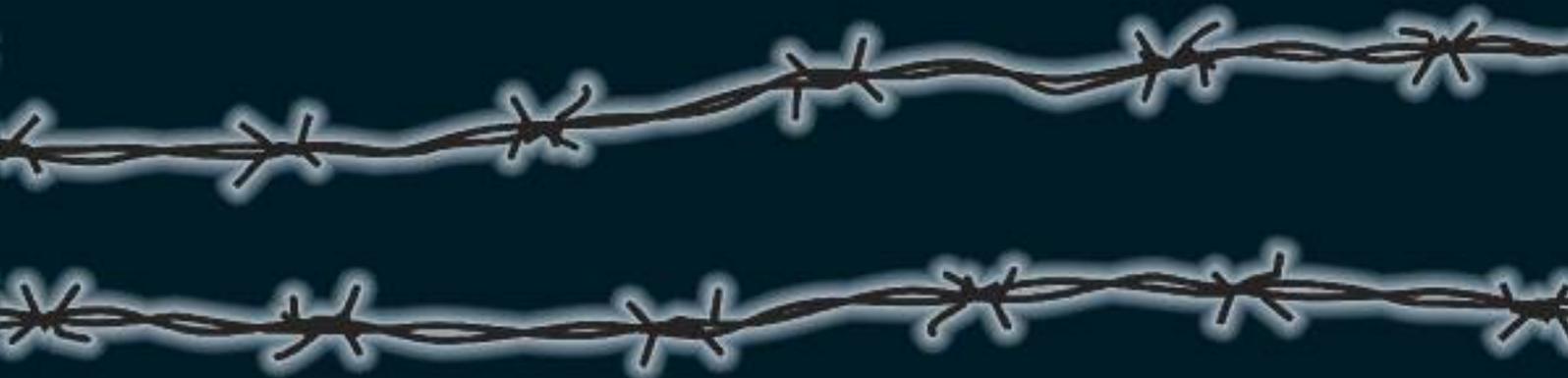


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Ethnicity Religion
Gender Race
Sexual Orientation
Age
Multiculturalism



Editorial Comment

There is no question that prisons in England and Wales have made significant advances in recent years in promoting diversity and equality. The racist murder of Zahid Mubarek at Feltham in 2000 and the subsequent public inquiry acted as a signal case which exposed the extent of institutional racism and galvanised a commitment to address the fundamental problems. However, issues of power and inequality are not easily resolved and are wider than race and ethnicity. This edition of *Prison Service Journal* includes four articles that address aspects of diversity that are arguably less visible and less discussed but nevertheless are of crucial importance.

Dr. Peter Dunn, an inspector with HM Inspectorate of Prisons, discusses the experience of homosexual prisoners. He argues that they are subject to a 'cycle of invisibility' where their sexual orientation is hidden due to their own fears and the insensitivity of those who live and work in prisons to the challenges, fears and experiences of gay and lesbian people. Laura Jones and Michael Brookes, both from HMP Grendon, offer a literature review regarding transgender offenders. This is an area that has been subject to little research and as a result there is only a limited understanding of the complexities. Jones and Brookes are able to reveal some of the intense experiences of those coming to terms with their gender identity and also the challenges of trying to work therapeutically with those who are concurrently undergoing significant changes. Both of these articles poignantly highlight that the painfulness of the experiences of some individuals means that they are at heightened risk of suicide. For those people, sexual orientation and gender identity can be matters of life and death.

The third article is from Conn Mac Gabhann, who works for The Irish Chaplaincy in Britain and authored *Voices Unheard: A Study of Irish Travellers in Prison*. This article argues that Irish Travellers suffer unequal hardship in prison as a result of deeply entrenched social and economic exclusion. It is argued that they have poor levels of literacy, mental illness, limited access to services, discrimination and prejudicial licence conditions for release. Critically, this report suggests that recognition of this group is patchy and there is a lack of an overall strategy to address their needs.

The final article addressing diversity relates to migrant women and is produced by Dr Liz Hales and Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe, from the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. This follows on from an article published in *PSJ* in November 2011. This article tracks the experience of these women through the criminal justice system where they can feel bewildered, confused and out of control.

Together, these four articles highlight how the criminal justice system, a large bureaucracy with a challenging task, can sometimes struggle to meet the needs of particular groups. Whilst individual members of staff attempt to provide the best service they can, the time, resources and facilities to better meet the needs of individuals are sometimes unavailable. It has been argued by Richard Sparks and Elaine Crawley¹ that, large organisations such as prisons do not only embed institutional racism but also suffer from 'institutional thoughtlessness' in relation to other groups. That is what is highlighted by these four articles. For individuals within those groups they can experience painful consequences in terms of their access to services and life chances, but also feel profound effects in their sense of identity and well being, what has been described by Richard Sennett and Jonathon Cobb² as the 'hidden injuries' of inequality. The intention of these articles is to highlight and continue to push for acknowledgement, responsiveness and sensitivity to the needs of disadvantaged or powerless groups.

This edition of *PSJ* also carried two reviews and an article responding to Frankie Owens's Koestler award winning *The little book of prisons: A beginners guide*. The articles are authored by an academic, a serving prisoner and a former prison governor, so drawing together a variety of perspectives. Owens's book is a deceptively jocular book about getting through a first prison sentence in a local prison. Whilst providing plenty of laughs, it also reveals some of the fears, anxieties and pains of imprisonment as well as giving an insight into the culture and practices of the prisoner world. The book has generated a significant amount of coverage and commentary and *PSJ* is delighted to dedicate space to serious consideration of this work.

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1. Crawley, E. & Sparks, R. (2005) *Hidden injuries?: Researching the experiences of older men in English prisons in The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 44, 345-56.
 2. Sennett, R. & Cobb, J. (1972) *The hidden injuries of class* New York: Norton and Co.