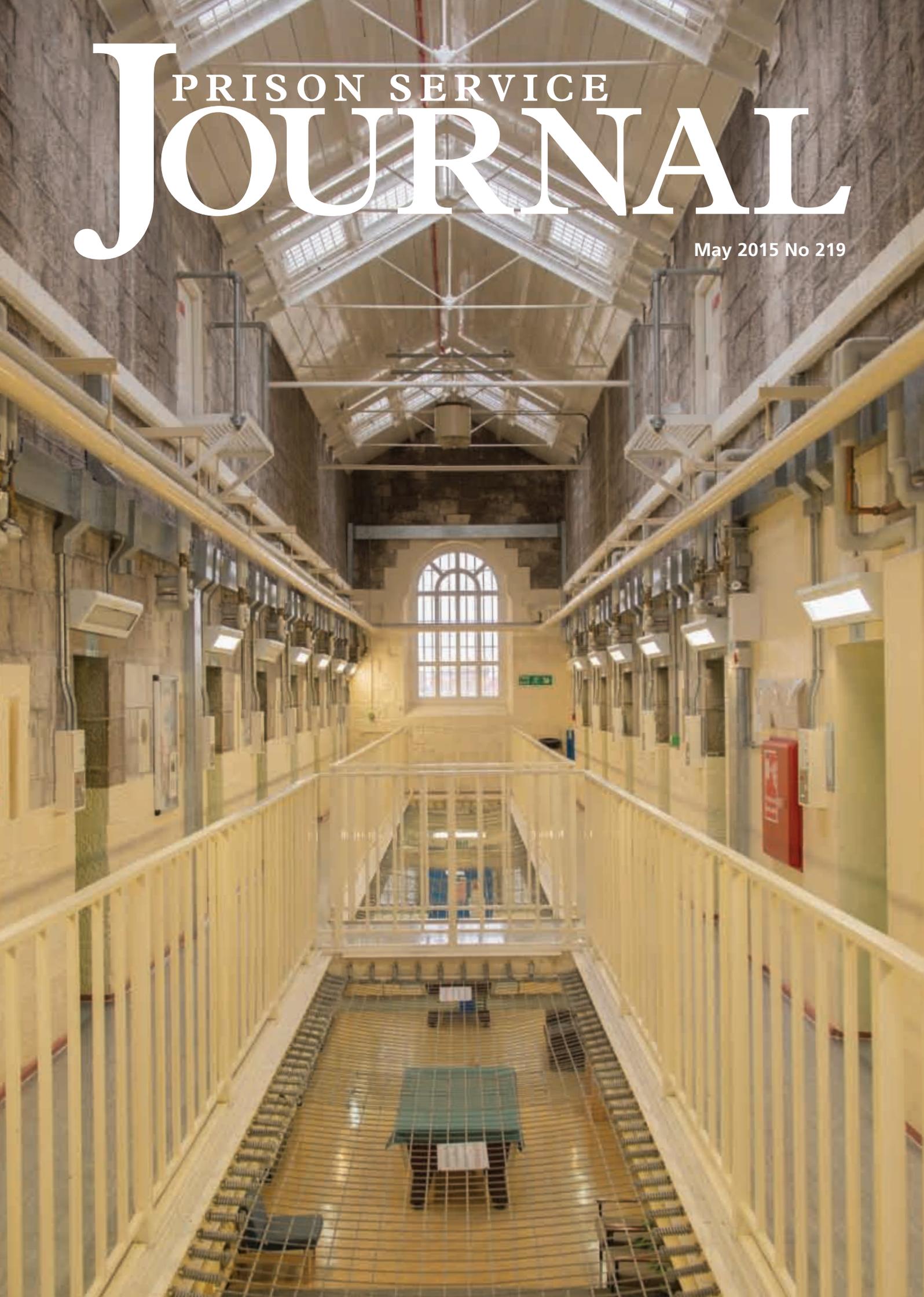


# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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# Reviews

Book Review

## **Disability incarcerated: Imprisonment and disability in the United States and Canada**

Edited by Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman and Alison Carey  
Publisher: Palgrave MacMillan  
(2014)

ISBN: 978-1-137-39323-4  
(hardback) 978-1-137-40405-3  
(paperback)

Price: £62.50 (hardback) £25.00  
(paperback)

In the grand traditions of critical criminology, this book offers a critique of places of confinement, including prisons, and their position in structures of power, domination and inequality. It makes an important contribution by addressing the ways in which disability is situated within this power nexus.

The editors of this volume, three American scholars, explain in their Preface that one of the aims of the book is to, ‘...highlight connections amongst various sites of confinement and institutionalization’ (p.ix) such as prisons, hospitals, immigration detention, and also schools. In the tradition of Foucault,<sup>1</sup> they illuminate how those institutions have a shared architecture and combine together as modes of social control. They go on to explain that their concern with disability is, ‘both in terms of the heterogeneous ‘population’ that gets abstractly collected together as ‘people with disabilities’ and in terms of processes of labelling, normalization, and marginalization upon which these settings rely and in which they

participate’ (p.ix). In this way, they are concerned with both ‘disabled people’, who meet a medico-legal definition, but also ‘processes of disablement’ through which those people are positioned so as to be excluded or restricted in their social participation and exercise of power.

This book has some strong contributions that offer some powerful, if polemical arguments. For example, Nirmala Ervelles describes the intersection of race and disability in the ways that diagnosis and access to services are practiced and that this contributes to and reinforces social segregation. Michael Rembis offers an account of the connections between the decarceration of the asylum system and the growth of mass imprisonment, not only as an empirical reality but also as a process of knowledge construction and the exercise of power. These accounts will be of particular interest to those working in or concerned with prisons.

One of the problems with critical accounts is their focus on broad macro-level arguments, often polemical, which have a tendency to reify their position. As a result, they sometimes fail to capture the nuances, contradictions and conflicts of everyday life. In this regard, Alison Carey and Lucy Gu’s chapter on the role of parents in disability rights activism is particularly important. This contribution, a historical case study of a parents’ organisation in Pennsylvania, illustrates that parents did not

adopt an ideological position, but were more pragmatic. As a result, they often held conflicted views about issues such as institutionalisation/decarceration, segregation/integration, and reform/abolition. The organisation itself had to navigate a contested field. This chapter is particularly important in addressing some of the complex messiness of activism and everyday social life.

Another criticism often levied at critical accounts is that they fail to articulate realistic alternatives. This volume takes that issue seriously. Several of the chapters offer reflections on intellectual resistance and the fact that several of the contributions are by scholars who themselves have experienced disability and detention is significant. Most directly, though, the final two chapters are concerned with self-advocacy and alternatives to incarceration, respectively. These contributions articulate forms of resistance, reform and radical transformation.

This is a book resolutely aimed at an intellectual audience. Practitioners seeking detailed guidance would not be best served by this book and would be best advised to look elsewhere. However, on its own merits, this book makes an important contribution in incorporating disability along with race, class and gender in a radical critique of confinement.

**Dr Jamie Bennett** is Governor of Grendon and Springhill.

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1. Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* London: Allen Lane.

Book Review

***Black Men, Invisibility and Crime***

By Martin Glynn

Publisher: Routledge

ISBN: 978-0-415-71535-5

Price: £90.00

*Black Men, Invisibility and Crime* forms part of the International Series on Desistance and Rehabilitation. This series comprises of high quality PhD work coupled with items from more established academics, and focuses on extending knowledge as opposed to providing a review of a subject. An impressive editorial board have so far produced six books in the series, largely with an international flavour.

Martin Glynn is both a Visiting Lecturer at Birmingham City University and a Research Assistant at the University of Wolverhampton. This book is based on his ethnographic PhD research completed at Birmingham City University and brings together his findings from both the UK and the US, in prisons and in the community. His unique approach to this series on desistance is that he aims to produce a black criminology of desistance through the use of critical theories of race.

Although based on his recently completed PhD (2013) Glynn has been working and engaging with black men for almost thirty years. Having said that, there appears to be a surprising lack of research into the perspectives of black offenders on their own approach to desistance. This is even more surprising considering the racial disparities black men appear to face in the criminal justice system. Glynn highlights that over 25 per cent of the prison population are ethnic minorities compared to 10 per cent of the general population. Of the prison population 11 per cent (53 per cent of ethnic minority prisoners) are black compared to fewer than 3 per cent of the

general population. Most shocking of all is that, proportionally, Glynn highlights that the UK incarcerates more black men than the US.

Glynn approaches his groundbreaking research by attempting to cover three significant areas. He aims to demonstrate what the impact of the 'racialisation' of crime has on black men's desistance, how black men formulate their own understanding of desistance in an oppressive society, and crucially what factors promote or inhibit black men's approach to desist from crime. Set within the framework of Critical Race Theory, which has been used to provide counter-narratives from a black perspective in education and sport, Glynn worked closely with black men in the community in Birmingham in the UK and Baltimore in the US, along with black prisoners in HMP Grendon's therapeutic community. The use of Critical Race Theory throughout the book allows two separate story-telling approaches to be considered; that of a white oppressive view and a counter narrative from a black view which allows black people to remove themselves from the inhibition of subordination when they 'create' their own self understanding.

The book is divided into ten chapters. Chapters one, two and three set out the structure of the book, the context of the racialisation of crime and the research method. Chapter four then considers the development of a black criminology of desistance with a focus on the issues around the approach of 'traditional' criminologists and a consideration of the merits of 'black on black' research. Glynn refers to himself as an 'on road criminologist', essentially using the relatively rare attributes of being black, a criminologist and prepared to understand, and abide by, the 'code of the streets' in order to gain acceptance, approval and permission from his subjects which

facilitates the gathering of the most accurate material.

Chapters five, six and seven summarise the author's findings from his research across the three differing settings highlighted above. The emergent themes explored from the ethnography across these chapters include; lack of fathering, fatherhood, hyper-masculinity, gangs, the criminal justice system, self concept, the code of the street and re-entry into the community. These sections are particularly detailed, but, with an intensive focus on the oppression of black men which prevents them from resisting crime, a limitation appears to be that there is little evidence of the attractiveness of crime, in particular to young black men, through a popular racialised counter-culture of money and power associated with crime. This 'pull' of crime as opposed to 'push' effect is only very lightly touched upon within Chapter five and could have formed part of the self narrative regarding oppression 'culture'.

Chapter eight extends the analysis of Glynn's findings by importantly exploring black men's desistance within the framework of masculinity. In particular this crucial chapter highlights the importance of masculine transitions from the prison to community and how black men in particular are disadvantaged during this time through their world view. Unsurprisingly, the final two chapters of this book discuss future research directions that can build on the counter narrative created here.

In conclusion, this book provides a much needed and surprisingly overdue in depth analysis of black men's views of their own desistance. The author is extremely credible and gathers insights that numerous criminologists would be unable to gather through ethnography or any other means. It is clearly aimed at promoting further research and provides a compelling argument for

other criminologists to take forward. The book is aimed at criminologists and sociologists with an interest in the area of the racialisation of crime but I believe it would also be an invaluable read for practitioners working within the criminal justice field. Furthermore, as an ethnographic study the book is written in a style which would be of genuine interest to the wider public, for example the author's use of poetic quotes to peak interest and to support his assertions.

**Paul Crossey** is Head of Admissions and Care (Young People) at HMYOI Feltham.

Book Review

***Pain and Retribution: A Short History of British Prisons 1066 to the Present***

By David Wilson

Publisher: Reakton Books (2014)

ISBN: 978-1-78023-283-6

Price: £20

This ambitious publication by a well-known criminologist provides, as the title suggests, a concise history of a large topic. About half of the content of the book is devoted to examining pre-1945 with most of that concentrating on the modern prison from the late eighteenth century onwards. The latter half of the book concerns the post-1945 period which has been researched more thoroughly by criminologists than historians. It is commendable that the writer is endeavouring to contribute to academic efforts underway to bridge the divide between historical and criminological investigation of the prison in Britain. I'm sure such interdisciplinary work will bring forth new insights and perspectives. In this publication that endeavour has in part been undertaken through the use of theories of

moral panics and legitimacy and in part through concentration upon the experience of the prisoner. This is effective but the writer underestimates the extent to which historians as well as criminologists have made use of these theories in their examinations of the operation and impact of this institution. Also, significant research has already been conducted to uncover the experience of the prison using autobiographical material. Nevertheless, this book includes interesting and very readable examinations of autobiographical sources, including where possible multiple accounts giving differing perspectives on the same period which works well. Therefore, this publication has contributed to further establishing the efficacy of that subjective approach.

It has to be said that the exploration of the period since 1945 is more questioning and more confidently written, largely because of the wealth of secondary material drawn upon. That half of the book includes consideration of the introduction of security categorisations, the occurrence of major prison disturbances, the development of therapeutic endeavours at Barlinni and Grendon Underwood, the toughening of regimes from 1992 and prison privatisation. Importantly, the value of media representations of the prison are also recognised and discussed. This is a subject on which the author has published widely and he asserts convincingly that even fictional prison television programmes can have an influential role in raising public understanding.

This publication is worthwhile purchasing as an initial introduction to the history of the prison and gives a very useful starting point regarding particular sources and theories. Efforts are made to genuinely reflect the 'British' in the title with limited but interesting case studies concerning events in Scotland and Ireland. Some of the

broad interpretations of historical change are debatable, such as the extent and velocity of the shift towards reform following the Gladstone Committee Report of 1895, but this text does cover many of the most crucial issues affecting prisons in Britain in the past and present.

**Alyson Brown** is a History Professor at Edge Hill University.

Book Review

***A Companion to Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Risk***

Edited by Paul Taylor, Karen Corteen and Sharon Morley

Publisher: Policy Press

ISBN: 978-1-44731-034-1

Price: £27.99 (Paperback)

The Companion to Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Risk specifically aims to provide an expert analysis of the growing hybridisation of criminal justice and mental health. With a large proportion of those who are in contact with the criminal justice system suffering from mental health issues, the pressure on mental health units and a higher than anticipated prison population, the overlap and occasional clash between care and control is contemporary, but also nothing new.

However, what is clear is that the convergence between criminal justice and mental health is complex and difficult to observe regardless of whichever background or specialism it is approached from. The editors have aimed this book at a readership of criminal justice and mental health practitioners, students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) and researchers facing these challenges.

The editors are three senior lecturers from the Department of Social and Political Science at the University of Chester. Despite covering such a broad scope with the focus on criminal justice and mental health, and from a multi-disciplinary perspective, the editors have compiled just over 180 key terms.

These terms are defined by an impressive collection of contributors, who also highlight the contemporary theoretical and practical debates that accompany this controversial field. Although a 'companion', this book's entries vary from the Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) approach to Zemiology; which serves to highlight the deliberate, eclectic mix of the practical with the conceptual. Indeed, the variety and complexity of the entries necessitates the book's aims to encourage critical thinking in the reader rather than 'provide all of the answers'; an aim the editors would probably avoid even if that were possible. This is advanced further with concise yet highly relevant suggestions for further reading at the end of each entry, as well as a useful Appendix covering international campaign groups and sources of interest.

The group of contributors are international (although focused on western civilisations) with an extensive background, experience and history in their own area of expertise. As well as academics in psychology, history, criminal justice and mental health, they include practitioners in learning differences, mental health nurses and social workers amongst others. The editors are rightly keen to highlight the policy and practical experience of some of the contributors, which compliments the entries from the theorists and intellectual thinkers. An additional practical bonus in the book that shouldn't be underestimated is the inclusion of a legislation and policy index as well as the traditional subject index.

Overall, this book provides an excellent reference point for students, researchers and practitioners and importantly offers an insight into crucial debates around each subject in addition to simple definitions. It is a highly relevant publication, with credible contributors and editors, and incredibly useful in today's climate of multi-disciplinary approaches to risk management within the criminal justice system.

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#### Book Review

#### ***Criminal Justice: A Beginner's Guide***

By Bryan Gibson

Publisher: Waterside Press

ISBN: 978-1-909976-00-9

Price: £12.95 (paperback)

This book aims to provide a 'no frills' overview of the criminal justice system, primarily aimed at those who want to start with the most basic level of understanding. The book hopes to provide an initial 'Skeleton' of knowledge that the reader can add more to via signposts to further reading. It comprises of ten chapters starting with the most basic understanding of 'What is Crime?', but also including sections on restorative justice and sentencing.

The author is both a barrister and the founder and editor-in-chief at Waterside Press. He acknowledges that the book comprises of ideas, facts and information from a variety of authors he has worked with over the 26 years of his editorship including Frankie Owens, Tim Newell, Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, Stephen Shaw and David Faulkner (who reviewed a late revision of the

text). Of note was a lack of currently employed practitioners that could comment on the contemporary factual accuracy of some sections of the book.

The introduction provides a very good summary of the key elements of the justice system, explaining not only the mechanics, processes and stakeholders involved, but also providing an overview of the rationale, principles and reasons behind why things happen in a certain way. Throughout the book there are very useful signposts to relevant reading that can help supplement the initial information given, mainly summarised in a section at the end of each chapter. This reading does cover important texts and includes fairly recent articles, books and reports of note.

The chapters consist of a large number of bullet-point lists. This is designed to keep the book succinct and accessible, although it does not provide an easy going or enjoyable read for the novice who wants the full overview in one sitting. It does however, provide as a reference book an opportunity for the reader to dip in and out of relevant sections as and when they are needed. Particularly useful is the fourth chapter that covers modern developments in the criminal justice system. This is particularly useful for novice readers to gain an understanding of what is new(ish) in the criminal justice system and gain an understanding of the history behind current thinking at the executive level. Although this book may quickly become dated it is very inexpensive and a useful starting point.

Unfortunately, one of the most significant draw backs is the sometimes outdated or inaccurate information it contains. The lack of consultation with a current practitioner has led to some flaws in accuracy. Of note is the suggestion that under 18 offenders typically receive Detention in a Young

Offender Institute (DYOI) rather than the Detention and Training Order (DTO). This is particularly relevant to those studying the Criminal Justice Systems as DYOI (which is typically given to 18-21 year olds) is currently under consideration for being abolished whereas the DTO is not. References to the Prison Service News (which has not been published for some years), the IEP scheme (which has undergone high profile change), Race Relation Liaison Officers

(which have not been termed that for a number of years) and 'added days' described as added to a sentence (when in fact they are a reduction in remission) are all glaring errors to those currently working in the system and are disappointing to see from a well intentioned book.

Overall, this book does provide the nuts and bolts needed for beginners to work in or study the criminal justice system and will allow them to understand the basic

processes, key players and reasons why certain policies are in place. It does this in a succinct and inexpensive fashion, providing clear signposts for further, contemporary reading. Where it is let down is in the outdated and occasionally inaccurate information in some of the detail which can mislead some readers.

**Paul Crossey** is Head of Admissions and Care (Young People) at HMYOI Feltham.