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Editorial Comment

The work of prison managers has largely been discussed in two conflicting ways. One approach has emphasised the distinctive features of prisons, and has suggested that managers act in ways that are idiosyncratic or individualistic. From this perspective, prison managers are heroic leaders who shape the culture and moral climate of their establishments. The second approach has focussed on the restructuring of prison management as a result of changes in public sector management over recent decades, including the growth of 'managerialism' with performance measurement, developments in IT and increased central monitoring and control. From this perspective, prison managers have become constrained and compliant, caught within the iron cage of contemporary bureaucracy. The contributions in this special edition of *Prison Service Journal* attempt to address such simplifications and offer a broader, more complex and illuminating account of prison managers and their working lives.

The approach in this edition is to combine academic articles that come from a range of disciplines including sociology, law and criminology, but also span a range of European countries. The edition also includes interviews with four current prison managers, from the UK and Norway. These represent differing backgrounds, experiences and approaches. This includes those who are very experienced having governed several prisons and those who are new to the role, it includes those who have spent their working lives in prisons as well as those who have previous careers outside of the public sector, it includes both men and women, and it includes those working in very different types of prison. The unmediated voice of those who work in the field is a vital element of this edition.

The edition opens with the latest article by Ben Crewe and Alison Liebling from their on-going work interviewing prison governors in England and Wales. This has yielded a rich body of data from which they have produced impressive research that reveals the changing nature of prison work and the effects upon prison managers and their craft. Their contribution to this edition touches upon important aspects including the role of individuality through discretion and moral communication, as well as the emotional texture of labour and the problems of power, including gendered power. They illustrate the complexity of the work not only from a technical perspective but more importantly from human, moral and emotional perspectives.

The article by Jamie Bennett, serving Governor of HMP Grendon and Springhill, is based upon research conducted in prisons, observing and interviewing operational, non-operational, uniformed and non-

uniformed managers. This focuses on the changes in prisons since 2008 and the initiation of what has been termed an 'age of austerity'. The article particularly focuses on the structural changes in prisons and prison management, including reforms in staffing and services. He pays attention to the ways in which this increasing centralised control and direction has affected prison managers and altered the nature of their work.

Thérèse Murphy and Noel Whitty offer a provocative article about the potential and limitations of quantitative performance measures in the human rights field. The authors highlight that this is a growing practice in which organisations such as the United Nations are increasingly viewing such measures as a means through which good intentions can be turned into reality. Critics, however, point out that such measures do not always encompass what is important but instead seek out elements of work that are readily measurable. Additionally interactional and emotional aspects of work are not easily reduced to such measures and so can be ignored despite their critical importance. Murphy and Whitty argue that careful reflection is needed in the construction and use of quantitative measures.

The last two substantive articles come from the Belgian prison system. Tom Daems offers a close analysis of attempts to reform the use of strip searching. This case study reveals the ways in which organisations and occupational cultures can be a source of significant resistance and 'clawback' reforms that are perceived as being contrary to organisational interests. Philippe Kennes and Rudy Van De Voorde focus on the uneven implementation of managerialist approaches in Belgium, including the development of strategic plans. This article highlights the inchoate nature of the managerialist project, but also shows how it is through re-shaping occupational culture that this can have the most significant impact.

Together these articles offer an examination of prison managers from a diverse range of perspectives. They show that prison management has evolved in a way that has been influenced by the world outside, through globalisation, the development of managerialism, and legal or regulatory reform, but also remains characterised by a distinct set of cultures and concerns. The role of prison managers is to navigate and negotiate between these various pressures and constraints, moulding them into a coherent sense of direction. As all of the authors and interviewees suggest, this direction is one that is not solely technical nor is it entirely based upon compliance with central dictates, but it is also shaped by individual priorities and a sense of values.