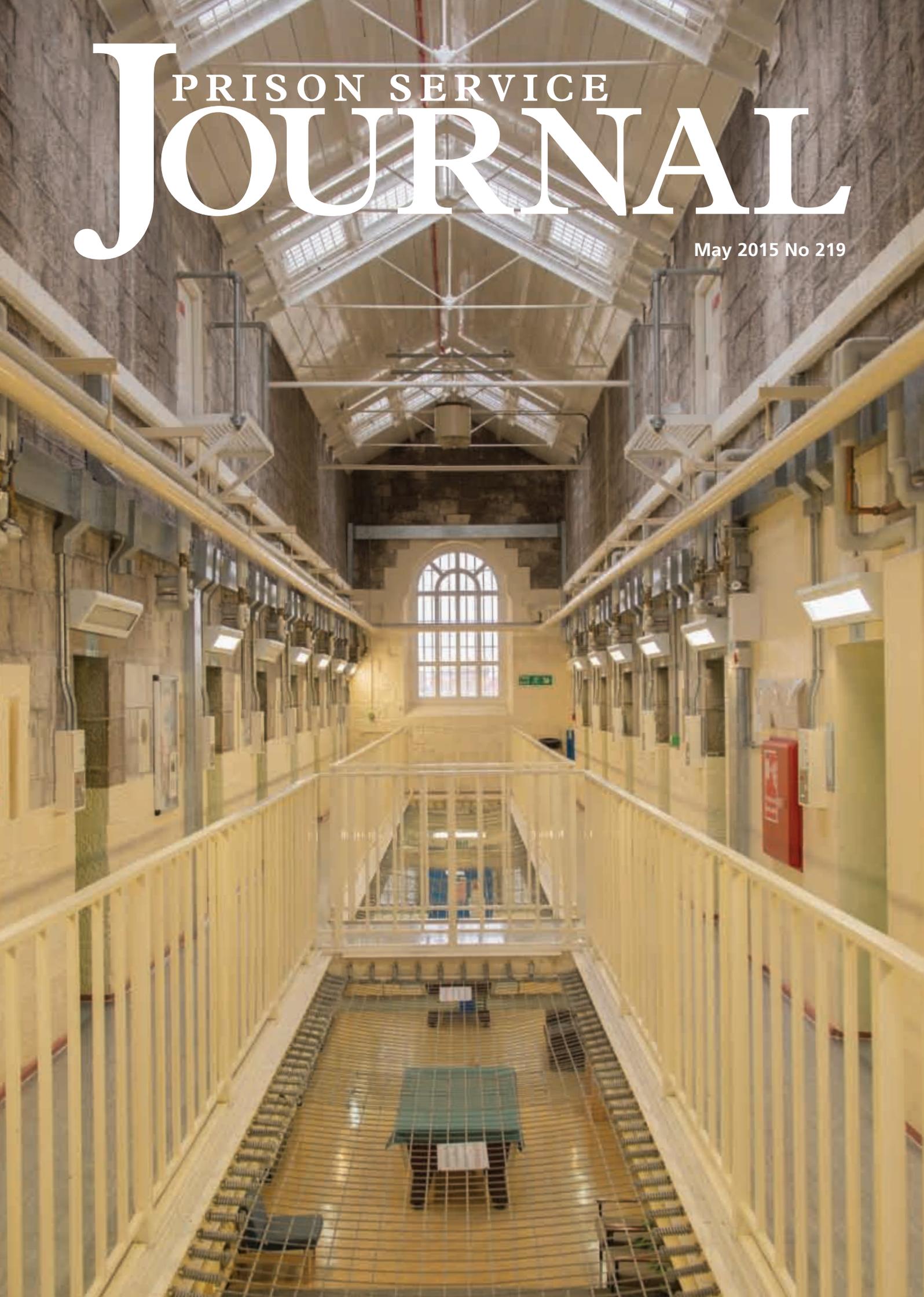


# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

May 2015 No 219



# Editorial Comment

There are two broad themes that link the main articles in this edition of *Prison Service Journal*. The first is diversity, a regular issue addressed in articles, recognising the range of needs and experiences of prisoners as well as the profound issues of power and inequality that are indelible in prisons. The second is a focus on the effectiveness of prison regimes as means of transforming the lives of prisoners. Together these subjects reveal some of the core values that intersect in prison life: prisons as a reflection of an instrument of wider social power structures; the efforts to construct prisons as humane institutions, and; the ambition that prisons become places in which lives can be improved.

The first article by Victor L. Shamma explores ethn racial relations in Norwegian open prisons. Similar to Coretta Phillips recent study of *The Multicultural Prison* in England,<sup>1</sup> Shamma observes the everyday civility, positive relationships and relative absence of conflict. He argues that this needs to be contextualised within both the prison and wider society. Within the prison, he argues that humane treatment, and reasonable access to facilities and resources create a foundation which minimises the grounds for conflict and facilitates order. Within wider society, he argues that the predominant acceptance of multi-culturalism within Norwegian society means that social divisions are not imported into the prison. The second article is contributed by Sarah Disspain. Richard Shuker and Emma Wildgoose, based upon research conducted at HMP Grendon into the experience of a transfemale prisoner. This is an issue that has received relatively little research attention and this paper is therefore an important contribution to existing knowledge. It explores issues around identity and coping, revealing the everyday experience of transgender prisoners with more depth than has previously been available. The final article on this theme is a literature review by Dr. Anthony Donnelly-Drummond examining the experiences of Gypsy, Romany and Travellers in prison. These are groups that have attracted some attention in recent years and this article is a further contribution to that new body of work. The article draws attention to the marginalisation of these groups and their over-representation in the criminal justice system. The article raises questions not only about Gypsy, Romany and Travellers in prisons but also in the wider community. Issues of diversity are also covered in the book review section with recent books on Black men in custody and disability in prisons being considered.

The second set of articles is concerned with effective prison regimes. Marguerite Schinkel's contribution is based upon research she conducted at HMP Glenochil in Scotland. Her research suggested that the relatively benign regime in the prison enabled prisoners to accept their sentence and engage with the activities available. However, she was also cautious that this did not necessarily result in better adaptation and reduced reoffending after prison and that in order to achieve such outcomes, humane also needed to offer diverse and effective interventions. The article by Dr James Woodall, Professor Jane South, Professor Rachael Dixey and Dr Nick de Viggiani focuses on peer interventions, in particular those factors that facilitate their effectiveness. The authors assert that peer interventions are most effective where they are part of a broad package of measures and are properly integrated within the organisation, being supported by the staff as well as prisoners. Whilst this article is specifically concerned with health interventions, the analysis and conclusions will also be relevant to the myriad of other circumstances in which peer support is provided in prisons.

This edition also features an interview with Jan King, Chief Executive of the Angelus Foundation, a charity who specifically work in the field of novel psychoactive substances, raising awareness of their effects and promoting good practice in management and interventions. This has been a growing issue in prisons, with the Chief Inspector noting in his most recent annual report that:

*The increased availability in prisons of 'new psychoactive substances', often known as 'legal highs', was a source of debt and associated bullying and a threat to health.'*<sup>2</sup>

This interview offers some broader context and discussion of the issues around the use of these substances and potential strategies that could be adopted in prisons and the community.

The subjects covered in this edition reiterate the central concerns of *Prison Service Journal* in facilitating a discourse about not only instrumental issues, about how to make prisons more effective, but also with normative matters, the values that are reflected in the practices of imprisonment.

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1. Philips, C. (2012) *The Multicultural Prison: Ethnicity, Masculinity, and Social Relations among Prisoners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
2. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2014) Annual report 2013-14 London: The Stationary Office (p.9).