

# Perspectives from inside:

## A report from HMP Grendon and HMP Barlinnie

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<b>Introduction</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Grendon:</b>		<b>4</b>
Workshop One	<b>Abuse, mental health and self-harm</b>	<b>6</b>
Workshop Two	<b>Activities, work and education</b>	<b>7</b>
Workshop Three	<b>Resolving disputes in prison, security, and the use of force</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Barlinnie:</b>		<b>10</b>
Workshop One	<b>Abuse, mental health and self-harm</b>	<b>12</b>
Workshop Two	<b>Activities, work and education</b>	<b>15</b>
Workshop Three	<b>Resolving disputes in prison, security, and the use of force</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Suggestions and examples of positive practice</b>	<b>22</b>

## Introduction

How far do UK prisons meet the best human rights standards as set out in the Council of Europe's European Prison Rules? This was the question the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies sought to answer as part of an eight country European Prison Observatory study funded by the European Union.

In 2014 the Centre held events at two prisons, HMP Grendon and HMP Barlinnie, to discuss human rights in UK prisons. Prisoners, prison staff, voluntary sector providers and researchers took part in the events, although those noting down comments paid particular attention to the observations and opinions of those who were serving sentences.

Each of the one day events at Grendon and Barlinnie were divided into three workshops focused on the themes of health; work and education; and security and resolving conflicts in prison.

This report brings together the main issues raised during the workshops. The Centre would like to thank Ian Whitehead and Jamie Bennett, Governors of Barlinnie and

Grendon respectively, as well as the staff from both prisons for helping to run the events. We are also grateful to those who volunteered to facilitate workshops. Joe Sim, David Scott, Charlie Weinberg and Abigail Rowe facilitated at Grendon, while Lisa Mackenzie and Jo Noblett oversaw workshops at Barlinnie.

Similar events were held by the other seven country partners (France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal and Spain) and the results brought together for a Europe wide conference held in Brussels in January 2015.

If you want to find out more about the work of the European Prison Observatory then please visit: [www.prisonobservatory.org](http://www.prisonobservatory.org). The European Prison Rules can be accessed on the Council of Europe website at <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=955747>.

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## Executive summary

The following points were the common themes raised by participants in the workshops at both HMP Grendon and HMP Barlinnie.

### General

- Recognition from participants that different prisons are all run very differently
- Overcrowding was highlighted as a key issue affecting the prison estate (except at Grendon)
- Calls for better staff to prisoner ratios: currently too few staff with too many inmates
- Staff should have improved training in particular areas – for example, in mental health care, resolving disputes, and how to respond to the diverse needs of prisoners
- Complaints about visiting procedures in most prisons, except at Grendon – where the procedures were described as ‘excellent’
- Recognition that remand prisoners have fewer rights than other prisoners and limited access to activities and work
- There should be more of a focus on the development and rehabilitation of prisoners, rather than a focus on punishment

### Health

Grendon was described by the participants as ‘exceptional’ in terms of health care, so the following points should be read in relation to healthcare in the wider prison estate (including Barlinnie).

- Initial assessments of health (specifically mental health) on reception are inadequate
- There should be better mental health care that goes beyond initial assessments
- Calls for greater peer-to-peer support to help those with mental health issues
- Some prisoners are reluctant to disclose their mental health issues
- There should be better sharing of information between different prisons – for example, prisoners’ medical history

- Need for improved continuity of health care between prisons when prisoners are transferred, as sometimes transfers mean medical treatment is stopped
- There should be more information provided to prisoners as many feel uninformed during their sentence, particularly those serving their first custodial sentence
- Prisoners felt staff judged them or were suspicious if they requested certain medications.

### Work, education and activity

- Prisoners do not get paid enough for work they do
- Seen as unfair that prisons profit from their work (and do not pay them well enough)
- There should be higher standards of education for prisoners
- Education should be more focussed towards practical use in the job market, to provide a greater opportunity for employment on release
- Internet access would greatly improve the quality of education
- A need for more time out of cells
- Too few staff creates problem of not being able to access time out of cells
- Increased community links, and individually tailored pre-release schemes would help with resettlement

### Conflicts, security and use of force

- Prisoners felt there is an ‘us versus them’ mentality between prisoners and officers (except at Grendon)
- Need for more respect between prisoners and prison officers, should follow the example of Grendon
- Violence towards prisoners used too often, except at Grendon
- Complaints process seen as ineffective and in need of change
- Governors should be more responsive to what is going on inside their prisons

# Grendon

Three workshops, where participants discussed the European Prison Rules, were held at HMP Grendon (in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire) on 27 June 2014.

Grendon is a therapeutic prison where 'inmates' are referred to as 'residents'. Therefore any references to 'residents' in this report should be read as references to those who are serving their sentences at Grendon, though there was also much discussion throughout the event about 'prisoners' in other prisons and in the prison estate in general. The residents agreed that their experiences at Grendon were not comparable to their experiences in other prisons that they had been in previously. They felt that Grendon's therapeutic atmosphere made the relationships between everyone in the prison more personal.

There were many general points discussed during the day that were not directly relevant to the theme of each workshop; for example, residents highlighted that Grendon feels far less claustrophobic than other prisons, as it only holds around 230 residents.

## Staff

Staffing levels, staff training and many other issues relevant to prison staff were discussed in all three of the workshops conducted at Grendon.

Participants recognised that in most prisons there is always a level of tension between staff and prisoners. However, they also felt that staff are not given enough training or resources to allow them to deal with the complex issues that arise from looking after a diverse population of prisoners. The problem of low pay for prison officers (especially in private prisons) was also discussed, as the wages do not reflect the range of duties the officers are expected to perform. It was agreed that there should be improvements in mutual trust, respect and understanding between staff and prisoners.

Participants said that staff should:

- Have a range of different skills and backgrounds to help assist with the diverse issues that prisoners face
- Receive comprehensive training to recognise, identify, and deal with mental health needs in the prison population
- Be held accountable for their actions. In Grendon prisoners are able to challenge (within reason) the validity of staff actions – this should happen in all prisons
- Remember to act in an understanding and compassionate way towards prisoners, who are vulnerable and need staff they trust and feel they can talk to

An issue that was repeatedly mentioned was the welfare of the officers. It was noted that their working conditions and the issues that they deal with (often with insufficient training) can have a strain on their own wellbeing and mental health. This is a problem that needs to be addressed, as the atmosphere in the prison environment and the quality of interactions between staff and inmates would be improved if prison staff felt more confident and happier in their job.

Those present expressed a need for prison staff to be trained to effectively deal with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues. Currently, LGBT prisoners have little point of contact, or in some cases none at all, for dealing with these issues. This can lead to feelings of isolation and lack of trust from their peers and the prison staff.

## Remand prisoners

Remand prisoners, and the specific issues facing them, were a frequently discussed topic in all three workshops. The following concerns were raised:

- Cuts in the prison budget mean that remand prisoners cannot get access to many of the facilities – for example, wearing their own clothes or watching television
- Remand prisoners need more attention and focus, whilst also minimising the impact of custody. They need to be provided with more information about their rights, the possible length of their sentence if convicted at trial, and the facilities they have access to

During the workshop on mental health, participants were concerned that remand prisoners are often processed too quickly with no adequate assessments of their mental health. Cuts to resources mean that the prevalent mental health issues among this population are often not recognised.

The participants also highlighted the unique position of this group with regard to work and activity in prison. Prisoners on remand are not required to work during their sentence. They have less access to work, education and activities than sentenced prisoners, even if they are kept in prison for long periods of time leading up to their trial. If they are not enrolled in any activities, they spend the majority of their time locked in their cell, which has a negative impact on their progress and personal development. Again, insufficient staff resources mean that most attention is given to sentenced prisoners who qualify

for offender management, leaving remand prisoners with fewer opportunities to use their time effectively.

### Inconsistent practice between prisons

The inconsistencies in practice across the prison estate was another recurring theme that was discussed in all three workshops.

Participants expressed concerns over the variations in practice, which they said can often be frustrating for prisoners and have a detrimental effect on their mental health. To achieve a truly effective rehabilitation programme, participants called for prisons to be more consistent, particularly in the provision of care and support schemes.

Whilst recognising that there are differences in environments across the prison estate, participants felt these factors should not negatively affect the levels of care that prisoners receive. Residents said that transfer information is often not good enough, and felt there should be an improvement here to ensure continuity of care for people moving between prisons. Mentoring schemes were also described as being inconsistent between prisons.

Those present felt that overcrowding was a significant problem across the prison estate. Overcrowding leads to many different issues (for example, creating conflict with cell mates) and participants felt very strongly that all prisons should only house prisoners up to their capacity and no more. In addition, there was a feeling that the staff to inmate ratio should be standardised across all prisons; currently there are many differences in staffing levels across the prison estate, which leads to unequal levels of care and support for both prisoners and staff.

Residents expressed their concerns over not knowing their next steps after prison or between prisons, as there is a lack of consistent information available to them. This often means they become anxious about planning for the future, and so again their mental health suffers.

### Family ties

Though it was not a focal point for the workshops, those participating highlighted the importance of maintaining family ties whilst in prison.

It was felt that prisons need to make more of an effort towards supporting stronger links between prisoners and their families. This should be seen in the context of creating a more effective rehabilitation programme, as improving family ties helps in the resettlement of prisoners and improves their mental health whilst inside. Currently, it is difficult for families to keep in touch with prisoners due to sometimes inconvenient visiting times, the difficulty and costs of arranging transport to prisons which can be located far from the family home, and the cost of postage and telephone calls.

Participants also felt that:

- Visits should not be part of the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme
- Website bookings for visits can be problematic – not all families have a computer in their home. It is important to maintain a ‘human role’ in the bookings system

Grendon was described as ‘exemplary’ in ensuring that family visits are as informal as possible. Families feel welcomed, prisoners can spend their own money on their family and buy them food, and there are no fixed chairs which means families, and in particular the children, are able to play and have physical contact. Residents said this informal visiting format reduces feelings of stress for them (instead of increasing it, which can often be the case in other prisons).

# Workshop One

## Abuse, mental health, and self-harm

### Reception

Participants were concerned that prisons do not currently have the capability to deal with inmates who have mental health problems. Much of the discussion focussed on the initial check-ups of residents when they enter prison; residents felt that assessments of their mental health relied too heavily on brief initial check-ups.

The 'first night centre' was also discussed as a specific area that needs improvement:

- First night centres should be clean on arrival
- Prisoners should be provided with a 'bed-pack' with essential toiletries
- Clear and accessible information should be given to the prisoners, to inform about: prison life, rules, regulations, and sentencing
- The aim of the staff at the first night centres should be to properly assess the people entering them, rather than simply carrying out an administrative process
- Health information from previous prisons or institutions should be shared to allow for the best course of treatment (one resident said there has been no effort to look at his medical history)

Staff should be:

- Compassionate in first night centres and be aware of how intimidating it is to arrive in prison, particularly for those serving their first custodial sentence
- Trained to take mental health problems seriously, so problems are not ignored and left untreated, and trained to deal with a wider range of challenging situations with regard to mental health

Some residents believed that initial assessment centres should be extended to last for the first three months. This would allow for more thorough assessments and mean that new inmates could adjust to prison life more gradually. Inmates might also feel more comfortable disclosing more personal issues if the centres were run over an extended period; it takes time to build up the courage to discuss certain issues (such as past abuse) with staff.

### Mental health services

Many of the suggestions in this workshop arose from comparing the practices at Grendon to the very different practices that occur in most prisons in the UK.

In most prisons, prisoners would have to ask staff directly for help and support; which was thought to cause unwanted stigma among residents and staff as well as concerns over confidentiality. Residents commented that doctors do not ask about past abuse in a prisoner's life – especially sexual abuse – which is often fundamental to mental health problems prisoners may be experiencing in the present.

Participants felt that there is often a lack of honesty during the intervention programmes that aim to help prisoners with mental health issues. Prisoners often fear that full disclosure of their problems would negatively affect their sentencing or chances of parole. This was described as a 'culture of fear' which is a barrier to progress for many prisoners using these intervention schemes. Similarly, one resident said that he is reluctant to admit that he needs medication for his mental health issues, as he feels that his doctor would judge him as simply wanting the drugs to get 'high.'

On the whole, the groups felt that the therapeutic approach at Grendon would improve prisoners' mental health if extended across the prison system. There were also calls to standardise the high quality care provided here to the whole estate, as currently different prisons have different standards and systems of care.

Those present said that in order to improve the system, there should be:

- A mixture of peer support and professional help
- Mentors available in each wing
- Community living that encourages group discussion
- The Listener Scheme, where prisoners are trained to be a listening ear to others in their wing

Concerns were raised that trainee psychologists are being employed to take posts that should be filled by a qualified psychologist. Residents felt this was problematic, as some trainee psychologists make judgements they are not equipped to make about the mental health of individuals that ultimately affect their prospects of release.

## Workshop Two

### Activities, work and education

#### Work

The amount that prisoners get paid varies across the prison estate. However, those participating recognised that prisoners' rates of pay are often so low that they are not motivated to work, meaning that many have to rely on their families (often themselves on a low income) for financial support in prison and immediately after release. Even if they do work in prison, they may still have to rely on their family for support; participants felt this places an unnecessary burden on the families of inmates.

At Grendon residents are paid substantially less than inmates in other prisons, as the higher level of therapeutic support in Grendon means that the prison needs to cover the cost of each resident's therapy. Several residents viewed this practice as unfair and not reflective of the amount of effort they put into therapy. Residents did not mention their specific rates of pay during the event; however after the event, the Governor, Jamie Bennett, told us that residents in Grendon earn up to £15 per week.

There was a strong feeling that wages across the prison estate should be standardised, so that prisoners will choose work based on the skills they will gain instead of the money they will earn. Most felt that earnings should be better aligned to what might be earned in the working world. Higher pay would also help prisoners to save up for their release and help them to overcome many barriers that face them after prison – such as finding housing or employment. The residents were also aware that private contractors make a profit from their low-paid work, which makes them feel devalued.

However, there was a debate among some participants over whether prisoners should be paid more, and whether they should pay for their lodging and board whilst serving their sentences. This was acknowledged to be a complex issue; living on minimum wage, as many prisoners hope at least to earn, is difficult even for those outside prison. HMP Coldingley was mentioned, as it was the site of an experiment where prisoners were paid in full – a trial that was ultimately unsuccessful as Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs refused to accept tax.

The participants also expressed the following:

- It needs to be recognised that it takes at least six months for trade skills (e.g. to become a qualified plasterer) and qualifications to be gained
- Work courses can give prisoners a sense of achievement and give them something to aim for, particularly if they know that the courses may benefit them upon release. Vocational training can help create

more positive attitudes amongst prisoners and provide realistic chances of employment after release

- Allowing day release for prisoners to work should be implemented more widely across the prison estate. This would result in the residents gaining practical skills and a work ethic, and relieve pressure on prison staff during the day (less movement in and out of cells)
- If they had the choice, more prisoners would work full time – there should be more placements and staff to allow this
- Residents will work hard learning new skills if they feel they are guaranteed a job on release. More guaranteed jobs and work placements and forging stronger links with the community would help ease the passage into employment for prisoners on release
- A better support network ought to be available upon release for prisoners looking for employment. Criminal records greatly hinder opportunities for employment and it is very easy to become de-motivated and return to a life of crime

#### Education and activities

Those participating recognised that education is essential for rehabilitation and resettlement. Education enables employment and other opportunities for prisoners that may not have been readily available before their incarceration. Therefore participants called for quality education (and activities) in prisons that are standardised across the prison estate – participants felt that no prisoner should be 'left behind' due to a lack of resources.

The residents also recognised that gaining skills means that they are less likely to go on to reoffend once they have left prison; therefore it is crucial that prisons move away from a culture of punishment and towards a culture of development and focus on the future.

Participants raised the following concerns:

- Educational standards in prison were described as 'poor'
- For example – education for trades was considered to be too simplified and insufficient for the level of training that would be needed in the relevant workplace
- Qualifications exclusive to the prison estate highlight to the employer that the individual has been incarcerated, and they are less likely to employ them based on this. There should be the chance to study for the same qualifications that are available in school
- Prisoners frequently feel little incentive to obtain qualifications when they know many of them will be of no practical use to them upon release

- Funding limitations and other restrictions often present barriers to running courses of a higher standard – such as Open University courses

It was felt that prisoners are kept in their cells for too long each day, though the time they are kept in their cells differs between public and private-run prisons. If prisoners are kept in their cells, then in-cell activity ought to be implemented. As well as this, those present expressed a need for all activities to be 'purposeful' rather than just being used to fill time or 'tick a box'.

Education and activities were considered to be too generalised in prisons and too focused towards the lowest common denominator. Participants suggested that courses be more catered to the individual in order to make a difference.

Those present expressed a desire for improved access to higher forms of education for residents who already have a high level of education, such as a degree, when entering prison.

Most of the activities and education on offer were viewed as outdated, or simply as irrelevant to the current job market. The issue of continuity between institutions was discussed, as the prison system currently does not ensure inmates can continue education courses when moved between institutions.

### Cuts to staff and resources

It was clear from the workshops that cuts to resources and staff numbers had a negative impact on prisoners' access to education, work, and activities.

Staff are needed to unlock and lock cells in order to escort the prisoners from one area to another. This is a basic task;

but many prisons lack sufficient staff to carry it out, which means that it can be hard to ensure that all prisoners get to their education/work/activity on time, or indeed at all. There have been many cases where activities and education have been cancelled altogether due to this problem.

### Appropriate work and special circumstances

*I'm dyslexic – I was told I was lazy. I am doing education here. I am calmer now – resident*

The groups expressed a need for more appropriate assessments of literacy and disability issues on admission. Residents reported their frustration at having to repeat literacy tests on arrival at a new prison; this is largely due to faults in the IT systems and a failure to record what courses an inmate has completed in the past. This makes many residents feel as though they are 'always starting at square one'. Many prisoners have literacy problems (due to dyslexia or lack of education) which need to be addressed, particularly as they have a negative effect on their employment chances upon release.

Participants also highlighted the fact that disabled prisoners need extra time and attention, especially when accessing education, work, or activities. There should be a requirement for sufficient staff resources to ensure that these individuals have the correct assistance to allow them to easily move around the prison – something that does not always happen currently due to lack of staff. The prison system in general was described as often overlooking the different needs of older or disabled prisoners, especially with regard to ensuring they have the same access to opportunities as other prisoners.

## Workshop Three

# Resolving disputes in prison, security, and the use of force

### Security and the use of force

Residents felt the staff at Grendon were much more respectful than those in other prisons they had served sentences in, where they had not felt respected. In the prison estate in general, residents mentioned there is a culture of 'us versus them' between prisoners and staff. It was felt that prison staff are not trained to use their discretion or judgement, and so often use violence as the first response when any sort of conflict or dispute arises.

Residents also expressed a desire for improved training for staff in prisons so that they are able to confidently address a range of issues that arise in conflicts. The resolution of conflicts was thought to be influenced by the staff to inmate ratio, as most prisons have low numbers of staff who are expected to deal with a large number of prisoners. If there were more staff on each wing, then staff would have more time to deal with conflicts without (sometimes) resorting to violence (the 'quickest way to get it done'), as they would not have such a high burden of other duties they are expected to carry out. Those present placed a value on methods that use mediation to resolve conflict. They added that it is important for staff to remember, when using this method, to approach conflicts in a balanced way and try to minimise their level of bias towards inmates.

Strip searches were viewed by all as extremely demoralising and distressing for prisoners. Most residents agreed that they are unnecessary, and only reduce the level of trust that prisoners have in staff.

### Complaints

The current process of dealing with conflict and complaints is the cause of much frustration among

residents. They felt that the process is often complicated, time-consuming, and benefits the prison staff more than the residents themselves.

Residents felt wary of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), the statutory body that deals with complaints, as they believe it is too 'one sided'. They also felt that officers 'stick together' and therefore there is little point in pursuing a complaint through the time-consuming process.

All agreed that a new system to deal with individual complaints is needed – a system that is entirely independent and that allows for quicker responses to individual complaints.

### Respect

The word 'respect' came up frequently in this workshop, especially with reference to how an increase in respect between prisoners and prison staff would have a positive effect on prison culture. Residents felt that if prison staff had more respect for them (and vice versa), then conflicts and complaints could be dealt with quickly between individuals – rather than having to spend the time going through the official complaints procedure.

At Grendon, residents are encouraged to challenge their peers and even prison staff, if they feel a conflict can be resolved in this way. This builds a level of trust, with residents describing the culture at Grendon as far superior to other prisons because of this: 'You see past the shirt', one resident said.

Participants felt that prison staff (including Governors) should be more responsive to the concerns of prisoners. This is more likely to happen if prisoners are encouraged to voice their concerns and more trust and respect is developed between everyone in prisons.

# Barlinnie

At HMP Barlinnie (Glasgow) the workshops were held on 28 October 2014. The workshops followed the same structure as those held at Grendon, with each workshop based on a different theme to be discussed from the European Prison Rules (EPRs).

Before engaging in any discussion, the prisoners in one group said that, due to the presence of a prison guard, their responses would be more limited than they would like; however, in another group the prisoners seemed to talk fairly freely about their experiences despite the guard being in the room.

The prisoners told us they had volunteered to take part, some because they wanted 'a decent lunch', and others because they wanted some time out of their cell (many did not supply a reason). They were very keen to know if their comments would be used to make any positive changes in the current regime.

At the beginning of the day there were many general observations about how prisoners felt about being inside. They recognised that 'the older you get, the harder it gets'; though those who had served longer sentences said that 'you become desensitised'.

## Overcrowding

Overcrowding was a particularly pertinent issue that came up many times in all discussions; Barlinnie has 300 people on each wing, and around three prison officers for every 85 prisoners, which all agreed was an unacceptable ratio. Those present agreed that Barlinnie is one of the worst prisons in Scotland for overcrowding, as it has a capacity of 1,000 but regularly accommodates 1,400 inmates.

This creates many practical and logistical problems in the prison: it makes it more difficult for prisoners to access work, education and exercise, or even to be let out of their cells at all during the day. Overcrowding was considered to be a problem across the prison estate. For example, education or work schemes that could potentially be helpful to prisoners are often not successful due to problems of overcrowding. Participants recognised that staff, the number of prisoners, and cost cuts are the problems that constantly come up, and that 'it is the way it is, but why is it like this *still*?'

## Culture

It was recognised that every prison in Scotland is run in a different way, and that there is a lack of consistency in the regimes, cultures and rules between the prisons.

The prisoners repeatedly mentioned that Barlinnie was worse than most prisons – it has its own 'mentality', 'things are done differently here', and it 'makes its own rules'. They expressed dissatisfaction at how the prison is run, and some compared it to their experiences in other prisons which had been better; for example, many have more opportunities to access work or education.

Barlinnie houses a range of prisoners, from those on remand to those serving life terms. The prisoners saw this as 'unfair', as it means that these very different categories of prisoner are allowed to mix.

All agreed that Barlinnie does not properly follow the EPRs (as described to them in the workshops), with prisoners feeling that their basic needs are not met. The prisoners assumed that there is a copy of the EPR handbook in Barlinnie's library, as every prison must have a copy on site, however, the prison staff are reluctant to allow prisoners access to the document. It was suggested that this might be because staff do not want to be on the receiving end of prisoners' frustrations for rules they cannot change in the system.

## Visits

Visits were described as 'unpleasant' experiences by several prisoners. They felt that staff were rude to family members, and that 'security overrules everything', as staff simply see family members as a security risk and 'up to no good'. This was seen as unfair, as family members have not done anything wrong. Toilet breaks currently terminate any visit due to security concerns, a policy which prisoners saw as indicative of how they are 'not treated as people'. Other complaints were raised regarding the limits on the number of visits per month, the lack of flexibility around visiting time slots, and the high expense incurred by some families to visit Barlinnie.

It was mentioned that there are plans to introduce postcode prisons in Scotland. The problems with prisoners being on a week release from prison were highlighted, because they often have to spend a significant portion of time travelling in order to visit their family.

## Common concerns

In one of the workshops the prisoners were asked by one of the participants, if there was one thing that could be improved about Barlinnie to make it better for you, what would it be?

Their responses were:

- Showers – often it is only possible to get a shower once in every 48 hours
- Clothes – new arrivals are given second hand clothes, which are often the wrong size
- Visits – prisoners expressed a need to have more time with their families and children, and thought that it was futile having a 9:30am visiting slot when not many visitors can actually use this slot

There was also discussion of the ‘main day-to-day gripe’ about the food:

- There is a delay in serving the food so it is cold, because the route to and from the kitchen is too long
- Barlinnie is an old prison and does not have kitchen facilities on the wings

In one of the groups prisoners discussed the practice of being ‘two’d up’ in cells. One prisoner described this as a ‘huge abuse of human rights’, because most prisoners have no choice over who they are ‘two’d up’ with. This can often result in suspicion between cell mates and a reluctance to disclose too much personal information, particularly about their family. They saw the constant changing of cells as frustrating and unfair.

# Workshop One

## Abuse, mental health, and self-harm

In this session the participants agreed they wanted to discuss the standards of general and physical health in Barlinnie, in addition to mental health.

### Initial assessments

The mental health and general health assessments that take place on arrival in prison were predominantly seen as ineffective from the prisoners' point of view. The rise in prison suicides was used as an example of how the care mechanisms are often ineffective.

Admission and reception into prison were viewed as too hurried, but this was said to be a problem in all UK prisons. One prisoner recalled that on admission he was asked about his previous medical history via a questionnaire, and he felt that staff did not really care about the answers he gave. This 'tick box' style of information gathering is also used in other types of medical check-up, and this system was viewed by several prisoners as completely ineffective for helping people.

The prisoners felt that the initial health assessments would be more effective if a follow up appointment was scheduled for a week or two after arrival, when prisoners have become more settled; when first admitted they can be emotional and unable to disclose crucial medical information to the prison staff. There is a lack of mental health care after the initial assessment, with one prisoner saying that 'when you are behind your door you are forgot about'.

One prisoner pointed out that inmates can easily tell a doctor that they will not self-harm or commit suicide, but the reality of their actions can be very different and it can be hard to intervene if someone is intent on doing this. As well as this, prisoners spoke of a reluctance to tell anyone about suicidal feelings because there is no trust when you are in an initial assessment: this takes time to build up. Stigmatisation was mentioned for those showing weakness as a reason why inmates may choose not to seek help in prison.

### Mental health services

*Barlinnie is not equipped to deal with mental health issues – prisoner*

There is insufficient access to people who prisoners can talk to in confidence. Prisoners said that the Listener Scheme in Barlinnie can only be accessed 'by request'; meaning that those new to Barlinnie do not know it exists.

Personal officers are not assigned to prisoners at Barlinnie as they are at some prisons, and it was felt that

this was a scheme that could make a positive difference. It was also agreed that a 'shadowing' scheme – an informal system to have other inmates appointed as 'shadows' or guides to new inmates – would be helpful, and would help in the expression of negative feelings. However several prisoners felt this would not work in Barlinnie due to practical issues: there are too many prisoners so there is 'no chance' of having a personal officer.

One prisoner recalled how he had been offered help by social workers when he was 14 or 15, but since 'becoming a criminal' no one has offered him any help. However, another prisoner felt that he has benefited from anger management courses in prison; a surprise to most in the room who had not seen the success of these courses with other prisoners.

Higher quality psychiatric care was called for, as several prisoners said that 'dirty protests' still happen, and that there had been an instance where a group of mentally disturbed prisoners were left banging and screaming on their doors for three days with no help or intervention – which is also distressing for other prisoners.

### Mental illness

Some prisoners said that there are people 'going off their head' on a regular basis and that there are a lot of angry outbursts, mostly due to the lack of care and how they are treated. However, these public expressions of frustration never lead to an improvement in care; the prisoner simply gets reprimanded for it.

One of the prisoners spoke of the abuse he had suffered as a 13-year-old when living in a borstal. He said he has never spoken about this to anyone, due the culture of not 'grassing in' people. His experience of the borstal was of a place where many staff were corrupt, with some bringing drugs in. He expressed his deep anger at being 'trapped in the system' of institutions ever since, as he is now in prison: 'if we believed in a fair system I wouldn't be here.'

Another had recently arrived to serve his first sentence, and had not expected to receive a custodial sentence: 'It is a big shock trying to get your head round it all'.

He described his mental state on arrival:

- 'Traumatising', 'I was completely scared' when he was put in a wing with inmates he thought were dangerous
- Felt like 'lashing out' due to the constant noise of banging doors and shouting from other inmates, he was 'shaking and paranoid'
- 'It takes ages to see anyone in mental health' and 'by the time you do see the mental health teams, you are so confused it is completely terrible'

After being assessed of being at 'high risk' of self-harm, he was put alone in a night shelter and felt 'terrified'. Several other prisoners agreed that isolation cells were not an effective way to care for vulnerable or 'at risk' inmates. These cells were described as depressing places which add to the feeling of isolation from the rest of the prison.

### Isolation cells

Isolation cells, or 'suicide cells', were generally feared by the prisoners, with some saying that they are reluctant to disclose mental health problems as they do not want to be placed in these cells. The potential for other negative repercussions, such as having restrictions placed on their activities, also made prisoners reluctant to tell medical staff about certain problems. Some admitted to lying about their drug use for the same reasons. They recognised that isolation cells did have a purpose and are essential for some prisoners, but felt that they are overused as an option by prison staff.

Rather than being put in isolation cells, prisoners felt that there should be:

- One-to-one sessions
- Clear information – which takes away the feeling that 'you have to fend for yourself' and that 'nothing is explained'
- More training for prison officers on how to deal with vulnerable prisoners and those who arrive for the first time
- More frequent checks of vulnerable prisoners by night shift officers

There was also a feeling that they were used for punishment too often, with prisoners saying: 'don't abuse cells that should be for suicidal lads'. Participants felt that prisoners should be sent to hospital if they are a danger to themselves, and should not remain in prison.

### Medical services

*Prisoners are treated inside like third world citizens – prisoner*

*A disgrace. Shocking. Diabolical. Staff treat you like scum – prisoner*

All agreed that they had to wait for too long to get an appointment with any medical staff: one inmate cited a one year wait to secure an appointment at a hospital. To see a nurse or a doctor, prisoners must fill in a referral

form which can take up to three months to be acknowledged and properly dealt with, and a significant number of forms get lost in the process. Sometimes the forms get processed within a week, but prisoners reported that this only happens sporadically. Various participants said that they felt the NHS reforms had not improved medical services in prison.

Prisoners felt that officers on the wing are not best suited to assess a prisoner's fitness to work, and this can lead to prisoners working when they are unwell which contributes to the passing on of illness. The use of bunk beds in every cell also allows infections to spread easily, and adds to heightened levels of anxiety and stress.

The prisoners said that Barlinnie no longer has an effective drugs treatment programme, that it is simply 'detox only'. There is a drug-free wing at Barlinnie, but this was described as 'so limited' by one prisoner. However, one prisoner testified to the success of the detox programme for helping with his 'binge-drinking' problem.

It was recognised that the medical services in prisons are of poor quality due to the problems of too few staff and too many prisoners. There is a lack of space and 'it all comes down to numbers'. This was thought to be the main problem rather than a lack of care from staff, who may often be stressed themselves when working in a prison environment.

### Nurses

- Appointments are only five to ten minutes long, so prisoners are reluctant to talk about their problems, particularly 'big issues' such as past abuse
- Some nurses can 'barely speak English', are very rude, and speak to prisoners like children
- One prisoner said he had been told by a nurse that she didn't 'have enough time' to deal with his concerns
- These problems lead to a lack of trust in the system

### Dentist

Prisoners mentioned long waiting lists to see all medical staff, particularly for the dentist as there is 'only one visiting dentist for the whole prison'. Some said that prisoners only have the right to see a dentist if they are serving over six months, though others said that the process seems 'completely random' and it is sometimes possible to see one in an emergency.

## Medication

Prisoners felt that doctors sign off medication too easily sometimes, for example when prescribing methadone, and expressed concern about the high numbers of prisoners taking this drug.

It was agreed that there are some inside who are an 'absolute mess' due to the drugs they are taking, and instances of prisoners hallucinating whilst on drugs were mentioned. Medication is used as currency and is traded between prisoners. Consequently, there is a general fear among staff that prisoners will sell their prescriptions to others, which in turn makes it very difficult for inmates to get a prescription for certain drugs. Staff were described as being 'suspicious' of prisoners on prescribed medicine, which can result in long waits or in some cases receiving medicine that is not appropriate. One prisoner said that he has not been prescribed anything for on-going shoulder pain because of this policy.

There were also concerns that some prisoners have their medication discontinued in the move between prisons. Frequently there are delays for new arrivals receiving their drugs (which is of particular concern for those who need, for example, anti-depressants or tranquilisers). Therefore, prisoners expressed a desire for

better filing and sharing of information across the prison estate, and for officers to be more aware of prisoners' medical histories. Mistakes in the healthcare process are often not explained to prisoners, who are frequently 'kept out of the loop', and so some felt there should be more accountability in the system.

It was noted that the prison officers make decisions about medication, including when it should be stopped, rather than medical staff.

## Physical health

It was recognised that people tend to get physically healthier when inside prison, but this does not necessarily lead to any improvement in mental health. However, exercise does help, and one prisoner agreed, saying that he always feels 'better about himself' after the gym.

There was a brief discussion of older prisoners, and the initiative in some jails to have a dedicated over-40s gym session was mentioned as good practice.

The issue of disabled prisoners was also discussed, and prisoners mentioned that Barlinnie has specially modified cells for disabled prisoners, in accordance with guidelines set out in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*.

## Workshop Two

### Activities, work and education

#### Time out of cells

*No way is eight hours out of cell being met – prisoner*

In one of the groups, the prisoners said that most inmates in Barlinnie are locked in their cells for close to 23 hours a day; one prisoner said that sometimes they are out for two hours, but 'no more than 2 hours 45 minutes, ever' (including meal times). However, differing views were expressed regarding the length of time prisoners spend out of their cells; clearly it varies for different categories of prisoner and for different wings.

One group described the time out of the cells for activities as:

- 45 minutes every second day for association
- 1 hour a day for exercise
- 45 minutes in the library each day – on request
- 45 minutes in the gym (but the gym is only open at certain times, so if a prisoner is on a visit/attending a course, they will miss going)
- 2 visits a week for 45 minutes

Those who work are unable to take part in activities that clash with their work commitments. All agreed that time out of the cells was limited due to the lack of staff and the overcrowding at Barlinnie, and the length of time it takes to unlock all the cells and to move men around the prison. It was felt that staff keep prisoners in their cells for longer than necessary, because it is easier to control the high numbers of prisoners this way.

#### Activity

When discussing the gym, one prisoner said it is 'alright', but it is a 'lottery' to get in due to overcrowding. Access is mediated through a rota process, which was seen as fair, but it does not have much capacity: it was estimated that only ten out of every 80 prisoners get access to the gym. The gym is only open at certain times, so some prisoners may miss out if they are on another activity or a course at the time. There are also rowing and running machines on every wing for the prisoners to use.

It was mentioned that a lack of activity can lead to boredom, and that 'boredom is the biggest killer' – boredom that could easily be alleviated with more activity. Mental health problems (particularly depression) caused by a lack of activity were also pointed out by one prisoner.

Remand prisoners get less access to education, activities, work and time outside their cells than others.

Prisoners are only allowed one book, one DVD and one CD at a time from the library and it is only possible to get new items about once every month; rules they view as unnecessary.

There is an opportunity to do gardening for some prisoners, but not many get this opportunity.

#### Television

- One prisoner saw them simply as 'pacifiers', to 'shut prisoners up' and keep them out of trouble
- Most viewed the programmes they are allowed to watch as 'boring'
- Prisoners felt frustrated by inconsistencies between wings for the type and amount of television prisoners are allowed to watch

#### Work

Work in prison was described as 'slave labour' by one prisoner, who pointed out that the SPS profits from their labour by not paying them a fair wage for the work they do. One participant mentioned that in Poland prisoners receive the minimum wage for their work, which was viewed as a good idea by most of those present. Some of the prisoners also felt that the idea of paying for your board and living in prison, out of your wages, would be 'amazing' for gaining life skills (if they received a fair wage). Another participant mentioned that the SPS have different rules from the rest of the UK about the payment of prisoners.

It was highlighted by one participant that earning in prison is an emotive issue and hard to separate from the politics and public view of prisoners earning the minimum wage. Prisoners feel that staff think they 'can't be trusted' and so do not want to pay them the minimum; however one also said that 'cons fuck it up for other cons' as it is simply the poor behaviour of a few who 'ruin it for everyone'.

For inmates, their priority was being able to save money for their release or to send out to their families, and for the work skills to give them a better chance of employment. It was generally thought it is better to 'skill you up' and spend time working on what would be useful in the future, rather than to take work with no future application.

An example of the low wages in Barlinnie was given by one prisoner, who described how he earns £10 per week for five days of working 7am-9pm. The amount of money earned means that some prisoners felt there is little

incentive to work, especially for those who receive money from their families. Despite this, some expressed a desire to work, as it makes them feel more positive and makes the time 'go faster.'

All agreed that there should be improvements to paid work opportunities outside prison walls for inmates. At the moment, when prisoners do go outside to work (for example on a building site) many are turned away as 'the foreman only has work for five out of 30 lads'.

One prisoner also expressed a desire to be involved in more meaningful work, for example 'helping build hospitals or help charities'.

## Education

### *A way of getting out of the cell – prisoner*

Some felt that Barlinnie offered courses of decent quality, while others described the education system as 'awful'. There was mention of how in the past there were useful, more varied schemes to help prisoners get back into the job market on release, but these no longer exist due to cost cuts. Prisoners also mentioned the inconsistencies between the educational schemes at different prisons.

Gaining access to education was seen as 'pretty straightforward' by some, whilst others complained some courses are hard to get on to because there is a long waiting list due to overcrowding. There is a restriction on the number of hours that each prisoner can take classes for, a rule that was viewed as unnecessary. Prisoners also said that they are 'paid more to mop floors' than to take classes, which they felt was wrong, as they are only paid for a maximum of five classes, even if they take up to eight. However most agreed that there are a lot of skills, both practical and academic, that can be learned.

Some prisoners thought that education is limited by the lack of internet access, and that having regular internet access would greatly improve the quality of learning for them. There is the opportunity to study to university level and gain a degree, although some prisoners were not aware this was possible. Participants also felt that the low wages paid to teachers in prison meant that they are generally less qualified, reducing the quality of some of the courses.

Arts education is available, but it varies from prison to prison, and the prisoners in one of the groups said that there is not enough at Barlinnie. One participant said that these courses are generally run as projects, not as everyday activities, and each prison needs to apply for funding to run them.

## Illiteracy

It was recognised that those who had already gained some qualifications, both at school and while at prison, are more confident and therefore more likely to request courses. Those with a lower educational background are less likely to apply. The prisoners reflected that this reluctance to apply was, in part, due to feelings of embarrassment and shame. This is especially the case for those who are unable to read, and cannot complete the relevant forms to access learning.

It was felt that those involved in the education system at Barlinnie should do more to tackle and recognise this problem; when prisoners have problems with literacy these are rarely noted on reception into prison and most people will not come forward themselves and admit needing help. Therefore, there was some discussion about how services could be improved to encourage those with low levels of education, though there was recognition that this would be difficult as there would always be some level of shame at admitting problems in reading and writing. More peer-to-peer teaching and support from other prisoners were discussed as ways to improve access for poorly educated prisoners.

## Rehabilitation schemes

It was felt that SPS in general is not geared up to the rehabilitation of offenders, and that there should be more of a focus on progress towards release.

In one workshop there was a discussion about how there should be more courses tailored towards the provision of key life skills. There are some initiatives focussed on addressing past behaviours, but it was felt that these are largely ineffective, as people are 'always coming back' to Barlinnie.

One scheme that operated in the past was mentioned, which involved conducting mock interviews with prisoners, as well as teaching them budgeting and practical information in the period leading up to their release. This 'brilliant' scheme was stopped due to limitations on funding and facilities in the prison. Some prisoners felt that there should be more courses tailored towards 'lifers', rather than only being geared towards the under-25s.

## After release

Several prisoners discussed their experiences of being released from prison in the past. On release, prisoners are most likely to be accommodated in a hostel, which they view as 'just another way to get back inside'. Hostels

usually house those from similar backgrounds, who are often taking drugs or drinking. In such an environment, prisoners felt it was too easy to get back into their previous way of life and perpetuate the 'vicious circle' of reoffending that can happen after release. Prisoners felt that unless there is more preparation before release this cycle will continue.

One prisoner mentioned that Barlinnie gives each prisoner £72 when released, which was agreed to not be enough by most of the prisoners, especially when the Jobcentre is reluctant to allow them easy access to Jobseeker's Allowance. Prisoners also felt that 'it's not what you know, it's who you know' when looking for work after prison and they felt that skills they have gained in prison might not be of much use, despite giving them more confidence. One prisoner felt confident he could get a job on release, because he had family members willing to employ him in their business.

## Workshop Three

# Resolving disputes in prison, security, and the use of force

### Complaints

*Complaints system is a joke – prisoner*

*Rules are not written in laymen's terms and feedback is also complicated – prisoner*

*The officers will say anything to appease you – prisoner*

*Red tape: always the same answers – prisoner*

There was a general feeling of cynicism about the complaints procedures at Barlinnie, and all agreed that it is very rare that they are listened to and anything changes in the prison. One prisoner said he has seen complaints 'go straight into the shredder', as prison staff do not want to take the complaints to a higher level (perhaps due to fear that they will be reprimanded as a result). Complaints are not often made, as they are seen as pointless; there is also a culture of 'don't grass people up' in prison, which prevents many complaints from being lodged. One prisoner even expressed the view that the only way to actually change things in prison would be through extreme action such as a riot.

On the other hand, some prisoners disagreed with the idea that complaints are simply a waste of time, and said that staff do make sure they read complaints as they are aware that prisoners feel ignored by staff. Prisoners admitted that some staff discourage complaints, but said that others encourage them and do not send people away if they have a grievance to make.

### Complaints system

The complaints system is not trusted by prisoners, as the complaints form is not in a sealed envelope. There are two types of form for complaints, one for a wing complaint and one for confidential complaints which is only seen by the Governor. A prisoner said that 'forms are not always available and the lads do not know the difference in forms' – concluding that the complaints process is far from easy. In general, responses are only received after a seven day wait.

Prison officers decide whether complaints are valid or not, and prisoners said that if you make too many complaints or 'if you annoy them' you will be transferred to another prison. If the complaint is followed through then it can take up to three to four months to complete the procedure and reach the ombudsman – so for many it is seen as a waste of effort, particularly for those on shorter sentences, as one said, 'why complain when we are only here for a wee while?' There are no copies of the

complaints normally given to prisoners, so there is no proof of a complaint on record, though it was added that prisoners can request photocopies.

### Confidentiality

In one workshop, the prisoners were not aware that there were already confidential complaints forms available, which led to a discussion about whether having a more confidential system would be an improvement. Some agreed that it is a good idea to have a confidential system, although one prisoner expressed the view that, even if the form is sealed, you will still be labelled as 'a grass' if you are seen putting the form into a complaints box, a label that many want to avoid. Another suggested a confidential 'hotline' for complaints, as forms can be confusing and also hard to complete for those with poor levels of literacy.

### Inspections

Prison inspectors ('suits') were discussed, with prisoners saying that engagement with them is restricted because of a fear of any complaints they make being fed back to management. There was a general consensus that it is better to 'keep quiet and get out', to not be labelled a 'troublemaker' by causing problems, especially for those who are seeking early release on tag. The prisoners held a similar attitude towards the visiting board of 'local worthies' that come into the prison, and also felt that they cannot resolve anything as there is no connection between them and the 'lads'.

One prisoner expressed his view that at present prison Governors do not know fully what happens in their halls as information is not shared with them. It was felt that Governors should be more involved with the general prison population, and could occasionally go round asking questions, even if this is just for three or four cells at random.

### Restorative justice

Restorative justice was discussed, with prisoners and other participants expressing mixed views on the concept. Some were unsure about whether it would work, but did realise that it could be beneficial to see the victim's point of view and the harm that has been caused. When discussing this, several prisoners felt this would be best for first offences and for 'less serious' crimes, but did not see much purpose in this process for crimes that have 'no real victims like big shops [shoplifting]'.

## Prison councils

A prison officer mentioned that Barlinnie does have a prison council, but it is not well advertised and so prisoners will only know about it if they ask staff whether there is a prison council. Therefore the effectiveness of this council is limited as there is a small amount of prisoners involved. The issues discussed at the council tend to be those regarding the food or the canteen, rather than more serious long-term issues.

Some felt that councils could be an example of good practice in prisons and mentioned instances of councils leading to positive outcomes in other prisons, though the prisoners felt cynical about the effectiveness of councils and felt that they never actually got anything done. On the whole the councils were viewed as being in place simply to give the prisoners the feeling of having some power and influence: which they do not have in reality. On a positive note, they said that councils would be a good idea, but only if they are taken seriously, which they did not see happening at present.

## Officers

*Some people just shouldn't be prison officers – prisoner*

The prisoners thought that 'about 70-80% of officers are pretty good', but recognised that there is a mix of good and bad officers in every prison. There were varied views expressed about the officers. Some prisoners said that, on the whole, they get on well with staff, while others said that they disagree completely with how staff treat prisoners, 'and don't think they should get much credit for this'. Once again, overcrowding was raised as the primary reason why officers are sometimes ineffective at dealing with prisoners' problems or concerns, as there are not enough staff to deal with the security of the prisoners.

One prisoner said that some officers know the prisoners very well, that they 'know more about other cons than I do myself', which has led to some guards bringing in drugs and phones for certain prisoners. Other prisoners saw the positive side of these personal relationships, as they felt more able to confide in some officers who 'have watched them grow up in the system'.

Officers were believed to sometimes encourage bullying and fighting between prisoners and to escalate many of the conflicts inside. This was described by one prisoner as officers having a 'survival of the fittest' mentality about prisoners, and others said how officers often insulted prisoners for no reason. On arrival, one prisoner described

how officers 'took the piss' because he was frightened and was supplied with ill-fitting clothes, which meant he 'felt too scared to ask the officers and had to learn from the others. Prisoners tell you more than the officers do.'

## Use of force

One prisoner said that some officers have been suspended 'around six times' for assaulting prisoners. It was felt that some officers use force to show their power over the inmates, with younger staff being more likely to use 'excessive force'. Prisoners also said that methods of physical control are used 'too quickly' but with no consistency. For example, some inmates are targeted and receive more forceful responses because of their history of violent behaviour before sentencing and whilst in prison. Staff do not listen to management and abide by the rules, so an officer can 'throw a punch' regardless of the rules, prisoners said. There was a feeling that prisoners 'don't stand a chance' against staff, and it was better to 'keep your head down' and stay out of trouble.

Another mentioned how restraints are used too often by staff, and demonstrated how he was now able to bend his wrist back much further than before, due to excessive use of this restraint.

## Resolving disputes

Disputes between prisoners are usually solved by separating the prisoners, after the conflict or fight has been logged on a computer. There is 'constant splitting up' due to conflicts going on in every wing. Officers were described as 'brilliant' by one prisoner in their efforts at keeping 'rivals from outside' apart when in prison, which is done mostly by talking to prisoners about this on induction to prison. Some said that bullying amongst prisoners has decreased in Barlinnie.

On the other hand, one prisoner described staff as 'ruthless' in the way they deal with prisoners and with disputes in particular. This was attributed to the extreme overcrowding that means the officers need to maintain a certain level of control. Prisoners said they rarely see mediation as a method of solving bigger disputes, but that it is sometimes used for minor ones. They also considered younger prisoners to be most likely to be involved in serious fights, that should have been resolved through mediation before the dispute escalated. The structure of the prison was also cited as a reason for disputes not being resolved properly; the size and structure of the wings means that they are not well suited for quiet, private

conversations between prisoners and officers to resolve misunderstandings.

Resolution of disputes is often dependent on the personal relationships between officers and inmates. Consequently, some feel like they can approach staff to solve a dispute while others do not. Prisoners recognised there will always be a barrier between guards and inmates, but that there should be more respect. It was felt that it is more important to resolve disputes in prison than on the outside, as 'outside you can walk away from a problem', but the prison environment presents different challenges with resolving disputes. Problems are experienced differently depending on the length of the sentence the prisoner is serving; prisoners felt that it is less crucial to have a resolution to a dispute if you are only in prison for a short time.

In one of the workshops, it was agreed that prisons are not culturally adapted for mediation and resolution. There is not enough time to deal appropriately with disputes, meaning that staff will favour a quick response rather than taking the time to mediate and enter into discussions with those involved. Participants felt that responses can often be aimed at those who are 'in the firing line' and who may be indirectly affected by the dispute rather than at those actually involved in the dispute.

A suggestion was made that a longer period of association when first entering prison might help mitigate against conflict as it would create closer bonds between prisoners. However another pointed out that more time together would leave 'no escape from each other', so it would not necessarily help, and could actually create more disputes and more tensions.

## Transfers

*Transport vans are disgusting – better treatment for animals – prisoner*

Transfers were described as being particularly humiliating because of the heightened security during this process, which means that more force is used. Prisoners also said that restraints are used very forcefully, with the possibility of breaking prisoners' wrists, though this varies depending on which staff are dealing with you and what type of training they have received. Despite this, some prisoners said they recognised that 'if you're getting carted off it's for a reason', and some said they did not bear grudges against this type of behaviour because prison 'is what it is.'

## Anxiety in prison

Some prisoners said that many inmates at Barlinnie are in a constant state of fear and anxiety. This was thought by one prisoner to be due to the 'huge gang culture' in prison which means that many people get 'slashed' when inside; it's 'common knowledge that that's just the way Barlinnie is.'

Those present discussed how the state of anxiety brought on by prison can stay with people once they are released, manifesting as a sense of paranoia around people that are viewed as threatening even when they are actually not.

At the time of the event, Barlinnie had no cameras, which was thought to make the problem worse, though one of the prison officers did clarify that there were cameras but they were not yet in use. Prisoners thought that cameras would be useful in keeping some vulnerable people safer, but that they would not solve all disputes and violence as the prisoners will simply 'get someone' in the cameras blind spots, or in areas without cameras. CCTV was recognised as an unreliable method of deterring crime from happening, both inside and outside prison. Another prisoner mentioned how he felt there was no privacy on arrival, because of his perception that there were cameras everywhere which caused him to feel very anxious (he did not realise that they were not yet in use).

## Searches

*Prison is about security – so get used to being searched – prisoner*

The European Prison Rules state that prisoners should not be humiliated when being searched, but this was seen as 'impossible' by one prisoner, who said strip searches were inevitably going to be humiliating. He added that you do become desensitised to searches after 'around the first ten times'. Others said that strip searches are humiliating and there is 'no dignity' when you are 'naked and squatting' in front of a prison officer.

Strip-searching was said to happen 'everyday', with most searches taking place after visits, as protocol dictates that two random searches of prisoners are conducted before they return to their cells. These are based on 'intelligence' – the prison officers know who to target and search after every visit. The practitioners present were surprised at the frequency of strip searching that was involved, as they mentioned that this would involve a lot more paperwork to record every search. However the prisoners pointed out that the officers 'hardly every write

reports' after conducting a search, and do not do searches 'by the book'.

Some prisoners said they are 'more upset about visitors being searched' than being searched themselves, as visitors must also go through a security procedure.

There are no internal bodily searches conducted by officers, but if staff want to check inside a prisoner's mouth they will make them open their mouth with their own fingers, and coerce them into doing this by the threat of taking away their medication. This was said to happen all the time and was viewed as unnecessarily frequent by the prisoners.

If prisoners refuse a search then they will be reported and punished again, so prisoners concluded that there is no point in complaining about it. Methods of punishment cited included the loss of wages, losing phone and

television privileges, and the termination of healthcare treatment. Prisoners also mentioned feeling frustration at being on the receiving end of punishments their cellmate has received, as they are often also affected by any restrictions placed on their cellmate due to living in the same space.

The conflict of 'human rights versus the purpose of prison' was raised. Those present recognised it is often hard to balance the human rights of offenders with the security requirements that are necessary in prison.

The idea of having a handheld scanner to scan over a prisoner's body was deemed to be a good alternative to strip searching, and has already been introduced in some prisons. The prisoners pointed out that they have to walk through a metal detector every day anyway, so they thought it would be futile to introduce these as well.

## Appendix

### Suggestions and examples of positive practice

During the events, participants in both Grendon and Barlinnie highlighted many examples of positive practice in prisons that benefit prisoners. The suggestions they gave are listed as follows.

#### Grendon

**HMP Bristol**, for working in partnership with the **Restore Trust** to allow prisoners to gain an NVQ qualification and apply the skills they have learned to restore derelict community housing in the local area.

- [www.therestoretrust.org](http://www.therestoretrust.org)

**HMP Erlestoke**, for focussing on training and rehabilitative behavioural programmes.

**HMP Maghberry**, for having a therapeutic wing for residents and staff.

**HMP-YOI Parc**, for having facilities that are orientated around the needs of young offenders. The family centre has phone and Skype facilities.

**HMP Peterborough**, for having work opportunities that are adapted to suit the needs of the individual.

**HMP Thameside**, for having computers in every cell which prisoners can use to book activities or classes from, which increases interest in these activities and makes them more accessible.

**HMP Wandsworth**, for running beneficial personal development courses. For example, it runs a **Shame Violence Intervention (SVI)** programme, that is constructed to help prisoners reduce their levels of prison violence.

- [www.cjf.bacp.co.uk/shame\\_violence\\_intervention.php](http://www.cjf.bacp.co.uk/shame_violence_intervention.php)

**HMP Wormwood Scrubs**, for having a good 'first night centre'. The cells are larger and much more pleasant than those in other prisons and are clean on arrival. New inmates are also given a 'bed pack' on arrival. As well as this, inmates are allowed to spend more time out of their cell than they are in other prisons.

**PIPE (Psychologically Informed Planned Environment) Units** were mentioned. These are residential units based on therapeutic community practice (much like at **HMP Grendon**), which provide a supportive environment for prisoners following a period of more intense treatment.

They are currently being piloted in six UK prisons and approved premises: two male prisons (**HMP Hull** and **HMP Gartree**), two female prisons (**HMP Send** and **HMP-YOI Low Newton**), and two Probation Approved Premises sites (**Merseyside** and **Leicester**).

These pilots seem to be successful, but more funding is needed before they can be introduced more widely across the UK.

- [www.gov.uk/government/publications/enabling-features-of-pipes-research-report](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enabling-features-of-pipes-research-report)

'**Toe-by-Toe**' is run by **The Shannon Trust**. Prisoners are trained as mentors to teach other prisoners to read, teaching that is carried out in the cells. Participants suggested that more educational classes should be made available in cells, where less confident inmates can feel more comfortable learning and where the prison regime is less disruptive.

- [www.shannontrust.org.uk/our-work/the-reading-plan](http://www.shannontrust.org.uk/our-work/the-reading-plan)

**The Listener Scheme** is a peer support programme run by the Samaritans charity that is available in nearly every prison in Scotland, England, and Wales. This exists to train the prisoners to listen in complete confidence to their fellow prisoners.

Prisoners do not receive a wage for becoming a listener, which some participants felt was appropriate in ensuring that their main incentive is to help others. However others felt that prisoners could obtain a certificate to show they have completed the training.

- [www.samaritans.org/your-community/our-work-prisons/listener-scheme](http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/our-work-prisons/listener-scheme)

The use of **Skype** calls to keep in contact with family and friends has been beneficial in some prisons.

Ahead of the opening of HMP-YOI Grampian in early 2014, residents of HMP Aberdeen and HMP Peterhead were transferred to HMP Barlinnie and HMP Perth. Consequently, many families were no longer able to visit due to the distance and the cost of travel, so SPS ( in partnership with **Apex Scotland**) facilitated the use of Skype calls instead.

Once HMP-YOI Grampian was opened, these calls were discontinued. It was the general consensus during the workshops that the prison estate should make use of modern technology, as an alternative to visits which can often be time-consuming and expensive for families.

**Working Chance** – provides education, training, and recruitment advice to women who are or have been in prison. The charity has established links with employers, and provides advice specific to prisoners' circumstances that will help in their search for employment.

● [www.workingchance.org](http://www.workingchance.org)

## Barlinnie

**HMP Castle Huntly**, for its open estate scheme, where prisoners are allowed many more placements than other prisons.

**HMP Dovegate**, for having a positive, though rigid, programme of daily activities that prisoners must take part in.

**HMP Drake Hall**, for use of a call centre on site that provides prisoners with training and an income (though they are still paid prison pay rates).

**HMP Perth**, for developing a prison mentoring scheme in which prisoners guide new inmates through the process of settling down in the prison system.

**The Bike Station** enables prisoners to restore old bikes that are then sold to provide donations to charity.

● [www.thebikestation.org.uk](http://www.thebikestation.org.uk)

**The Clink** restaurants are run by The Clink charity in three prisons: **HMP High Down**, **HMP Cardiff** and **HMP Brixton**. Prisoners are employed in the restaurants and gain training and qualifications. Participants suggested that it would be helpful to have more business schemes run by prisoners that are similar to this, though recognised that it would be harder to include 'lifers' in these schemes.

● [www.thelinkcharity.org/the-clink-restaurants](http://www.thelinkcharity.org/the-clink-restaurants)

**The Koestler Trust** was mentioned – a charity which runs arts programmes for inmates in various prisons. Those present mentioned specifically the money and prizes that could be earned by prisoners from the sale of their art, and highlighted that this is not allowed in Scottish prisons, due to differences in rules about earning in prisons.

● [www.koestlertrust.org.uk](http://www.koestlertrust.org.uk)

**The Sycamore Tree**, run by the Prison Fellowship, is focused on exploring the effects of crime on victims and society with groups of prisoners.

● [www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/what-we-do/sycamore-tree](http://www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/what-we-do/sycamore-tree)

**Timpson** – a company that is very active in the employment of many who have left prisons.

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