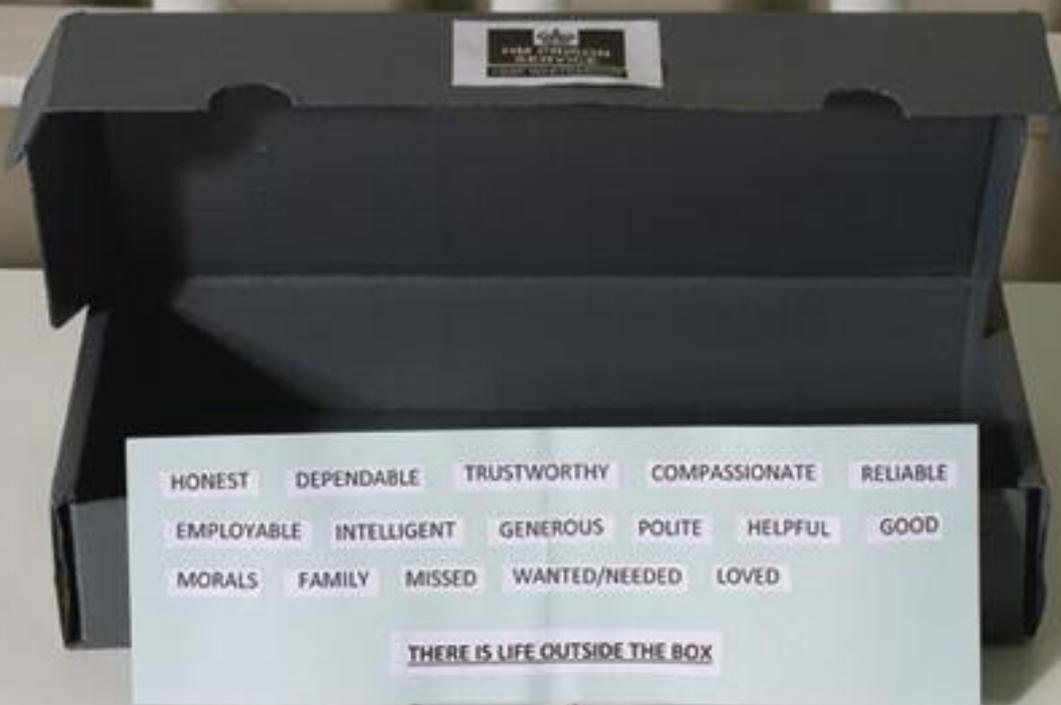


# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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# Editorial Comment

There is always been an optimism at the heart of *Prison Service Journal*. It is a publication that seeks to engage in the battle of values that are at the heart of prisons. Should prisons essentially be places of condemnation, pain and punishment? Should they simply be administered in as efficient manner as possible with ambivalence about moral, political and social context? Should they be operated in a manner that is humane and offers opportunities for reconciliation, restoration and personal growth? The enduring tensions between these punitive, managerial and liberal humane values is the centre of gravity in prison policy and practice. PSJ has always engaged in this messy, contested field, advancing a liberal humane approach to prisons. This edition of PSJ offers a collection of articles that all, in their own ways, offer grounds for hope and optimism. They offer ideas for progressive change and illustrations that reform is possible.

In the opening article, Jane Mulcahy, a PhD candidate at University College Cork, joins the growing chorus of people calling for greater awareness of the impact of adverse childhood experiences on people in prisons, and the need for greater trauma-informed practice. By drawing together the current evidence and emerging practice, Mulcahy provides a useful resource for those working in the criminal justice system.

The following four articles focus upon programmes or activities that currently take place in prisons. Independent researcher Lorna Templeton describes her work with HMP Parc to deliver M-PACT, a programme aimed at improving the well-being of children and families affected by parental substance misuse, specifically by targeting the intersection between substance misuse and families. Templeton offers qualitative research that suggests that the programme has a beneficial impact on families and men in prison. Dr. Kimberly Houser, Dr. Gennifer Furst and Michele Pich focus on an American animal-based intervention. Such interventions are growing in popularity. This article provides empirical evidence of the effectiveness of such programmes and how animal-based interventions can play an important role in humanising prisons, ameliorating harm and promoting personal growth. Nichola Cadet, from Sheffield Hallam

University, gives attention to the experiences of older prisoners entering prison for the first time. This is a fast growing population in the UK. Cadet offers some simple and constructive suggestions for supporting the process of adaptation for people in this group, and helping to construct a sense of identity and meaning at a moment of crisis in their lives. Sarah Nixon, from University of Gloucestershire, explores the positive impact of peer support in prison. This can be an effective way of supporting those in need, but is also beneficial to those offering support, who nurture a refreshed personal identity.

A further contribution in this article from the United States, is a fascinating and inspiring interview conducted by Bryonn Bain, of UCLA in California, and Susan Burton, the founder of A New Way of Life *Re-entry Project* (ANWOL), Los Angeles. Burton is a better known figure in the US than she is in the UK, but nevertheless there is something universal in her story. In recent years there has been growing attention to how mass imprisonment in America is an institution that recreates racial power and inequality. Distinguished sociologists, most notably Loic Wacquant and Michelle Alexander, have described a historical trajectory from the institution of slavery to the segregation of the Jim Crow system, to the spacial separation in inner city ghettos, and on to the criminalisation and mass imprisonment that is present in America today. From this perspective, imprisonment is an institution that perpetuates and entrenches racial power and inequality. Throughout American history, there has also been a more noble and progressive tradition, including the abolitionist movement of the mid-19th century and the civil rights movement of the mid-20th century. In this interview, Bain situates Burton's work within the long history of resistance and reform.

This edition of PSJ closes with an interview with Pia Sinha, who was appointed as Governor of HMP Liverpool in the aftermath of a damning, high profile inspection report in 2017. In this interview, Sinha describes her leadership style and offers an in-depth description of the work to improve Liverpool. This is a fitting way to close an edition that is filled with optimism that change is possible and seeks to inspire those who support the cause.