



Ministry to prisoners

Every prisoner, by statute, has to have a Warden and a Chaplain. One Chaplain describes his day:

08.00 arrive at prison, meet with multi-faith team. Pick up any messages from the night. These could include information about self-harm, death of relatives of prisoners, or messages from worried family members. At this point the team will also work out how many prisoners were admitted the previous day and agree who will go to see them. The plan for the day is shaping up.

08.30 meet prisoners on their way to work; managing chaplain will often go to attend Governor's daily briefing

08.45 embark on priority work - this will include visiting all prisoners who have arrived in the last 24hrs, visiting healthcare, visiting the special care and segregation unit and seeing prisoners vulnerable to self harm.

12.00 ... breathe, remember to breathe ... then paperwork for volunteers' coming into the prison, religious registration, Chaplains log, etc...

1230 lunch; maybe a staff prayer meeting / pastoral work with staff

1300 begin preparations for afternoon; catch up with rest of team on how things are going, prepare for up-coming events e.g. Sunday worship

1345 meet prisoners on way to work in afternoon. Often afternoons are used for more structured work, eg. One to one support, resettlement work, pastoral visits, victim awareness and other structured courses, etc....

1700 evening activities. Bible studies, meditation classes, fellowship groups, music practice, informal support groups etc.... often involving management and supervision of chaplaincy volunteers.

1830 time of prayer? Ensure that any issues raised during the evening are followed through eg. Prisoners feeling vulnerable, security issues, family concerns. Complete chaplains log.

1900 Check chapel is Secure and go home!

Reflection - Prisons Week

Prisoners' Week began in England and Wales in 1975. The Prisoners' Week Committee, consisting of Prison Chaplains and other Christians involved in work with prisoners and their families, was formed to encourage prayer within churches and the wider Christian community. This they did by producing each year a prayer and information leaflet for use on the third Sunday in November.

*Lord, you offer freedom to all people.
We pray for those in prison.
Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist.
Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends,
Prison staff and all who care.
Heal those who have been wounded by the activities
of others, especially the victims of crime.
Help us to forgive one another.
To act justly,
love mercy and walk humbly together with
Christ in His strength
and in His Spirit, now and every day. Amen.*

We need to remember that the injunction of Jesus, "When I was in prison you visited me" had no condition attached.

And the only person who was ever promised, "Today you will be with me in paradise", was a convicted thief.

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Faith in Families

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“Lock ‘em up and throw away the key”



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“Life in prison is a closed world to the majority of people, yet it has a profound effect on those, who, for whatever reason, come into contact with it. It contains many of those problems which affects contemporary society, yet hides from view numerous situations which few are prepared to face.”

William Noblett, “Prayers for People in Prison” (OUP, 1998)

The Prison Service has two key objectives, to:

- protect the public by holding those convicted by the courts in a safe, decent and healthy environment.
- reduce crime by providing constructive regimes which address offending behaviour, improve educational and work skills, and promote law-abiding behaviour in custody and after release.

When he was Home Secretary Jack Straw wrote, “You have to pray daily, light a candle - get down on your knees - as far as prisons are concerned.”

International Comparisons

Nowhere in Western Europe jails more of its population than England and Wales, where about 154 people per 100,000 are in prison. Prison rates in the US are the world's highest, at 730 people per 100,000. In Russia the rate is 508. At 154 per 100,000, the imprisonment rate of England and Wales is at about the midpoint worldwide. Scotland, where 155 people out of every 100,000 are in jail, is also midpoint. Northern Ireland, however, where 98 people out of every 100,000 are in jail is among those countries with the lowest rates of imprisonment. Italy's prisons are the most crowded, with an occupancy level of 131.5%. Belgium has the most un-sentenced prisoners and the Netherlands has the most women prisoners. (Figures from International Centre for Prison Studies)

A growing prison population

The prison population in England and Wales has increased steadily over the past century and surpassed 80,000 for the first time in December 2006. On 22 February 2008 the total population exceeded the useable operational capacity of the prison estate for the first time in history.

Useable operational capacity of the estate is the sum of the total operational capacity of the prison estate less 2,000 places. This is known as the operating margin and reflects the constraints imposed by the need to provide separate accommodation for different classes of prisoner i.e. by sex, age, security category, conviction status, single cell risk assessment and also due to geographical distribution.

Following a marginal reduction in the prison population in the early 1990s the increase has become more marked: the average prison population has increased on average by 3.7% in each year since 1993.

Over one-third of the total sentenced prison population (excluding fine defaulters/recalls) are serving determinate sentences of more than four years, with a further one-fifth serving indeterminate sentences (Life sentences and indeterminate sentences for public protection).

The violence against the person offence group accounted for the largest proportion of the total sentenced population at March 2012 (28%).

Prisoner's Families

It is not possible to fully understand the total vulnerability experienced by the families of people in prison just by looking at the Prison System alone. Prison is one part of a criminal justice process in which the families of someone accused of a crime also find themselves marginalized, ignored and treated as 'guilty by association'. Indeed, they become seen as *prisoners'* families, rather than as individual members of family who, through no fault of their own, find themselves intrinsically linked to someone in prison.

Prisoners children are a particular risk. Over 140,000 children per year are estimated to have a parent in prison and the impact of the experience on them can have long lasting effects. For a child, the rest of the parent or sibling means a central figure in their lives has suddenly been taken away from them. Many arrests take place in the home and in the middle of the night when the police know a suspect is most likely to be there and off-guard. This experience, from the perspective of a child, can be extremely traumatic. It can lead to possible antipathy towards other figures of authority. It can have a detrimental effect on the future of children's lives, including threatening their educational performance and future life chances. Many children experienced bullying, teasing or are worried about other peoples own prejudices and do not want to talk with an appropriate person about what is going on. And for parents, what and when to tell the children is one of the hardest issues they have to face.

In 1999 the Church of England Board for Social Responsibility produced a collection of essays in 'Prisons - A Study in Vulnerability'. This concluded that, "families needs to be viewed as a positive resource in the fight against crime by the Prison Service and the wider community. They should be given the opportunity to be involved throughout the prisoner's sentence in the induction program and sentence planning and preparation for release courses. It is only by seeing families in this way that their own vulnerability will be minimized and the prisoner be given an improved chance of leading a law-abiding life on release. Until then, families will continue to live in the shadows of the offender's action, marginalized by a system that depends on them, ostracized by the community around and vulnerable to the many pressures and demands put upon them."



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Where are prisons in Wales?

- * *HMP Cardiff is a Category B Local/ Training Prison, holding male adult prisoners who are drawn predominantly from the surrounding court catchment area in South East Wales. The operational capacity is 784.*
- * *HMP & YOI Parc is a Category B local prison at Bridgend housing approximately 1200 male adults (convicted only), young offenders (convicted and remand) and young people (convicted and remand).The prison opened in November 1997 and is the only private prison in Wales.*
- * *Swansea functioned as a prison for both male and female prisoners until 1922 when females were transferred to Cardiff Prison. It has since operated as a Local Prison, holding Cat B prisoners and young adults. In the early 1980s Swansea started the Samaritan-trained prisoner Listener Scheme that has now developed into a nationwide provision. The operational capacity is 445.*
- * *HMP Usk/Prscoed is the amalgamation of HMP Usk and HMP Prescoed.*
Usk opened in 1844 as a House of Correction. In May 1990 it became an Adult Cat C establishment for Vulnerable Prisoners and continues in that role today. The operational capacity is 250.
Prescoed is a purpose built hatted camp erected by prisoner labour and opened in 1939 as an open Borstal. It continued as a Borstal until 1964 when it became a Detention Centre. In 1983 it became an open Youth Custody Centre, changing to an open YOI in 1988. The operational capacity is 178.

Women and children in prison and a few other facts

- ✓ Approximately 4,200 females were in prison at the end of March 2012, slightly lower than the number in prison a year earlier, accounting for 4.8% of the prison population. Over the past decade the number of female prisoners has increased by around 12%, a lower rate of increase than the male population, approximately 30%.
- ✓ The proportion of the prison population that are women rose steadily from the low of 2.5% in the late 1960s to a peak of 6.1% in 2002, the highest proportion since the late 1940s. In each year since 2002 the proportion of the prison population that are women has fallen.
- ✓ Because of their role as mothers and carers policy is that they should serve a sentence as soon as possible to their family. The average distance from home of a female prisoner is currently 62 miles. Mental health issues abound amongst this part of the population. 35% of women are held for drug offences, 12% for theft and fraud. Self harm is a huge problem affecting some 30% of the female population.
- ✓ 60% of women in prison have a drug problem, and many are suicidal.
- ✓ 50% of women in prison have a child under 16.
- ✓ 25% of women in prison have been in care.
- ✓ 50% of women in prison have suffered domestic violence.
- ✓ 33% of women in jail have suffered sexual abuse.
- ✓ Children in prison is an increasing problem for the U.K. Three women's prisons her mother and baby units. Although social services have an input, a number of babies are born to mothers who are prisoners, and in some cases are able to remain with their mothers up to the age of 18 months. Women, (like a lot of men) are failed by the system, and are inadequately prepared for release. 41% (Home Office figures) have no accommodation on their release.
- ✓ There are about 11.5 thousand young people under 21 in our prisons, 2000 are under the age of 18.
- ✓ The number of children in prison has doubled in the last 10 years.
- ✓ The average age of a prisoner in England and Wales is 27.
- ✓ 135,000 people enter prison in England and Wales each year.
- ✓ It costs on average £38,000 to keep a person in prison for a year. Each new prison place built since 2000 has cost about £100,000.

Why do we punish people?

There are four main justifications for punishing criminals:

- ✓ Retribution - seen in the Old Testament, from which the saying "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" has come. Retribution is built upon the belief that each crime should be punished by a similar or identical harm.
- ✓ Incapacitation - when an offender is placed in an environment in which his/her freedoms are restricted and prevents the criminal from committing further crimes. Collective incapacitation occurs when society focuses on locking up all criminals regardless of their likelihood of committing more crimes.

Selective incapacitation occurs when the most severe punishments are kept to punish only the most dangerous criminals.

- ✓ Deterrence - which can be seen as "sending a message to the would be criminal". The roots of deterrence go as far back as the eighteenth-century when Jeremy Bentham argued that retribution was pointless and unjustified except when pain inflicted was demonstrably more beneficial to society than pain withheld.
- ✓ Rehabilitation - re-socialising an offender and allowing him / her to lead a productive life. This goal will emphasise prison programmes of education and skill acquisition.