

Comment

This bumper edition of the PSJ is devoted entirely to the debate about the implementation of "Fresh Start" within the Prison Service — perhaps the most radical change the Service has seen since the Gladstone Report at the turn of this century. "Fresh Start" has undoubtedly set the Prison Service on a course which will see it well into the next century. At present, however, all levels of the organisation are pre-occupied with the immediate impact of such profound change and the articles in this edition reflect the anxieties and difficulties associated with managing change on such a large scale.

For those unfamiliar with the details of "Fresh Start", it is worth briefly outlining its significant features. It is best understood as a fundamental re-orientation of the Service in three key areas. First, we have in one bound freed ourselves from the constraints of an overtime-driven organisation. The vast majority of staff are now paid a basic salary and hostages to fortune in terms of industrial action by means of withdrawal from overtime have been removed. Uniformed staff are now paid a good wage in return for civilised hours of work and in consequence see more of their families. Secondly, the management structure, and in particular, the line of managerial accountability, has been reorganised, with the former Chief Officer rank incorporated into the Governor grades. There is now a clear line of accountability from basic grade officer through a hierarchy of ascending grades to Governor Grade I, and

beyond through Regional Directors, to the Deputy Director General and the Director General. Adequate incentives in the form of financial differentials have been built into each level of the management line. Finally, the deployment of uniformed staff has been de-centralised to group managers, the former Principal Officer rank, who now carry considerably enhanced responsibility for managing and directing a group of staff immediately accountable to them for their day to day activities. Concomitant with this measure of de-centralisation there now exists a much greater scope for group managers to deploy staff flexibly to meet the needs and tasks of their particular groups. Thus, the Prison Service is now implementing massive change in all these three key areas, and the debate reflected within these pages will no doubt continue for several years until the Service has adapted to the changes and settled down to entirely new ways of working.

Inevitably, this edition of the PSJ is somewhat inward-looking and "in-house", and may not mean as much to a member of the general public as a member of the Prison Service. Nevertheless, in keeping with our recently stated policy of making the journal more relevant to practitioners, the Editorial Board decided that we must devote the whole of this larger than usual edition to this particular subject. We hope that our wider readership will also appreciate a private family debate opened up in this way to more distant relatives and friends.