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## **“They haven't done the course in becoming a prisoner yet”: exploring the induction experiences of neo-phyte older prisoners**

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The increasing older prisoner population in absolute and proportional terms<sup>1</sup> has led to repeated calls from academics, policy makers and lobbyists for a national strategy, for more than a decade.<sup>2</sup> The House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee in 2018 lamented that there had been little progress since the Justice Committee report on older prisoners in 2013<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, they highlighted criticism that HMPPS 'model of operation' for older prisoners falls short of strategic intent. Despite projections showing that by 2023, over 50s will constitute 16 per cent of the prison population<sup>4</sup>, 43% of prisons do not have an older prisoners' policy.<sup>5</sup> This has potential repercussions for all aspects of prison life, and every type of prison: reception and induction; allocation; meeting physical, social and psychological needs, and ensuring the delivery of an appropriate regime. In particular,

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2017). *Offender management statistics: Prison population 2017*, London: Ministry of Justice.

<sup>2</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. (2004). *'No problems – old & quiet': Older Prisoners in England and Wales*. London: HMIP.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2008). *Older Prisoners in England and Wales: A follow up to the 2004 thematic review*. London: HMIP.

Hayes, A. J., Burns, A., Turnbull, P., & Shaw, J. J. (2012). The Health and Social Needs of Older Male Prisoners. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 27, 1155-1162. Doi: 10.1002/gps.3761.

House of Commons Justice Committee. (2013). *Older Prisoners Fifth Report of Session 2013–14*. (HC89 2013-14). retrieved from <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/justice/older-prisoners.pdf>

House of Commons Justice Committee. (2014). *Older Prisoners: follow-up*. (HC 659) retrieved from <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/justice-committee/older-prisoners-followup/oral/15020.html>

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee. (2018). *Prison Health Twelfth Report of Session 2017-19 (HC 963)*. Retrieved from

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhealth/963/963.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Justice (2018) *Prison Population Projections 2018-2023*. London: Ministry of Justice [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/735428/prison-population-projections-2018-2023.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/735428/prison-population-projections-2018-2023.PDF)

<sup>5</sup> Senior, J., Forsyth, K., Walsh, E; O'Hara, K; Stevenson, C; Hayes, A...Shaw, J. (2013). Health & Social Care Services for Older Male Adults in Prison: the identification of current service provision & piloting of an assessment & care planning model. *Health Service Delivery Research* 1(5). NIHR Journals Library. Doi: 10.3310/hsdr01050

Senior et al<sup>6</sup> identify that the delivery of health and social care for these prisoners is “repeatedly sub-optimal.” The issue has implications for the whole prison service, as the majority of prisoners will commence their sentence in a category B prison (HMIP, 2015) and will progress through the system depending on their sentence duration and sentence plan needs. Thus, even local prisons, which may only hold prisoners for a short period of time, will increasingly have to respond to the needs of older prisoners. This is important because older prisoners have a range of unmet health and social care needs upon reception. The most frequent unmet needs relate to information about condition and treatment, psychological distress, daytime activities, benefits, and food. Furthermore, older prisoners incur higher costs of between three and eight times that of younger prisoners.<sup>7</sup> As prisons increasingly fulfil social care and care home functions, this also has implications for the recruitment, training and retention of prison staff.<sup>8</sup>

Induction is an important process for all prisoners, regardless of age; however, as this article shows, a comprehensive induction is vital to reduce some of the issues facing older prisoners, particularly those entering prison for the first time. This article therefore contributes to filling an empirical gap relating to the lived experiences of men<sup>9</sup> coming into custody for the first time in later life. It considers prisoners' perspectives on the issues they faced in making the transition into custody; how their life experience shaped the nature of that transition, and how new relationships were tentatively formed during that period.

### **What constitutes 'older'?**

Different categories are used to delineate age, exacerbated by age being a social and cultural construct<sup>10</sup> leading to an (unresolved) debate about how to define ‘older’ prisoners<sup>11</sup>. This has implications for research, where different ages are used nationally and

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Senior et al (2013).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* Senior et al (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Crawley, E. & Sparks, R. (2005). Hidden Injuries? Researching the Experiences of Older Men in English Prisons. *The Howard Journal* 44(4) 345-356. Doi:10.1111/j.1468-2311.2005.00380.x

Psick, Z., Simon, J., Brown, R., & Ahalt, C. (2017) Older and Incarcerated: Policy Implications of Aging Prison Populations. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 13(1), 57-63. Doi: 10.1108/IJPH-09-2016-0053.

<sup>9</sup> The research took place in a single male prison site. The women's estate is seeing similar increases in the proportion of older prisoners. 13% of women prisoners are aged over 50.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2018>

Some of the issues identified in this research may also apply to women, however, updated research needs to be undertaken to fully understand the intersectionality of gender and age in prison, particularly as experiences of ageing will change by cohort. See Wahidin, A. (2004) *Older Women in the Criminal Justice System*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Senior et al. (2013).

<sup>11</sup> Cooney, F., & Braggins, J. (2010). *Doing time: Good Practice with Older People in Prison – the views of prison staff*. London: Prison Reform Trust.

internationally. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons define older prisoners as aged 50 plus<sup>12</sup> owing to evidence suggesting that prisoners physiologically age up to ten years compared with community counterparts.<sup>13</sup> Other researchers have applied that logic to age 55, as 65 is the age at which people in the community would begin to draw their pension<sup>14</sup>. Hayes et al's<sup>15</sup> cross-sectional design of 262 older prisoners in the North West region identified no additional differences between the health needs of prisoners aged 50-59 and those aged 60 plus, and therefore advocated 50 for future prison health interventions. Internationally, Wangmo et al<sup>16</sup> determined that 50 is the most frequently cited age. Although differing legal, social, cultural and political perspectives may limit direct applicability to the United Kingdom context, relevant issues were also identified, for example, the federal system of the US justice system means that they too, do not have a nationally agreed definition of 'old' or 'elderly' prisoners, ranging from 50-70<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, this does not take into account the fact that older prisoners are a heterogeneous population:

*While many in their late-70s were largely immobile, forgetful and depressed, others enthusiastically took computing classes, wrote essays or went to the 'Seniors' exercise class<sup>18</sup>.*

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid* House of Commons (2013).

<sup>13</sup> Loeb, S.J., Steffensmeier, D. & Myco, P.M. (2007). In Their Own Words: Older Male Prisoners' Health Beliefs and Concerns for the Future. *Geriatric Nursing*, 28(5) 319-329. Doi:10.1016/j.gerinurse.2007.02.001

NACRO. (2009). *A Resource Pack for Working with Older Prisoners*. London: NACRO. Maschi, T., Sullivan-Dennis, K., Gibson, S., MacMillan, T., Sternberg, S., & Hom, M. (2011). Trauma & Stress Among Older Adults in the Criminal Justice System: A Review of the Literature with Implications for Social Work. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 54(4), 390-424. Doi: 10.1080/01634372.2011.552099

Maschi, T., Sullivan-Dennis, K., Gibson, S., MacMillan, T., Sternberg, S., & Hom, M. (2011). Trauma & Stress Among Older Adults in the Criminal Justice System: A Review of the Literature with Implications for Social Work. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 54(4), 390-424. Doi: 10.1080/01634372.2011.552099

<sup>14</sup> Filinson, R. (2016). A Day in the Life: How Time is Spent Doing Time Among Older Inmates. *Activities, Adaptation & Aging* 40 (2) 125-149. Doi: 10.1080/01924788.2016.1161339

Murdoch, N., Morris, P., & Holmes, C. (2008). Depression in Elderly Life Sentence Prisoners. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 23 957-962. Doi: 10.1002/gps.2017

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*. Hayes et al. (2013).

<sup>16</sup> Wangmo, T., Handtke, V., Bretschneider, W. & Elger, B.S. (2016). Prisons Should Mirror Society: the debate on age-segregated housing for older prisoners. *Ageing & Society*, May 1-20. Doi:10.1X15001373

<sup>17</sup> Chiu, T. (2010). *It's About Time. Aging Prisoners, Increasing Costs, & Geriatric Release*. VERA Institute of Justice. Retrieved from [https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/its-about-time-aging-prisoners-increasing-costs-&-geriatric-release/legacy\\_downloads/its-about-time-aging-prisoners-increasing-costs-&-geriatric-release.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/its-about-time-aging-prisoners-increasing-costs-&-geriatric-release/legacy_downloads/its-about-time-aging-prisoners-increasing-costs-&-geriatric-release.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*. Crawley and Sparks (2005) p.349

Despite such diversity, there is no doubt that prisons' regimes are designed for younger men, leading to Crawley coining the term "institutional thoughtlessness."<sup>19</sup>

### The increase in older prisoners

The increase in older prisoners can partially be placed within the context of overall population change. Within the general population, one fifth of the population will be aged over 65 in the next eight years. This brings consequences for health and social care in particular.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, prisons also need to be prepared to ensure that their whole regime, over and above the provision of health and social care, caters to the diverse needs of this population. The increase in the number of older prisoners can be attributed to a variety of factors. The number of people aged over 60 in prison has tripled since 2003. 13,601 (16%) of the prison population are aged over 50.<sup>21</sup> Three in 10 people serving an indeterminate sentence are aged 50 or over.

Wahidin's typology<sup>22</sup> partially explains the increase in the older prison population, to be considered in the context of an ageing society<sup>23</sup>:

1. Repeat prisoners ageing as their life-course includes multiple sentences.
2. Prisoners growing old throughout a long sentence.
3. Short-term, first-time prisoners.
4. Long-term, first-time prisoners – possibly for historic offences.

Ministry of Justice projections cite increases in both the number of people aged over 50 being sentenced to custody for sexual offences increasing since 2012, and the lengthy sentences handed down, meaning more people are growing older in custody. This also includes an ageing lifer population, and also an anticipated increase in recalls to custody<sup>24</sup>.

However, there are no readily available statistics to understand how the older prisoner population is apportioned, despite recognition from the US that the needs of each cohort may vary, and that their proportions may change over time, correlating with changes to sentencing practices and public attitudes.<sup>25</sup> MoJ data from 2017<sup>26</sup> shows that 82 per cent of prosecutions of males aged over 50 were for summary offences. Of the non-summary or miscellaneous offences, 25.7 (n=2938) per cent were prosecuted for theft; 18.6 per cent

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<sup>19</sup> Crawley, E. (2005). Institutional Thoughtlessness in Prisons and its Impacts on the Day-to-day Prison Lives of Elderly Men. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 21(4), 350–363. Doi:10.1177/1043986205282018

<sup>20</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2017). *Overview of the UK Population: March 2017*. Retrieved from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandlife/bulletins/articlesandreports/overviewoftheukpopulationmarch2017>

<sup>21</sup> Table 1.3, Ministry of Justice. (2017). *Offender management statistics quarterly: April to June 2017*. London: Ministry of Justice.

<sup>22</sup> Wahidin, A. (2006). 'No problems – old & quiet': Imprisonment in Older Life. In A. Wahidin, & M. Cain, (Eds.) *Ageing, Crime & Society*. (pp. 171-192). Cullompton: Willan.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid* Hayes et al (2013).

<sup>24</sup> However, some of the growth is offset by a declining IPP/lifer population among this age group.

<sup>25</sup> American Civil Liberties Union. (2012). *At America's Expense: The Mass Incarceration of the Elderly*. Retrieved from [https://www.aclu.org/files/assets/elderlyprisonreport\\_20120613\\_1.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/files/assets/elderlyprisonreport_20120613_1.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Women and the Criminal Justice System* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/women-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2017>

violent offences (n=3413), and 16 per cent sexual offences (n=2938). The data does not show how many then went on to receive custodial sentences.

### Neo-phyte prisoners

One cohort accounting for the increase includes 'neophyte' older prisoners<sup>27</sup>, those imprisoned for the first time, in later life. In one quarter of 2018, there were 19,330 first receptions into prison, which is not broken down by age. Although there are a range of offences for which older prisoners are sentenced, convictions are disproportionately received for sexual offences. Whereas 19% of the prison population are convicted of sex offences<sup>28</sup>, 45% of men over 50 are convicted of sexual offences, which rises to 87% of those aged over 80. For many prisoners within this cohort, this will be their first conviction, stemming from a historic offence.<sup>29</sup>

Crawley and Sparks<sup>30</sup> identify foreseeable increases, given changing sentencing practices. This has led to an increased "scale and depth" in the experiences of older men, particularly long-term, first time prisoners who are less likely to have contacts outside prison; unlikely to have their needs advocated for, and, alongside the proliferation of punitive and risk management approaches means many prisoners will serve their sentences in higher security prisons in an attempt to "manage the monstrous."<sup>31</sup> Maschi, Viola, Morgen and Koskinen<sup>32</sup> highlight that differing "pathways to prison" require different interventions and responses. However, despite distinctions being made regarding the means by which prisoners are incarcerated at an older age, research stops short of utilising the typology to distinguish between differing needs. Despite Crawley and Sparks<sup>33</sup> identifying the particular issues

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* Crawley. & Sparks (2005).

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Offender Management Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales. Quarterly April to June 2018*. Retrieved from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/750698/omsg-bulletin-2018-q2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/750698/omsg-bulletin-2018-q2.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> House of Lords written question HL3278, 5 January 2017.  
Ministry of Justice. (2017). *Further breakdown of the prison population by age and offence group as at 31 December 2016*. London: Ministry of Justice.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* Crawley & Sparks (2005).

<sup>31</sup> Simon, 1998, cited in Crawley and Sparks, 2005,(p.349).

<sup>32</sup> Maschi, T., Viola, D., Morgen, K., & Koskinen, L. (2015). Trauma, Stress, Grief, Loss and Separation Among Older Adults in Prison: The Protective Role of Coping Resources on Physical and Mental Well-being. *Journal of Crime & Justice*, 38(1), 113-136. Doi:10.1080/0735648X.2013.808853.

<sup>33</sup> Crawley, E. & Sparks, R. (2006). Is There Life After Imprisonment? How Elderly Men Talk About Imprisonment and Release. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 6:63-82. Doi:10.1177/1748895806060667

experienced by “neophyte” older prisoners, using 65 as the age criteria, there is little literature which further explains the needs of this particular cohort.

### **The Equality Act 2010**

Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.<sup>34</sup> Thus, age is included within the Equality, Diversity and Faith expectations framework utilised by HMIP<sup>35</sup>. Because of a lack of national strategy, individual institutions have implemented measures on the ground, rather than emanating from national policy planning, to meet those individualised needs, particularly where prisons have larger cohorts of older prisoners. Ensuring that older prisoners' needs are met will have particular implications for prison regimes, the delivery of health and social care, and in the development of resettlement pathways. Government justifications for not developing a national strategy alleges a heterogeneity of needs, and a conflation of age with disability and social care need<sup>36</sup>. This is in sharp contrast to the 2018 Women's Prison Strategy<sup>37</sup> which has been developed for a much smaller population than the older male population. The women's strategy also recognises the need for early intervention and community solutions in addition to a reconfiguration of custody, which arguably could also be a useful framework to apply to older neophyte prisoners. The strategy, despite some criticism<sup>38</sup>, does at least recognise the diverse experiences of women, and adopts a thematic approach complemented with a series of actions. Therefore, government could utilise a similar approach to develop an older prisoners' strategy. Any such strategy should critically review the purpose of imprisonment for older people in the context of soaring prison, health, social care and societal costs.

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<sup>34</sup> Equality Act 2010 (ch.15). Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

<sup>35</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. (2017). *Expectations. Criteria for assessing the treatment of and conditions for men in prisons version 5*. Available at <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprisoners/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2018/02/Expectations-for-publication-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Justice (2013). *Government response to the Justice Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2013–14 Older Prisoners Presented to Parliament by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice by Command of Her Majesty Cm 8739*. London: HMSO.

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Justice (2018). *Female Offender Strategy*. Retrieved from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/719819/female-offender-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719819/female-offender-strategy.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> See for example, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/resources/response-female-offender-strategy>

## Reception, induction and transition into custody

Newly sentenced prisoners under PSI07/2015<sup>39</sup> should receive an induction whereby “all prisoners undergoing induction must be treated decently, with full regard for equality, vulnerability and any special needs.”

“Full regard for equality”, of course, includes older prisoners, given that age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. This is supported by the World Health Organisation’s approach to induction, which identifies gold standards for prisoner health:

*There should be a well-organized procedure to introduce prisoners to the regime of the prison in such a way as to support and optimize their ability to cope with prison life... Wherever possible, prisoners should be encouraged and helped to make and maintain contact with their families and friends outside prison.*<sup>40</sup>

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime<sup>41</sup> also advocate that inductions should include physical and mental health; family contacts; community relationships and criminal history. However, the reliance on healthcare based screening assessment tools such as the Grubin health screen<sup>42</sup> has arguably led to an increase in bio-medical approaches to assessing need, emphasising epidemiological health needs.<sup>43</sup> This potentially reinforces the ‘medical supply side’ of healthcare<sup>44</sup>, and does not consider the broader social issues which may impact on a successful induction and transition for individual prisoners.

## Identifying need

Notwithstanding attempts to identify needs on reception, and measures designed to understand the overall quality of life of prisoners, the transition into prison is fraught with

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<sup>39</sup> National Offender Management Service. (2015). *Early Days in Custody – Reception In, First Night in Custody, and Induction to Custody. Prison Service Instruction 07/2015*. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/offenders/psipso/psi-2015/psi-07-2015-pi-06-2015-early-days-in-custody.pdf>. This PSI appears to be out of date, with an expiry date of 2016.

<sup>40</sup> World Health Organisation. (2007). *A WHO guide to the essentials in prison health*. Retrieved from [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/99018/E90174.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/99018/E90174.pdf?ua=1).

<sup>41</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime (2009) *Handbook on Prisoners with Special Needs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-&-prison-reform/Prisoners-with-special-needs.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Birmingham, L., Mason, D., & Grubin, D. (1997). Health Screening at First Reception into Prison. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry*, 8 435-439. Doi: 10.1080/09585189708412022.

<sup>43</sup> Marshall, T., Simpson, S. & Stevens, A. (2000). *Health Care in Prisons: A Health Care Needs Assessment*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

<sup>44</sup> Loeb, S.J., Steffensmeier, D. & Lawrence, F. (2008). Comparing Incarcerated and Community-Dwelling Older Men’s Health. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 30(2), 234-249. Doi: 10.1177/0193945907302981



difficulties<sup>45</sup> particularly as individual's 'ontological security' is challenged by the nature of the transition<sup>46</sup>. Three particular worries emerge from the literature for first time older prisoners: emotional needs, feeling safe and physical health.

A HMIP 'findings' paper<sup>47</sup> identified that "those experiencing custody for the first time are particularly likely to be distressed and fearful" particularly if imprisoned away from home area and support networks. The Prison Reform Trust's evaluation of six first night centres<sup>48</sup> highlighted five factors which contributed to prisoner's first impressions: relations with other prisoners; prison officer attitudes; first night environment; healthcare information; prison information. Participants identified that they received too much information, in a rushed format which added to feelings of confusion and disorientation, particularly if they were also distressed and emotional, or had specific learning needs. Much information is provided in a written format which Bosworth<sup>49</sup> argues, enhances concepts associated with self-governance of prisoners adopting the "key ideas of administrative managerialism."

Liebling et al's<sup>50</sup> evaluation of the 'safer locals' programme determined that induction needed to be well structured, delivered by trained, motivated staff to alleviate distress: address feelings of safety, maintaining family contact, and assisting vulnerable prisoners, achieved through dedicated facilities; identifying and meeting immediate needs and good access to information with a structured routine, including peer support.

First time older offenders are often the worst affected in making the transition to custody<sup>51</sup> particularly where they also have poor mobility, are victims of bullying, or have problems with

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<sup>45</sup> De Viggiani, N. (2007). Unhealthy Prisons: Exploring Structural Determinants of Prison Health. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 29(1), 115-135. Doi:10.1111/j.1467-9566.2007.00474.x

<sup>46</sup> Giddens, 1991 cited in Crewe, B. (2011). Depth, Weight, Tightness: Revisiting the Pains of Imprisonment. *Punishment & Society*, 13(5) 509-29. Doi:10.1177/1462474511422172

<sup>47</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. (2015). *Life in prison: the first 24 hours in prison*. Retrieved from <http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/11/HMIP-First-24-hours-findings-paper-web-2015.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Jacobson, J., Edgar, K., & Loucks, N. (2007). *There When You Need Them Most: PACT's First Night in Custody Services*. Retrieved from: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/there%20when%20you%20need%20them%20most%20a%20review%20of%20pact's%20first%20night%20in%20custody%20services.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Bosworth, M. (2007). Creating the Responsible Prisoner. Federal Admission and Orientation Packs. *Punishment & Society*, 9(1): 67-85. Doi: 10.1177/1462474507070553

<sup>50</sup> Liebling, A. Tait, S., Durie, L., & Stiles, H. (2005). *An Evaluation of the Safer Locals Programme Final Report*. Cambridge: Institute of Criminology Prisons Research Centre. Retrieved from [http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/people/academic\\_research/alison\\_liebling/SaferCustodyReport.pdf](http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/people/academic_research/alison_liebling/SaferCustodyReport.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Aday, R.H. (1994). Golden Years Behind Bars: Special Programs & Facilities for Elderly Inmates. *Federal Probation*, 58: 47-55. Retrieved from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.lcproxy.shu.ac.uk/ehost/detail/detail?sid=c7256624-7677-4a53-9a2f->



was based on research from over ten years ago. As Mann<sup>60</sup> articulates, current, and future next generations of older prisoners will not have experienced the same deprivations of post-second world war Britain nor had experience of National Service. Their 'habitus'<sup>61</sup> is increasingly not characterised by respect for authority and chivalry to women which may affect their perceptions and experiences of custody<sup>62</sup>.

### **This study**

The primary aim of this research was to evaluate older prisoners' perspectives on how the transition into prison affects their wellbeing. This included an appreciation of the imported knowledge and experience that older prisoners bring to this transitional process. Following ethical approval by HMPPS and the University, an exploratory qualitative research design was used to interview nine male prisoners in a single prison site. All interviews were manually recorded, as recorders were not allowed into the prison. After the interviews were completed, the notes from the interview were written up and analysed using thematic analysis, adopting a simple coding framework, due to the small sample size. Within this sample, age 55 was selected as the entry point, as this was the point at which prisoners were able to access age-specific activities within the regime at this particular establishment.

The ages ranged from 56-79, the mean age was 66 and 44% (n=4) declared a disability. All but one participant was white<sup>63</sup>. Only one participant stated that they had been in poor health prior to coming into prison. 56% (n=5) were single or divorced; the remainder, 44% (n=4) were either married or co-habiting prior to custody. 66% (n=5) were in employment prior to coming into custody; half of those in employment had been self-employed. The remaining 44% (n=4) were retired. This compares with only one third of all newly sentenced prisoners being in employment immediately before coming into custody<sup>64</sup>. 33% (n=3) owned their home outright; 33% public rented accommodation; 22% (n=2) private rented accommodation and one prisoner in supported accommodation. This also reflects differences in the life

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<sup>60</sup> Mann, N. (2012). *Doing Harder Time? The Experiences of an Ageing Male Prison Population in England and Wales*. Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>61</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* Mann (2012).

<sup>63</sup> A further gap in the literature relates to the intersectionality of ethnicity and age in the criminal justice system.

<sup>64</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2012). *The Pre-custody Employment, Training & Education Status of Newly Sentenced Prisoners*. Retrieved from [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/278832/newly-sentenced-prisoners.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278832/newly-sentenced-prisoners.pdf)

experiences of older prisoners compared with younger prisoners, as 15% sentenced prisoners are homeless prior to coming into custody.<sup>65</sup>

56% (n=5) interviewees were sentenced to one-five years' imprisonment and 44% (n=4) sentenced to five-ten years, compared with 17.1 months as the average sentence length for all custodial sentences<sup>66</sup>. Respondents had spent nine months on average in the establishment. All had commenced their sentence elsewhere; 55% (n=5) at prisons in the East Midlands; 22% (n=2) in Yorkshire; one from Lincolnshire and one from the South East.

The nature of transition and induction lent itself to a discussion of the past, present and future regarding their understanding of the prison experience. The analysis identified three main themes: (1) former identities; (2) becoming a prisoner and (3) ageing well. The remainder of this article will focus on the first two themes, that of former identities and becoming a prisoner, as these explicitly draw upon prisoners' experiences of induction.

### **Former identities**

All participants referred to their life prior to coming to prison, whether that was by the nature of their role in the labour market; discussing their relationships with partners and family members, or identifying practical issues they faced in making the transition into custody.

Importation models,<sup>67</sup> that is, the behaviours, attitudes and experience of life before prison which are then brought with people into the prison with them have been shown to influence the development of prison sub-cultures. Mann<sup>68</sup> extends this notion to the belief systems in particular that prisoners bring with them into the prison environment, which is influenced by their life-courses as older prisoners.<sup>69</sup> Importation models were also identified in this study. Four participants identified that they were unprepared for the sentence that they received, for example being unable to make arrangements for their flat to be cleared and property to be stored:

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<sup>65</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2013). *2013 Compendium of re-offending statistics and analysis*. Retrieved from [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/278133/compendium-reoffending-stats-2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278133/compendium-reoffending-stats-2013.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly, England and Wales, July 2017 to June 2018*. Retrieved from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/756065/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly-june-2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756065/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly-june-2018.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> Irwin, J. & Cressey, D.R. (1962). Thieves, Convicts and the Inmate Culture. *Social Problems*, 10(2), 142-155. Doi: 10.2307/799047

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.* Mann (2012).

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* Maschi et al (2015).

*My property suited me as I am disabled. I had no time to tell anyone or cancel anything. (P6)*

Similarly, the financial implications of coming into custody were laid bare by four participants:

*How do you find the phone number to cancel the contracts and what do do...? if you're in your seventies, people on the outside may be incapable of helping. (P5)*

*I needed to find my bank details... I had to put an app in. (P1)*

*Prison need to explain more about finance, especially if you have no one on the outside. (P4)*

A range of emotions were expressed by participants in respect of leaving their outside life, ranging from the stoical<sup>70</sup> *"What can't be cured must be endured"* (P1) to the scared and shocked. *"It was a real shock – it was my first time in prison straight from court. It's still frightening"* (P7)

Seven participants discussed on going relationships and the impact of their prison sentence on their family members. For some, this was also a factor for consideration when moving between prisons.

*My partner isn't a confident driver, and wouldn't be able to visit if I was further away (P4)*

*I'm further away from my wife now so I was a bit worried about visits.... if I didn't have my wife to worry about it would be a doddle. (P5)*

There was also recognition of the crossovers between their lives inside and outside:

*Your family are serving a sentence too. (P4)*

*My wife has stayed with me so that has made it more bearable knowing that nothing has changed on the outside (P5)*

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<sup>70</sup> Crewe, B. (2009). *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Kids are the first thing on your mind. I get accumulated visits. It's too much of a worry for me for my family to make such a journey. (P7)*

In addition to the nature of relationships with family members on the outside, by no means a feature exclusive to older prisoners<sup>71</sup> there was recognition from participants that they imported certain expectations around being treated with respect and dignity from their outside life on making the transition into prison life. Participants commented upon the friendly, helpful and civil staff at reception, with a number also commenting on the importance of positive relationships with staff, particularly personal officers. One participant specifically alluded to the generational gap:

*"I was brought up in a different generation. I did two years National Service...I was taught discipline in school and in the forces. They [younger prisoners] don't know the meaning of the word. You have to be able to discipline yourself – they don't know what makes themselves tick." (P7)*

Reflecting on such life experiences, and being able to draw upon previous experiences<sup>72</sup>, appears to be one way in which older people are able to make the transition from community life to custody. Bartley et al<sup>73</sup> also highlights the significance of life-course perspectives on the nature of transitions, in that the accumulative nature of each transition influences the extent to which future transitions results in unfavourable outcomes, such as coming into prison.

### **Becoming a prisoner– changing identities and induction**

Despite, or perhaps because of, participants being able to draw on previous life experiences, many were frustrated with induction processes, particularly where there was an assumption that they had been in prison previously, and the sense that *"you don't know what you don't know"* (P3). One respondent compared the induction process to *"welcome meetings"* on holiday, with another proclaiming the induction process was *"mediocre at best"*, also using his life experience to make comparisons with induction processes in the workplace. There

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<sup>71</sup> Lord Farmer. (2017). *The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*. London: Ministry of Justice. Retrieved from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642244/farmer-review-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642244/farmer-review-report.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.* Crawley & Sparks (2005, 2006).

<sup>73</sup> Bartley et al, 1997, cited in Blane, D. (2006). The Life Course, the Social Gradient and Health. In M. Marmot & R.G. Wilkinson. *Social Determinants of Health*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (pp. 65-85). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

was also some resentment about the relatively ad hoc nature of induction processes, with participants also stating that planned sessions were cancelled due to staffing shortages and regime issues. Other issues that affected induction included space within the main prison for prisoners to be transferred from the induction wing. Two interviewees stated that they assumed they had completed their induction but were still on the induction wing, whereas another participant stated that they had seen prisoners moved off induction after four days. Two other interviewees stated that they did not know whether their induction had been completed or not:

*I don't know if I've finished induction or not. I don't know the structure of the people I have to answer to on the OMU; I don't know about probation or my licence conditions.... I feel helpless...I don't think it's taken place fast enough but I don't know what expectations are." (P7)*

*No one sits you down and goes through all the ways you can get in trouble (P4)*

Given that induction processes are designed to impose a sense of 'sameness'<sup>74</sup>, it is perhaps unsurprising that respondents may have felt this way, compounded by the disempowering effects of institutionalisation which leads to a reduction in self-determination<sup>75</sup>. However, a number of respondents also commented on the differences between their first prison and their current prison, with surprise articulated, both positively and negatively, about the varying prison experience across establishments. Crewe's notions of 'tightness' can be viewed in the experiences articulated below, particularly regarding the notions of experiencing power as both 'firm' and 'soft'<sup>76</sup> leading to prisoners simultaneously experiencing a loss of autonomy alongside increased accountability.

*I expected more when I arrived here but I don't know what. There's a decency charter but there's no signs of individualised needs being met. At XX, on a VPU with sixty prisoners the conditions were diabolical but you now knew where you stood. I was shocked at the difference between establishments. Staff can be indifferent, curt. (P3)*

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* Crawley & Sparks (2005).

<sup>75</sup> Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline & Punish*. New York: Vintage Books.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.* Crewe (2011).

*Staff are more laid back here but can be petty on little rules...Every regime is so different. (P4)*

*It was like walking into a palace. The officers are much pleasanter. They treat you like a human being. (P5)*

Differences regarding expectations were particularly marked where participants had been placed on a vulnerable prisoner unit within their former establishment, which did not deliver the safety they craved. In comparison, their current establishment was deemed to be much safer, given the focus on rehabilitation through offending behaviour programme delivery, although anxieties were expressed about the focus on programmes.

Interviewees were asked to list the elements of induction that they could recall. This was mapped against the aspects of induction which should be included within PSI07/2015. Where induction activities included a physical visit to their location (e.g. gym, or education) or visits from departments respondents felt more relevant to their incarceration (e.g. healthcare, programmes), participants were more likely to recall those aspects being covered. No participants could recall information being given about health and safety, local arrangements, such as visiting times, and legal services. That is not to say that these elements were not covered, however, PSI07/2015 also reminds staff that prisoners may not retain information and may need reminding.

Hayes et al's administration of the CANFOR-S<sup>77</sup> assessment identified unmet needs of older prisoners around information about condition and treatment; psychological distress; daytime activities; benefits and physical health. In their interviews, prisoners reiterated that 'entry shock' for first time older prisoners led to a reduction in their ability to retain information, alongside an assumption that prisoners had been in custody previously. They also identified their reliance on other prisoners to provide them with information. Where prisoners disclosed in interviews their worries about their family, they also stated that they had not told staff their concerns.

During the interviews, older prisoners made the following recommendations for improving induction:

- Providing more information about the prison prior to transfer. Despite six of the nine respondents being aware that they may be transferred to the prison, only one was told in advance, the day before.

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<sup>77</sup> Camberwell Assessment of Need – Forensic Version



- Provide a list of acronyms - *Everyone talks in acronyms (P1)* and an individualised checklist with space for named individuals to be written in e.g. offender supervisor; personal officer.
  - Make induction more visual e.g. videos, pictorial folders, flowcharts and more help for people to find their way around initially.
  - Ensure that prisoners are supported to understand and make early use of the app process.
  - Provide space for prisoners to ask questions on a 1:1 basis.
  - Recruit older PID<sup>78</sup> workers.
  - Providing a checklist of community tasks which may need resolving (e.g. tenancy, utility bills, pension arrangements).
  - Early meetings with offender managers to understand the rationale for the transfer, and the development of a meaningful sentence plan that related to using time constructively within prison, while planning for a return to the community.
- Participants were frustrated that activities tended to focus on employability rather than interest and experience, given many would not be returning to the workplace after their release.

Simplistic as these recommendations may be, the fact that a prison which is oriented towards the needs of older prisoners in their regime has not considered these issues within their population, means that many other prisons are likely to be missing opportunities to minimise the harms of transition which ensue for many neo-phyte older prisoners.

### **New relationships**

While participants recognised that they would form relationships with other prisoners, many were wary of forming relationships with younger prisoners, lest they be accused of grooming. Conversely, another participant felt as though he was viewed as a father figure by younger prisoners. Some participants expressed anxiety at the prospect of forming relationships with other prisoners, who could be moved to another wing or out of the prison at a moment's notice. This corresponds with Bond, Thompson and Malloy's<sup>79</sup> research, in the US, which identified that although the size of older prisoners' networks diminish over time, their emotional value increases.

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<sup>78</sup> Prisoner Information Desk

<sup>79</sup> Bond, G.D., Thompson, L.A., & Malloy, D.M. (2005). Lifespan Differences in the Social Networks of Prison Inmates. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 61(3) 161-178. Doi: [10.2190%2F7H5P-2AHJ-L34Q-GW9U](https://doi.org/10.2190/2F7H5P-2AHJ-L34Q-GW9U)

*You make friends at induction but then they move you off just as you are starting to feel comfortable. Then you start to feel anxiety about where you are being moved to; you are being plunged into a new situation and there is uncertainty. Today you've got a pad mate; tomorrow they may be moved – you feel unsettled on a day to day situation. (P6)*

Rumours and conjecture are rife in prisons, including this establishment. In many cases, fears were not realised, where participants had heard 'horror' stories from other prisoners about other wings, participating in offending behaviour programmes or transfers to other establishments. Nevertheless, this contributes to a pervading sense of foreboding, and the ontological insecurities inherent in making the transition into prison<sup>80</sup> Whether it was confusion about how to access services – “*put an app in*” or a lack of information about the next steps in various processes, such as sentence planning, selection for work or receiving visits, there was a sense from prisoners that information was provided solely on a “*need to know*” basis. Participants recognised that there were some helpful staff, and that personal officers, in particular, were valued, however in the main, they relied on other prisoners for information.

Because the prison did not receive individuals from court, there was an implicit assumption that induction and transitions were not particularly problematic as issues would have been dealt with at the receiving prison. The responses from participants demonstrate that this is not the case. Prisoners felt that there was an assumption that they had been in prison before, and remained anxious, in a liminal state, compounded by delays in accessing elements of the prison regime. This potentially has consequences for prisoners' mental state and resilience as they experience the contemporary pains of prison<sup>81</sup>, and may also relate to maladaptive coping strategies developed over time as a consequence of former trauma during their life-course<sup>82</sup>.

### **Limitations of the study**

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<sup>80</sup> Giddens, 1991 in Crewe, B. (2011). Depth, Weight, Tightness: Revisiting the Pains of Imprisonment. *Punishment & Society*, 13(5) 509-29. Doi:10.1177/1462474511422172

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Harper, R. & Franks, D. (2013). Treating the Person Not the Prisoner: how talking therapy interventions support Sex Offender Programmes and risk reduction at HMP Whatton. *Prison Service Journal*, July 2013 No 208. Retrieved from <https://www.crime&justice.org.uk/publications/psj/prison-service-journal-208>

Although the aim was to identify from prisoners' own perspectives their experiences of undertaking induction and transition into custody there was a lack of opportunity to understand more about induction due to a lack of staff engagement, and the marginal role of being a researcher within the prison<sup>83</sup>. Thus views emanating from prisoners only creates a partial picture of the realities of induction, although they do constitute *their* realities.

The research site is not typical of the prison establishment. It is a category C prison, where 90% are serving sentences over four years, and one third of the population are over the age of 40. Thus prisoners are sentenced for indictable offences, serve longer sentences as a consequence and constitute an older population. Additionally, the prisoners were male, and eight of the nine were white. Further research regarding intersectionality and age is also needed.

As a self-selecting sample<sup>84</sup>, it is possible that those who were engaged were more likely to put themselves forward, than prisoners who have found the transition more difficult, and/or had more complex needs. A sample of nine participants could lead to questions of validity, however this confounds quantitative standards of assessment with qualitative approaches.<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

This study serves as a useful pilot study, which could be developed in a number of ways, through exploring similar issues in other custodial settings, particularly local prisons. The study demonstrates a need for further research because it is clear that induction and transitions are not one-off, process driven events and need further exploration. Prisoners take time to adjust to their new surroundings; each prison transfer provides another transition. All too often, it is assumed that prisoners have been in prison before, whereas for neophyte older prisoners "*they haven't done the course in becoming a prisoner yet*"<sup>86</sup>. Ensuring that prisoners are able to make appropriate arrangements for their home life will ease the transition and ability to engage constructively in the prison regime, which ultimately will have implications for their resettlement. This includes facilitating an early visit from family; supporting contact with external service providers, and early meetings with offender managers so that prisoners are aware of the purpose of their sentence. Cost neutral, pragmatic recommendations made by interviewees such as providing written information, and reducing jargon would reduce anxieties, provide more structured information about the

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<sup>83</sup> Rowe, A. (2014). Situating the Self in Prison Research: Power, Identity and Epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(4), 404-416. Doi: 0.1177/1077800413515830

<sup>84</sup> King, N. & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

<sup>85</sup> Wincup, E. (2017). *Criminological Research. Understanding Qualitative Methods* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE.

<sup>86</sup> A comment made by a governor, when setting up the research.

regime, and would benefit prisoners of all ages. Finally, it is only when efforts are made to fully appreciate individual's life histories, their multiple vulnerabilities and implement measures to actively support making a successful transition into custody, that progress can be made with this cohort of prisoners.