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Editorial Comment

The peer review and production process of an academic journal are such that they cannot immediately respond to issues in the way that current affairs media does. They can however respond to contemporary issues and concerns and offer more thoughtful, in depth and evidence based analysis. This edition of *Prison Service Journal* speaks to a number of current issues in criminal justice and penal practice.

Iolo Madoc-Jones from Glyndwr University, and his co-authors, revisit the issue of prison size. This remains an important subject with the building and design of Berwyn prison continuing, with a planned opening in 2017, and with future plans to close older inner city prisons and replace them with new establishments. What are the challenges of operating larger prisons? Do the economic benefits come at a cost in terms of quality and everyday social relations? Using the findings of HM inspectorate of prisons, Madoc-Jones presents empirical evidence for the view that larger prisons come at a cost. The challenge for practitioners will be how to respond to this, ameliorate the risks, find ways of strengthening everyday relations and create means to make big feel small.

The incentives and earned privileges scheme has, since the 1990s been a central means through which order is managed in UK prisons. Zarek Khan reports in this edition his research into the ways in which the operation of IEP can shape prisoners' perceptions of the organisation. He argues that the impact upon compliance and order is not solely from the tangible benefits or deprivations that come from the privileges made available or withdrawn, but instead from the sense of fairness and legitimacy. This is a valuable article, particularly as this is an area of policy where governors may receive greater autonomy in the future. The article illuminates how IEP has a critically important and complex role in the everyday social world of the prison.

This edition is published three months after the European Union referendum in the UK. Indirectly, three articles comment upon the potential implications of the decision to leave the EU. French academics Gaëtan Cliquennois and Martine Herzog-Evans explore the impact of the Council of Europe and European Court of Human Rights on

prisons in three European jurisdictions. Without being polemical or evangelical, the article highlights how these institutions can have a defensive role in ameliorating poor conditions and can, in a modest way, promote progressive improvements. While the Council and the Court are distinct from the EU and their status is not directly affected by the EU referendum, one of the longer term questions that may arise is how the UK's relationship with those institutions evolves in the future. Australian academic Bronwyn Naylor, offers an overview of human rights practice in prisons. She draws attention to the structures in place including laws, rules, policies, external monitoring and remedies, but also pays attention to the development of staff so that human rights become embedded in everyday practice. As with the previous article, it highlights the international (and European) nature of much human rights documentation and invites reflection upon whether and how this might be affected by the UK's changing relationship with the EU. The third article to invite reflection is Michael Teague's on mass imprisonment in America. The United States are, by some way, the most extensive user of imprisonment in the world. Teague argues that there is evidence of a slow down or pause in the growth of the prison population, and even some tentative signs of reverse. The article directly suggests that the future direction may well be dependent upon who occupies the White House after the upcoming election. It also indirectly invites the question of whether the influence of European practice on the UK will wane and instead emulation of US practice might be an alternative. The outcome of the EU referendum is likely to have longer term implications for all aspects of public policy, large or small. While these articles do not offer any direct responses to this, they do contain material that invites reflection.

In her article, Fiona Hutton discusses legislative responses to legal highs or new psychoactive substances in New Zealand. This draws out the tension that has existed in recent years between regulation, in other words making access legal with appropriate medical controls, and prohibition, in other words a blanket ban. Hutton rightly illustrates that the public and political discourse does not solely draw upon evidence of risk and harms, but

instead draws upon wider, popular social and moral concerns. The New Zealand experience is one that has been drawn upon in the discussions leading up to the introduction of the Psychoactive Substances Act in the UK, and therefore this analysis has important learning points.

The edition closes with an interview of Moosa Gora, Imam and Managing Chaplain at HMP Full Sutton. This is a fascinating insight into the work of a prison chaplain and the complex dynamics within Islam and within the wider community. The interview gives a sense of the demands placed

upon chaplains and the ways in which they contribute towards creating a positive community and enabling individual change.

Prison Service Journal continues to offer a space for practitioners, academics and others with an interest to engage with the contemporary and enduring challenges of prison life. This is a discussion that resists the idea of prisons as hermetically sealed, isolated institutions, but clearly situates them within the wider social context in which they exist and which continually influences and shapes what happens within the walls.