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# JOURNAL

**Special edition:  
Security in prisons**

# Editorial Comment

This special edition of *Prison Service Journal* focusses on prison security. Despite the centrality of security to prison life, this is not a theme that has often been explicitly explored in PSJ. Indeed, this special edition has been prompted by a belief that security practices have been relatively under theorized and researched generally and in prisons in particular. Instead, there has developed a set of assumptions and traditions that have guided thinking and actions. Predominantly, it has only been in the face of significant failures, such as high profile escapes, that there has been prominent and systematic examination of security. In attempting to address this gap, this edition of PSJ draws upon expertise within prisons and the wider field of security in order to examine some critical areas of practice.

In the opening article, Professor Mark Button Professor of Criminology at University of Portsmouth considers how existing and emerging research in the wider security field can be applied to prisons in a strategic way so as to improve practice. This article sets out an agenda that we are keen to encourage. This is followed by an interview with Claudia Sturt, Director of Security Order and Counter Terrorism in HM Prisons and Probation Service. In this interview, she describes the security threats faced by prisons and discusses the new approaches that have been developed over recent years to professionalise and enhance practice so as to effectively respond to the threats. In her interview, Claudia Sturt, particularly emphasises that the purpose of security is to create a foundation for the rehabilitative work of prisons.

One threat that has intensified in recent years is that of organised crime and ongoing criminality in prisons, in particular facilitated by developments in technology, including mobile phones. Dr. Kate Gooch and Professor James Treadwell offer an analysis of the extent and nature of this problem in prisons. This is followed by a study conducted at HMP Holme House prison by Dr Victoria Bell and Dr Maggie Leese of Teeside University. This study describes the effectiveness of the approach taken to tackling drug supply. This approach integrated security and a broader drug treatment regime, and security practice consciously incorporated an emphasis upon procedural justice. This is an example of the potential synergy of security and rehabilitative cultures.

An interview with Jason Hogg, Deputy Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, considers the effective working relationship between prisons and the police in tackling and preventing crime. As the national lead for policing in prisons, he has particular expertise and insight into what this means across a range of activities.

Three articles follow that provide detailed assessments of critical security practices. Professor Robert Barrington, Jack Silverman and Marie Hutton from University of Sussex offer an account of the development of counter corruption activity in prisons. After a slow start, recent years have seen greater acknowledgement and action to respond to the threat of staff corruption. Professor Julian Richards of University of Buckingham provides an overview of security intelligence practices. This draws upon the use of intelligence in a range of settings including law enforcement and military and speaks to prison intelligence as part of this wider profession. Dr Grant Bosworth and Sarah Ashcroft discuss recent work in prisons to improve the governance, scrutiny and research of the use of force. The use of force by state actors is sometimes necessary, but is also one of the ultimate exercises of power. Given this context, the considered attention provided by this article is to be welcomed.

The final contribution is an interview with Alison Wakefield, Professor of Criminology and Security Studies at the University of West London and former Chair of the Security Institute. The Security Institute is the leading professional body for people working in security. In this interview she describes the importance of security work and the cross-sector efforts to developed excellence in practice, and to nurture a more diverse workforce.

This edition of PSJ attempts to offer a dedicated examination of security practice in prisons. It is not intended to be definitive, but rather it aims to draw closer attention to this field of practice, draw upon a broader range of academic expertise, and encourage further engagement. Security can be a highly technical field, which has an element of specialism. Those who work in security need to have a command of the tools available and understand how to deploy them to their best effect. It also, however, involves the application of generalist skills including leadership, planning, governance, analysis and, interpersonal interactions. The way security is practiced has wider implications for prisons as a whole. Security can contribute to safety internally and for the wider public. Yet this needs to be conducted in a way that is integrated with the broader strategic objectives, including nurturing a fair, decent and respectful environment; tackling inequality and disproportionality; creating openness and trust, and; supporting opportunities for people to experience personal growth and change. Reconciling and integrating these aims is a sophisticated and highly complex task. This is what is required from effective prison security.