchildren (hoping I have some) live in a safer and better society.

I was very proud and humbled to attend the recent funeral of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of HMPPS and I remember thinking — I really hope when I die people think I had a career in the service of others.

**RA:** Overall, a huge thank you for your time today, and for taking on such a challenging role, for being willing to answer these questions, and for your leadership and courage in times of unprecedented economic and ideological challenge for our public services. I'll now see if we can track down Helen Ryder so we can discuss with her some of the resettlement challenges and the strategy her team is looking to implement!

# From strategy to street: Can resettlement policy really make a difference?

*Helen Ryder is Head of Resettlement and Commissioned Rehabilitative Services within the Probation Reform Programme, Tajinder Singh Matharu is the Senior Responsible Owner for the Offender Management in Custody Recovery Project and Ryan Walker is Executive Assistant at the Howard League. They are interviewed by Dr. Ruth Armstrong.*

**In early November 2022 Dr Ruth Armstrong (RA) interviewed Helen Ryder (HR), Tajinder Singh Matharu (TSM) and Ryan Walker (RW) about planned changes to resettlement policies and practice under the new One HMPPS structure. This interview took place shortly after His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation issued a report on 'inadequate' probation services in London, and a day before inspectors published a report calling for a root and branch overhaul of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model. The contents of the OMiC report were not yet known when this interview was recorded, but the conversation transcribed below does reference some of the concerns highlighted in that report which were readily apparent to those working with and being managed under this model. Other relevant contexts for this conversation are the ever-present consequences of recovery from the Covid pandemic, severe shortages in front-line staff in the criminal justice system and beyond in related services, and the move to 'One HMPPS' under the leadership of Amy Rees, as discussed in the interview with her also published in this issue.**

**Helen Ryder** is the Head of Resettlement and Commissioned Rehabilitative Services within the Probation Reform Programme. Prior to taking on this role she worked in the Welsh government, but before that she has a broad range of experience in the prison system, from working in learning and skills focussing on the delivery of purposeful activity, training and employment, to being a deputy governor and then governing several prisons across the estate.

**Tajinder Singh Matharu** is the Senior Responsible Owner for the Offender Management in Custody Recovery Project. Tajinder has over 18 years of experience in the criminal justice system. He began as a probation officer and has always lived and worked in London. Most of his practice in probation was on the prolific and priority team so he has experience of working in multidisciplinary teams alongside other criminal justice professionals and community partners.

Before moving into a more policy focussed role Tajinder worked with partners to set up one of the first Community Hubs. He has been part of the Probation Service throughout several systems changes over the years, he has worked as Head of Performance and Quality in the National Probation Service (NPS) London and the Youth Custody Service and most recently as Head of Assurance, Risk Management and Governance for HMPPS. He brings to this role an understanding of front-line probation work, inter-agency work, but also a sense of how the service can try to work together to deliver a better-quality service.

**Ryan Walker** is the Executive Assistant at the Howard League and is currently under supervision in the community having completed 15 years in custody. While in prison he gained a first-class social science degree in Criminology and is now studying a Masters in Crime and Justice. Ryan brings many years of personal experience of the criminal justice system to the theoretical knowledge he is developing through his studies. While in prison he was a student, then mentor and finally course facilitator on the University of Cambridge's Learning Together Butler Law Course. His focus now is on building forwards positively in his own life and using his experiences to shape the system to better support people in prison and post-release.

Helen and Tajinder are both relatively new to their roles, having begun only a few months ago, so this conversation was very much setting the scene for their hopes, aspirations, and vision of the way ahead. Between them, Helen, Tajinder and Ryan have nearly 50 years of experience in different facets of the criminal justice system, and during this interview each of them showed a passion for things it can do well, an understanding of its failings, and a commitment to playing their part in system improvements for the benefits of all involved.

**RA: Today we want to discuss current realities of resettlement policy and practices, and future-plans, but it would be helpful to start off with some history. You have all been involved in one way or another with the criminal justice system**

**over the last 15 years or more. There have been many changes in policy over that time. Recent history of Offender Management in Custody and in the Community has certainly been turbulent to say the least. Could you give our readers a brief history of resettlement in England and Wales that will set us up for better understanding the context of the work you are doing at the moment?**

**TSM:** I'd be happy to speak to my experience of that. I left the probation service in 2018 and we were just starting to talk about OMiC at that time, so I wasn't so familiar with it, and then I've been out since then, so in many ways I'm coming to it with fresh eyes, which has been a steep learning curve over the last few months. But, that said, in all my years in probation we have always had some model of end-to-end offender management, whether through the National Offender Management Service or the newer OMiC system they were just bringing in, there has always been a version of trying to bring prisons and probation together in their practice.

So currently everybody has their views about OMiC. People often talk about it being very complex and this may well be something the Inspectorate pick up in their report due out tomorrow, but essentially what I've worked out is if you strip everything back, OMiC is a framework that tries to coordinate a prisoner's journey through custody and back into the community, so that's not a new concept. That's not a new thing. But as a new model of an old thing, I think its main aim was to put rehabilitation at the centre of custodial and post release work, in order to reduce reoffending, to promote community integration and to protect the public, and this should be at the heart of any model. I can sign up to that aim, and that's why I'm here. But we are trying to do that in an incredibly complex system, and that's why it's important to think about our history and identify where we are on that journey, what the challenges are, what the blocks are, what the experiences are, and how we can tackle some of those.

And if I think about where we are currently with the OMiC model, I can identify two main challenges. One is that it was rolled out just before COVID, and we know that COVID had a profound impact on delivery of services across the piece. So, we can't ignore that. And the second challenge here is recruitment and retention. So, I think our biggest challenge remains the national staffing pressures that are impacting on the ability to

reach full staffing in some regions. However, national recruitment campaigns aimed at Probation Service Officers and ongoing new intakes of Professional Qualification in Probation (PQIPs) are underway to help to resolve this situation. So, whatever the model, that's our starting point. And we are on the start of the journey to look at that. So we are asking ourselves questions like, Where are we now? What can we do in the short term, medium term, and long term to make the model work in very challenging circumstances.

**HR:** And I'd like to add to that with a very specific resettlement focus. The OMiC model sets out when the responsibility for an individual going through custody and heading back into the community is handed over to a Community Offender Manager. And I think for

resettlement as in the services that we offer and provide to support that transition between custody and the community, the actual ownership of that process, I think, is an interesting one across probation and prisons. In the past we had resettlement colleagues in a resettlement team based in the prison, made up fundamentally of prison staff. We would have probation colleagues working in prison, with specific activities that probation colleagues would advise on, particularly for those deemed higher risk, such as parole and release on temporary license, but in terms of the kind of ownership

OMiC is a framework that tries to coordinate a prisoner's journey through custody and back into the community, so that's not a new concept.

of the process, it was something that we used to have prison staff delivering. In 2015 (when we did the Transforming Rehabilitation split of the probation service into the public National Probation Service and the private Community Rehabilitation Companies), the responsibility for resettlement fell to our Community Rehabilitation Companies in the form of through the gate teams that were placed into prison. Then we had an enhancement of that because we got some additional funding, so we had enhanced through the gate teams and that led people up to probation supervision post release. Following the re-unification of probation in June 2021, the model for resettlement and how it would be delivered changed, and the responsibility for resettlement very much fell to the probation service. So, the colleagues who are going into prisons now as pre-release teams are working for the probation service. Under the OMiC model people are handed over to their Community Offender Manager before release, and these Community Offender Managers are probation staff. So, we are looking at questions about responsibility with resettlement and



how we measure its success. These are things that as an agency we've never quite established strategically. And the work we are leading to look at the models of how we best support and deliver this resettlement work, and the new approach within One HMPPS where we're very much thinking about the fundamental role of us all as an agency working together to achieve our strategic priorities, really enable us to think about this more seamlessly, hopefully for individuals who are going through that transition from custody into the community.

**RA: Thank you. You posed a great question there - 'Who owns resettlement?' And I'm wondering what is the answer now?**

**HR:** I think it's sits across prisons and probation, which is the challenge we are working on together. For me, re-settlement begins on day one in custody or even before then, from the point of the pre-sentence report in court thinking about your immediate needs and your longer term needs to help to prepare you for getting back out into the community. And then obviously people go into the prison system and depending on the length of the sentence, engage in different interventions. Different experiences of education, employment in prison, depending on the length of sentence. It's obviously very different for somebody who's got a long time between the beginning of their sentence and the potential end of their sentence, and somebody who's got short sentence, where we need to think about prioritisation and immediacy of need.

For example, around accommodation, if somebody's out in six months, we really need to start thinking immediately about where they're going to live when they're released. But if you've got a long tariff, then we've got some more time to be planning and thinking about that. But either way, that assessment of needs at the beginning of the sentence and all the different interventions and activities that are coordinated within the prisons ahead of release, those are the responsibility of the prison governor. But the preparations for release and the support with that process comes from probation. So, the pre-release teams are probation staff now, and they are based in

prison. Under OMiC it's become a very jointly owned process.

**TSM:** I think that's right, and from my perspective every person sentenced should have an individualised sentence plan, and they should be familiar with it, and everybody in the service should be working alongside each individual to support their progress against that sentence plan. And the ownership of that sentence plan from an agency perspective sits with one Offender Manager somewhere, whether it's a Prison Offender Manager or a Community Offender Manager, depending on where that individual is in their sentence. But then everybody else in pre-release teams or any other team is playing a supporting role. And therein lies the challenge, it is understanding what role everybody plays in this space and having clear ownership of the plan. So ultimately, it is the individual who owns their plan, but in partnership with the Prison Offender Manager and with the Community Offender Manager and bringing other people in as needed.

It's obviously very different for somebody who's got a long time between the beginning of their sentence and the potential end of their sentence, and somebody who's got short sentence, where we need to think about prioritisation and immediacy of need.

**RA: I hear what you are saying there, and I am keen to bring Ryan in to discuss his experiences of sentence planning in prison and post-release, because as I'm listening to you, I am wondering about how you do that power and responsibility sharing in practice. Do people in prison really have the power to own their sentence plan, to make it their plan, with their goals, and to get the support they need to achieve these goals? And if they don't have the power, can they have the responsibility for not achieving it? Who is the 'last answer' on these issues? For example, what happens if you are getting to the end of your sentence in prison and you are going to be homeless on release and for all the asking you may have done, you haven't got the help you need with setting up any accommodation what happens? Doesn't shared responsibility just mean that everything is pushed to the last person along the line, and might it mean that people are released without adequate support in place, and probation staff in the community are going to struggle to respond resettlement needs if they**

## haven't been adequately addressed and prepared for during the custodial part of a sentence?

**HR:** I think that is the logic of having the Community Offender Manager take that responsibility a number of months before the person is released, so that they've got the opportunity to get to know the individual and also to support them in that transition, and to lead that move back into the community. So, it's not last minute – 'you've got released today, goodbye'. We are trying within the system to prevent that from happening by allowing that lead in time, although we have to be really honest and face the main issue at the moment with our resources, which is that we just do not necessarily have the people in post to be able to do that consistently.

**RW:** I'm happy to reflect on these matters from my experiences. So, when you asked, 'Who owns resettlement?' the first thing I wrote down is that I own resettlement, but we need to think about that in the context of OMiC. Because when you're trying to implement change in the Criminal Justice System, as a recipient of that change, you don't normally buy into it, you don't normally have a purpose within it. So, for example, the system has changed many times throughout the years of my sentence - terminology changed, interactions changed, but because you're just going about your sentence, you're not very invested in it. But OMiC was a bit of a stand-out thing for someone in my situation, because prior to OMiC you had a Community Offender Manager as well as a Prison Offender Manager. Then OMiC came in and the model is basically saying now you're only going to have a Prison Offender Manager and your Community Offender Manager will come later-on in the in the sentence or when you're nearly released. So that change caused a lot of anxiety amongst people doing a long time, because they've established that relationship with their Community Offender Manager, and it felt like that trust, that relationship they had built over many years, was all being taken away. And I think that's the one of the reasons why someone in my situation didn't buy into the OMiC model.

And even though in many ways it's just a change of acronyms and a change of terminology, you have to get used to it, and staff have to get used to it, and it was really difficult to understand when it first was implemented. The staff didn't know what it was,

everyone was talking about this new model, but no one quite knew what it was, so it took a few years for it actually to get embedded. And some of the concepts within the model are really helpful, like the key worker scheme and the way you can sit down with your Offender Manager and actually discuss your risks and do the stuff you need to do to reduce your risk and to plan for your resettlement, thinking about your needs and what you need to have in place for a successful release. So that element of it is brilliant. But in reality, any potential the model offers is bound by the resources available - by the amount of time your Offender Manager can spend with you.

I was lucky because I was in a prison that really bought into the rehabilitative culture and bought into the enabling environment. So, any new type of change being implemented from the top, the prison bought into it. So, in some ways I was in a good place to benefit from the OMiC model. But even in a prison that was doing things well, there were some real difficulties with the OMiC model in terms of being told you were not going to be given a Community Offender Manager, you're only going to be given a Prison Offender Manager. And that is a problem because when it comes to writing a parole report, the Prison Offender Managers weren't allowed to give a recommendation on the new parole scheme. So, the

We are trying within the system to prevent that from happening by allowing that lead in time, although we have to be really honest and face the main issue at the moment with our resources.

schemes didn't work well together, because under OMiC you are working with your Prison Offender Manager to understand your risk factors and the risks you pose, and then all of a sudden, when it comes to parole, your Community Offender Manager is the only one who has a say. The prison offender manager only comments on the progress you've made in prison, so a lot of people found that hard to get their heads around, and the Prison Offender Managers themselves, they just felt helpless, like 'I've done all this work with you but all I can do is give them a bullet point list of what you've been up to in prison'. So, in my situation, I had developed such a good relationship with my prison offender manager and then they weren't able to offer a good reflective report on my progress and that caused a bit of upset.

But in terms of rehabilitation and resettlement, whose responsibility is it? It is my responsibility or anyone else in my situation. And what you need to be able to do when you've got a responsibility is you need

to be in charge of that responsibility, and then you need an agent to allow or help it to prosper basically, and that's what having good funding in place and good training in place does. It means that when you're in charge of this vehicle, your resettlement vehicle, you need to know that the roads are clear that the traffic's going to assist you when you're driving around. You need to know that the lights are going to protect you when it's time to stop. You need to know that when it's the green light, you've got enough petrol, so you'll be able to go. It's a bit of a crazy analogy, but you just need to know that if I'm in control of this car, everything around me, all the structures around me are going to help me to have a smooth journey in this car and there's not going to be any barriers on this car journey. So yeah, I think people who are serving the sentence are in charge, and should be in charge, but we need to be given the impetus to move forward in a safe and secure manner.

**RA: That is a really helpful analogy Ryan, and I want to link it back to something Tajinder said about putting rehabilitation at the centre of what is happening in terms of reducing reoffending, increasing community into integration and protecting the public. With the challenges the service is facing in terms of staff shortages, is it possible to do more than the bare bones of public protection? And if risk management becomes the sole logic of criminal justice practice because there is little capacity for anything else, will rehabilitation and resettlement suffer? To put that more positively, I guess the question could be reframed as what are the current opportunities for resettlement strategy and practice in amongst the huge challenges we are facing, and is the service in a position to take these opportunities?**

**HR:** It's hard for me to say what I want to say here without sounding twee, but I'm going to say it, because I absolutely believe it, and that is that we have some huge advantages as a service, and some huge opportunities, because of the nature of our workforce, because the grand majority of colleagues who I've ever met or worked within HMPPS have a set of shared principles and values underneath everything we do and why we do it. And I think that provides a huge opportunity to build on and to understand how we safeguard that. We've had a lot of reviews and audits and reports lately into the issues that we've got as a

service. But each report has come back saying among our workforce they found colleagues that really care and everybody's trying their best. Everybody's working really hard to make this work, so as a service what we have to do is not so much fix things, but recognise and reflecting that motivation, the principles and the values, and try to support people as we recruit to more optimum levels, so that in the meantime people do not lose heart.

One of the challenges in HMPPS is that everything we do matters. It's not a case of prioritising in the same way other organisations might be able to prioritise because everything we do is so important. There has to be risk management, because it is vital to safety, and I don't see a conflict between security and rehabilitative approaches in prisons because an underpinning of a secure prison where people feel safe when they're unlocked is crucial for rehabilitation. Without safety you just can't do rehabilitative work.

The value of the colleagues we have is absolutely essential, and I think we are seeing it with a lot of the new recruits too. There's a real risk in the fact we have a number of people who are inexperienced coming through. But actually, we still see that sort of passion and that engagement, particularly on the prison side we see it with key workers, because a lot of the people coming through as new officers have done the key

worker training and what we see is that they really look forward to that role and actually having the opportunity to build those relationships with the people that they're working with. And I think for probation colleagues, there's a real appreciation for coming back and being in the probation service and being one organisation again, So I also think the move to One HMPPS is an opportunity. In saying this I am in no way trying to hide the fact we also have high levels of people feeling frustrated and the very real risk of burnout many colleagues are facing. I think partly that comes from doing something you feel passionate about and not being able to do it to the highest standards in the current climate. We are engaged in a number of initiatives in several regions to provide some support, understand their staffing issues, and design an interim way of working that will really try and bring out the best in people, and the best of the situation ahead of the cavalry coming through actual resourcing increase. We are trying to ensure the conditions for success are put in place, those underpinnings of what we need in terms of cultural approach, joint working, mutual

It's not a case of prioritising in the same way other organisations might be able to prioritise because everything we do is so important.

respect. If we can build that into what we're doing in everything we do, then hopefully the new starters that we get to increase our resource will all be in a stronger position to deliver well. I'm not naïve, it will be hard, and it will take time, but I do think we have an opportunity to build forward well from this point.

**RA: I really hear what you're saying about keeping heart, recruiting people with the right values, and engaging with staff on the frontline about just how you can support them through the current challenges, but I want to push you a little bit to say more about how One HMPPS offers an opportunity to build a culture of joint working and mutual respect. How does that happen?**

**HR:** I think the fact that with OMiC the resettlement work is reliant on both parts of our agency working together so structurally means that regions are generating some of this cooperative work themselves. They are holding many joint events and our approach is not to be top down, but to develop good practice from the ground up, from what is already happening within some teams. We need a clear vision of the outcomes that we're trying to work towards and how best we support each other in achieving them, and then we need to enable the events and to bring people together and to enable and empower regional and local leaders to share best practice. I think this is what will make for healthy change and build that culture of joint working and mutual respect.

**TSM:** We don't see this as a top-down process. We see that the strategy moving forwards needs to be developed from within teams, so we need to be clear from the centre on what outcomes we are working towards and then we need to establish how best we support each other to achieve these outcomes through enabling and empowering region through local events and communications and strengthening local leaders and practitioner voice through bringing people together. From the centre we need to work on prioritisation, red lines, boundaries, legislation, these central matters, but we don't want it to feel like we are dictating what happens and frontline staff are delivering it – we are in the business of co-design, working with practitioners who are responsible for delivering the models and those who are under supervision to establish systems that actually work in this space given the current constraints.

I'm not naïve, it will be hard, and it will take time, but I do think we have an opportunity to build forward well from this point.

We really want to get it right and we are willing to try some different and new approaches working from the ground up. We will of course wrap evaluation around the things we decide to do, and we are always conscious of the risks we manage in this system, as well as managing the expectations of all our stakeholders, but within this there is room for evidence led new ideas to be co-produced at a local level, and our intention is to work in ways that empower and enable these innovations in practice.

**RA:** Ryan, perhaps you could respond to that by telling us from your perspective when you think resettlement policy and practise should kick in? What would have been helpful to you or what was helpful to you?

**RW:** I think re-settlement, like Helen said, starts from the minute, or even before, you go to prison, like with the pre-sentence report where they are identifying your needs and identifying some of the problems that led you to go to prison. And I think those problems should start getting worked on almost instantly. Even though I had a long sentence, I wanted to start doing things differently from the beginning. I didn't want to wait years before starting to get the help I needed to do things differently.

I remember going through my 'settlement' period, and although I was 15, I was really eager to change my ways and change my behaviour. But I found there were a lot of barriers in place because I had such a long time. So, for example, I applied for therapy, and I was told 'Oh, you don't need therapy, firstly because your troubles are not big enough – like you've not got that much trauma, and secondly, we've not got the capacity to put you up there because someone's getting out soon and they need that place more than you. You've got a long time left, so we'll push your application back in the queue and reconsider it the future.' So, the lack of space on that therapy unit probably misdiagnosed me because I did need therapy, and it definitely left my treatment needs unmet. That could have been quite detrimental to my future development if I didn't address those core issues that I was really motivated to work on at an early stage, as soon as I got to prison.

And I also think re-settlement is not just about behavioural issues being met. It's about educational aspirations being encouraged and met, and it's about social skills, so all the time out your room, that's all resettlement and you need to be afforded the opportunities to develop those skills during your time in prison within a regime that that allows and encourages

you to develop those skills. And like you say, we'll talk about risk a lot. It runs through everything in prison and post-release, and a lot of the time risk does overshadow resettlement because some prisons are not open to ideas of letting the community in. For example, when I was in prison, I took part in loads of initiatives with the community and they were far more important for my rehabilitation and my resettlement than sitting down on a Thinking Skills Programme, so I think if you want prison regimes that support resettlement and rehabilitation the security risks and risk aversion to broader community involvement just needs to be managed in an appropriate way. It is important to get the balance right. Obviously there's always a need for security, I've been in prison since I was a child and no one wants to be in an unsafe prison, but in my experience, in the good prisons I was in, it was all this good community work that overshadowed the risks, and what I mean by that is that the good work with the community the prison was supporting was reducing the risk of the people in the prison population because we all had meaningful things to engage in, ways to develop our aspirations and our skills, ways to see and feel ourselves as part of community again.

In that prison, all these opportunities for goodness were just making the risks less and less, and then the prison could put less effort and resources into risk management and security and could focus its resources on increasing the budget for reducing reoffending. I think if resettlement work starts early on, you can imagine how the budget for security across the whole estate might be able to be reduced and the budget for reducing reoffending might be really increased, and if used appropriately it would reduce the spending needed on security.

So, I think re-settlement should start early on. And I think as well as your core behavioural needs, the other parts of the regime also helped and there is a real need for them all to work collaboratively. Although I say yeah, it's up to me to take control of my resettlement, like if I'm doing the Thinking Skills Programme, I have to actually put everything into it and do it, but it's also about working with the professionals who might say to you, 'Well, actually, you don't need therapy. What you need is Resolve (anger management) or Thinking Skills' or whatever it needs to be. And I think that communication with your offender manager and with psychology needs to happen early on and regularly

throughout your sentence and that will all help your resettlement massively. But normally what happens, like in my case, is that you are coming to being released after 13 years and its like 'Oh, you're coming up for release, let's do a psychological risk assessment on you' and it comes back that you've actually got some underlying issues that you need to work on. Then you're going over tariff [serving more time in prison than the minimum time recommended by the judge before you can be considered for release] and stuff like that, and that causes frustration. So yeah, for me, resettlement needs to start from the initial point and should be led by the person in prison but working closely with appropriate professionals taking care of them and working with them to make informed decisions.

**RA:** One of the things I wanted to pick up on is that we are here speaking with Ryan, who is a young man who spent a lot of years in prison, and we know that our prison system is mainly made-up of a lot of young men. But is also made-up of other people. It is made-up of women. It is made-up of children and listening to Ryan I was wondering whether your resettlement strategy would look the same across all of the different people that we have in prison, or does it need to look a bit different, and if so how does it need to be different? Is it possible to take account of the individual

when you are building an overarching strategy?

**HR:** That's a very hard question because resettlement is a complicated process, isn't it? In terms of the factors that all feed in to enabling the best chances of successfully coming back into the community and settling in the community when we think of all of the different areas around accommodation, employment, education, self-identity, family relationships, health, mental health, substance misuse. My take on that is to some extent we design our models and processes according to the prison type. So, the fact that we have different types of prison, so prisons for women, prisons that are for resettlement, others that are long term, high security, trainer prisons etc., we design our work and our models according to those prison types and thinking about how we can best direct resources according to that point in a person's journey. So presumably Ryan you would have spent some time in the long-term high security estate and then progressed and eventually ended up in open conditions? So, the resourcing and the modelling, and

In that prison, all these opportunities for goodness were just making the risks less and less, and then the prison could put less effort and resources into risk management and security.

hopefully the interventions or the services that you had access to will have changed as you went through your sentence. So, to some extent we are trying, I think, to support individuals in their individual needs according to their sentence.

But we know there are challenges in that. We know COVID has thrown some of this planning off course. We know that a number of people are not in the right prison for the point of their journey, so we are releasing people from different types of prisons that we haven't prepared for. We have a separate directorate for women that thinks about women's policy very separately in terms of knowing that women have different needs. And we also know that sadly women's outcomes are not great, so we're trying to address that. We've got our strategy for women and their resettlement. And another important issue for women's resettlement is that because there are fewer women's prisons, more often than not women are quite far from home when it comes to their resettlement, which presents extra challenges.

And I think perhaps the number one thing that we're trying to achieve is clarity. Ryan has spoken really clearly about his sense of responsibility and accountability for himself and what he needed from us in terms of the services we provide and how we might design those to support people. And I think there are different roles for us as a service in that process and we need to ensure there is clarity and understanding of these different roles. Sometimes this will include supporting people to get to the place where they are ready to take that responsibility, because there are lots of people that are not there yet.

**RA: Would that be a bit of a shift for staff in prison and in probation to understand their role as being to scaffold and come alongside people where they are in order to support them to move forwards? Earlier you discussed the main purposes of resettlement as reducing reoffending and supporting community integration to protect the public, and I wonder what it feels like to be an offender supervisor in prison or in the community working out the relationships between managing risk and promoting resettlement. How do you give criminal justice professionals the freedom to**

**use their professional discretion to support resettlement in a risk averse culture. Do you think there is a conflict and is there work to do in the service about giving frontline staff the trust and freedom to use their professional discretion?**

**TSM:** I don't think there is necessarily conflict, but it can play out like that, so I accept that there is work to be done around that and the first thing is we must take a data and evidence led approach to all of this right? We need to understand who we're working with. And that is really important for me, and I think if we strip it all back and look at the evidence, we can put out long or short policy documents that clarify roles and responsibilities and budgets and everything else we can do that, and that's needed, but what the evidence shows is that doing this work well is all about relationships any individual has with any professional they come into contact with at any point in their sentence. Our role in the centre here is to create the space and capacity and have the right people forming those relationships and then give them the tools they need to help the people that they are working with, whether that's access to accommodation, employment, training opportunities, whatever it might be. That's the infrastructure we want to build here because relationships help us to manage risk and help us to provide the right support in resettlement.

**RW:** I just want to say that when you were asking the questions about what might be the most important thing for different people whether men, or women or children, that's exactly what I was thinking, that no matter who you are it is about building that relationship, it's having that time and creating that space where you can say to a professional, 'I'm struggling in this area, I need help in that area' and I think that's consistent whatever demographic you're in, and I think that is the central point. If you can do that then resettlement is just ten times easier, so that is the most important part for me.

**RA: If this is one of the central goals of resettlement strategy in One HMPPS, how do you grow that as a central culture across all of the different agencies working together in resettlement? How do you support interagency**

Our role in the centre here is to create the space and capacity and have the right people forming those relationships and then give them the tools they need to help the people that they are working with, whether that's access to accommodation, employment, training opportunities

**transparency, communication and cooperation putting strong relationships with those you're working with at its heart? So I'm thinking here about the key relationships between probation, third sector, prisons and the security forces, including police, and perhaps specialist counter-terrorism forces and even MI5. How do you ensure that culture of transparency and cooperation to support resettlement and keep the public safe?**

**TSM:** I can speak to that because I have worked for many years in multi-agency teams, and it's not easy, and there can be tensions in the system, but I think it's about creating healthy tensions. In a multidisciplinary setting everybody represents a part of the system and they bring diversity of thought and experience to the table and it's about creating the environment in which this expertise is equally valued. And once again it's about relationships, and realising we are all on the same side and bringing our expertise to develop collective views, rather than certain agencies having the last say. It's not an easy thing to do.

**HR:** It's very much about building those relationships at a local level but with that overarching understanding of the purpose of bringing people together. And that is one of the clear goals of One HMPPS, to have a more locally and regionally led service where colleagues are plugged into the local systems, local government and Police Crime Commissioner structures, and the other agencies within those areas so they are better able to utilise the benefits of those things, together.

**RA:** So it sounds like a big part of the resettlement strategy is going to be empowering regional teams to build local relationships, but at the risk of sounding sceptical, I have to ask how convinced you are that such a resettlement strategy actually makes much of a difference to what happens on the frontline in terms of empowering relationally focussed practises and better service user experiences when the reality is that we have seen a hollowing out of public services within and beyond the criminal justice system, in accommodation, employment, education, mental health and addiction provision? Can any resettlement strategy really make a difference on the ground in those realities?

In a multidisciplinary setting everybody represents a part of the system and they bring diversity of thought and experience to the table and it's about creating the environment in which this expertise is equally valued.

**TSM:** We both think it can, otherwise we wouldn't do this work, and we have to be realistic but also aspirational in what we do. In lots of ways, post Covid, some of the important links have actually been strengthened. There are now really strong links and engagement across probation teams and accommodation services with local authority relationships. These have definitely improved. And I think there have also been improvements in employment. The Department of Work and Pensions are working well with us and we've got lots of different initiatives in place that I think really give us the opportunity to build on some of that. Which is not to deny that undoubtedly at the moment we're in a difficult time, as a country. But within those challenges we are clear about what we need to do, and we are doing it, starting with a big focus on recruiting new colleagues to come and be part of this work. With building relationships, clarity of purpose and understanding as the basis of what we are doing, I think it's absolutely possible to make a real difference, even in such difficult times. It's got to really, because the need is not going to disappear, so we have to step up and do our best to support people.

**RA:** I think what I'm hearing is that a key element of the resettlement strategy moving forward is to empower regions to make the necessary connections with local services to provide support that can reduce risks and meet needs. You've talked about the need for a clarity of purpose and the fact relationships are key with people under supervision, between key agencies and with other service providers. But one thing I want to ask is how are you going to empower local teams to deliver on this, because my sense is that there is a nervousness of independent thought and action within the criminal justice system, and especially in probation and a sense of quite close central oversight. How will you achieve this sense of devolved freedom?

**TSM:** I recognise what you are saying, but the way we are thinking is that we have to simplify things and empower the regions to respond to their local population, their local needs and have more control over what happens locally.

**HR:** This is exactly the change we are hoping to bring about through the move to One HMPPS, to move to a more regional approach rather than central. We're hoping to learn from areas like Manchester with their different commissioning relationships and from Wales because they have a different system with their devolved administration. We want to learn from areas where they have more regional processes and autonomy and support the rest of the system in learning from those areas as well. Hopefully empowerment will lead to better outcomes.

**RA: Ryan, can I give you the opportunity to give a last thought - if you had one wish for resettlement strategy what would it be?**

**RW:** Everyone's resettlement journey is different. Some people take charge of theirs. Other people sit back and let the system do it for them. If I had just one wish, I would want everyone to have equal access and equal access to information and support, to know what's out there. For example, because I'm quite proactive, I get on the internet to see what's out there. I'll ring people. I do things. I speak to my probation about everything, and it turns out when you do the digging, you find the gold. And I say that because I've had untold levels of support from probation, and from the third sector. I've just had all kinds of support and it had helped me get where I am in this short amount of time after a long prison sentence. And then I look at the other people in the hostel I was in and none of that support is available to them because they're not digging.

In my opinion, if we want to really support resettlement, people shouldn't need to dig. If the support can be there for one person, it should be there for another person as well. So, I think centralising the support and increasing its access through awareness that this stuff is out there.

Technology has moved on a lot since I went to prison, but I'm not sure the use of technology to support resettlement has kept pace. I think using technology could provide one way forwards. When I came out, all I was thinking throughout the time I was digging to find support, was how come there's no centralised app, like a prison leavers app, that could show everyone the different kinds of support they can have access to? Why don't you try this? Why don't you try that? I'm in the process of working out what the potential is to do this type of app, because I think it'll be so beneficial to have a centralised piece of technology that just guides people to the support, because my experience tells me it is out there, all you need to do is make people aware that it's out there.

**Post-script:** This was a broad ranging interview, beginning with some fundamental questions about

who owns resettlement, acknowledging the challenges of recovering from the pandemic and its consequences, the current staffing crisis, and the need for clarity about the way forwards. Some clear themes emerged, and some questions remained. The move to One HMPPS is being seen as an opportunity to establish, or re-establish, a coherent and cohesive vision and purpose across criminal justice professionals. Within this, the heart and values of criminal justice professionals, existing and new, are celebrated. In many ways the central strategy seems to be that once staffing levels are recovered, within a clear purpose of building strong relationships throughout the service, local teams will be empowered to deliver local services to achieve this purpose. The vision of building a culture of responsive resettlement with relationally based risk management led by understanding each individual's situation and needs and providing appropriate professional input to help people meet these needs, reduce their risks and access the resources available is compelling. But quite how we get there still feels unclear, especially considering the overhaul of OMiC called for in the report released the day after this interview, and the fact local teams might struggle to create this relationally based responsive service when many local services have been hollowed out over recent years and we are facing more years of austerity.

The crucial voice we all acknowledged was missing from this discussion was that of the frontline professional, but there does seem to be a new focus on hearing from and listening to those on the frontline, and empowering criminal justice professionals to achieve criminal justice outcomes through finding local solutions to local problems. How this works in practice is yet to be determined, but it is a shift in tone, which many frontline staff will no doubt be hoping is accompanied by a shift in resources. Perhaps in our next edition we can interview some of our frontline criminal justice professionals to see if they feel that prioritising relationally based connections to better understand risks and challenges and effectively support success is something they can expect from the service as employees as well as deliver to those they supervise, and how easy it is for everyone involved in our criminal justice system to be honest about their struggles and their needs. If this kind of dialogue can be instilled throughout HMPPS, it gives me some hope the use of penal power will become more legitimate for all involved in our criminal justice system. We know that more legitimately used power is likely to be more effective, so if the new resettlement strategy can help to achieve this, then it is possible it could make a difference 'on the street', resulting in better outcomes for us all.



**Penal Servitude: Convicts and Long-Term Imprisonment, 1853-1948.**

**By Helen Johnston, Barry Godfrey and David J Cox.**

**Publisher: McGill-Queen's University Press**

**ISBN: 978-0-2280-0842-2**

**(Hardback) 978-0-2280-0909-2**

**(Paperback)**

**Price: \$130.00 (Hardback) \$39.95**

**(Paperback) \$31.96 (eBook)**

*Paul Finegan is the Curator of Dartmoor Prison Museum, HMP Dartmoor*

Firstly, I must declare an interest in this publication as I was contacted to see if I could provide images from our vast photographic archive which I was more than happy to do. I was even more pleased to see that a number of images I submitted were included in the finished article.

Whilst there have been several texts which draw upon the experiences of individuals subjected to Penal Servitude, for example Victorian Convicts: 100 Criminal Lives by the same authors, little has been written to explain how Penal Servitude was conceived and how it was expected to work in practice. In the valediction carried on the back cover, Professor Neil Davie states:

*'there is no other comprehensive study of the convict prison system in England and Wales during this period.'*

In this summing up he is quite correct and the text covers what passed for the Criminal Justice system for over 100 years. The book is well set out firstly giving context to the origins of the Penal Servitude Act of 1853, and the chapter structure describes the logistics of implementing Penal Servitude on all aspects of prison life, for example how the regime ran, how education and labour worked, convict's diet and health and how convicts progressed through the class

system. It provides easy reading and takes the reader through in a logical chronological sequence, providing appropriate case studies that give historical context to the subject(s) being addressed.

For those readers new to the subject, the book starts by providing context, outlining the system from 1779 to 1853. This draws upon the rationale behind the changes required as the use of Transportation declined and highlights the fact that the thinking behind what was known as a national penitentiary system was in actual fact not a replacement for but predated transportation. The 1779 Penitentiary Act stated that *'well regulated labour and religious instruction might be the means, under providence, not only of deferring others from the commissions of crimes but also of reforming the individuals and inuring them to the habits of industry'* (p. 12). Funds could not be obtained from the Treasury to enact the measures contained in this Act and the decision was made to use New South Wales as the site for a Penal Colony.

The implementation of the Penal Servitude Act could not happen overnight, and the second chapter looks at the building of the convict prison estate which had hitherto not existed, with the exception of Pentonville and Millbank which were transitional prisons prior to convicts being transported. With new legislation in 1853 and 1857 replacing transportation as a sentencing option, an urgency arose for an increased building programme. There is a consistency throughout each chapter which seeks to address how these changes affected female prisoners, particularly drawing out the differences in treatment. This chapter describes how the female convict estate developed. It also deals with problems with so-called repeat offenders and those released

on licence, proposals for greater supervision or early release of offenders restricted to those who could demonstrate their rehabilitation were proposed at this time. There were also issues with striking a balance between being seen to be tough on crime whilst having to fund an increasing prison population. Issues highlighted as causing a quandary 150 years ago still seem to be causing a quandary today.

The experiences of 650 convicts provide case studies to support the narrative. The chapter that addresses Regime, Labour and Education uses the case of a convict named Goodwin (p. 59) who complained that he had not received full marks for his work. His request was denied by the Governor stating that he would have been given full marks if he had worked hard. The marks system was a system of reward for good conduct and a good report for labour, allowing the convict extra privileges and remission. There is a case study of Edith Jennings (p. 69) who was convicted of arson and sentenced to five years penal servitude in 1885. This serves to demonstrate how the 'star class' operated, which was designed to keep first offenders separate from repeat offenders in the hope they would be easier to rehabilitate. In Edith's case several letters were received as to her previous industrious character, and she was released after serving just 17 months.

The use of prison labour was key to the operation of the penal servitude system, and it is interesting to read how the perception of how this would be used and reality altered over the years. From the very start the principle that convicts should be trained for subsequent gainful employment was a key driving force. Whilst this sentiment could be applied whilst a convict was imprisoned, it became much harder

to implement upon release. Joshua Jebb had a vision that labour would secure post release employment, going so far as to advocate no man should be released until employment was secured. The public were not so quick to accede to these demands and the work rate of convicts was also brought into question. Commenting on convicts quarrying stone at Portland it was judged that 'we get 40% work from a convict that we would get from a free man'. This chapter highlights the difficulties establishment found in keeping convicts engaged in meaningful labour and how they would be secured work upon release. Another issue that faces the Prison Service of today.

Later chapters deal with health, diet, resistance to the regime, gender, sexuality, and class. A case study of Ann Kelly (p. 122) highlights how prisoners were treated who were pregnant upon their conviction. It is not only the experiences of female convicts that is addressed. The fight by women to be recognised as employees is discussed and reveals that it was not until 1916 that a woman attained Governor grade when Dr Selina Fox was appointed Deputy Governor and then Governor of Aylesbury Prison (p. 125).

The book highlights the lack of joined up thinking in the management of offenders in terms of both their time spent in prison and how they were managed afterwards. It came as a surprise that local and convict prisons only came under one umbrella in 1945 following the passing of the Criminal Justice Act. It is also surprising that there was not initially a national body whose responsibility it was to manage offenders upon release, this burden falling to variously named Aid Societies.

I drew heavily upon this text when asked to address a conference highlighting how regimes of the past operated. I remarked that the ideas contained in the various Penal Servitude acts, focusing as they did on measures to rehabilitate offenders, reduce the prison population and control offenders by offering incentive schemes were not too far removed from how the Prison Service operates today. This view has recently been reinforced by an article I read in PSJ 260, 'The Truth About Prisons and Probation' by Roy King and Lucy Willmott which serves to illustrate that the penal justice system has not really moved on since 1853.

As if in response to this observation, in concluding the authors make the argument that the more we know about the historical development of the carceral system, the better armed we are to fight to improve the ways we deal with the problems of the prison system today.

**Male, Failed and Jailed: The Revolving Door of Imprisonment in the UK.**

**By David Maguire**

**Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan.**

**ISBN: 978-3-030-61061-6**

**(Paperback) 978-3-030-61058-6**

**(Hardback) 978-3-030-61059-3**

**(eBook)**

**Price: £109.99 (Paperback)**

**£109.99 (Hardback) £87.50**

**(eBook)**

*Dr Kate Gooch is Associate Professor in Criminology and Deputy Head of Department at the University of Bath.*

It has long been recognised that prisons are sites where the performance of masculinity is brought into sharp relief. Whilst the gendered performance of men within prison has received far

greater attention in the last 30 years, this burgeoning body of research tends to focus on the structure, plurality, and function of masculinities *within* prison. Maguire's monograph *Male, Failed and Jailed* is a refreshing break from this tradition. Not only is it elegantly written and meticulously researched, but it offers a compelling account of the ways in which expressions of prison masculinities are forged within the local social and economic spaces of deprived neighbourhoods, schools, alternative educational settings, local authority care, youth custody, and post-industrial employment (or lack thereof). It is within these sites, and later in their non-working lives, that working class young men develop 'masculine trajectories' and strategies that ease their transitions into penal spaces. The inspired title *Male, Failed and Jailed* succinctly captures the central thesis of the book, namely that working-class men begin their journeys into prison many years earlier in impoverished neighbourhoods and institutional settings where they develop 'hard' masculinities that not only prepare them for imprisonment but continue to 'trap' them 'in the revolving door of imprisonment.'<sup>1</sup>

Traced throughout this book is the concept of 'protest masculinity,' a term originally coined by Connell<sup>2</sup> to describe the ways in which marginalised men resist their subordinate status. This 'protest masculinity', it is argued, allows men in positions of relative powerlessness and economic precarity to find alternative strategies for performing masculinity. Maguire revitalises the concept to explain the symbiosis and continuities between street and prison-based masculinities, but also how these strategies reinforce men's exclusion from education,

1 Maguire, D. (2020) *Male, Failed and Jailed: The Revolving Door of Imprisonment in the UK*. Palgrave Macmillan. p.191

2 Connell, R. (1995) *Masculinities*. Polity Press.

employment and later, the community.

Maguire's monograph makes a significant theoretical and empirical contribution. First, it offers a more nuanced analysis of the genesis of prison masculinities. Whilst Maguire challenges the view that prison-based masculinities are primarily structured by the depriving nature of the prison, he also illustrates how street-based masculinities are not just imported into prison but are also adapted within it. Consequently, he not only offers a fresh perspective on the (somewhat stale) importation-deprivation debate but also provides a persuasive account as to how (and why) some men adapt easily to imprisonment notwithstanding its punishing effects.

Second, and rather uniquely, Maguire's treatment of prison masculinities considers the intersection between class, age, transitions, and locality. Central to the monograph is the rich descriptive detail of Hull as a city and HMP Hull as an institution, as well as an analysis of the life-history accounts of 30 adult prisoners aged 18-45 years old. This combination very effectively contextualises the continuities between the cultural milieus and spaces that these working class, local lads share and experience prior to their imprisonment in a local prison. Maguire carefully reflects on his own position in relation to this research, considering both the advantages but also the challenges of negotiating access and establishing rapport as a 'partial insider'.

The empirical accounts vividly extend the monograph's theoretical arguments. For example, in Chapters 2 and 3, Maguire argues that de-industrialisation stimulated a decline in traditional, 'masculine' manual labour in favour of

'feminised' service work. Later, in Chapter 6, he demonstrates how disrupted school-work transitions and the growing precarity of employment opportunities not only has a role in explaining why men find alternative ways of performing masculinity but also how 'in the context of deprived neighbourhoods, 'doing crime' was in many cases, a more emotionally exhilarating route to a locally valorised version of performing masculinity than the employment opportunities open to many of them.'<sup>3</sup>

Third, and in contrast to the 'hard' masculinities described throughout the book, Maguire also turns his attention to the 'vulnerable masculinities' of prisoners on a vulnerable prisoner's unit (VPU). In so doing, he describes three principal adaptations of these seemingly low status prisoners: 1) 'protest,' where prisoners assert their criminal credentials and their lack of choice in the move to the VPU 2; 'acceptance'; and, 3) 'pragmatic' adaptation. Moreover, Maguire also illustrates how male prisoners navigate and mitigate their absences and 'failures' as men. In so doing, further illustrates how the adoption of prison masculinities serves these men poorly on release. Rather, imprisonment had 'intensified' masculine traits and strategies that would contribute to their continued marginalisation.

Although this monograph might at first appear to be – as Maguire describes – a 'bleak study', Maguire dispels any sense that the pathways into prison are fixed or permanently cyclical. In this way, he avoids being either unduly deterministic or pessimistic. He not only emphasises that he is describing some working-class young men (not all), but also that there can be 'critical moments' in an individual's life that disrupt this

trajectory. It is Maggie to whom Maguire ascribes credit for encouraging his own biographical shift. Encouraged to pursue prison education and finding in Maggie someone who believed that he was not only 'teachable' but had 'something of value to say', Maguire finds for himself an alternative way of 'doing masculinity'. It is in the final pages of the monograph that we encounter Maggie, but her introduction serves as a powerful example of how any one individual can inspire, support, and encourage another.

This outstanding monograph will of interest to students, academics, and practitioners in a variety of settings and fields.

**Dementia in Prison: An ethical framework to support research, practice and prisoners**

**Edited by Joanne Brooke**

**Publisher: Routledge**

**ISBN: (Hardback) 978-0-367-25917-4**

*Price: £130.00 (Hardback)*

**Maggie Bolger** *CF FRSA is a HMPPS Specialist Adviser (Older Prisoners)*

The number of older prisoners in the UK has grown significantly over the last two decades. In 2009 the ratio of older individuals in the total prison population was 1:11. In 2021, this ratio is now 1:6.<sup>1</sup> As the total prison population is projected to rise by a quarter over the next 5 years, it is likely that our older prisoner population will also rise in line with this prediction. The rise in the number of older prisoners can be largely attributed to convictions for 'historical' sexual offences, resulting in lengthy custodial sentences. Older prisoners are also more likely to have significant health and social care needs, which

3. Ibid, p.122.

1. HMPPS. (2020). *Offender Equalities Annual Report 2019-2020*. MOJ.

can be very challenging to manage effectively within the secure environment.

This book explores the challenges associated with dementia, which an increasing number of older prisoners are now experiencing. Aimed primarily at healthcare professionals and prison staff it argues that better detection and support are needed to improve outcomes for this vulnerable population (p.127). The book is well researched and provides a contemporary review of the issues across three key areas: namely how healthcare services in prison are provided and impact on an older population; human rights and ethical considerations of prisoners with dementia; recommendations for practice, as well as the need for further research in this area.

Using international comparisons, it aims to provide the reader with a better understanding of dementia, as well as outlining different approaches to providing care and support citing examples from the USA, Australia, Norway, France, some of which could be adapted for use in the UK. One such initiative outlined is from the USA, where modifications to the physical environment were introduced, supported by individualised care interventions. Staff were provided with training in recognising the signs of dementia, how to communicate effectively with individuals, as well

managing challenging behaviour.<sup>2</sup> UK initiatives are also described, such as the Buddy Support Worker programme designed by the charity RECOOP.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the book has a strong focus on person-centred approaches to care, outlining that good dementia care is founded on five key aspects, namely: comfort, attachment, inclusion, occupation and identity.<sup>4</sup>

One of the key challenges in planning service provision is knowing how many adults in the prison system are currently experiencing early onset or full dementia. There are cognitive screening tools available, but their application in prisons is largely untested and the evidence base is too insufficient to recommend a particular tool as suitable. One of the ethical dilemmas explored is the conflict between providing custody and care, where it is argued that the need to maintain security can adversely impact on the quality of care.<sup>5 6</sup> Another dilemma concerns mental capacity and whether healthcare staff are able to seek informed consent for interventions, as well as the capacity of the individual with dementia to be involved in decisions about their care. The Nuffield Council on Bioethics<sup>7</sup> ethical framework is presented and there is good discussion on how this could be applied within the prison setting (Chapters 4, 6 & 9). A later chapter (Chapter 8) also reflects this discussion in terms of

applying the framework in conducting research within a prison, which also provides guidance on how to write an ethical protocol and how to undertake research within a secure environment.

The concluding chapter of this book calls for the development of a national strategy for older prisoners that acknowledges their unique and complex health and social care needs. It is recommended that the strategy outlines the treatment and services needed to support an individual with cognitive impairment, including appropriate palliative and end-of-life care (p. 180). It is recommended that the Newcastle Clinical Model<sup>8</sup> be adopted for use within prisons. It is proposed that this model provides an assessment and intervention approach that is person-centred and suitable for implementation within the prison environment. Lastly the authors stress the need for further research in this important area, to establish the scale of the problem, as well as enable decisions on care to be made on robust evidence, rather than anecdotal support for initiatives.

In the main, this book is most likely to appeal to academics planning research within the secure environment and health care professionals. However, it does also provide valuable information and application for prison staff who work with older prisoners.

- 
2. Hodel, B., Sanchez, H.G. (2012). The special needs program for inmate-patients with dementia (SNPID): a psychosocial program provided in the prison system. *Dementia*, 12(5), 54-660.
  3. Resettlement and Care of Older ex-Offenders and Prisoners (RECOOP). (2019). *The Care Act 2014 and The Buddy Support Worker Training Programme*. Available from: Buddy-Support-Worker-Leaflet.pdf (recoop.org.uk) (Accessed on: 30th August 2022).
  4. Kitwood, T. (1997). *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
  5. Pont, J. (2011). Medical Ethics in Prison. Conference Presentation. Available from: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/balticstates/EventsPresentations/FinalConf\\_24-25Mar11/Pont\\_25\\_March.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/balticstates/EventsPresentations/FinalConf_24-25Mar11/Pont_25_March.pdf) (Accessed on: 30th August 2022).
  6. White, A.L., Larsson, A.S. (2012). Exploring scope of practice issues for correctional facility nurses in Montana. *Journal of Correctional Healthcare*, 23(1), 70-76.
  7. Nuffield Council on Bioethics. (2009). *Dementia: Ethical Issues*. London: Cambridge Publishers.
  8. James, L.A. (2011). *Understanding Behaviour in Dementia That Challenges: A Guide to Assessment and Treatment*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

# JOURNAL

PRISON SERVICE

## Purpose and editorial arrangements

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

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

**From May 2011 each edition is available electronically from the website of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. This is available at <http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/psj.html>**

## Circulation of editions and submission of articles

Six editions of the Journal, printed at HMP Leyhill, are published each year with a circulation of approximately 6,500 per edition. The editor welcomes articles which should be up to c.4,000 words and submitted by email to [prisonservicejournal@justice.gov.uk](mailto:prisonservicejournal@justice.gov.uk).

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

## Subscriptions

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

### United Kingdom

single copy	£7.00	
one year's subscription	£40.00	(organisations or individuals in their professional capacity)
	£35.00	(private individuals)

### Overseas

single copy	£10.00	
one year's subscription	£50.00	(organisations or individuals in their professional capacity)
	£40.00	(private individuals)

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

## **Complaining in Prison: 'I suppose it's a good idea but is there any point in it?'**

Dr Sophie van der Valk and Dr Mary Rogan

## **An exploration of imprisoned fathers' needs in the Netherlands**

Simon Venema and Eric Blaauw

## **Perspectives on the Employee and Family Assistance Programme for Correctional Workers in Saskatchewan: Challenges and Opportunities**

Laura McKendy, Rosemary Ricciardelli  
and Matthew S. Johnston

## **Examining Correctional Administrator Perceptions of The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)**

Dr Craig Dunton, Dr Hayden Smith and Dr Frank Ferdik